

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: REIMAGINING BLACK POWER: PRISON
MANIFESTOS AND THE STRATEGIES OF
REGENERATION IN THE REWRITING OF BLACK
IDENTITY, 1969-2002

Lisa Marie Corrigan, Doctor of Philosophy, 2006

Dissertation directed by: Professor Shawn J. Parry-Giles
Department of Communication

This study is predicated upon an analysis of the manifesto as a rhetorical centerpiece of both black resistance and revolution from slavery to the present in an attempt to build on an obviously significant, yet undertheorized, genre of persuasion. It examines the history of black manifestos and moves to study the utility and strategies of prison autobiographies and life-writings in the Black Power movement to understand the typology of discourses produced under constant surveillance and violence from the state.

To this end, the study examines the life writings or, manifestos, of three Black Power activists: Assata Shakur, Mumia Abu-Jamal and H. Rap Brown (now Jamil Al-Amin). Rather than studying all of their rhetorical actions during the earliest phase of the Black Power movement of the mid- to late 1960s, this study instead features the regenerative strategies within the prison manifestos of Black Power leaders who have

been compelled to revise notions of Black Power after many of its leaders and followers were either jailed or killed for their revolutionary actions and commitments during the 1960s. These chapters examine the rhetorical strategies within the autobiographical manifestos that continue Black Power agitation and trace how the writers continue to serve as celebrities and Black Power leaders in a new phase of Black Power agitation.

Finally, the study looks at the potentially positive and negative contributions of regenerative Black Power strategies in the autobiographical manifestos of Shakur, Abu-Jamal, and Brown, and traces the circulation of their ideologies through hip-hop culture to see how these activists continue to inform the black public sphere of incarceration.

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by

Lisa Marie Corrigan

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Advisory Committee:

Professor Shawn J. Parry-Giles, Chair
Professor Robert N. Gaines
Professor Mari Boor Tonn
Professor Katie King
Professor Trevor Parry-Giles

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In many ways, this study was a labor of love that really began years ago when I started bringing home hip-hop music in grade school. Listening to the black nationalist sentiments percolating in Los Angeles and New York in the early 1980s accessed a frustrated part of myself that felt trapped in the rust belt of the Midwest and propelled me to take an earnest interest in social justice.

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The United States has had a long and complex history of racial discrimination and resistance. Yet, the debates about nationalism and the nation, which characterized racial discourses of the 1960s, signaled dramatic changes in the social fabric of American life. Civil rights rhetoric during this time period centered on the integration of black Americans into white society, particularly in the areas of education, public transportation, housing and business. Despite the dominance of the integrationist ideology in the racial discourses of the 1960s, civil rights protests also produced an increasingly prominent strand of black nationalism.¹

Revolutionary black nationalism was central to the rhetoric of Malcolm X and his response to integration.² In *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, the Nation of Islam minister wrote, “Not long ago, the black man in America was fed a dose of another form of the weakening, lulling and deluding effects of so-called ‘integration.’”³ Malcolm concluded that the integrationists and President John F. Kennedy pursued a policy of assimilation to white norms at the expense of an autonomous black identity.⁴ Rather than compromise an independent black identity, Malcolm X and other revolutionary nationalists sought intellectual, economic and social separation from the nation, which helped to re-energize a more revolutionary black agenda.⁵

To challenge integration, black nationalists taught people to re-imagine themselves and their relationship to the nation-state as a way of changing black consciousness. Sociologist Benedict Anderson is right to remind us that, “the nation is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”⁶ As elites decide to form and maintain nations, they engage in the

collective envisioning of a past and present, an invention of traditions and symbolic construction of community that both grants and restricts rights and citizenship.⁷

Although scholars often imagine the state by theorizing its existence and promulgating its policies, perhaps the most important part of this intellectual project is the interrogation of the “nation.” Critiques of the nation often destabilize the us-them dichotomies built and maintained by the state; and the clashes that inevitably arise because of these racialized, gendered, and classed dichotomies are rarely without political and social tension.⁸

Historically, black nationalism has been a political tool for re-assessing identity. Historians John H. Bracey, Jr., August Meier, and Elliot Rudwick write that black nationalism represents “a body of social thought, attitudes, and actions ranging from the simplest expressions of ethnocentrism and racial solidarity to the comprehensive and sophisticated ideologies of Pan-Negroism or Pan-Africanism.”⁹ Black nationalism may include cultural nationalism, territorial separatism, emigrationism, Pan-Africanism, religious nationalism, economic nationalism, and revolutionary nationalism and has often, but not always, sought a new black nation, in both the geographical and sociological sense.¹⁰ Ultimately, black nationalism reflects a “group consciousness among black people and the belief that they, independent of whites, can achieve liberation by the creation and maintenance of black institutions.”¹¹ Although black nationalism was hardly a new phenomenon in the United States by the 1950s and 1960s, black nationalists shaped the civic discourse surrounding debates about inequality during that period. Perhaps the most significant ideological invention of black nationalists during this time period was the assertion of

Black Power, an ideological construct whose articulations lived on long after the original organizations involved in its evolution declined.

The Black Power movement included groups like the Black Panther Party (BPP), the Black Liberation Army (BLA), the Us group, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), the Black Arts Movement, the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), and other radical black associations.¹² These groups challenged the centrality of nonviolence and direct action that had been at the center of the Civil Rights Movement by re-envisioning black identity and taking positions of self-defense against the discrimination and violence of the white nation-state. Yet, by the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, the Black Power movement suddenly met new obstacles as many of its leaders were either imprisoned or killed for their perceived threat to the nation-state. Although many movements fade away once their leaders die or leave the public spaces of political action, the Black Power movement represents an exception and demonstrates how its leaders continued to regenerate black identity from spaces of confinement. In the process, its leaders, now imprisoned, altered their rhetorical strategies once again in order to reconstruct an identity against the state's oppressive actions.

To understand the ways in which Black Power activists exhibited strategies of regeneration in what I conceive of as the “next phase” of the Black Power movement, we must look at the writings that reflect this intellectual work—work produced from a site of incarceration or exile— “a political and cultural avant-garde which identifie[d] the various progressive issues that constitute[d] the generational moment.”¹³ Hazel

Carby reminds us that academic work must “expose and learn from the gendered, ideological assumptions which underlie the founding texts and determine that their authors become *representative* figures of the American intellectual.”¹⁴ She adds, “These authors and their productions are shaped by gendered structures of thought and feeling, which in turn actively shape the major paradigms and modes of thought of all academic discourse.”¹⁵

In particular, this project examines the ways in which Assata Shakur, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and H. Rap Brown have formulated a narrative about Black Power, black identity, and resistance to state-sanctioned violence, using their own their identities as imprisoned leaders as the foundation for rethinking resistance strategies. These three activists are part of a small cadre of black nationalists whose life-writing constitutes part of the corpus of radical black prison activism that extends conceptions of black liberation and the Black Power ideology beyond the often studied 1960s.¹⁶ In their writings, the activists “engage with other autobiographers and potential representatives in a struggle for power” that extends the mission of the Black Power movement that they helped initiate in the 1960s. As a result, their autobiographies are self-conscious examinations of the highly fluid and evolutionary nature of the political identity struggle that follows the Black Power movement beyond the spotlight of the 1960s.¹⁷

As Black Power activists engage ideological issues pertaining to identity, they craft narratives that express their individuality and also their fidelity to the group. Sidonie Smith calls these “self-consciously political autobiographical acts” autobiographical manifestos. “Purposeful, bold, contentious, the autobiographical

manifesto contests the old inscriptions, the old histories, the old politics, the *ancien regime* by working to dislodge the consolidations of the Eurocentric, phallogocentric ‘I’ through an expressly political collocation of a new ‘I.’”¹⁸ She writes that the autobiographical manifesto “offers an arena in which the revolutionary can insist on identity in service to an emancipatory politics.”¹⁹ Because the voices of these activists are systematically repressed by the state, it becomes even more paramount that we interrogate their intellectual treatises in order to understand the evolution of Black Power identities and strategies of regeneration. Before addressing the incarceration stage of the movement, however, we must first detail the genesis and substance of Black Power movement and its prevailing ideologies as conceptualized by its framers and detractors.

The Origins of Black Power

When the “Black Power” slogan began to circulate in the mid-1960s, it had the dual effect of mobilizing black activists and panicking both liberal and conservative whites.²⁰ The first reference to the term “Black Power” appears to be Richard Wright’s book, *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos* (1954), which was written about the writer’s trip to Africa, where he observed twentieth century Pan-Africanism blossoming.²¹ However, in 1966, formerly moderate civil rights activists in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress On Racial Equality (CORE) embraced Black Power as an expression against the police brutality and state oppression that they continued to face while organizing in the American south. In the 1960s, Black Power represented a

bold rhetorical move to reframe the debates about self-defense and violence that had permeated public discussions of civil rights tactics.

As a slogan, Black Power initially had two primary purposes, both of which were grounded in resistance. First, and foremost, Black Power was a repudiation of “Negro,” the white term for black Americans. Toward that end, Black Power was an identity move that embraced blackness. Historian Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar argues that

African American rhetoric has always concerned itself with questions of identity. Free blacks widely used the term *African* up to the 1830s, when white supremacists increasingly argued for “repatriation” to Africa for free blacks. *Colored* and *Negro* suddenly grew in popularity because they downplayed any association with foreign lands. By the early twentieth century, nationalists avoided ‘colored’ and more fully embraced *Negro* (always capitalized) as a more fitting and proud term.... Not until 1930, however, did any organization reject *Negro* and *colored* for the term *black*.²²

Asserting blackness usurped the power to name and define racial groups and provided a sense of collective identity. Black Americans chose to name themselves, connote blackness with positive images rather than negative stereotypes, and embrace difference.

Second, Black Power was a way of describing an ideal of resistance whose definition was deeply indebted to the revolutionary black nationalist perspective. Former executive secretary of SNCC and Black Power activist James Forman wrote extensively on the consequences of Black Power:

Those two words electrified the nation and the world. Black people wanted power, the words said. Only power could change our condition. The type of Black Power that we wanted still had to be defined, but this initial articulation meant that another stage of struggle had been reached. It was a higher one than “One Man, One Vote” or “Freedom Now”.... To achieve that power, poor black people had to take the power away from the racist, exploitative masters of the society, who are white. Therefore, “Black Power” was more than a slogan to me. It was a concept pointing the way to a revolutionary ideology.²³

Although it was used organizationally as a slogan to unite black America, radical civil rights groups developed Black Power into a philosophical and ideological platform through manifestos, newspaper and journal articles, through autobiographies and life-writing. In the 1960s, Black Power served as an organizing principle and as evidence that black activists were working together to take power back from the state.

In their 1967 treatise on Black Power, SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael and his mentor, Charles V. Hamilton, defined and theorized Black Power as a philosophy of resistance. They wrote, “...we aim to define and encourage a new consciousness among black people which will make it possible for us to proceed toward those answers and those solutions. This consciousness, which will be defined more fully...might be called a sense of peoplehood: pride, rather than shame, in blackness, and an attitude of brotherly, communal responsibility among all black people for one another.”²⁴ Elaborating further on this theme of empowerment, activist Julius Lester asserted, “Black consciousness is an essential part of speaking and defining for

ourselves. It is the foundation for Black Power.”²⁵ Black Power, then, became a way of raising black consciousness.

As Black Power demanded a new group consciousness for black Americans, it also encouraged them to preserve an autonomous identity at all costs. Theologian and Black Power scholar James H. Cone used Malcolm X’s words to explain Black Power. Cone wrote that Black Power is the “complete emancipation of black people from white oppression by whatever means black people deem necessary.”²⁶ Cone, like many others, has understood Black to be a question of identity and an expression of humanity. He noted that, “To be human is to find something worth dying for. When the black man rebels at the risk of death, he forces white society to look at him, to recognize him, to take his being into account, to admit that he *is*.”²⁷ For such writers, Black Power is an assertion of humanity in the face of the nation-state’s denial of that humanity (through *de facto* and *de jure* discrimination) to black people. Stephen Butterfield adds, “The realization that white cultural oppression has robbed the black man of human identity makes the achievement of a black identity essential to the act of resistance.”²⁸

Malcolm X was central to this resistance as he demanded a radicalized group consciousness in black America and sought a powerful cultural revolution in black communities.²⁹ At the founding rally for the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) on June 28, 1964, Malcolm X explained:

We must recapture our heritage and our identity if we are ever to liberate ourselves from the bonds of white supremacy. We must launch a cultural revolution to un-brainwash an entire nation.... Our cultural revolution must be

the means of bringing us closer to our African brothers and sisters. It must begin in the community and be based on community participation. Afro-Americans will be free to create only when they can depend on the Afro-American community for support....³⁰

For Malcolm X, understanding Black Power as a cultural revolution that would free black Americans from the expectations of whites was essential to the struggle for black liberation “by any means necessary,” hopefully creating a changed black identity. Malcolm X’s ideological statements about black radicalism and cultural revolution became even more popular with emerging Black Power activists after his assassination on February 25, 1965, at the Harlem Ballroom. When America lost its most radical and charismatic firebrand, it gained thousands of loyal adherents to his work; Malcolm X became the martyr for the Black Power movement that espoused a complicated and contentious ideology.

Black Power: An Ideology

As an ideology, Black Power articulated four principal themes in the 1960s and early 1970s: 1.) pride in, rather than shame of, blackness, which is often expressed through cultural nationalism, 2.) a disavowal of nonviolence, 3.) identification with the Third World, disdain of white nationalism, and the adoption of violence as a viable political strategy, and 4.) an emphasis centered on black masculinity. By demanding the radical change in consciousness that Malcolm X and others espoused, Black Power proponents theorized and practiced an ideological platform that challenged the dominance of white nationalism through a strategy that embraced black masculinity.

Cultural Nationalism and Black Power

One of the most debated aspects of the liberation of the black Diaspora has been the evolution of cultural nationalism.³¹ This has included the adoption of cultural symbols that distinguished Black Power activists and sympathizers from the people they called “Negroes,” or those who accepted the status that whites forced upon them. Black Power has been a powerful cultural force for several reasons. First, Black Power became a part of the streets and popular culture as a way of affirming blackness. For black activists, cultural nationalism tended to embrace either the American-ness or the African-ness of being black.³² Cultural nationalists sought to identify blackness with positive connotations including beauty, power, and strength. For cultural nationalists in the Black Power movement, “the struggle to recover a positive identity came logically before political, social, or economic battles. Liberation was to be sought through the development of distinctly black forms of culture and art.”³³ Cultural nationalism centered on the possibility of reframing blackness as a liberating identity through cultural production. In *Black Power*, Hamilton described this reframing of blackness:

The emphasis today on blackness is healthy and good because it calls into question those traditional values held by the larger society. Even many people who have styled themselves “integrationists,” upon closer examination, have continued to view black people as “culturally deprived” or as having to prove themselves “worthy of acceptance” as a precondition to integration.... The emphasis on “blackness” attempts to emphasize those characteristics which should not be subordinated to a policy of racial integration.³⁴

Black cultural nationalism has attempted to reverse stereotypes in the face of integration, which understood America as an ethnic and racial “melting pot” where one would be free to pursue an “American Dream.” Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver noted:

The basic flaw in the analysis and outlook of the white liberals, radicals and the black bourgeoisie is that the concept of the American melting pot completely ignores the distinction and contradiction between the white mother country and the black colony. And the solution of integration, based on this false outlook, was doomed from the beginning to yield only a deceptive and disillusioning result. Black people are a stolen people held in colonial status on stolen land, and any analysis which does not acknowledge the colonial status of black people cannot hope to deal with the real problem.³⁵

Cleaver and others argued that living within a colonized nation with the colonizers forces a demarcation of culture that creates the justification for racism through separation. Because both blacks and whites are socialized in the same climate, they both begin to see the separation as either necessary or inevitable.

This distinctly psychological strategy sought to correct the inferiority conferred upon black culture by dominant white society from the slave trade to the present. Black Power advocates argued that because of the oppression of black people in the United States, “any effective action to end this oppression must be initiated by [them] as a self-conscious, autonomous group...”³⁶ The prevailing assumption has been that their own people must lead them and their own community must hold them accountable. This is Malcolm X’s legacy and it has been the

foundation for cultural nationalist claims about blackness. Consequently, Black Power found its way into popular culture through soul music, blacksploitation films, and through both African and militaristic garb.³⁷ Malcolm X's position on Black Power during his tenure at the NOI also ushered Black Power into the religious sphere, particularly as debates about reparations became salient in the 1970s.

In addition to popular and religious culture, Black Power also influenced the academy and intellectual production through newly formed Black Student Associations, black sororities and fraternities, the Black Arts Movement, black conferences and professional development associations. Black Power advocates were keenly interested in the relationship between black Americans and Africa. Afrocentrism, or the centering of Africa and African experience, is certainly one way in which this identity debate about cultural nationalism developed in the West as a pedagogy for learning and teaching about black identity.³⁸ Over two centuries, black people in the United States debated the utility in claiming portions of Africa as a historical homeland to build origin stories, as a new homeland, as a setting for mythic narratives praising heroes (biblical or otherwise), and as a location within the Diaspora to mobilize in the struggle for dignity and equality.³⁹ Black Power groups followed in this tradition by earnestly debating the importance of Africa to their cultural strategies.

In what Vivian I. Davis has termed the "New Black Renaissance" of cultural production in the 1960s and 1970s, there were more black writers being published, exhibited, televised, and promoted by "white press, white publishers, and white liberals" than ever before. This helped to expand the already enlarging black

audience who were accumulating the wealth to “spend money on books, movies, theater” and other representational discourses produced by the black intelligentsia.⁴⁰ Davis notes that in the 1960s and 1970s, outlets for black literature and other black discourses also proliferated. She writes, “Significant was the establishment of new black publishing houses: for example, The Third Press, Third World Press, Broadside, Lotus Press, Black River Press, and the Howard University Press.”⁴¹ Likewise, black magazines and newspapers promoted and reviewed black literature and new black scholarly journals emerged as well as other journals appealing to a broader audience such as *Liberator*, *Umbra*, *Soulbook*, *Black Dialogue*, *The Journal of Black Poetry*, *Nommo*, *Black Creation*, and *Black World*, which made the new black aesthetics available to a larger audience. Finally, television and radio helped bring black literature and art to black publics through such venues as the PBS program *Soul* and through black poetry readings, which also found space within colleges, churches, and night clubs. Additionally, “[s]uch establishments as liberation schools, black drama companies, and black bookstores around the country added to the numerous outlets by which the literature of the ‘60s and ‘70s was delivered to the people.”⁴²

The black artists and poets in the Black Arts Movement, particularly Amiri Baraka, Larry Neal, Nikki Giovanni, Sonia Sanchez and Etheridge Knight, demanded that “Black art must stand for the collective consciousness and subconsciousness of Black people in particular.”⁴³ Larry Neal argued that “Black Art is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept. As such, it envisions an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of Black America. In order to perform this task,

the Black Arts Movement proposes a radical reordering of the western cultural aesthetic.”⁴⁴ The Black Arts Movement sought “a cultural revolution in art and ideas” because, as Neal maintained, the “cultural values inherent in western history must either be radicalized or destroyed, and we will probably find that even radicalization is impossible.”⁴⁵ For Neal, “a cultureless revolution is a bullcrap tip. It means that in the process of making the revolution, we lose our vision. We lose the soft, undulating side of ourselves – those unknown beauties lurking rhythmically below the level of material needs. In short, a revolution without a culture would destroy the very thing that now unites us; the very thing we are trying to save along with our lives.”⁴⁶ Many poets, writers and artists of the Black Arts Movement, saw culture as inextricably linked to political action, an argument that was not lost on many participants in the Black Power movement who, though interested in political action, also expressed themselves through poetry, song, and life writing.

Participants in the Black Arts Movement wanted to move away from traditional protest literature, which was based on the assumption that change would happen if only the masters were aware of the grievances of the protestor. They saw protest literature as begging and rebelled against the white aesthetic forms that were laden with white power. These artists announced that “Black poetry must function as fists, daggers and guns to clean up the sordid Black experience”⁴⁷ as well as to “clean out the world for virtue and love.”⁴⁸ To this end, those in the Black Arts Movement sought to construct new discourse forms, new values, a new history, new heroes, myths and legends. Their challenge was a resurrection of black cultural production controlled by and reflecting black communities.

Black American literature of the 1960s and 1970s was also influenced by cultural productions from the Third World. David T. Haberly has described the tradition of black writing as an essentially post-colonial form of discourse because as a genre of representation, it has historically dealt with one fundamental problem: “how to achieve cultural independence and identify despite the irrevocable and pervasive absence of viable cultural alternatives to the continuation of that influence.”⁴⁹ Because the literature of Black Power advocated separatism and also critiqued the imperialism of white standards, practices, and structures, it has clearly become part of a nationalist discourse against an America which, first, kept black America in chains, second, kept black America in a state of economic and social dependence, and finally, tried to prevent black America from creating its own nation. For black literature, the effect of colonialism has been the stifling of both the literacy of black publics and of black literary production (since white presses often controlled the production and distribution of black texts). By the 1960s and 1970s, however, these two barriers had been minimized for black publics who had the interest, the literacy skills and the disposable income to support black-produced discourses.⁵⁰

One final complication with black post-colonial literature in the United States has been the language through which black experiences have been expressed. Haberly notes that the “literature of the invisible Black nation has necessarily been written in the language of white America” largely as an “inevitable result of the history of Black America and of the influence of the editorial underdevelopment of the invisible nation.”⁵¹ The conundrum of writing in the colonialist tongue is a problem facing all post-colonial writers but since writing in an aboriginal tongue is an

unrealistic alternative, the solution has historically been to wait “for time and the influence of specific and culture and social environments to so alter the inherited language that it becomes something new and distinct.”⁵² Cultural nationalists at the end of the 1960s and throughout the 1970s pushed for a more “authentic” black voice for literary productions that was independent of the colonial tongue and that was understood as a cultural product of a specific place and time.

Additionally, history has been a central object to Black Power in the debates over defining cultural nationalism. In his essay, “The Highest Political Expression of Black Power is Pan-Africanism,” Stokely Carmichael noted, “All revolution is based on history.”⁵³ Perhaps we can see history as one of the resources that a subaltern, oppressed culture must rearticulate and recreate as it prepares to manifest a new identity. Carmichael argued that, “Revolutionaries must study. They must study because revolution is built on history. If you’re running around all over this country speaking to everybody, not only in our community, but to other radicals and what have you, you will not have an opportunity to sit down and to analyze the situation about which you are speaking.”⁵⁴ Black activists wanted to study and write history because without it, black people could not understand themselves as products of a particular relationship to the state, which constantly controlled their rhetorical resources to name themselves, their struggles, their enemies, their goals, and their demands. Black Power, then, was not only a pragmatic strategy for social change but also a movement of prolific intellectual production as advocates wrote their histories and the histories of other important black heroes. In both studying and writing black

history, the academy became a useful tool to promote Afrocentric study and to support the study of a people who had long been erased from canonical history.

Activists hoped that the strategy of redefinition would create a stronger, more unified black public. From the perspective of the black political nationalist (especially the Black Panthers), however, embracing symbols of the struggle was not enough of a contribution to movements for liberation.⁵⁵ Haines writes, “Cultural nationalism was not especially threatening to elites. It did not make overwhelming demands of whites and rarely threatened violence. Even when the rhetoric became heated, the threat did not seem so serious as in the cases of other types of black radicalism.”⁵⁶

Despite this assessment of limited success, cultural nationalism was a relatively easy strategy (certainly compared to those advocating revolution) for black Americans to embrace. SCLC activist and writer Charles E. Fager wrote, “The first blow to be struck against white supremacy...is for blacks to begin acting *for themselves as a group* in the context of their racial and cultural identity.”⁵⁷ Cultural nationalists argued that a group must first create an identity before it can counter definitions of its culture propagated by a dominant opposition group. In the 1960s and early 1970s, cultural nationalism was a strategic reassessment of identity that has made it possible for black activists to question their subjectivity in relation to the white nation-state from a historical perspective. It also provided the foundational consciousness for them to confront the state’s repression and to examine the strategies of resistance that would most effectively challenge state-sanctioned violence.

Cultural nationalists paved the way for larger discussions of the benefits and problems associated with nonviolent direct action strategies.

Nonviolence and Black Power

Initially, the radical vision of Black Power competed with the ideology of nonviolence advocated by the more conservative religious camps within the civil rights community, most notably the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), CORE and SNCC.⁵⁸ Congressman and former SNCC activist John Lewis writes about the importance of non-violence to civil rights activism in his autobiography, *Walking With the Wind*.⁵⁹ For Lewis and many others, nonviolent pacifism became their way of loving their oppressors so that forgiveness and cultural healing could begin: “One method of practicing this approach, when faced with a hateful, angry, aggressive, even despicable person, is to imagine that person - actually *visualize* him or her –as an infant, as a baby. If you can see this full-grown attacker who faces you as the pure, innocent child that he or she once was – that we *all* once were – it is not hard to find compassion in your heart.”⁶⁰ Love and compassion became the driving force behind nonviolent civil rights actions and many black Americans read and trained to practice patience, forgiveness and love.⁶¹ For many nonviolent activists, the roots of nonviolence were in the philosophy and teachings of Jesus and Mahatma Gandhi and many of them studied the ideals of both men in preparation for their activism.

In 1966, however, CORE and SNCC activists abandoned their pledge to nonviolence due to the brutality that they had faced while organizing in the South. Instead, they embraced Black Power and its militancy about active self-defense;

Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X were critical in shaping these emerging Black Power ideologies particularly on the issue of self-defense.⁶² Malcolm X's vehement denunciation of state-sanctioned violence and his contempt for King and the other civil rights advocates for non-violence permeated the Black Power discourse that followed the March on Washington. The Nation of Islam heavily influenced the Black Power themes of black pride, black self-reliance, and black self-defense.⁶³ Malcolm's rhetorical prowess also influenced Black Power and impressed NOI members like Eldridge Cleaver, Bobby Seale and Huey Newton, who went on to found the Oakland chapter of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.⁶⁴ In fact, many members of the Black Panther Party and other revolutionary black nationalist groups through the 1970s were either members of the NOI or admirers of Malcolm X's radicalism.

Black Power sought to encourage dignity in black communities by building a black identity based on strength, pride and power. In their 1967 manifesto, Carmichael and Hamilton offer a definition of Black Power that includes a call to the black community to answer white violence with black self-defense. They wrote,

This book presents a political framework and ideology which represents the last reasonable opportunity for this society to work out its racial problems short of prolonged destructive guerrilla warfare. That such violent warfare may be unavoidable is not herein denied. But if there is the slightest chance to avoid it, the politics of Black Power as described in this book is seen as the only viable hope.⁶⁵

Black Power advocates were careful to describe violence as a last resort and only in self-defense, despite the white media's insistence on characterizing their position as one of rampant black-on-white violence. Active self-defense was becoming necessary more often, as Julius Lester explains, "Nonviolence might do something to the moral conscience of a nation, but a bullet didn't have morals and it was beginning to occur to more and more organizers that white folks had plenty more bullets than they did conscience."⁶⁶

For Carmichael and Hamilton, Black Power was a way to preserve the dignity of black communities who were defending themselves from racist white violence. They saw it as a pressure valve of sorts, which would allow people of color in the United States the power of self-definition and self-determination. This also allowed Black Power activists to see their struggle as one without national boundaries and to show support and solidarity with people of color from around the globe who likewise were facing white state-sanctioned violence. As a strategy, then, Black Power initially vocalized the necessity of black self-defense because of white-on-black violence. As an ideology, it interrogated the relationship between (white) state violence and (white) power.

The Diaspora and Black Power

Black Power was a phenomenon that emphasized black self-determination in the United States through active self-defense. As it evolved from a slogan to a philosophy, Black Power activists also embraced the plight of oppressed people around the globe and sought to call them all to revolution. Carmichael and Hamilton saw Black Power as the ideology linking members of the African Diaspora in their

poverty, illiteracy, victimization of white power and Third World status due to factors like the rich-poor gap, child mortality, and white racism.⁶⁷ They wrote:

Black Power means that black people see themselves as part of a new force, sometimes called the “Third World”: that we see our struggle as closely related to liberation struggles around the world. We must hook up with these struggles. We must, for example, ask ourselves: when black people in Africa begin to storm Johannesburg, what will be the role of this nation – and of black people here? It seems inevitable that this nation would move to protect its financial interests in South Africa. Black people in this country then have the responsibility to oppose, at least to neutralize, that effort by white American.⁶⁸

Here, Carmichael and Hamilton describe the oppression of black people in the United States as a new colonialism or apartheid, which was certainly consistent with the emerging Marxist-Leninist perspective that accompanied most Black Power ideology and which had its roots in the early Marxist perspectives of W.E.B. DuBois.

Carmichael and Hamilton saw the strategic necessity in creating alliances among poor people of color across the globe so that black people may see their struggle in their community or in the United States as one that is larger than any nation-state and is based in class as much as race. Black Power advocates used the term “Third World” to link together oppressed people from all over the world to protest the excesses of the First World.

For many, Black Power was about reclaiming space to build a new identity and a relationship to the nation, particularly as indigenous populations rebelled

against colonialism following the world wars. Inherent in the idea of the nation-state are the binary categories that separate the elites from the masses and, historically, the most salient differences that created spaces between classes have been race and gender. Black Power advocates like Eldridge Cleaver argued that “Afro-America” is a colony of the nation, like much of the Third World. Cleaver notes:

Black Power must be viewed as a projection of sovereignty, an embryonic sovereignty that black people can focus on and through which they can make distinctions between themselves and their enemies – in short, between the white mother country of America and the black colony dispersed throughout the continent on absentee-owned land, making Afro-America a decentralized colony. Black Power says to black people that it is possible for them to build a national organization on somebody else’s land.⁶⁹

This internal colony thesis was circulated through Robert Allen’s text *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* (1969) and was taken up by many Black Power activists who began to see race in terms of global capital.

Cleaver and many of his contemporaries saw the liberation of black Americans as *a priori* and thought that it must be achieved by urban guerrillas, whose spiritual fathers were revolutionary leaders like Toussaint L’Overture, Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser and Denmark Vesey, whose black masculinity and calls to arms terrified white plantation elites.⁷⁰ And, in this way, Black Power was often an expression of black masculinity that privileged a black history, which reified black male martyrs. But this strategy also allowed Black Power advocates, particularly those influenced by the Black Panther Party, to understand liberation as an

investigation into their relationship to land, ownership, servitude and the conditions of millions of their brethren across the globe. In this way, many Black Power activists saw their work as a continuation of those who led slave revolts and who held the power to terrify whites, just as whites had been doing to blacks in America for centuries. As a result, the Black Power movement embraced guerrillas in the Diaspora as heroes, icons and fathers. The gendered implication is quite clear: black women were very rarely considered heroes or icons and Black Power advocates did not generally see themselves as the progeny of Black Power women.

For many Black Power advocates, however, claims to the Diaspora and arguments promoting self-defense were not enough to guarantee a sovereignty that would enable the cultural transformation for which they longed.⁷¹ As they embraced active self-defense, Black Power advocates began to theorize revolution and the necessity of violence as a tactic for social change. Algerian sociologist Franz Fanon provided the framework for Black Power activists to champion their kin in the Diaspora through violence, which was a direct refutation of the work of King, Lewis and others who sought to free their oppressors through acts of nonviolent love. In his treatise *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon observed:

At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect. Even if the armed struggle has been symbolic and the nation is demobilized through a rapid movement of decolonization, the people have the time to see that the liberation has been the business of each and all and that the leader has no special merit.... When the

people have taken violent part in the national liberation they will allow no one to set themselves up as the “liberators.”⁷²

For Fanon, violence has always constituted the true work of colonized peoples because liberty and freedom cannot be given. Instead, those oppressed by the dominant nationalist culture must revolt and take the rights and privileges that had long been promised but never delivered. Fanon wrote that, “The practice of violence binds them together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upward in reaction to the settler’s violence in the beginning. The groups recognize each other and the future mobilizes the people; that is to say, it throws them in one way and in one direction.”⁷³ For Fanon, violence is the epoxy of revolution; it unites those struggling against authoritarianism, state-sanctioned violence, colonial occupation and the police state in acts of total liberation. Only through this violence can revolutionaries propel their nation forward, through the dark shadow of state power. Hence, revolutionaries must arm themselves with historical knowledge and a steely resolve for the necessity of violence; they must be ready for the ultimate confrontation with the nation-state.⁷⁴ Revolutionary action is, therefore, as physical as it is intellectual.

Violence and the threat of violence make Black Power a menace to the image of the nation and make it a force that must be answered in a clash that will expose the hypocrisy of the colonizer and free the colonized. Fager explained, “Black Power says to Negroes that they must assert their manhood, and part of manhood is meeting and stopping the kind of violence that Negroes have been subjected to in our society. If the law does not protect blacks, which it has, in fact, not done for the most part,

then they must protect *themselves*.”⁷⁵ Although women were involved in self-defense and in the maintenance of the threat of violence from Black Power groups, the assertion of manhood became intrinsically linked to the image of Black Power, both for its adherents and for its opponents. As Black Power embraced a posture of self-defense, many white elites pulled their support, precipitating a brutal backlash.

Black Power, White Backlash

Black Power was effectively a double-edged sword. Radicals wanted to separate from rather than integrate into white America; Black Power’s emphasis enabled them to do so by using black masculinity, militancy, and the threat of violence. However, these tactics also alarmed white liberals (who were former allies of the integrationists), mainstream white America, and the police and FBI of the nation-state. The result was a white backlash that simultaneously liberated and constrained black nationalism. As Arthur Flannigan Saint-Aubin notes, “The pathologizing of black masculinity as codified and institutionalized in laws and as reinforced in racial brutality is indeed evidence of a profound fear.”⁷⁶ That fear led to police confrontations with Black Power activists across the United States.

And, as a consequence of these confrontations surrounding Black Power, news outlets focused on the white backlash. According to the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, the press often deliberately misinterpreted the usage of the term by various leaders, groups, and causes.⁷⁷ SNCC member and radical black activist Julius Lester recalled that

With the push for the civil rights bill in 1964, there began another kind of talk.

The White Backlash! The papers stirred it up like witches stirring a cauldron

of black-spider broth. The “white backlash” was nothing new to the black community. They knew all about the backlash, frontlash, sidelash, and all them other lashes. They couldn’t quite understand what all the fuss was about. Hell, white folks hated niggers. So what else was new?⁷⁸

With debates about the Civil Rights Act of 1964 occupying Congress and Malcolm X’s revolutionary rhetoric capturing the imagination of younger urban activists, the tension between earlier strategies of nonviolent protest and Black Power commitments was quite pronounced by the mid-1960s. White backlash was a manifestation of the fact that whites thought their black counterparts should be satisfied and pleased to assimilate to white standards.⁷⁹ This fear and backlash against black nationalism increased as urban rebellion spread throughout America’s cities and as black leaders began espousing a more radical ideology after 1966.

By 1967, the clash between the American nation-state and black nationalists reached a new high. In January 1967, Gallop released a poll indicating that Martin Luther King, Jr. was no longer included among the ten men most admired by Americans; this was due, in part, to King’s own radicalization about the war in Vietnam but also to the growing popularity of Black Power.⁸⁰ Despite his waning support, however, King’s assassination in 1968 fueled the rage against the broken promises of the American Dream.⁸¹ After King’s assassination, the political landscape of resistance changed dramatically and the revolution lost its integrationist ideology as many black Americans shunned King’s dream; formerly moderate civil rights organizations radicalized their politics and strategies accordingly.⁸² In 1968, Black Power became the dominant civil rights message and white backlash became

even more pronounced.⁸³ Lester notes, “Thus, Black Power was merely the next step in a logical progression, not the outpouring of frustration that the press tried to make us believe when they couldn’t explain it away. It was new in the context of ‘the movement’ of the 1960s. It was not new in the context of the lives of black people.”⁸⁴

The white backlash of this era had huge political consequences nationally and regionally. It was certainly a crucial factor in the 1968 presidential election of Richard Nixon. In 1968, Nixon “pursued a ‘southern strategy’ of appealing to the supporters of segregationist George Wallace and opposing school desegregation. Through his policies of ‘benign neglect,’ Nixon tried to slam the door on the movement for racial equality; but the Watergate scandal undermined his conservative strategy.”⁸⁵ Historian Bruce Schulman notes: “By hinting that he would slow the pace of desegregation, Nixon’s ‘southern strategy’ drew Dixie’s yellow-dog Democrats and prosperous new migrants to the metropolitan South into the emerging Republican majority.”⁸⁶ Schulman also explains that Nixon courted “blue-collar northerners - white ethnics who for generations had voted their pocketbooks and supported liberal Democrats, but had recently become alarmed about the social issues - crime, drugs, loose morals, streets filled with antiwar protesters and black militants.”⁸⁷ As housing desegregation began to threaten white ethnic neighborhoods, political strategists saw an opportunity to exploit their fear and racism, which fueled the white backlash promoted by the media.⁸⁸

This kind of politicking was hardly confined to Nixon’s election campaign. Manning Marable notes that the same racial politics “overwhelmingly endorsed the conservative candidacy of Ronald Reagan,” who was certainly no friend to Black

Power.⁸⁹ In the 1966 California governor's race, Reagan used the same tactic that his Republican colleague was using in the race for the presidency: a rhetoric of law and order.⁹⁰ By appealing to white America's fear of Black Power (and black masculinity), civil rights, black rebellion, and integration, candidates framed their election hopes on white backlash; consequently, both won their campaigns and Nixon's political coattails were able to secure the reelection of many anti-civil rights whites. Because Oakland, California, was a hotbed of black nationalist activity, Reagan's law and order campaign focused on the eradication of black political activists in that area, including the Black Panther Party and the Us organization.⁹¹

Despite these wins by conservative politicians, Black Power replaced direct action protests and sit-ins and it flourished in northern cities. When Black Power advocates squared off against the police in urban neighborhoods, the black communities who were tired of living under constant harassment, surveillance and brutality saw them as heroes. Inner city black youth were primed for radical black nationalism and for a more revolutionary ideology. The fact that MLK was unable to touch the black inner city youth in places like Chicago and Oakland made them likely to embrace a revolutionary ideology and begin urban rebellions because their lives were "more fragmented and in so many ways so much more bitter" than their counterparts in Montgomery or Memphis.⁹² The immediacy of the state's violence meant that black youth in cities could wait patiently for time to heal the constant scars of racial violence.⁹³

Police Brutality, Incarceration and Prison Autobiography: Black Power after the 1960s

Calls for Black Power in the mid-1960s were often coupled with demands to free blacks from America's internal colonialism and as America's urban centers revolted against racial discrimination, the FBI expanded its surveillance regime. As Ward Churchill and Jim VanderWall explain, "The task thus presented in completing the federal counterinsurgency strategy was to destroy such community-based black leadership before it had an opportunity to consolidate itself and instill a vision of real freedom among the great masses of blacks."⁹⁴ The community-led urban rebellions that consumed American cities prompted President Johnson to announce that he had issued orders to the FBI that those instigating or leading urban rebellions needed to be brought to heel by "any means at its disposal," which mirrored Malcolm X's slogan, "by any means necessary."⁹⁵ The roundup of Black Power leaders began with H. Rap Brown, then the head of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), in Cambridge, Maryland, in 1967, but continued long after Brown left SNCC. Many of the FBI schemes to disrupt Black Power involved violence or led to violent clashes between activists and officers, leaving many on both sides wounded, or, in some cases, dead.

In the trials that followed the violence between agents, officers and activists, the black activists were often labeled "cop killers" and detained and deemed innocent or convicted of murder, despite the fact that the FBI or local police often orchestrated the confrontations. Labeling someone a cop killer has several consequences, particularly since most of the police officers killed in the line of duty are white and those accused and convicted of the crimes are black. For example, "Black defendants who kill white victims receive the...death sentence more than twice as often as black

felony suspects who kill black victims” despite the fact that the victims of felonious murder are least likely to be white.⁹⁶ This, of course, raises the problem that “those who are least likely to be killed are most protected by sentencing policy.”⁹⁷

Additionally, much research has shown that whites are much more likely to support capital punishment than blacks, so when white juries or white news consumers see reports of alleged black-on-white violence and, heightened by the constant replay of racial stereotypes, they form their opinions about state-sanctioned violence from this skewed perception.⁹⁸ John Kaplan adds, “After all, in the usual story, the criminal had an equally good reason for not shooting at the policemen, for this action would almost certainly make instant retaliation at least as likely as would be later apprehension and capital punishment. And even in those jurisdictions which do not have capital punishment, cop-killers are generally treated with considerable harshness.”⁹⁹

Killing police officers is punished harshly in the United States but it is also often considered an “un-American” act of terrorism, particularly when the alleged assailant is black and the officer white. Yet when police kill innocent victims (particularly those of color), it is often understood as an accident, resulting from the difficult but important job that police officers are supposed to perform in the nation’s communities. When police officers kill civilians, police brutality is rarely the narrative deployed and this is precisely why patterns of police brutality have been difficult to document, despite the high profile cases of men like Rodney King, Amadou Diallo and Abner Louima. In the judicial setting, “[c]ourts tend to portray incidents of police brutality as anecdotal, fragmented, and isolated rather than as part

of a systematic, institutional pattern.”¹⁰⁰ This is despite the fact that police brutality is dependant upon “on the complicity of multiple governmental actors, including the courts.”¹⁰¹ Brutality is pervasive because it is concealed and the torturers attempt to leave no marks but also because it often takes place in marginal neighborhoods against people of color who have very little institutional power.¹⁰² Additionally, the racialized and classed aspects of police brutality are often overlooked as patterns to preserve the illusion of security that the police force is supposed to offer the public. However, “[i]n most cases, the view of police brutality as aberrational (or even justified) shapes the conduct of every institution responsible for dealing with the problem, including police command, review boards, administrative agencies, city, state, and federal government, and the courts.”¹⁰³ For example, those involved in police brutality often have a long history of incidents, they are often housed in departments with several officers who engage in the same behaviors, or the brutality is concentrated in poor neighborhoods of color.

For the alleged “cop killer,” the unwillingness to see patterns, the reluctance to investigate, admit or publicize police brutality and misconduct makes the death sentence more likely because in the courtroom, the presumption of guilt with these cases is often immediate and unwavering. The anecdote of the hardworking middle-class white police officer, patrolling unsavory (read: poor and black or brown) neighborhoods, unwittingly stumbling across a violent crime is prevalent in the cases of alleged cop killings. Police officers are humanized even in court as loving fathers, husbands and sons in a way that the “cop killer” never is, particularly when victim impact statements are permitted in trials.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, judges often bar character

evidence about the defendant (though they allow the often emotional victim impact statements) as well as evidence of persistent police brutality. The narratives of “good cops”, thus, remain untarnished by prolific instances of torture, murder and misconduct often because their re-election demands that they take a hard-line stance on both the death penalty and cop-killing.¹⁰⁵

But there are, nevertheless, numerous problems involved with documenting the patterns of police brutality including: discouragement of complaints, the lack of videotaped confession, lack of recordkeeping, and/or sealed or expunged records. Often, the police files are often deemed undiscoverable, the victims are often prohibited from introducing brutality into hearings, the courts tolerate police perjury, the assumptions of credibility often favor police officers rather than victims, the immunity for testifying officers is usually granted, and the exceptionally high standards for proof of wrongdoing make documenting police misconduct and brutality difficult.¹⁰⁶ Susan Bandes notes, “Systematic police brutality has been masked, insulated, and implicitly condoned because courts have failed to make connections among incidents; failed to make causal links between police conduct and the injuries and confessions of suspects; denied litigants or juries access to information which would enable linkages to be discovered; and in general persisted in defining encounters as separate from-and irrelevant to-any overarching systematic patterns that need to be addressed.”¹⁰⁷

The result is that the judicial system insulates and immunizes police departments from internal discipline and “gives the appearance of formal justice, but actually helps to institutionalize subterfuge and injustice.”¹⁰⁸ In major cities like “Los

Angeles, New York, Pittsburgh, New Orleans, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia – in every city for which anecdotal or statistical evidence exists, the pattern of no pattern, the relentless anecdotalizing, the refusal to learn, to know, to acknowledge, is the predominant reaction to police brutality.”¹⁰⁹ The persistent evidence of police brutality is dismissed as aberration. Stories of brutality are either rejected “as irrelevant and incredible” or they are treated “as exceptions that prove the rule – isolated instances of ‘savage torture’ that constitute an unusual deviation from ‘the squeaky clean norms.’”¹¹⁰ For the state, “it becomes crucial to preserve the grand narrative of a police force keeping order effectively, and yet without losing its integrity or abusing its discretion. To preserve this narrative, judges must dismiss stories that would threaten its coherence as irrelevant, incredible, or unrepresentative.”¹¹¹ All of these decisions to ignore systemic police brutality have had an impact on black defendants, particularly those affiliated with civil rights or Black Power organizations.

In addition to the reticence of the courts to acknowledge police brutality and misconduct, FBI surveillance has also helped to influence the mediation about black liberation and police killings. Kenneth O’Reilly adds, “[m]ost COINTELPRO schemes attempted to influence public opinion on the un-American nature of the civil rights movement and its leaders in a similar manner.”¹¹² So, when the accused is a civil rights leader, politically active in the community, mobilizing against persistent police brutality, the smear campaign begins and “anti-American,” “terrorist” language is sometimes used to mold the image of the activist into one of a threat to the security of the community or nation. And, since many civil rights leaders and Black Power

leaders spent time in jail labeled as “community threats,” or “terrorists” for their protests, it is no wonder that the prison has been a locus for black liberation efforts since the 1960s.

By the end of the 1960s, a large number of Black Power activists were either involved with prison activism or incarcerated for their resistance to segregation and white supremacy.¹¹³ Police brutality and prison treatment were issues that concerned prison inmates and prompted them to organize and begin prisoners’ rights movements. Black Power activists also championed such concerns because they were prominent issues within urban communities. But as Black Power agitation intensified in the 1960s, so did police brutality. As a result, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) stepped up its role in thwarting the popularity of Black Power, both fueling and containing its influence. Although the FBI began monitoring black nationalists as early as the 1920s, the 1960s saw a heightened surveillance of Black Power activists.¹¹⁴ FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover reacted to Black Power and urban rebellion by making huge budget requests to Presidents Johnson and Nixon for more agents and more staff training. Hoover also asked for funds to create and enforce the Counter Intelligence Programs (COINTELPRO).¹¹⁵ The FBI was particularly concerned about the possibility of the rise of a “black messiah” which would mobilize the black masses to rise up against the white system of power in America and topple the ideologies of white supremacy.¹¹⁶

As a result of such augmented surveillance, Black Power advocates formulated their rhetorical positions on both self-defense and violence under constant siege by the federal agents who were paid to disrupt their activities, even if that meant

jailing them to keep those activists out of the public eye. Churchill and VanderWall detail the tactics that FBI agents used in COINTELPRO against radical activists including: eavesdropping, bogus mail, fabricating publications on behalf of targeted organizations, disinformation propaganda campaigns, harassment arrests, infiltrators and agents provocateurs, phony pseudo-gangs used to create dissent in activist communities, the spreading false rumors and misinformation, and fabrication of evidence.¹¹⁷ The FBI also orchestrated the assassinations¹¹⁸ of Black Power activists like Chicago Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark and was implicated in the assassinations of both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.¹¹⁹ As Karen Wells Borden has noted, “As the rhetoric of the black leaders became more threatening to whites, there seemed to develop a concerted national effort to eliminate the leaders.... Most Black leaders active in the late 1960s are now either dead due to police raids, in exile, or in jail awaiting trial.”¹²⁰ Assassinations and disappearance became tools of the state in removing black liberation leaders from the public sphere and into the sphere of incarceration, where they would be seemingly less effective.

Much of the philosophical and practical work of Black Power after 1960s has been theorized and practiced by the intellectuals of the radical left of the civil rights movement despite the fear and violence they endured by the nation-state. Joy James reminds us that, “In a stratified culture, one may superficially assume that only professional intellectuals, recognized writers and pundits in the public realm, academies, and policy makers constitute an intellectual formation. However, every group has an ‘organic’ intellectual caste, one that functions as a vehicle to articulate, shape, and further the aspirations of its constituency.”¹²¹ James comments that the

“oft-forgotten ‘public intellectual,’” who, “like his or her visible and celebrated counterparts, reflects upon social meaning, discord, development, ethics and justice.”¹²² Even though the FBI likely believed that incarcerating Black Power activists would lead to the death of their revolutionary activities, these public intellectuals continued Black Power activism long after their incarceration or exile.

Because social movements “undergo birth, transformation, and decay” over decades or even centuries it is always up to these organic intellectual leaders to articulate the goals, phases and histories of each phase of the movement as organizations and agendas rise and decline.¹²³ Kevin Djo Everett adds, “Contested issues and concerns arise, groups emerge to protest or advance their interests, the issues are resolved, and the groups often recede into the background.”¹²⁴ Often, “mobilization renders the submerged networks of social movement activity visible. Since protest demonstrations are the most commonly engaged in form of publicly accessible movement activity,” the problem of mobilizing activists during lulls in public protests (due to state repression and often the recession of social movements) falls to imprisoned writers and activists who are often unable to publicly protest even if the climate supported public outcry.¹²⁵ In the case of the political prisoner, mobilization about prison issues must be done through writing since these leaders cannot leave the prison to physically protest.¹²⁶ So many black liberation and civil rights leaders spent time in jail and have worked on prison policy, that it comes as no surprise that the manifesto is a privileged form of protest or that the prison is such an important locus for Black Power activism.

Prison activists, both inside and outside of the prison-industrial complex, have frequently been at the center of Black Power reflections on prison, violence, state repression, and freedom.¹²⁷ “Because freedom of the mind is the only freedom possible to the convict, it is searched and articulated to a much greater, more passionate degree than in most of the autobiographies of writers who have never been imprisoned. Consequently, imprisoned autobiographies and life-writing differ significantly from those texts of movement activists outside of the prison industrial complex because they testify to the conditions of incarceration.”¹²⁸ When examining the ongoing ideological force of Black Power as it travels beyond the 1960s, we must locate the strategies of regenerating and reimagining Black Power in the manifestos of Black Power leaders. These imprisoned intellectuals are crucial in understanding the ways in which black identity has been shaped by and continues to frame the new phase of Black Power from 1969 to the present because for Black Power groups, “the autobiographical manifesto anchors its narrative itinerary in the specificities and locales of time and space, the discursive surround, the material ground, the provenance of histories.”¹²⁹ Nancy Hartstock describes the autobiographical manifesto as “an account of the world as seen from the margins, an account which can expose the falseness of the view from the top and can transform the margins as well as the center...an account of the world which treats our perspectives not as subjugated or disruptive knowledges, but as primary and constitutive of a different world.”¹³⁰ These writers are leaders, then, of a movement that re-centers the prison at the foreground of new Black Power activism in the manifesto form, which can expose power structures and disrupt knowledge to forge oppositional consciousness.

Although a small but significant body of critical scholarship has recently concerned itself with first-person manifestos of civil rights activism in the early 1960s, there is a glaring lack of comparative *criticism* concerning radical black thought in the twentieth century, particularly prison writing and prison autobiography. In his critically acclaimed anthology *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (2006), Peniel E. Joseph notes that the intellectual origins of Black Power have yet to be examined. He writes, “Perhaps surprisingly, even the era’s iconic activists have, with notable exceptions, yet to be accorded substantive historical analysis. A historical archaeology of Black Power will need to focus on the lives and activism of key figures...whose political activism and intellectual thought have, more often than not, received insufficient scholarly attention.”¹³¹ The existing critical work deals almost exclusively with Malcolm X’s autobiography, despite the publication of numerous first-hand accounts of Black Power from the first phase of agitation in late 1960s by Angela Davis, Huey Newton, Stokely Carmichael, and Eldridge Cleaver.¹³² Additionally, very little critical work has addressed the strategies of representation in these autobiographical manifestos or the significance of women’s writings in the Black Power movement.

This project sees the prison writings of currently incarcerated or exiled Black Power advocates as a new stage of Black Power and builds upon previous work, first, by examining the remobilization strategies for identification in the case studies selected and, second, by comparing and contrasting the writings of black men and women activists to understand more fully how gender, race, and class influence such attempts to regenerate the next stage of the movement.¹³³ Such writings should be

read as manifestos that ultimately situate subjectivity in the larger collective narrative and position the writers as leaders and *living martyrs* of the movement. As Janet Lyon explains, “The use of ‘we’ in forms that claim to speak for a constituency is perhaps more controversial now than ever before: control of the pronoun ‘we’ lies at the heart of the debates that have surrounded identity politics and interpretive theory in the past decades.”¹³⁴ The subjective “I” of prison autobiography or life-writing may well best be read as an enthymatic “we,” since many political memoirists write from positions which deal with the collective memory and identity of a people. Autobiographical manifestos or life-writing become the synecdoche of the struggle, which expands the notion of authorship. Lyon notes that “...manifestoes frequently operate as textual equivalents of violence, retort, and even political or aesthetic brinksmanship, all of which signal an inevitable and cumulative explosion of impatience in the face of repeated or long-standing abuses and broken promises.”¹³⁵

This study is predicated upon an analysis of the manifesto as a centerpiece of both black resistance and revolution from slavery to the present in an attempt to build on an obviously significant, yet undertheorized, genre of persuasion. In translating the ideologies, demands, identities and voices of radical groups and individuals, the autobiographical manifesto is a constitutive rhetorical force uniting and mobilizing revolutionary actors and movements over the past three centuries. Black Power activists continue to produce texts from a position of containment (in prison or in exile) in the aftermath of the pronounced activities of the modern civil rights movement. Analyzing prison life-writings strengthens our understanding of the genre of manifestos, their qualities, utility, and the ways in which they operate as political

texts. By examining autobiographical and life-writings as manifestos, we gain an immeasurable tool in evaluating the typology of discourses produced under constant surveillance and violence from the state.

Specifically, this project examines the life writings or, manifestos, of three Black Power activists: Assata Shakur, Mumia Abu-Jamal and H. Rap Brown (now Jamil Al-Amin). Rather than studying all of their rhetorical actions during the earliest phase of the Black Power movement of the mid- to late 1960s, this study instead features the regenerative strategies within the prison manifestos of Black Power leaders who have been compelled to revise notions of Black Power after many of its leaders and followers were either jailed or killed for their revolutionary actions and commitments during the 1960s. Judith Rollins identifies the period of the “classical civil rights movements” from the late 1950s (at the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court Decision) to the 1960s. She writes that “in the post-1965 period of the [civil rights] movement – when equal employment, access to trade unions, Affirmative Action and fair housing became the issues...much of the support of ‘liberal’ whites was withdrawn” due to the arrival of Black Power philosophies and ideologies of black self-determination.¹³⁶ Though many scholars like Rollins view Black Power as predominantly a 1960s movement, this study instead, features the continued work of the movement’s leaders to regenerate and reshape notions of Black Power and black identity in the face of the significant gains in voter registration, office-holding, and integration of housing but also in the considerable white backlash against Black Power. When social movements begin to decline, “movement communities change in ways that are significant for movement maintenance and

continuity”; the production of radical manifestos help to consolidate veterans, recruit new members, rearticulate strategy, craft history, and record narratives of struggle.

All of the case studies in this analysis deal with American prison intellectuals who became members of radical Black Power organizations in the 1960s and were convicted of killing police officers; all of them are currently or were formerly incarcerated or living in a state of exile; and all of them have changed their names and their political commitments as part of their move toward black liberation activism. Such political prisoners and exiles have emerged from prison as a “*counterhegemonic bloc* of social theorists and political philosophers” that has been overlooked by scholars.¹³⁷ In prisons, these “radical prison intellectuals are crucial interlocutors, theorists and testifiers” who witness and describe the violation and degradation of “bodies and subjects.” These radical prison intellectuals, thus, “are generating a theoretical corpus that articulates with resistance and opposition to state violence.”¹³⁸ They are reinterpreting Black Power as an intellectual and historical resistance of not only police brutality and white supremacy but also to the prison as a site of physical and psychological torture and violence. Dylan Rodriguez argues, “Radical prisoners are a sort of *embodied contraband*. Their political agency represents a form of incorrigibility that articulates principled hostility to the state’s ideological regime of correction and rehabilitation – arguably, it is this practiced immunity to the domesticating overtures of the state that lies at the definitional core of the category of radical prison intellectual.”¹³⁹ As contraband, these activists are resisting the state through writing, even from within the nation’s prisons.

The study begins with a critical analysis of Black Liberation Army activist Assata Shakur's *Assata: An Autobiography of Assata* (1987). On May 2, 1973, Black Panther activist Assata Shakur (formerly JoAnne Chesimard), was pulled over by the New Jersey State Police, shot twice and then charged with murdering a police officer. She was convicted and served six years in the Clinton Correctional Facility for Women in New York. Although Assata Shakur escaped from the Clinton Correctional Facility for Women in New York on November 2, 1979, and accepted the offer of exile in Cuba, she is still on the FBI's most-wanted list.¹⁴⁰ In 1998, New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman placed a \$150,000 bounty on Shakur's head and in April 2005 that bounty was increased to \$1,000,000 by Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez who also placed her on the "terror watch list."¹⁴¹

The analysis of Assata Shakur's autobiography is followed by an examination of the prison writings of Mumia Abu-Jamal including, *Live From Death Row* (1995), *Death Blossoms* (1997), and *All Things Censored* (2000). Mumia Abu-Jamal is an award-winning journalist who is still incarcerated on death row in Huntington Prison for the alleged murder of a police officer in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As one of the most prolific prisoners in America's history, Mumia Abu-Jamal's writings about Black Power, black nationalism, and black masculinity have been published in the *Yale Law Review* and in many scholarly periodicals. To date, no critical work has dealt with his prison writings, the influence he has had on the anti-death penalty movement, or the importance of his affiliation and agitation on behalf of the John Africa and the MOVE organization. Mumia Abu-Jamal's writings should be

subjected to a critical examination to understand how such a prolific journalist helps shape Black Power, black identity, and black liberation from his cell on death row.

Finally, this project examines the autobiography of H. Rap Brown, *Die Nigger Die!* (1969; Reprint 2002). H. Rap Brown became the Alabama project director for SNCC in 1966 and national director of SNCC after Stokely Carmichael left in May 1967. As chairman of SNCC, Brown abandoned SNCC's nonviolent ideology, embraced self-defense, and became an honorary member of the Black Panther Party as Minister of Justice. In 1967, Brown was arrested and charged with inciting a riot during a rally in Cambridge, Maryland. He was arrested at several social protests between 1967 and 1970 and wrote *Die Nigger Die!* from under house arrest. Brown was eventually shot and captured by New York City police during an armed robbery. Sentenced to a term of from five to fifteen years in Attica Prison, Brown was paroled in 1976. In prison, Brown converted to Islam, and emerged as a Sunni Muslim named Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin.¹⁴² Since the 1970s, he has led a large congregation in Atlanta, Georgia. His memoir details the reasons why young black youth join black liberation movements and explains the relationship between young black men and police, poverty and violence. Recently, Al-Amin was charged with the March 2000 slaying of a Fulton County sheriff and the wounding of his partner. The officers were allegedly shot as they tried to serve a warrant to Al-Amin. His arrest and subsequent imprisonment in Fulton County has sparked intense interest in the intersection of black identity, Islam, "terrorism," social protest, and incarceration.

By theorizing Black Power in the context of the prison-industrial complex during the next phase of Black Power agitation, this study aims to fill a large gap in

the study of Black Power ideology, and is guided by two research questions. First, the study focuses on how the autobiographies of Assata Shakur, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and H. Rap Brown exhibit strategies of regeneration for the Black Power movement constituting a new phase of Black Power. Second, this study examines how autobiographies as manifestos negotiate the intersectionality of racialized, gendered and classed identity (personal and group) in their reconceptualizations of Black Power. In the end, the study helps discern the ways that these manifestos inform our understanding of the regeneration of the Black Power movement, centered on matters of black identity and the surveillance and brutality of the prison-industrial complex at the turn of the twentieth century. A study with these emphases highlights the resources for building a collective identity for the radical black left and the race, class and gender tensions apparent within the strategies of Black Power regeneration.

Collective Identities and Social Movement Formation

Collective identity formations are often formulated through the work of movement leaders seeking to produce social change and alter social practice. As groups form to effect social change, leaders help invent a collective identity built upon antagonisms between groups or between a group and the state.¹⁴³ The production of this collective identity takes place “through the interrogation of forms of consciousness” that connect the individual to the group and that highlight exigencies that need to be addressed.¹⁴⁴ Political scientist Jean L. Cohen notes that this process of interrogating consciousness can “take the form of an examination of theories so long as the theories in question are those of the participants, produced for movements and, to an extent, within movements.”¹⁴⁵ These movement-produced

ideologies “receive their importance precisely to the extent to which they help the crystallization of already emergent identities.”¹⁴⁶

In many cases, the producers of their movement ideologies also become celebrities. David S. Meyer and Nancy Whittier add that social movements are hardly “self-contained and narrowly focused unitary actors” but instead span “formal organizations, informal networks and unaffiliated individuals engaged in a more or less coherent struggle for change,” which often leads to the cross-pollination of “ideas, tactics, style, participants, and organizations” that affects other movements.¹⁴⁷ As criticisms of the state or the status quo begin to permeate community cultures, leaders emerge to circulate and rework the ideologies that become the basis for collective identity and which frame the dissent of the movement.¹⁴⁸ These leaders produce narratives and ideologies that “mobilize a group to attempt political change” and allow social movements supporters and group participants to “transfer their allegiance” to social movement intellectuals.¹⁴⁹

These narratives of the self and of the collective produced by social movements “*are social* narratives, created not solipsistically but from the wider narratives at hand.”¹⁵⁰ These “[n]arratives may inspire social movements but, more precisely, the dissemination and expression of narratives measure the extent and political success of social movement participants. At times of great danger of reprisal for overt resistance, narratives are told in carefully guarded free spaces....”¹⁵¹ Consequently, one way to gauge the power of a social movement is to examine the narratives that leaders espouse to their audience.¹⁵² Moreover, the leadership of social movements creates “a community of memory that may later inspire the leadership of

social movements.”¹⁵³ Leaders tell narratives of oppression and craft strategies to address those problems (sit-ins, demonstrations, marches, education programs, community activism), which the social movement participants then carry out. The narratives of movement leaders help shape their own identity as the movement leader as well as the help constitute a new or revised collective identity for participants.

This new collective identity is crucial in social movement organizing for several reasons. First, such identity formation helps to recruit and normalize new activists in the generation and regeneration of social practice. Kenneth McNeil and James D. Thompson argue that, “Not only do newcomers need to be turned to the local scene...they often need to be socialized” into the organization as well.

Historically, this socialization “is also likely to fall to veterans” who produce the frameworks useful for interpreting the history of the movement, the organization and the participants, including commentary addressing the role of the state.¹⁵⁴ These veterans are the leaders of movements even during periods of relative inactivity and they produce manifestos, ideologies, and narratives that create the histories and exigencies for renewing commitments to their cause. As leaders, they span different cohorts of activists and, as intellectuals, their writings attempt to bridge gaps in organizing and to formalize the ideologies of new social movement actors.¹⁵⁵

The strategies of social movements are generally carried out until the goals of the movement have been achieved, the exigency of the movement fades, or the state responds violently to the social movement by imprisoning or killing the leaders of the group. As movement leaders and intellectuals are removed from public spaces by force or by the will of the movement, the movement predictably dies or loses force.

And, when this removal of movement leaders is combined with reform on the part of the state, elites providing resources for the movement pull out and participants stop mobilizing. At this juncture social movements either collapse or recalibrate themselves over a longer period of time in an attempt to resuscitate its activities. In some cases, however, movements can "survive the low points of protest cycles and continue even when not staging direct political challenges to the state or public policy."¹⁵⁶

In the case of those resisting the state, narratives and anecdotes help to begin or regenerate social movements around specific cases and causes. McNeil and Thompson explain, "Regeneration processes seem of fundamental significance to political processes. The battles of one generation remain bitter memories, perhaps, for that generation, but they are simply history for the next generation. Eventually, the symbols which appeal to the collective consciousness of one generation become washed out, and at this point political mobilization around old issues and symbols fails."¹⁵⁷ New social movement leaders act "publicly upon the narratives of the community and exten[d] them to new places."¹⁵⁸ Therefore, one way to measure the political strength of a social movement is to examine the ways that leaders relates the narratives of regeneration to new audiences who have not heard the narratives. When previously banned or politically unpopular narratives emerge from spaces of surveillance, leaders emerge to provide narrative frames and to craft exigencies and collective identities for new movement actors.

As leaders create narratives to build collective identities for new movement actors, they engage in four strategies that precede confrontation with the state. First, leaders assert that group members are dead to the world and do not count as persons. Second, leaders underscore the notion that the members of their organization or those who ascribe to their ideology can be reborn into new identities. Third, leaders exhort that the members of the movement “can strike to kill” because the old world never belonged to them and killing provides the opportunity for rebirth. Finally, leaders acknowledge that the movement is organized, united and can turn the degraded past into a bright future.¹⁵⁹

Using these strategies, movement leaders craft a collective identity through familiar narratives and anecdotes that normalize new members to ideologies, traditions, histories and exigencies that demand allegiance and attention. Movement leaders appeal to “potential members through, among other things, ideological ‘frames’ that organize experience, motivate action, and justify a movement’s agenda.”¹⁶⁰ These frames are outlined in manifestos, treatises and other discourse of the movement. Williams adds,

Movements find their niche in the political terrain by tapping into recognizable rhetorics and symbols. This both constrains and enables movement activities. The boundaries of the repertoire limit the range of politics discourse; but using clearly recognizable elements gives movements easier entrée into “legitimate” politics. Elements in the established repertoire facilitate the recruitment and retention of allies and are stronger persuasive

tools in the political arena. The repertoire is not entirely fixed, of course, and innovations by political movements are often responsible for its flexibility.¹⁶¹

In the case of the social movement cycles of the 1960s, more often than not, the collapse of the organizations and movements came from COINTELPRO, imprisonment, and death. Barbara Harlow writes:

The state and its apparatus of political detention have, as their clear goal, the isolation of the opposition leadership from its base of popular support in the larger community. However, that strategy is being disarticulated and turned to other ends through the differently reconstituted social and political relations across the prison walls between incarcerated militants and the population outside.¹⁶²

It is from within paradigm that prison activists and incarcerated writers emerge as the vanguard of movements that are undergoing transformation. Here, they begin to *regenerate* the movement for change by elevating new leaders, developing revised identities, adopting new symbols, mobilizing familiar symbols, crafting exigencies, revering fallen heroes, tracing a history or lineage of resistance and in crafting new strategies for social change.

Prison writers emerge as social movement leaders through their life stories and their autobiographical manifestos, where they do the work of regenerating the movement by developing their own identities, by writing the history of their people, and by critiquing the institutions that perpetuate their repression. Joy James writes, “Through their narratives, imprisoned writers can function as progressive abolitionists and register as ‘people’s historians.’ They become the storytellers of the political

histories of the captives and their captors. These narratives are generally the ‘unauthorized’ versions of political life, often focusing on dissent and policing and repression.”¹⁶³ James adds that many contemporary political activists “have intimately interwoven their own autobiographical resistance and subsequent capture into their (neo)slave narratives.”¹⁶⁴ The regenerative strategies of prison writers are crucial in understanding the nuances of resistance possible even under such constrained circumstances. Prison memoirs provide insider accounts of the prison-industrial complex and have the potential to spearhead movements for prison reform. Sociologist Edward C. Banfield notes, “Here then lies the final significance of a mass political movement to expose the prisons and free the prisoners. The issue is not only reform, but also to mount a struggle to abolish the present functions and foundations of the prison system.”¹⁶⁵ Imprisoned social movement leaders, then, re-center the prison-industrial complex at the nucleus of black liberation efforts. Such revisioning is central to understanding race, gender, and class relations that are integral dimensions of Black identity.

Black Identity: Representing Race, Gender and Class

Given the focus on Black identity, this study merges the social movement strategies of regeneration with critical race theories and feminist theories committed to intersectionality, which examines the relationships and histories among multiple identities and oppressions involving gender, race, and class.¹⁶⁶ While this project acknowledges the social construction of oppression and identity, it nonetheless recognizes the material consequences of such social relations and is indebted to the work of black women who have theorized the intersectional nature of oppression.¹⁶⁷

Patricia Hill Collins writes that “black women’s work and family experiences” have been “shaped by intersecting oppressions based on race, gender and class.”¹⁶⁸ Rather than privileging one kind of oppression at the exclusion of that element’s interaction with other kinds of oppression, Collins takes a systems approach to understanding the multiple oppressions that work as a complex web of systematic incentives and punishments for individuals or groups of people within a culture. This intersectional approach allows us to scrutinize the identity markers for both individuals and groups and will be part of the method of this inquiry.¹⁶⁹

However, identity markers are inherently complicated and interconnected. As Sylvia Walby reminds us, “Gender cannot be analysed outside ethnic, national and ‘race’ relations; but neither can these latter phenomena be analysed without gender. It is not a case of simply adding these two sets of analyses together, but rather that they mutually affect each other in a dynamic relationship.”¹⁷⁰ Monserrat Guibernau concurs and notes that, “Gender and race are both underpinned by a supposedly ‘natural’ relation which assigns different qualities and needs to individuals and ‘justifies’ inequalities. Class, gender and race reflect power structures within a given society and play a crucial role in the constitution of individual identity.”¹⁷¹ In using this intersectional approach, feminist theorist Bonnie Thornton Dill also reminds us that while gender and race are important markers of difference, we can use their intersection with class to shed light on the similarities and differences among people, particularly women.¹⁷²

Though these identity markers all work in concert to create our understanding of self and group, definitions of each are necessary in understanding the dimensions

that each marker encompasses. To begin, Michael Omi and Howard Winant remind us that racial identity in the United States is constantly contested and is always in flux as a signpost for difference and power.¹⁷³ “Race” is a word with multiple and ephemeral meanings often used to mean color, ethnic group, nationality, and ancestry.¹⁷⁴ It is important, then, to understand that people recognize their own “race” in ways that may or may not differ from the way that others view and define “race.”¹⁷⁵

The history of gender can be seen in a similar way, as a signifier of first, the differences between the sexes and second, of power.¹⁷⁶ We can understand gender not as a substitute for “women,” but as a descriptor of the “social creation of ideas about appropriate roles for women and men.”¹⁷⁷ Feminist theorist Joan W. Scott writes, “The use of gender emphasizes an entire system of relationships that may include sex, but is not directly determined by sex nor directly determining sexuality.”¹⁷⁸ Scott argues that “gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power.”¹⁷⁹ Gender, then, is a descriptor of perceived differences based on supposed adherence or deviance to normative judgments about behavior and power. In the realm of social movements like Black Power, gender is particularly salient since “gender can be used by social movement participants who wish to construct their image in a certain light, frame an issue in a particular way, or claim legitimacy as actors in a given arena”; likewise, gendered images and frames can be used by “social movement targets, countermovements, or observers to delegitimize the activists themselves or the movements as a whole.”¹⁸⁰ Consequently, movements become gendered when some facet of the movement “constructs differences between

women and men and/or elicits a certain set of social meanings because of its association, actual or assumed, with femininities or masculinities.”¹⁸¹

In examining the life writing of political prisoners, we must also look carefully at the interaction of gender and race with class at particular historic junctures. Sociologist Rogers Brubaker writes, “The study of class as a cultural and political idiom, as a mode of conflict, and as an underlying abstract dimension of economic structure remains vital; but it is no longer encumbered by an understanding of *classes* as real, enduring entities.”¹⁸² Class is not a monolithic category; rather it is a symbol that is created by both the state and the individual to understand economics relative to variables like wages, social customs, ownership, employment, etc. Class becomes important in understanding race so much so that Henry Louis Gates, Jr. writes: “Race has become a trope of ultimate irreducible difference between cultures, linguistic groups, or adherents of specific belief systems which - more often than not - also have fundamentally opposed economic interests.”¹⁸³ Class is hardly fixed or permanent even within the same group of individuals but it does implicate the relationships between groups of people in national contexts. Rather than stable depictions of difference, race, gender and class function together to create the conditions for oppression and privilege and the negotiation of these identity markers is the terrain over which activists struggle for autonomy, identity, and power. In the process, the activists' discourse reifies as well as destabilizes traditional notions of race, gender, and class as central components of Black Power identity. This study examines the way that gender, race and class circulate through the manifestos of Black Power leaders in this new phase of agitation.

Black Power Manifestos and Identity: Tracing Strategies of Regeneration

This study, thus, integrates notions of intersectionality with a movement centered perspective interrogating the strategies of regeneration at work in the manifestos of Assata Shakur, Mumia Abu-Jamal, and H. Rap Brown in the next stage of the Black Power movement. In the case of Black Power, I argue that the regeneration of the movement begins due to the assassinations of major civil rights leaders like Malcolm X (1965), Martin Luther King (1968), Fred Hampton (1967) and the incarceration of others like Huey Newton (1967), Rap Brown (1970), and Angela Davis (1970). From 1969 on, the Black Power movement was compelled to recalibrate itself through the prison writings of several of its members who served as the intellectual vanguard of this next phase.

In the Black Power manifestos of this study, which exhibit strategies of regeneration, the writers perform historical revisions that elevate black liberation history through nostalgia for black liberation heroes (particularly Malcolm X). In the process of elevating and celebrating black martyrs as integral components of black nationalism history, the new Black Power leaders of the next stage connect their own images to such martyred legacies, situating themselves in the historical progression of Black martyrdom. They also articulate ideologies of self-defense and/or armed struggle and resistance. In addition, they position the police and the (white) government as enemies and see police brutality and covert repression as exigencies that must mobilize new activists around police brutality, political prisoners and prison reform. These activists also employ strategies that highlight the importance of self-reliance and black pride, which underscore the cultural nationalism of their projects

become part of the collective identity necessary for oppositional consciousness. In the case of Assata Shakur, the emphasis on black pride is also connected to expressions of hope for the future, which have the potential to inspire new groups of activists. Although explicit similarities exist across the manifestos, clear differences also exist within their strategies of regeneration.

More specifically, Chapter 1 examines the history of black nationalism and black identity in the United States. It privileges the evolution of the political manifesto as a pragmatic discourse used to interrogate subjectivity in the modern world to evidence literacy, citizenship, grievances and discontent with the political system. The black manifesto has interrogated black identity in the United States through discourses debating the various forms and strategies of abolitionism, Reconstruction, and black nationalism from the American Revolution to the 1960s. Such a history acknowledges those historical leaders who become the Black martyrs of black nationalism, who in turn function as regenerative forces for Shakur, Abu-Jamal, and Brown.

Chapter 2 begins the case studies by examining former Black Panther and Black Liberation Army member, Assata Shakur and her autobiography, *Assata: An Autobiography of Assata* (1987). This chapter analyzes Assata Shakur's autobiographical manifesto to understand how she reconstitutes a black female identity within this new phase of the Black Power movement. This chapter contends that she uses her own identity as a black female political prisoner to inspire a notion of black liberation and to provide an ideological critique of the prison-industrial complex. Shakur's poetry and prose exhibit strategies of regeneration that construct a

new black identity based in black culture, they emphasize the importance of black liberation history and heroes, and they feminize the history of Black Power and black resistance through metaphors of (re)birth and sisterhood. Shakur's feminization of black liberation history is, however, complicated by a reification of masculinity through nostalgia for Malcolm X, whom she connects explicitly to Mumia Abu-Jamal. Finally, Shakur's regenerative strategies re-center the prison-industrial complex and political prisoners in Black Power agitation.

Chapter 3 examines the three anthologies of essays penned by former Black Panther and current John Africa Society member Mumia Abu-Jamal from his incarceration in Huntington Prison: *Live From Death Row* (1996), *Death Blossoms* (1997), *All Things Censored* (1999). Abu-Jamal's strategies of regeneration begin with a centering of police brutality and the abuses of the prison-industrial complex through narratives of police corruption and abuse in Philadelphia. Abu-Jamal provides narratives and anecdotes collected from his experience as a reporter in the city and as a victim of police surveillance and repression. Like the previous chapter, this analysis tackles the issues of identity production, centered particularly on Abu-Jamal's constructions of black masculinity as he extends ideological formations of Black Power and black nationalism through narratives about the men on death row and through the nostalgia of black leaders like Malcolm X, Huey Newton and Martin Luther King, Jr. It also illustrates how Black Power is replicated in both the secular and spiritual spheres through Abu-Jamal's positioning of himself as a prophet-leader in the regeneration of Black Power.

Chapter 4 centers on former SNCC chairman and former honorary member of the Black Panther Party, H. Rap Brown/Imam Jamil al-Amin and his autobiography, *Die Nigger Die!* (1969; Reprint 2002). This chapter examines the intersection of blackness, masculinity, Islam, and class to elucidate the politics of representation in *Die Nigger Die!* in the context of 1969. It highlights Brown's emergence as a black badman through his performance in the dozens, his defiance of authority, and his critiques of political liberals but it also underscores the extent to which texts travel through time, since the book was re-released in 2002. In the modern context, this chapter features both the controversy surrounding Brown's current incarceration and the role of radical black Islam in the post-September 11th climate of terrorism as well as the anti-Muslim sentiment and its impact on the political prisoners. Since his most recent incarceration, Al-Amin's text reminds us of the repression facing black Muslim activists and political prisoners in the post 9-11 world due to the continuity of COINTELPRO-like programs and Cold War racial hierarchies in climate of the War on Terror.¹⁸⁴

Finally, the conclusion examines how all three activists travel through hip-hop culture, particularly through rap music and the Internet, to understand the legacy of their Black Power messages in this next stage of the movement. The celebration of the Black martyr in the leaders' manifestos combines with their celebrity status in popular culture, to create a *living martyr* phenomenon where the images of Shakur, Abu-Jamal, and Brown circulate as another regenerative force for a new generation of Black Power activists. To such ends, the notion of the leader and their heroic image is a key force in the perpetual regeneration of black nationalism. The conclusion

contends that refashioning history to reflect black liberation struggle, feminizing black history and heroes and centering the prison-industrial complex help to regenerate Black Power in ways that are important for mobilizing black communities in overcoming centuries of racism within white nation-state in the next stage of the Black Power movement.

Examining such discourses of confinement by Black Power activists provides a new framework for the study of liberation in the United States, featuring the forms that such activism takes after the imprisonment of a movement's leaders. Through their narratives and observations, we can understand a more complicated conception of Black Power that acknowledges the necessary and on-going reimagining at work long after these leaders were expelled from the public political spaces of the 1960s. Such continued agitation, though, is rhetorically and ideologically rooted in the history of nineteenth-century black activism that eventually gave rise to the advent of Black Power.

Chapter 1: Black Manifestoes and Black Identity from the 1770s to 1969

The manifesto enjoyed popularity as a discursive form in the United States as early as the 1770s.¹ In particular, 1776 was a watershed year for the intellectual production of the manifesto because of the formulation of the *American Declaration of Independence*. On June 7, 1776, Richard Henry Lee, Virginia delegate to the Continental Congress, presented a formal resolution to the members calling for America to declare its independence from Britain. Congress postponed its decision on declaring independence, and on June 11, 1776, a committee of five was appointed to draft a declaration of independence from the British crown.² Thomas Jefferson was chosen to prepare the first draft of the declaration, which he completed in just one day and, on June 28, 1776, Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence* was presented to the Continental Congress.³

On July 2, the colonial delegations voted in support of Lee's resolution for independence and embraced a revolutionary natural rights philosophy that would be the basis of the new nation.⁴ Stephen E. Lucas writes that the intent of the *Declaration* was “to justify America’s secession from the empire by indicting [George III] as a tyrant and assigning him all blame for the British-American conflict.” By doing so, “the Declaration emulated – in form as well as content – the rhetorical traditions Englishmen had followed for centuries when dethroning a ‘tyrannical’ monarch.”⁵ Colonists had to “establish a legitimating rationale for their action” as they declared themselves independent subjects from Britain.⁶ In his treatise, *Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism*, Staughton Lynd describes the implications for this manifesto in the context of American social change: “For all its ambiguities...the Declaration of Independence is the single most concentrated expression of the revolutionary intellectual tradition.

Without significant exception, sub-variants of American radicalism have taken [it] as their point of departure and claimed to be the true heir of the spirit of '76.”⁷

American radicals have utilized the *Declaration of Independence* and also the U.S. *Constitution* (particularly the *Bill of Rights*) as the basis for expressions of revolutionary egalitarianism.⁸ Together, these documents expressed the revolutionary milieu and became the dominant model in the United States for crafting public dissent. Early American manifestos listed grievances, sought independence from colonial rule, called publics to action, and provided rubrics for rebellion; essentially, they were *provocations for change*.⁹ Although manifestos can be political, philosophical, literary, or artistic, there are several key components that manifestos often share across these sub-types.¹⁰

First and foremost, manifestos are *constitutive*. The manifesto mixes “hortatory political rhetoric with righteous rage and the manifesto addresses and at the same time elicits an entity called the People, each constituent of which is hailed as an entitled universal subject of the modern state.”¹¹ Manifestos constitute a “people” who are rising up against some structure. In the U.S. context, “the people” have been historically “interpolated by the Anglo-American ideology as a narrow, relatively homogenous group who shared religion, values, and customs, in addition to language and daily habits.”¹² However, alternative constructions of the “people” in the United States have historically challenged this limited understanding, particularly in the history of autobiographical and life writings, which often position the autobiographical “I” as a collective “we” protesting injustice.¹³

Manifestos are also *declarative*. They provide a sense of exigency for the struggle that is unfolding. Janet Lyon notes, “The manifesto declares a position; the manifesto refuses dialogue or discussion; the manifesto fosters antagonism and scorns conciliation. It is univocal, unilateral, single-minded.”¹⁴ Mary Ann Caws concurs and adds, “As if defining a moment of crisis, the manifesto generally proclaims what it wants to oppose, to leave, to defend, to change. Its oppositional tone is constructed of *againstness* and generally in a spirit of a one time only moment.”¹⁵ Since the manifesto is often constructed on the basis of binaries, it must create an authorial presence within the text that authorizes such a polarization.¹⁶ Hence, the manifesto often presents a seemingly straightforward, unwavering proclamation.

Although the manifesto appears to be uncomplicated, it is also necessarily *persuasive* and meant to mobilize people into action. Caws writes, “The manifesto was from the beginning, and has remained, a deliberate manipulation of the public view. Setting out the terms of the faith toward which the listening public is to be swayed, it is a document of an ideology, crafted to convince and convert.”¹⁷ The manifesto, then, has become a useful form for the cultivation of direct action politics, but to who is the manifesto and its ideology directed? Certainly, at one level, the manifesto levels grievances against those with power. At another level, it must create new definitions and descriptions of the world to persuade a larger audience that an alternative future is possible. Those that produce, author, or sign the manifesto see themselves in the role of vanguard, ushering in a new age of thought and action for the masses.¹⁸ The audience of the manifesto, then, must enact the suggestions of the manifesto and help initiate social change.¹⁹

More than anything else, however, the manifesto is a *fluid, dynamic form*. As Caws suggests, “[T]he manifesto can *always* be redefined” because “it makes its own definition each time.”²⁰ Claude Abastado is also quick to remind us that manifestos exist in many mediated forms: verbal, literary, film or music.²¹ Because the American nation-state was founded through a revolution, the early documents of the nation-state reflect that milieu; likewise, later decades embraced media more congruent for the times even if the form of the message deviated little. It is no surprise then, that many revolutionary actors produce discourses using discursive forms like the manifesto.

In the United States, black intellectuals have often used the manifesto to assert identity using claims based on literacy, humanity, and citizenship in the face of the slave system and its consequences. The manifestos produced by black leaders from the Revolutionary period forward demanded the true embrace of the principles laid out in the nation’s founding documents.²² For black people in the United States, identity questions are necessarily about the relationship between racial identity and national identity as they are manifested through citizenship, which was denied to slaves, free black people and those who were manumitted.²³ Prior to the advent of the Black Power movement, four key periods of intense black nationalist campaigning emerged to construct black identity in a context of systematic racialized and gendered oppression in the United States.²⁴ This chapter begins with an examination of the post-Revolutionary Period: 1790-1830s, and examines the emergence of an Ethiopianist/messianic ideology disseminated from early black-operated institutions and in early black nationalist manifestos. These ideologies reinterpreted white Christian myths about salvation and redemption, elevating black orators and writers who used Christian doctrine to charge white America with the sin of slavery.

The chapter continues with an examination of the Antebellum Period: 1840s-1850s. It tracks the strategies of representation that black Americans embraced to deal more intricately with questions over the fidelity that U.S. blacks should feel towards the nation. It also concerns the interior lives of black people living in such a white supremacist culture. Strategies for representation under these circumstances were explored through slave narratives documenting the horrors of slavery, in black fiction, and in emerging black presses which debated emigrationism and slave revolt. Finally, this section examines the importance of the black convention movement as a public space for the emergence of black nationalist traditions including emigrationism and revolt.

The third period reviewed in this chapter is the Post-War Reconstruction and the Millennium: 1870s-1940s.²⁵ Following the Civil War, Reconstruction saw white supremacists reinstated to positions of power, particularly in the South. In response, black agitation for change focused, first, on the attainment of education as a strategy for changes in consciousness and for economic independence, and, second, on the reform of black communities to standards of white middle-class values and racial uplift. Modern black nationalism grew as leaders began to conceptualize their separation from the nation as an opportunity to build organizations advancing a racial solidarity lacking in earlier periods.

Finally, this chapter examines the period from the early 1950s-1969 as the modern civil rights movement develops its tactics for confronting segregation and discrimination and its ideas about nonviolence, self-defense, group solidarity, racial pride, and alliances with other groups. Emerging from this milieu is a new phase of black activism found in the prison texts of black nationalists and Black Power advocates which

takes on issues of black identity and incarceration long after the movement for integration weakened.

1790s-1830s – The post-Revolutionary Period

Although blacks participated in the Revolutionary War, they quickly came to recognize that the promises and rights of the nation's founding documents did not apply to them. The response was to embrace a host of strategies, which emphasized black culture, black life, and black interpretation of religious myths and social norms.²⁶ As the inconsistencies began to emerge in the colonists' limited application of "universal" rights for freemen, U.S. blacks began to test the limits of the natural rights that America's founding documents seemingly embraced.²⁷ Free and freed blacks argued that they "had been invaluable to America's development, were part of its cultural and religious life, and had worked side-by-side with whites. Though profoundly handicapped by enslavement, many had achieved freedom and had proven themselves to be productive workers."²⁸

As U.S. blacks claimed a part of America for themselves, however, Southerners argued that the *Constitution* provided for the ownership of property, including slaves. Celeste M. Condit and John L. Lucaites note, "where emancipationists appealed to the commitment to the natural rights of equality as the grounds for abolishing slavery, the slaveholders responded with the equal and opposite commitment to property."²⁹ Therefore, equality and property were intrinsically connected in the Anglo-American imaginary.³⁰ Consequently, U.S. blacks had to uncouple equality and property to begin forging an identity that was not predicated upon their status as chattel.³¹ Slave revolts captured the American imaginary at the turn of the nineteenth century as a response to the violent assertion of property rights by Southern plantation owners.³² Gabriel Prosser's

attempted attack on Richmond, Virginia, in 1800, and Denmark Vesey's slave revolt in 1822 paved the way for the use of violence in ending plantation culture and inspired many to fight for abolition; it also solidified plantation owners' fears of black rebellion. The images of male slaves revolting against their white owners created a revolutionary feeling that was almost exclusively masculine.

As slavery ended in the North, many blacks faced a new kind of second-class citizenship based on their skin color.³³ Politicians began to argue that because many U.S. blacks were illiterate, did not practice the Christian religion, and were heathens, they should not be granted full citizenship rights.³⁴ It was here, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, that racist ideology began its insidious corruption of the American public sphere. Under pressure from Northern abolitionists, Southern plantation owners "developed justifications for slavery that contended blacks were innately inferior and naturally dependent. Many Northerners subscribed to these theories and feared that disorder and dependency would accompany emancipation."³⁵ Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* became the most widely circulated example of slavery's justifications (though to be fair, it also provided an example of how contested the terrain of slavery was, even among slaveholders).

Black organizations and mutual aid societies began to form in the free black communities of the North and they began crafting a rhetoric refuting claims of universal degradation of U.S. blacks. The creation of these groups was an important first step in carving out the public space to resist white supremacist nationalism. Black freemen and freedmen "formed such self-help organizations as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Educational and Benevolent Society, the Sons of Africa Society, the

Philadelphia Free African Society and the African Association for Mutual Relief, and the African Masonic Lodge.”³⁶ The new black owned and operated institutional spaces helped to fund the emergent black presses as they began to advocate racial solidarity and to support abolitionist causes, especially in the North.

From the 1770s onward, Boston became a hub for abolitionist activity, particularly in the 1830s.³⁷ Manumitted a month after the Boston Massacre, on April 9, 1770, former slave Prince Hall (1735?-1807) began organizing a leadership class of bourgeoisie blacks in the city.³⁸ These black men of the bourgeoisie “achieved elite status by exemplifying Puritan ethics, attaining relative economic affluence and forming social institutions, schools, churches and fraternal organizations” that were ultimately the basis for black civic life in Boston.³⁹ The black bourgeoisie under Hall began to purport white, middle-class values in Boston and began creating the organizations that would theorize and modify black behavior and identity.”⁴⁰ Hall was central to the formation of Northern black male identity during this time period, because his vision dominated two masculine public spheres in New England’s “colonial American culture, Freemasonry and the military.”⁴¹ Hall’s activism highlights “the single-minded earnest with which African American men in the colonial period aimed to prove and link their manliness to the building of nationhood.”⁴²

Despite the centrality of black masculinity in the activism of U.S. blacks during the colonial period, other agitators rose to prominence in Boston as well by utilizing a jeremiad form to critique white power and to demonstrate their commitment to re-imagining black identity in America. Two Boston activists that stand out for their re-appropriation of the manifesto form of the jeremiad are Maria M. W. Stewart (1803-

1879) and David Walker (1785-1830), who emphasized a religious nationalism and the stirrings of racial unity. In the 1830s, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church became quite influential in Boston and supported the speeches and writings of Stewart that were also published in *The Liberator* following her husband's premature death.⁴³ Stewart's first essay, "Religion And The Pure Principles Of Morality, The Sure Foundation On Which We Must Build" (1833), was the first political manifesto written by an African American woman and contributed to the "self-empowerment and community-building strategies of the African-American elite" in Boston.⁴⁴ Here, Stewart "invoked both the Bible and the Constitution of the United States as documents proclaiming the universal birthright to justice and freedom."⁴⁵

Stewart's interest in the Bible led her to spearhead a primordial ideology of "Ethiopianism," which was a form of black messianism that saw black people as having a "manifest destiny or a God-given role to assert the providential goals of history and to bring about the kingdom of God on earth."⁴⁶ As Wilson Jeremiah Moses notes, "Ethiopianism is the name given to millennial Christianity of various sects and cults...derived from the Biblical passage so often cited by black missionaries, 'Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch forth her hands unto God' (Psalms 68:13)."⁴⁷ In her 1833 "Address Delivered at the African Masonic Hall," Stewart remarked:

History informs us that we sprung from one of the most learned nations of the whole earth.... But it was our gross sins and abominations that provoked the Almighty to frown thus heavily upon us, and give our glory unto others. Sin and prodigality have caused the downfall of nations, kings and emperors; and were it

not that God in wrath remembers mercy; we might indeed despair; but a promise is left us; "Ethiopia shall again stretch forth her hands unto God."⁴⁸

Ethiopianism was a racialized religious nationalism whose advocates sought the redemption of degraded Africa and Africans from colonization and domination.

Abolitionists used Ethiopianism to remind black Americans of their connection to the continent and to preach the glory of redemption (sometimes in the form of a prophet).⁴⁹

The jeremiad tradition of American oratory lent itself well to projecting Ethiopianism as both a movement toward pan-African solidarity and as a source of hope for millions in bondage; both became part of the black nationalism that developed in Northern communities in the early 1800s.⁵⁰ This black nationalism emerged from expressions of black identity ranging from racial solidarity to more radical visions for black communities like emigrationism or racial separatism. In this case, speakers like Stewart used the prophetic tradition, a genre historically reserved for men, to harness the social momentum for change that was building in Boston and to secure the imagery of Africa at the center of black identity.

Ethiopianists in Boston's black elite, like Stewart, also staunchly opposed the colonization movement, which was led by the American Colonization Society (ACS),⁵¹ a white organization founded in Washington, D.C., which sought to expel freed blacks to Africa in order to build a strong white nation.⁵² At the base of the colonization movement was the desire to separate black and white people in the United States. Stewart's sermons against the ACS helped build momentum against colonization in Boston and also began a tradition of agitating against separation of the races and for integration, a theme which would dominate questions of racial identity throughout the twentieth century.⁵³ This was

due, in part, to the close business ties that the bourgeoisie black class of Boston had with white elites which also made the degradation of slaves and poor blacks easier for this newly forming black class.

Boston's organizations also supported Stewart's contemporary, a tailor named David Walker, who was the spokesman of the Massachusetts General Colored Association and also a member of Reverend Samuel Snowden's Methodist Episcopal Church (founded in 1818).⁵⁴ Walker stunned the nation when in 1829 he published one of the "earliest African American documents that protests American slavery and racism in radical militant terms," titled *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World but in particular, and very expressly, to those of the United States of America*.⁵⁵ The pamphlet was circulated widely and was so vehemently anti-slavery that it propelled two states, Georgia and North Carolina, "into enacting laws prohibiting the incendiary publications and forbidding the teaching of slaves to read and write."⁵⁶

In part, Walker's manifesto was disconcerting because of its organizational similarity to the invocations of the *Declaration of Independence*. Its contentiousness was further related to the idea that he 1.) "predicted the coming of a sable Hannibal who would lead the Negroes out of slavery and enable them to destroy their cruel masters" in the form of a messianic jeremiad,⁵⁷ 2.) "sought to inspire the Negroes with confidence in their ability to fight" their slavemasters by reinterpreting the Bible,⁵⁸ and 3.) "bitterly attacked the colonizing movement as a scheme to drain off the natural leaders of the Negroes" by providing a scathing critique of Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. Walker's *Appeal* was a biting rebuke to the notion that whites should send manumitted blacks to Africa in the colonization scheme advanced by the ACS and was an early

example of revolutionary nationalism since it advocated a kind of messianism paired with the incendiary rhetoric of slave revolts.⁵⁹

The critiques advanced in Walker's manifesto stemmed from the claims to Christian virtue that slaveholders advanced as they enacted the brutality of slavery. After his damnation of slavery, however, Walker did offer repentance, classic of the jeremiad form. He wrote, "Americans!! I warn you in the name of the Lord...to repent and reform, or you are ruined!!! Do you think that our blood is hidden from the Lord, because you can hide it from the rest of the world, by sending out missionaries...? Will he not publish your secret crimes on the house top?"⁶⁰ Here, Walker allows for possible redemption of slaveholders but only after having condemned them and insisting that slaves overthrow their masters. "It was Walker's prophecy of impending warfare and of slavery's doom that most deeply shocked white Southerners and discomfited Northern antislavery advocates," writes Sean Wilentz in an introduction to the *Appeal*.⁶¹ Walker's insistence that a new black messiah would deliver blacks from their earthly suffering shifted the interpretive powers of the white slaveholder to the black preacher in a move similar to that of Maria M. W. Stewart. His text provides a starting point for a revolutionary black nationalism intent upon securing emancipation immediately through acts of self-defense and it also provides a template by which to compare later manifestos and radical black declarations.⁶²

During the post-Revolutionary period, men like Hall began to understand the importance of accumulating wealth to create the institutions that would deliberate and disseminate ideology and standards for black behavior. Black elites like Stewart and Walker began to favor Ethiopianism, because it separated them from the wretched black

masses and allowed for the belief in a black messiah that would lead a revolution for equality. The combination of these two strategies prompted the introduction of a counter-nationalist strategy that began to displace the interests of Anglo-Americans for the interests of U.S. blacks as a group. The identity politics of the Revolutionary period reflected the turmoil of the milieu and also the needs for a group identity in the wake of such profound social and political upheaval. The emergent black nationalism of this period reflected early attempts at racial solidarity, ideologies of black messianism, early Pan-Africanism, and an advocacy of slave uprisings to assert personal autonomy.

The Antebellum Period: 1840s – 1850s

Black identity in the antebellum period leading up to the Civil War centered on fidelity to the nation and emigrationism. During this period, many Northern black political leaders, most notably Frederick Douglass (1818-1896), embraced “the Great Tradition” of an “Americanism that insisted that blacks formed an integral part of the nation and were entitled to the same rights and opportunities white citizens enjoyed.”⁶³ Douglass argued the centrality of the American nation-state to black identity and vice versa in the November 16, 1849, issue of the *North Star*. He wrote that for the black man, “America will, for ever, remain the home of his posterity. We deem it a settled point that the destiny of the colored man is bound up with that of the white people of this country; be the destiny of the latter what it may. It is idle – worse than idle, ever to think of our expatriation, or removal.”⁶⁴ Douglass saw colonization attempts as a disgrace and the advocacy of emigrationism by free blacks and black intellectuals as race treason because of the centrality of black America to the nation as a whole.

Douglass and those who followed him argued that being American was a birthright of all blacks born on American soil and saw it as their heroic duty and obligation to express fidelity to the ideals described by the nation's founding manifestos. Douglass argued, "*We are here*, and here we are likely to be. To imagine that we shall ever be eradicated is absurd and ridiculous. We can be remodified, changed and assimilated, but never extinguished. We repeat, therefore, that *we are here*; and that this is *our* country...."⁶⁵ For Douglass, an essential part of black identity was the spirit of egalitarianism that characterized the *Declaration*. He certainly saw this part of Anglo-American culture as an important foundation for black identity, even if the rights guaranteed by the founding documents did not yet embrace black identity as a component of national identity. Douglass and others believed that moral suasion would deliver the end of slavery, mostly due to the influence of Garrison, but he "became ever more convinced that constitutionally based political action was the most effective means for achieving the abolition of slavery."⁶⁶

At this point, the articulation of racial uplift marked a huge moment in the shifting reinvention of black identity. The black bourgeoisie embraced a white middle-class value system that promoted racist and classist stereotypes of poor black freemen, freedmen and also slaves.⁶⁷ Historian Frederick Cooper writes that antebellum political leaders often "stressed that the 'elevation' of the race depended on the 'self-improvement' of the individual," which echoed the sentiments of men like Douglass who were constantly arguing for integration rather than emigration.⁶⁸ Cooper notes that "[a]lthough leaders became increasingly involved in campaigns against slavery and discrimination, especially in the 1840s, whenever they spoke of bettering the living

conditions of free blacks, it was generally to exhort blacks to overcome their ignorance, conquer the temptations of the bottle and behave industriously and respectably.”⁶⁹

Degrading the poor black masses was a strategy that helped to preserve the elitism of free and freed blacks above their brethren in bonds. It paved the way for associations with white abolitionists based on ideas of benevolence and also distanced the black bourgeoisie from slave culture. This double identity move embraced the individualism of the *Declaration* and also prevented many early black leaders from advocating a racial program based on a racialized group identity.

By the 1850s a growing number of Northern black leaders began advocating emigrationism despite the constant assertion of assimilationist views of their most recognized politician, Frederick Douglass.⁷⁰ By this point, “it was apparent that freedom from slavery did not mean citizenship and social equality for black men in America.”⁷¹ The interest in the emigration of U.S. blacks to Africa, Canada, South America, or the Caribbean by many black leaders of the period reflected “both an incipient racial nationalism and pessimism about black prospects” in the United States, due to the hostile character of white nationalism to black America.⁷² Those following Douglass, however, promoted a more inclusive ideology that asserted the importance of fidelity between the black bourgeoisie and slaves.

The identity debates surrounding emigration and nationalism were partly motivated by the class interests of many upwardly mobile free blacks who were often reluctant to craft a group identity based upon “race” or color. Consequently, several spaces emerged where black identity and nationalism were assessed: 1.) slave narratives were published to document the abuses of the South’s peculiar institution, 2) black fiction

and fictionalized techniques evolved to critique slavery, 3.) new black presses launched as forums to debate emigrationism and the role of U.S. blacks in the nation, and finally, 4.) the black convention movement focused on issues of emigration and slave revolt.

First, slave narratives formed an important corpus in the literary production of U.S. blacks, though it complicated their relationship with capitalism. Although slave narratives were not new to the American literary scene, this period gave birth to a large number of narratives, which provided eyewitness testimony for Northern abolitionists who used them to formulate moral arguments about the horrors of plantation life.⁷³ For black Americans, historical slave narratives were created and re-appropriated to help build individual and collective identity around racial oppression.⁷⁴ These narratives performed as testimonials as well, since ex-slaves were describing the horrors of slavery on behalf of those who couldn't escape, read, or write to both white and black audiences.

However, by preceding the former slave's comments with white authenticating discourse, the creation of black identity was often subverted and compromised even as this became an important step in the assertion of black literacy and humanity. Often, but not always, a white editor vouched for the authenticity of the story in a preface, as in the case of William Lloyd Garrison's foreword to Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* or in the case of Amy Post's observations about Harriet Jacob's strength of character at the beginning of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.⁷⁵ These comments were meant to bolster claims of authenticity for writers or actors whose credibility was not assumed or accepted by a white audience as they were for white autobiographers. Therefore, black autobiographers had to prove their validity.⁷⁶ The examination of black subjectivity was just beginning as black writers began to populate the literary market with first-person

accounts of slavery.⁷⁷ The white audience of slave narratives, then, differed markedly from the rhetoric produced by black presses and at black conventions because the latter consummatory rhetoric was constructed entirely by U.S. blacks for black consumption.

After the prefatory comments by white editors vouching for the authenticity of the story, the narratives center on the ritual passage from the hell of plantation culture and the violence permeating that lifestyle to freedom.⁷⁸ By recording this passage from South to North, slave narrators were able to provide an interior view of black subjectivity and an exterior view of plantation violence to the (mostly) white audience. By depicting the flight from slavery, “[i]mpelled by faith in God and a commitment to liberty and human dignity comparable, the North American slave narrator often stressed [that]...the slave undertakes an arduous quest for freedom that climaxes in his or her arrival in the North.”⁷⁹ This tactic reinforced a mythic heroism for blacks who dared escape. It also illustrated the sense of profound betrayal that many U.S. blacks felt at being held as property in a nation that prided itself on universal freedoms. Ironically, the assertion of these freedoms by white abolitionists often restricted the possibilities for authentic black representation.

Also constraining the formulation of individual subjectivity and collective identity for U.S. blacks was the complex relationship that the literary productions of this age had with capitalism, property, and the modes of expression possible for consumption by (mostly) white audiences. Both Manning Marable and Carla Peterson argue that the lives of black Americans were greatly constrained by “systematic exploitation and underdevelopment.”⁸⁰ U.S. blacks were property of white commercial enterprises and produced the commodities (e.g., cotton, tobacco, more slaves) that built the U.S.

economy. Peterson argues that black Americans turned to narrative writing (first autobiographical and historical discourse and then, in the 1850s, to fiction) as a way of redefining their lives and identities. Through such writing, blacks participated in the intellectual productions characterizing their world even though their authorial control over these literary productions was hardly total. Slave narratives, then, helped to paint the landscape of race relations and describe effects of slavery upon black men and women who had resisted and escaped.⁸¹ But this familiarity came at the expense of an autonomous, fully represented black self and often forged the stereotypes that hindered self-empowered identity constructions, fostering, for instance, images of the tragic mulatta or the Uncle Tom.⁸²

Initially, black nonfiction and slave narratives were a way that U.S. blacks began to assert control over expressions of individual identity; however, black fiction emerged as a way of simultaneously protecting the interiority of black identity while also allowing writers to examine both individual and group identity from a position outside of subjectivity. Two novels stand out as important intellectual contributions of this period which explored issues of commodification, production and consumption, travel, transnationalism, and, of course, slavery: *Blake, or the Huts of America* by Martin Delany (1812-1885), and *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* by Harriet Wilson.⁸³

Delany's *Blake* is a noteworthy fictional piece of this period because of its radical insistence (much like Walker's text) upon destroying the plantation economy; *Blake* also prefigures the preoccupation of Diaspora politics that characterize Black Power a century later. Published serially from 1859-1862 in the *Anglo-African* magazine (though never

completed, nor in order), Blake tells the story of Henry Holland, a.k.a. Blake, whose wife is sold from their plantation in Mississippi. He escapes to find her, spreading the message of slave insurrection and black revolutionary violence all the way to Cuba. *Blake* is notable for at least three reasons. First, Delany's text suggests that it is impossible to understand America's slave culture without recognizing its relationship to the colonial conditions of the Caribbean and as such, *Blake* accentuates black identity concerns about property, bodies, and the black Diaspora. As Paul Gilroy notes, "The version of black solidarity *Blake* advances is explicitly anti-ethnic and opposes narrow African-American exceptionalism in the name of a truly pan-African diaspora sensibility. This makes blackness a matter of politics rather than a common cultural condition."⁸⁴ The introduction of the black Diaspora builds upon earlier notions of racialized group solidarity by seeing black people as allies across the globe as Henry Holland travels through the United States to Cuba.

Second, the militancy found in Delany's *Blake* anticipates the calls to arms of black revolutionaries like Henry Highland Garnet and, later, Franz Fanon, who encouraged the slave insurrection as the only way to dismantle the plantation economy and ensure the true liberation of black America. In this way, Delany's fictional account provides a literary example of the manifesto in its advocacy of slave insurrection as a solution to the slave system. John Zeugner notes, "Violence is the essential message Henry carries from plantation to plantation, as he imparts his 'secrets' and builds an insurrectionary organization."⁸⁵ The silences and secrets of black narratives mark an important development in black identity because at these moments, portions of black culture and black ideas are withheld from white literary consumers. This is self-serving

of course, since to reveal a strategy of escape often prevents more from fleeing the confines of slavery but it also suggests a collusion of U.S. blacks based on racial solidarity and a larger group purpose. *Blake's* assertion of race solidarity and the militancy with which it deals with both violence and colonialism, foreshadows the philosophical debates that characterize the 1960s when Pan-Africanism enjoys resurgence among black intellectuals in the United States, Africa and the Caribbean.

Finally, *Blake's* militant black nationalist position about violence is also gendered. As Zeugner contends, Delany suggests that “the greatest atrocity of the slave system is its emasculation of the slaves.... Delany’s proposal for retrieving a sense of black manhood and pride” engages his hero Henry Holland in a process where he must exit the system of slavery, organize against the system of slavery and strike at the system of slavery violently.⁸⁶ Henry Holland becomes the feared black man intent upon overthrowing the system that has perpetually castrated black masculinity.

Another of the most significant literary achievements of the 1850s was Harriet E. Wilson’s *Our Nig* (1859), which stands in contrast to Delany’s *Blake* not only because it provides a female-authored narrative but also because it traverses and benefits from the complicated terrain of “racial tensions and mutual mistrust” to describe a “new economy of identity.”⁸⁷ The story follows the abandoned mulatta protagonist, Frado, who is left in the custody of the Bellmonts, a white family that uses her as labor from the age of seven to the age of eighteen. Frado survives the assaults of life at the hands of her white mistress and learns to rebel against the beatings that characterize her bondage. Unlike other contemporary narratives, Wilson’s story does not speak to a white audience, instead asking her “colored brethren” to “rally around me a faithful band of supporters and

defenders.”⁸⁸ Wilson speaks to multiple audiences in the fictionalized narrative as she subverts the genres that had previously characterized (white) women’s writing. “Unable to control the terms of her own cultural identity or to trust others similarly defined, Wilson speaks both to and against those – black or white, male or female – who see her as a cultural type.” In the process of controlling her own identity, “Wilson signifies on her own culturally determined identity” by using ‘Our Nig’ as the title of both the book and its author,” writes John Ernest.⁸⁹ As Beth Maclay Doriani argues, this move places Wilson “squarely in the political arena acting as a spokesperson for her people, implicitly urging her readers to join her in condemning Northern racism.”⁹⁰ If Wilson is positioning herself as an advocate against racism, *Our Nig* also functions as a manifesto, constituting a people, declaring an exigency to be remedied, and persuading an audience to denounce the practice of discrimination and racial subjugation.

Wilson’s identity strategy authorizes black narrators to speak for themselves, and to testify, to remember their lives for others.⁹¹ Wilson expands the space for writing black identity as she collapses generic barriers and begins to grapple with the relationship between the author, the text, the capitalist relations surrounding both, particularly the audiences who pay for her writing. In examining the slave narratives and black fictional works of this period, we can see the link between literacy and freedom as authors negotiate the climate of capital that makes their bodies and their words commodities. U.S. racial climate has continued to impact the production of black texts as writers negotiate their relationship to capitalism and as they assess the potential audiences for their discourses.

In addition to the books printed during this time period, black presses began aggressively deliberating the expediency of emigrating out of the United States as the optimism of the early nineteenth century began to wane. White abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison entreated Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown to engage critiques of colonization in his Boston paper, *The Liberator*.⁹² The paper examined the “sheer impossibility....of removing millions of enslaved and freed blacks to Southern America or Africa. Garrison turned many reformers against the idea of colonization” and influenced many free blacks to stay in the United States to concentrate their activist energies on freeing their brethren from the yolk of slavery.⁹³

Emigration became central issues in black identity because they fundamentally dealt with the obstacles of working from within the United States for abolition and equality. From Canada, abolitionist Henry Bibb published his paper, *Voice of the Fugitive*, which reported on the Underground Railroad and also included information on issues of racial uplift. *Voice of the Fugitive* served as a space for Bibb’s own editorial manifestos persuading blacks to emigrate from the United States to Canada.⁹⁴ Roger W. Hite notes that, “Even though his message was aimed primarily at the Fugitive black, he also tried to convince free blacks to leave the North and lend their talents to the development of a strong, productive black Canadian community.”⁹⁵ Men like Bibb challenged Douglass and his insistence that bourgeoisie blacks stay in the United States to fight for the citizenship and equality that was due to them by the state. Such discourse demonstrates the growing support for establishing black communities outside of the United States.⁹⁶

The convention circuit also provided a testing ground for positions that ranged from acquiescence to Anglo-American ideals to nationalist positions encouraging black separatism and armed conflict.⁹⁷ Many of the convention minutes include manifestos pertaining to colonization efforts, sovereignty and citizenship and provide the ideological platform for early black nationalism during the antebellum period.⁹⁸ At the Rochester convention (1853), Douglass used the nation's founding documents to affirm their citizenship rights in the United States thereby asserting the primacy of the American-ness of their identity above a group racial identity.⁹⁹ In his "Address, of the Colored National Convention, to the People of the United States," Douglass cited the *Declaration* and the *Constitution* as evidence that he and his brethren had the same inalienable rights as Anglo-Americans. Douglass reminded the audience that, "RESISTANCE TO TYRANTS IS OBEDIENCE TO GOD" and that they must seek the promises of American liberalism. Douglass contended, "We are Americans, and as Americans, we would speak to you as Americans. We address you not as aliens nor as exiles, humbly asking to be permitted to dwell among you in peace; but we address you as American citizens asserting their rights on their own native soil."¹⁰⁰ Douglass claimed that to secure the rights of fellow men, the members of the convention will "speak, write, and publish," "organize" and "invoke the aid of the pulpit and the press," "appeal to the church and to the government," "vote, and expend money," and "send eloquent men of our condition to plead our cause before the people."¹⁰¹ By arguing for citizenship rights, Douglass shifted the debate away from emigrationism and towards emancipation as the most important goal that U.S. blacks could help to achieve.

The Rochester convention stressed the need for equal rights among blacks and whites and excluded emigrationists, but the conversations at the convention continued in the black presses. Such dialogue turned into an ideological battle between Douglass and Martin R. Delany, who had recently reassessed his long-held opinions on anti-colonization in favor of emigration. Bell writes that even by 1859 the abolitionist leadership was unwilling “to admit defeat on one of their most cherished tenets – that the free Negro must stand by in America to witness the end of slavery, and to cushion the shock of the slave as he made the transition to freedom.”¹⁰² For many black agitators, it was paramount that free blacks stand up for their brethren so that they all might be free.

On the convention circuit, delegate Delany gained prominence for his emigrationist views.¹⁰³ In 1852, Delany published his radical black nationalist treatise, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered*.¹⁰⁴ The book spoke of the proud history of the black “race” at a time when leading theorists debated blacks’ innate inferiority, thereby advocating a rare message of racial unity for this period. Because it was such a controversial book, Delany’s text helped solidify the importance of the emigration issue to the larger debate about the nature of blackness, black culture and black identity. Delany’s manifesto drew harsh and immediate criticism from white abolitionists, the liberal press, and even black leaders for its ruthless critique of the colonization scheme proposed in Liberia by the ACS. Although Delany was interested in the mass emigration of blacks from the United States he was absolutely opposed to the forced removal of blacks from the U.S. by white elites. Abolitionists opposed to both colonization and emigration attacked Delany’s emigrationist proposals, “which they considered would vitiate their demand for

immediate emancipation,” which came to epitomize the conflict between abolitionists and emigrationists.¹⁰⁵ Delany did not want to alienate the abolitionists, so he temporarily halted the publication of *The Condition*. Clearly, within the context of colonization, emigration posed a rhetorical challenge for men like Delany.

As the debates about emigrationism raged, another dimension of the discussion emerged around the topic of slave insurrection and the necessity of promoting slave revolts as a way of forcing quick and radical social change from within the plantation economy. Abolitionist and lecturer Henry Highland Garnet is most famous during the 1840s for introducing the idea of slave insurrection into the convention scene.¹⁰⁶ Douglass, of course, immediately chastised Garnet for stirring the seeds of insurrection and told the convention audience that he wished no responsibility for the bloodshed that would follow from such a recommendation.¹⁰⁷ The dialectic between Garnet and Douglass illustrates the poles at which black activists aligned themselves as they strove to liberate their brethren and themselves from the constraints of white supremacy that characterized their individual experiences and their collective culture. Although emigration was ultimately discarded as a long-term solution to the problem of white supremacy, it marked an important locus where black Americans debated their own future.¹⁰⁸ The convention circuit and other forums for black intellectualism prior to the Civil War exposed the tension inherent in the limited application of the rights doctrines of the nation’s founding documents; however, this did not mean that blacks were unwilling to embrace the form of the *Declaration* or its ideals. Throughout the nineteenth century, black leaders did question the framers’ intent of the *Declaration* and their loyalty to it.¹⁰⁹

Through the slave narratives published by abolitionists and the black novels of antebellum America, black culture saw the possibilities of black self-representation. White culture was exposed to the literacy and humanity exhibited by those who they generally perceived as heathens. Where the oratory and early manifestos of the post-Revolutionary period helped carve out discursive public space for the performance of blackness, black literary texts also exploded during the antebellum period as black writers began to experiment with such subjectivity. The strategies of representation evident in the productions of these black writers surrounded issues of voice and silence as writers negotiated the complicated racial terrain of the fledgling nation. The messianic Ethiopianism of early writers like Stewart, Walker and Alexander was temporarily discarded (until Reconstruction) in favor of more expedient solutions to slavery, which were debated in newspapers and on the convention floors of antebellum America. The newspapers and conventions centered on acquiring citizenship and exhibiting loyalty to the United States. Early black nationalists promulgated the creation of separate black nations through emigration to new lands where U.S. blacks might be able to live without the violence and discrimination that characterized life in antebellum America. What stands out from these institutions is their centrality to the “reproduction of African-American social, cultural, and literary knowledge in the nineteenth century.”¹¹⁰

Post-Reconstruction, and the Millennium, 1870s – 1920s

Conscription and the success of the Union Army cemented the Great Tradition and its emphasis on the liberal tradition found in America’s first documents. Leading up to and after the Civil War, emancipation replaced emigration as the issue over which debates about identity primarily centered. The beginning of Reconstruction saw a revival

of the manifesto in the rhetoric of black America on the black convention circuit.¹¹¹

Black delegates at conventions justified their call for suffrage with the guarantees of the *Declaration of Independence*¹¹² and “Southern blacks proclaimed their identification with the nation’s history, destiny, and political system” through letters, petitions, autobiographies, novels, and other textual representations.¹¹³

Leading up to the Civil War, preserving the “nation” was a central anxiety for both Lincoln and many U.S. blacks, and this preoccupation impacted the debates surrounding emigration and abolition that characterized black discourse in the antebellum period. The dramatic numbers of U.S. blacks enlisting in military service complicated questions of citizenship and natural rights. By the end of the war, over 180,000 blacks totaling over one-fifth of the adult male black population of the United States under the age of forty-five, served in the Union army.¹¹⁴ The service “helped transform both the nation’s treatment of blacks and blacks’ conception of themselves. For the first time in American history, large numbers of blacks were treated as equals before the law - if only before military law.”¹¹⁵ Former slaves learned how to read and write in the army, they traveled, and they worked to reconstitute the nation. Each of these changes altered the subjectivities of blacks in America as the debate about emancipation consumed the nation.¹¹⁶ Consequently, the Union army conscripted blacks that sought “advancement and responsibility” and it produced many of “the black political leaders of Reconstruction.”¹¹⁷ Conscription had a profound influence on black identity because the promise of abolition and emancipation wed U.S. blacks to the Union cause. Once they saw that Lincoln and the nation were bowing to the demands of abolitionists, U.S. blacks argued fervently for their inclusion in the nation-state rather than embracing strategies of

emigration or revolutionary nationalism. Eric Foner concludes that “the restoration of the Union, not emancipation, was the cause that generated the widest support for the war effort” though the Emancipation Proclamation changed the nature of the War and the Reconstruction that would follow it.¹¹⁸

With the promises of Reconstruction, emancipation and also the relative safety provided by the Union Army, black leaders sought to consolidate the black public sphere (which had become fragmented due to the Civil War) through their institutions: churches, schools, and mutual aid societies.¹¹⁹ Southern blacks embraced their new (though hardly complete) freedom after the war by migrating and utilizing their new mobility. They also, however changed their names, married, dressed differently, and acquired “dogs, guns and liquor (all barred to them under slavery, and refused to yield the sidewalks to whites).”¹²⁰ These assertions of autonomy helped to pave the way for more sophisticated strategies of group identification directly after the Civil War.

However, despite the fact that Lincoln’s Republican Party abolished slavery and made U.S. blacks citizens, the 1870s were a decade of growing discontent. Black Americans began to denounce the Republican politics that had brought them the promise of social change, and the manifestos of the 1870s reflected this disillusionment. Of particular merit is a four-page leaflet titled, the “Negro Declaration of Independence,” written by the National Independent Political Union in Washington, D.C., on February 28, 1876. The pamphlet described a Republican Party “infatuated with sordid ambition,” duplicitous and corrupt, with a “want of faith,” vacillating policy, and “selfish motives.” The organization pledged to “sever all connections with that *infamously* and *tyrannically* administered organization.”¹²¹ They wrote, “We are tired of our self-imposed party yoke

its injustice to us, and its flagrant violations of the Constitution, in order to trample out local self government, and insult our brave and well disposed fellow citizens of the South...”¹²² U.S. blacks were abandoning the Party that abandoned them. The “Negro Declaration of Independence” speaks to the disillusionment and disappointment that characterized the experience of many black Americans as Reconstruction began and then receded at the end of the 1870s.

The violence and mob rule that emerged during and after the failure of Reconstruction exposed the structural problems with Emancipation; most of black America saw the grim, brutal face of Jim Crow materialize from the ashes of the Civil War. Foner contends that such conditions were due

to the fact that the Republican administrations were proceeding to abandon the Southern Negro to the White supremacists, granting amnesty to Confederate leaders, withdrawing Union troops from state after state, and doing little to suppress the extralegal organizations like the Ku Klux Klan that were murdering and terrorizing Negroes, depriving them of their right to vote, and forcing them to remain economically oppressed.¹²³

The violence of this era was stirred by fears of miscegenation, racial mixing and shared public space and prompted the reintroduction of black nationalism into the black public sphere.¹²⁴ Although many black men received training in the Union Army, learned to read and write, and had the opportunity to travel during and after the Civil War, these new-found skills were now often punished through violence by the larger white culture following the War, eroding the excitement and promise of Emancipation. The result was

a majority culture that embraced the practice of lynching as retribution for crossing the race line.

Leading the resistance to lynching and mob culture at the turn of the twentieth century was a vanguard of black women who wrote, spoke, educated, and agitated against lynching, undermining the defeminizing mythology that characterized discourse about black women in the process.¹²⁵ Ida B. Wells-Barnett (1862–1931) was a prominent intellectual who produced several treatises spotlighting the abuse of white mob rule in the South with tacit or overt support of state and municipal government. Wells-Barnett also led the charge for the Dyer Anti-Lynching bill in the U.S. Congress.¹²⁶ Her agitation to end lynching was important at the turn of the twentieth century because lynching was at the center of this racialized and gendered terrain. Across America, “white supremacists intended to reassert their dominance by playing on antebellum themes – the ‘Sambo’ incompetence of black men and the ‘promiscuity’ of black women.”¹²⁷ Catherine Clinton notes that whites at this time feared that black men would revenge the brutality of the slave system and also worried “that the growing segment of the black population labeled ‘mulatto’ might not be a result of slave women’s licentiousness, but rather of white coercion.”¹²⁸ At once, “ex-Confederates, especially veterans, concocted new and important projections of their fears – none was more complex and potent than the ‘black rapist.’”¹²⁹ As a result of the interplay of these stereotypes of black masculinity, white femininity and black female promiscuity, black communities recoiled and asserted the conventional gender roles and sexual morality; they also embraced self-segregation as a way of preserving their communities from the white violence that characterized even the most mundane parts of life. Self-segregation in the face of *de jure* discrimination

changed the possibilities for black identity because it allowed for a more concentrated exploration of black subjectivity. At the same time, however, such identity exploration was constantly constrained by white violence or the threat of violence.

The mob and lynching culture that prevailed at the turn of the twentieth century illustrates the extent of the violent reaction to integration and exposes the fears of both black men and women in the white imaginary. At the turn of the twentieth century, lynching was understood as an “enforcement mechanism by which the threat of presumptively hypermasculine black manhood is successfully contained via symbolic emasculation. This in turn generates ‘manhood’ as a space into which black politics directs itself.”¹³⁰ The importance of lynching and mob culture to post-Reconstruction in the formation of both black male and female identity in the twentieth century was cemented by the unyielding presence of segregation and the stigma of blackness which characterized the period.¹³¹

In the North, the face of Jim Crow was less apparent yet it still patrolled the racial borders of communities, particularly in the cities. The rise of mutual aid and benevolent societies in the North which advocated racial uplift, illustrates the ways in which black Americans (particularly women) understood that their “fates were intimately tied together; individual freedom could be achieved only through collective autonomy.”¹³² These societies, led by women like Mary Church Terrell (1863-1954), Fannie Barrier Williams (1855-1944), Nannie Helen Burroughs (1883-1961) and Wells-Barnett, helped to craft the larger group identity after the Civil War because the migration of working-class Southerners demanded a reevaluation of the black public sphere in the North.

Women in these organizations ascribed to a middle-class ideology of racial uplift that touted thrift, temperance, modesty, hard work, education, and charity and emphasized the importance of the black family as the most important unit of black communities. Their charity work started old age homes, provided domestic training, and established day care centers, children's camps, and other useful social programs. However, many middle-class black women working from within this framework of benevolence saw migrating women as a threat to race progress and often demonized them, resulting in a moral panic and a language of restraint that marked migrating women as immoral, lewd, and in need of control.¹³³ Victoria Wolcott writes that from the end of the nineteenth century through the 1920s, "reformers used language of female respectability, focusing instead on male self-defense, civil rights, and industrial unionism" which reflected a shifting gender ideology among black communities.¹³⁴ The rhetoric of female respectability split black women along class lines and also reified the stereotypes like that of the black Jezebel temptress that had been circulating in the Anglo-American imaginary for a century or more.

Strict legal segregation of public facilities in the United States was strengthened in 1896 by the Supreme Court's decision in the *Plessy vs. Ferguson* case and the establishment of the "separate but equal" policies which restricted access to public venues. This erosion of the citizenship rights that seemed to be granted by the Reconstruction Amendments had a detrimental effect on black organizing and group solidarity as the violent, lynching culture of the South permeated black America.¹³⁵ Consequently, black-controlled social, educational, religious and community organizations became incredibly important, especially in the North.¹³⁶ The best option

that black Americans had during Reconstruction was to forge all-black communities in the wake of *Plessy* to at least preserve the organizations that had given their lives meaning and preserved their basis for resistance. And, in the debate about state-guaranteed rights following Emancipation and the *Plessy* decision, the ballot became a symbol of inclusion in the polity as black suffragists and activists, particularly in the black convention scene, articulated civic republicanism.¹³⁷ The rein of terror imposed by white supremacist groups shrank the black public sphere and also limited contact between whites and blacks based on fears of miscegenation. The politics of respectability forced many black women out of the public sphere and into the home to replicate white standards of Victorian womanhood as black patriarchal authority became a community standard.¹³⁸ Even women like Wells-Barnett were often excluded from the circles of “race leaders.”¹³⁹

The men who recognized themselves and each other as “race leaders” after Reconstruction were intent upon disproving the prevailing notions of universal black inferiority that provided the foundation for decisions like *Plessy*. Preacher, missionary and Pan-Africanist, Alexander Crummell (1819-1898) is perhaps most well-known as the black nationalist muse of W.E.B. DuBois (1868–1963), epitomized in DuBois’ eulogy of Crummell in *Souls of Black Folk*. But as a post-Reconstruction black intellectual, Crummell contended that colonial legislation condemned the black intellect by making it illegal for blacks to learn to read or to receive a public education. In “The Attitude toward the Negro Intellect,” Crummell explained that

thus the legislatures of the several states enacted laws and Statutes, closing the pages of every book printed to the eyes of Negroes; barring the doors of every

school-room against them! And this was the systematized method of the intellect of the South, to stamp out the brains of the Negro! It was done, too, with the knowledge that the Negro had intellect. The denial was an afterthought.... It was the denial of intellectuality in the Negro; the assertion that he was not a human being, that he did not belong to the human race.¹⁴⁰

Crummell argued that the racism of the Enlightenment's founding fathers was entrenched in their scientific method and that the conclusions of these philosophers and "scientists" were duplicitous.¹⁴¹ Instead, Crummell proposed a social climate that would promote education and culture for the black American:

What he needs is CIVILIZATION. He needs the increase of his higher wants, of his mental and spiritual needs. *This*, mere animal labor has never given him, and never can give him. But it will come to him, as an individual, and as a class, just in proportion as the higher culture comes to his leaders and teachers, and so gets into his schools, academies and colleges; and then enters his pulpits; and so filters down to his families and his homes; and the Negro learns that he is no longer to be a serf, but that he is to bare his strong brawny arm as a laborer; *not* to make the white man a Croseus, but to make himself a man.¹⁴²

This civilizationist discourse argued that if blacks were inferior, it was due to white suppression of natural talent. Civilizationism appealed to racial solidarity by acknowledging institutional oppression and by recognizing the importance of racial uplift. Civilizationist discourse paved the way for the arguments about black education that would characterize the first several decades of the twentieth century and provide the

impetus for black leaders (particularly black male leaders) to push education as a way of both preserving and advancing black identity.

Although their goals and strategies differed, early twentieth-century black nationalists like Crummell walked a thin line between reifying and critiquing white supremacist power, particularly as Southern blacks began to deal with the consequences of Jim Crow. This maneuvering is best viewed through the clash between W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) over the types of appeals, strategies and self-definition that would be most useful to black Americans striving for inclusion in political legal rights, literacy and tolerance. DuBois introduced the theory of “double consciousness” in describing the complexities of race relations during and after Reconstruction.¹⁴³ DuBois wrote, “One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”¹⁴⁴ DuBois’ conception of double consciousness expressed the dynamics of negotiating identity as black communities strove toward racial uplift against the tide of beatings, lynchings, firebombings, and murder that characterized the post-Reconstruction South.¹⁴⁵ This type of loyalty struggle, loyalty to the ideologies and dominant social constructions of the sexist, white supremacist state (especially given the history of conscription) and loyalty to black-ness is precisely the dilemma that Frederick Douglass and his contemporaries took up prior to the War.

Ultimately, double consciousness forces an examination of the nature of “being black” in America after a war that was fought, in part, to end a system of subjugation based on skin color. DuBois wrote that black men “would not Africanize America, for

America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world.” Instead, DuBois concluded, “He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face.¹⁴⁶ DuBois argued that education is the only way to create a self-conscious manhood capable to ameliorating the conditions that American-born blacks faced at the turn of the century. He noted, “It was the ideal of book-learning’; the curiosity, born of compulsory ignorance, to know and test the power of the cabalistic letters of the white man, the longing to know. Here at last seem to have been discovered the mountain path to Canaan; longer than the highway of Emancipation and law, steep and rugged, but straight, leading to heights high enough to overlook life.”¹⁴⁷ DuBois posited education as a way of creating more intellectuals to lead the ignorant out of the dark and into the light, like Moses led the Israelites away from their own destruction. He pursued this position on liberal education through his affiliation with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).¹⁴⁸

With the creation of the NAACP in 1909, and the beginning of its publication, *The Crisis*,¹⁴⁹ American-born blacks were able to find and hold leadership positions that provided educational and legal support for communities of color on issues of violence, discrimination, economic exploitation, and suffrage.¹⁵⁰ DuBois argued that if the state would enforce segregation, black American should carefully plan their communities based on this segregation, thereby controlling it.¹⁵¹ By embracing blackness, voicing his position of black degradation of black communities, pushing for liberal education in

addition to industrial education, and by arguing for a separationist understanding of black communities in the face of Jim Crow, DuBois provided a very different economic and social agenda for black America than did his contemporary, Booker T. Washington.

Booker T. Washington founded the Tuskegee Institute, a normal and industrial school in Alabama; he is remembered chiefly for his accommodationist address before a predominantly white audience at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta on September 18, 1895.¹⁵² In this speech, he argued that blacks would be willing to give up the pursuit of civil rights in exchange for the right to pursue industrial education. For Washington, political and social equality were less important as immediate goals for black America than respectability and independence.

Washington urged blacks to work as farmers, skilled artisans, domestic servants, and manual laborers to prove to whites that all blacks were not “liars and chicken thieves.”¹⁵³ He advised blacks to trust Southern whites and accept the fact of white supremacy through a rhetoric of friendship that is non-threatening to white interests. Washington also invoked the faithful servant trope and assured the white Southerners that blacks are trustworthy rather than deceitful. He refused to indict the plantation lifestyle of the Southern economy and then flattered his white male audience by suggesting that men of color are given the best opportunity to contribute by building capital in the American South.¹⁵⁴ In exchange for white assistance in employing black industrial workers, Washington promised dutiful, law-abiding black “friends” in the South. Washington said, “While doing this, you can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-abiding, and unresentful people that the world has seen.”¹⁵⁵ Washington’s speeches and writing

stressed the symbiotic interdependence of blacks and whites in the South although he conceded that the races should socially separate.¹⁵⁶ He constantly counseled blacks to remain in the South, pursue an industrial education, model virtues after white society and save their money.

Of course, DuBois criticized such a strategy for accommodating white fear, distrust, and power by removing much of the political agency that blackness could gain from militancy and, in *Souls of Black Folk*, DuBois directed several of these accusations at Washington's policies.¹⁵⁷ Certainly, DuBois was deeply concerned with the position that blacks in the South were degraded and needed to educate themselves without community support.¹⁵⁸ DuBois provided a rebuttal to Washington's "half-truths" and noted that the implication of his claims was that "[his] doctrine has tended to make the whites, North and South, shift the burden of the Negro problem to the Negro's shoulders and stand aside as critical and rather pessimistic spectators; when in fact the burden belongs to the nation..."¹⁵⁹ Rather than degrade black Americans for their ignorance, DuBois argued that only education would liberate black Americans from the self-hate and shame that centuries of discrimination, slavery and Uncle Tomming had produced. Although, Washington's racial program set the terms for the debate on black intellectual and social programs for the decade between 1895 and 1915, DuBois' strategy was clearly to implicate both blacks and whites who failed to work towards social and economic equality.

It was the clash between these two men and their thoughts on education and the status of black America that led to a polarization in the black community on issues of black intellectual identity.¹⁶⁰ Migration and emigrationism reemerged as themes of black

discourse in the 1920s and 1930s, as racial violence and lynching culture replaced legitimate law and order in the South and as decline of the cotton economy prompted many to take advantage of their new mobility.¹⁶¹ Led by Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), the emigrationists echoed many of the arguments that Martin Delany and others had made in the early black convention movement. Garvey was responsible for *The Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World*, the manifesto adopted by a black convention in 1920, which listed the demands and grievances of black America. It argues "That nowhere in the world, with few exceptions, are black men accorded equal treatment with white men, although in the same situation and circumstances, but, on the contrary, are discriminated against and denied the common rights due to human beings for no other reason than their race and color." Garvey's *Declaration* advocated integration and also due process. It continued, "In certain parts of the United States of America our race is denied the right of public trial accorded to other races when accused of crime, but are lynched and burned by mobs, and such brutal and inhuman treatment is even practiced upon our women."¹⁶² By tackling the contentious issue of lynching, Garvey and activists like him took up the mantle of leadership that Ida B. Wells-Barnett had carried for so long by demanding federal protection. Though the UNIA survived after Garvey's deportation, the FBI honed its surveillance and disruption of black nationalists groups throughout the middle of the twentieth century.

The 1930s saw an explosion in both racial uplift ideologies and in black nationalism as religious organizations like the Nation of Islam gained prestige, particularly in Northern cities like Detroit, Chicago, Baltimore, New York, and

Washington, D.C.¹⁶³ Jeffrey Ogbar notes that, “From the rejection of the term *Negro* to the popularity of the term *black*, the Nation of Islam was a formidable influence” in the United States as religious nationalism embraced racial solidarity.¹⁶⁴ NOI minister Malcolm X was at the forefront of this movement and pointed to the white brutality against nonviolent civil rights workers that “convinced many that black nationalism was an effective way to resist racial oppression. These continuous acts of racist brutality also affirmed the notion that whites were, indeed, immoral,” which helped mutual aid societies and nationalist religious organizations like the NOI to recruit black Americans and promote racial solidarity.¹⁶⁵ This brand of black nationalism attracted women into religious organizations like the NOI with its emphasis on middle-class values like thrift, temperance, modesty and an emphasis on patriarchal authority that had begun to push black women at the turn of the century into club work under the direction of Wells-Barnett and Mary Church Terrell (1863-1934).

At the center of debates about black identity in the period following Reconstruction, education was also central as leaders worked to solidify black communities in the face of Jim Crow and the Supreme Court’s *Plessy* decision. Where Booker T. Washington proposed manual labor and industrial training to pacify white Southerners fears of black men and women, W.E.B. DuBois denounced the black bourgeoisie habit of degrading their black brethren as he expressed the complexity of black identity in racist America. DuBois advocated racial separatism intended to shore up black communities in the face of Jim Crow as he promoted educational policies that embraced liberal education so that black America could more fully examine its historical and contemporary identity in America.¹⁶⁶ By the 1920s and 1930s mutual aid societies

and religious organizations proliferated in the black public sphere and black agitation for social change advanced.

By the late 1950s, Malcolm X emerged as an outspoken advocate of the black nationalism presaged by DuBois earlier in the century. His preaching in the Nation of Islam influenced the tactics first shunned by and later embraced by the modern civil rights movement. By the middle of the twentieth century, black leaders were pushing for the integration of public services and spaces, voting rights, employment opportunities and federal protection of civil rights.

The Modern Movement for Civil Rights, 1950 – 1969

From the early 1950s to 1969, black activism embraced a wide variety of tactics as civil rights organizations proliferated and spawned other competing organizations and ideas. Black leaders began to postulate a black identity unconstrained by segregation, discrimination, and unemployment. The black identity of this period embraced alternate blackness, promoted alternately integration and separation, advanced notions of nonviolence and self-defense, and saw alliances with other groups of people as ideal in the struggle for liberation.

Mass demonstrations, boycotting and sit-ins were important tools for mobilizing black participation in social change from the 1950s through the early part of the 1960s.¹⁶⁷ Beginning with the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955, and continuing through the sit-ins that began in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1960, black activists began a cycle of social activism that was physical as much as it was intellectual.¹⁶⁸ The nonviolent tactics used by activists in Alabama, Mississippi, and North Carolina walked the line between making demands about equality and trying not to offend white liberals. By August 1961, sit-ins

included over 70,000 participants and produced over 3,000 arrests.¹⁶⁹ Black mobilization at this point was intricately tied up with white Northern elites, which complicated an autonomous black identity.

Led by the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) and Martin Luther King, Jr., marches, boycotts and others forms of nonviolent social protest swept the South. Streets, lunch counters, buses and public parks became stages for protest against segregation but so did an unlikely space in the American South: the prison. By the time that King was arrested in Birmingham and wrote his famous prison manifesto, “Letter From Birmingham Jail,” hundreds of protestors had been jailed for their role in the public outcry over segregation. Houston A. Baker writes that from the early days of the struggle in Alabama,

black preachers realized the only way to unify their efforts was to follow King wherever the struggle led him, including jail. This was the beginning of the ironic creation of a new space of black freedom: the entire criminal justice system of the American South. With the sit-ins, the most thunderous cry of black public resistance was “jail, no bail.” This cry indisputably defined a new southern black public consciousness that instituted a body-on-the-line revolution.¹⁷⁰

Baker adds, “Suddenly, the entire apparatus of white policing and surveillance, which had evolved from the ‘patter-rollers’ in the armed camp of slavery, was converted, mostly by young black students, into a vocational site for liberation. The white-controlled space of criminality and incarceration was transformed into a public arena for black justice and freedom.”¹⁷¹ Even at the outset of social protest, the jail became a space of resistance, of

rebellion, of manifesto-writing, though the pace of integration did not speed up even as more protestors were jailed.

The slowness of integration and the influence of white elites in the civil rights movement left many Northern urban blacks angry and hopeless. Consequently, Northern urban centers became the site of inevitable conflict as radical black nationalists clashed with the state.¹⁷² Rebellion overtook Harlem, Watts, Chicago, Cleveland, Atlanta, Boston, New York, Jacksonville, Tampa, Buffalo, Durham, Memphis and South Bend as black Americans demanded an end to segregation and began to embrace Malcolm X's separatism as a black nationalist strategy.¹⁷³

Self-defense, though articulated and practiced by both black men and women, was the dominant imagery of Black Power advocates and was an extension of the masculinist slave revolt imagery captured earlier in the nineteenth century by activists like Henry Highland Garnet. By embracing self-defense and militant black nationalism, "Black Power's overemphasis on black masculinity and black male entitlements might be viewed less as a simple re-creation of patriarchal logic than as an extrapolation and, to some degree, politically resistant intensification of America's intersecting legacy of race, sexuality, and gender."¹⁷⁴ As a result, Black Power's assertion of black masculinity often "elides black liberation struggle with a universal masculine position, thereby displacing both the specificity and legitimacy of black female articulations of political disempowerment, as well as a variety of claims from African-American sexual minorities."¹⁷⁵ The black masculinity advanced by Robert F. Williams, Malcolm X, the Black Panther Party, the Black Liberation Army and other Black Power leaders and organizations, at best, marginalized the role of black women in black liberation struggles

at the expense of recovering the supposedly castrated black male self lost to slave times. Although cultural nationalists began to promote racial solidarity based on black pride, state repression in urban centers led to the incarceration of many radical activists as America's prisons became holding pens to keep activists from organizing or inspiring black urban communities. Self-defense was demonized near the end of the 1960s as wanton black-on-white violence and rebellions engulfed America's cities.

Although organizational platforms and speech texts provided a basis for the renegotiation of the public sphere as integration became law, autobiographies and life-writing became central in advancing the goals of black activists and the new identity moves of Black Power advocates. William L. Andrews writes that the questions surrounding identity in the 1960s and 1970s were spurred by the civil rights and Black Power movements, which invited black America to explore "the concern with selfhood and modes of identification that reoriented so much African American autobiography criticism in the 1970s."¹⁷⁶ The strategies of identification and representation that characterize the intellectual work of radical black activists have historically been devalued by the academy and by the culture writ large. While these life-writings are often read in the academy, very little criticism has attended to the radical Black Power treatises or prison manifestos of Black Power activists.¹⁷⁷

The prison manifestos of Black Power activists of the late 1960s through the contemporary period are an extension of the early strategies used to create individual subjectivity and group solidarity. These twin pillars of subjectivity and solidarity formed spaces for cultural excavation and construction of black identity from the post-Revolutionary Period onward. And, since Black Power manifestos have been

overlooked, particularly due to the decline of the modern civil rights movement, a need exists to examine their strategies in creating a new black identity and their extension of Black Power ideology in the post-civil rights context through a critical paradigm that recognizes the intersection of race, gender, and class in the formation of individual and group subjectivities.

Black Power intellectuals constructed their own personal identities while contributing to the evolution of a racialized group identity against the discursive backdrop of the nation-state.¹⁷⁸ Ogbar notes that “Unlike integrationist, middle-class-led organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Urban League, the NOI and the B[lack] P[anther] P[arty] systematically recruited from the poorest segments of the black community and developed rhetoric that appealed to many poor blacks, particularly males.”¹⁷⁹ Poverty and masculinity were inherent to the ideal of the *lumpenproletariat*, which complicated the relationship among men and women in Black Power organizations. However, Black Power also enabled activists to resist state power by (re)defining themselves and their relationship to the dominant nationalism and nation-state; the power of naming and of articulating experiences is the basis of black resistance in the United States.¹⁸⁰

From the 1950s to the end of the 1960s, the modern civil rights movement gained concessions from the state due to its ever-changing tactics in demanding integration, social and economic opportunity, and legal protection.¹⁸¹ As the state became less and less yielding to the demands of nonviolent social protest, however, leaders and organizations shifted tactics to embrace self-defense and more confrontational tactics of agitation. As Black Power groups began to advocate more controversial methods of

dissent, rebellion engulfed U.S. cities and the state began to repress dissent rather than compromise with the demands of more radical civil rights groups. The discourses emerging from this period inspired leaders and activists by forging a racial solidarity that overtook black communities. The narratives of the period following the decline of the mainstream civil rights movement have made the some of the most interesting and unexamined contributions to individual and collective identity in black communities.

Calls for Black Power were coupled with demands to free blacks from America's internal colonialism. As Ward Churchill and Jim VanderWall explain, "The task thus presented in completing the federal counterinsurgency strategy was to destroy such community-based black leadership before it had an opportunity to consolidate itself and instill a vision of real freedom among the great masses of blacks."¹⁸² FBI repression through programs like COINTELPRO had a devastating effect on black liberation effort. and Black Power was pronounced dead by the middle of the 1970s, despite the fact that many of its leaders, prophets, and living martyrs produced manifestos that exhibited strategies of regenerating Black Power. The following chapters examine the ways in which the imprisoned or exiled leaders craft narrative strategies from within spaces of confinement to transform Black Power as the movement enters a new phase of black identity formation and revolutionary reform. These chapters look at the strategies of regenerating Black Power that punctuate the texts of Assata Shakur, Mumia Abu-Jamal and Rap Brown and elevate these figures as leaders, martyrs, and heroes as they call for new Black Power agitation.

Chapter 2: Recovering Black Identity and History, Feminizing and Regenerating Black Power

In 1965, the Johnson Administration created the Office of Law Enforcement Assistance as part of the federal government's effort to curb crime in the United States. Consequently, Congress authorized the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act in 1968, thereby establishing the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA). The federal expenditures for the LEAA swelled from 63 million dollars in 1968 to an impressive 895 million dollars in 1975 and they remained high in 1977 at 753 million dollars.¹ Nixon's administration augmented the LEAA with their "law and order" campaign and, in 1969, encouraged riot-control expenditures and the creation of domestic intelligence-gathering operations. The administration also used LEAA funding allocations to prioritize programs and weapons that would be useful in "civil disorders."² In equipping the police with so much firepower and weaponry, the result was that the rebellions of the 1960s were almost all "precipitated by police actions."³ Critics argue that many local police departments used the LEAA to acquire weapons and hardware that would aid their efforts to, in Joseph C. Goulden's words, "tool up for repression."⁴

The expansion of the LEAA during the 1960s outfitted police with an array of anti-riot gear that became a symbol of white racism for black communities. Political scientist Robert M. Fogelson has noted that for many black Americans "the patrolmen are the principal...representatives of white society in the ghettos" and therefore, "by the virtue of their presence alone, the police bear a heavy brunt of the...hostility to white America."⁵ This is particularly true given the massive build-up of "riot control" weapons during the Nixon administration. Because black Americans are often subjected to

“brutality and harassment, few ghettos are adequately protected and few complaints are impartially processed.”⁶ The separation of the police from the people, especially in terms of race, has also made it relatively easy for police to avoid positive social interaction with the populations they are entrusted to protect. Historically, “the police feel profoundly isolated from a public which, in their view, is at best apathetic and at worst hostile, too solicitous of the criminal and too critical of the patrolmen. They also believe that they have been thwarted by the community in the battle against crime, that they have been given a job to do but deprived of the power to do it.”⁷ In America’s cities, the police are often ostracized, both racially and socially, and often rely on stereotyping to judge individuals and communities. Such conditions lead some urban police to conclude that black Americans are “lawless, prone to resist the police, and likely to require rough handling.”⁸ This rough handling by the police is rarely exposed by other officers because of loyalty oaths and because sanctions against brutality are often ineffective in preventing recurring brutality.⁹ As Bernard D. Headley suggests, some police officers often do not see black Americans as people but instead see them as objects or animals that can be maimed and/or killed at will.¹⁰

The police officers of New Jersey, in particular, have a very auspicious record of brutality and racialized violence. In 1967, out of a police force of nearly 1,400 only 150 members of the Newark police force were black, mostly in lower, subordinate positions.¹¹ Consequently, black Americans have historically seen the New Jersey police force, especially in Newark, as an occupying force rather than as guardians of their lives and property.¹² In the mid-1960s, a small but significant group of radical, militantly anti-black police officers in cities like Newark and New York organized specifically to crush

the Black Panthers and other black nationalist groups. In what William C. Kronholm has called “Blue Power,” northern urban police forces in places like New York and New Jersey mobilized against protestors and organizers who they saw as threats to their community because they did not recognize the importance of granting civil rights to people who had been historically denied access to equal protection under the law.¹³ Rather than recognizing the 1960s protests “as an expression of anger by deceived people, [police] saw them as an impudent demand for the good life on the part of people who would not work to earn it.”¹⁴ Officers understood the protests of the 1960s simply to be a breach of the peace and they saw protestors as people who were demanding special privileges from the state.

It is at this intersection of Black Power and Blue Power that the Black Liberation Army (BLA), “a military organization, whose primary objective is to fight for the independence and self-determination of Afrikan people in the United States,” grew in the wake of the decimation of the Black Panther Party.¹⁵ The prison and exile writings of Assata Shakur must be located here, after the destruction of the Panthers, and in the midst of the fortification of America’s police. Assata Shakur was born JoAnne Freeman in Jamaica, New York, on July 16, 1947, where she grew up with her sister, mother, aunt, grandmother and grandfather. On May 2, 1973, Shakur lay near death in a hospital bed after a deadly shoot-out following a “routine” police stop on the New Jersey Turnpike. Shakur was traveling with two friends and members of the BLA, Sundiata Acoli (formerly Clark Squire), and her best friend Zayd Shakur, when two state troopers stopped them for “a faulty taillight.”¹⁶ The shootout on the turnpike left two men, Zayd Malik Shakur and New Jersey State Trooper James Harper, dead and both Assata Shakur

and New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster injured.¹⁷ Shakur was a political prisoner of the state for four years before the trial in 1977 where an all-white jury convicted her of killing state trooper James Harper and injuring Werner Foerster with the intent to kill. She was sentenced to life plus thirty-three years in prison. She escaped from the Clinton Correctional Facility in New York on November 2, 1979, and fled to Cuba (after five years underground) where much of the autobiography was written and where she currently lives in exile.

This chapter analyzes the poetry, prose and open letters of *Assata: An Autobiography* and contextualizes Assata Shakur's manifesto within the revolutionary aesthetics of the 1970s and the identity politics of that period. It examines the rhetorical strategies of regeneration featured in Shakur's autobiographical manifesto that help to regenerate Black Power. Toward such ends, Shakur situates herself as a leader and as a martyr within the context of past leaders, using a nostalgia for Black Power leaders as inspiration for the activism ahead. She remembers black history and the centuries of oppression that has plagued black life and highlights the importance of cultural nationalism. In addition, she commits herself to revolutionary action and the politics of self-defense while showing solidarity with the Third World. Finally, she explains the historical and contemporary exigencies that prompt continued action, including police brutality, the prison-industrial complex, the judicial system and false accusations of cop killing. As a rhetoric of regeneration, *Assata* demands a place for Shakur's narrative among the memoirs of the sixties as well as the organizational manifestos of the Black Power movement.¹⁸

The chapter begins by examining the role of the *Foreword*, penned by Angela Davis, and the *Introduction*, presented by Lennox Hinds, Esq., as commentary that situates Assata Shakur as part of the vanguard of black liberation and Black Power. Davis and Hinds function as interlocutors or character witnesses for Shakur, situating her in a history of white repression and black resistance while humanizing her, condemning her trial, and elevating her to the status of intellectual leader. As black intellectuals, they help to place Shakur in a context where she has the credibility to lead the next phase of the Black Power movement, situating her rhetoric of regeneration in the context of black liberation history, stressing the urgency of new Black Power activism.

Second, the chapter considers the ways in which Shakur uses literacy and revolutionary language in her poems to describe the history of violence and resistance necessary to frame the new black struggle. Her poems center on the idea of hope, which make it easier for a reader to identify with Shakur as a leader. As a strategy of regeneration, the theme of hope also helps to recruit new members, since Shakur emphasizes that the future of black liberation struggle is bright.

Third, Shakur's text advances an identity for black America that centers on dignity in the face of white repression. Her anecdotes about her family's values serve to underscore not only the history of strong black families but also a commitment to black pride, which provides the basis for Black Power organizing. This helps her pay homage to the history of collective black resistance that shaped her rhetoric of regeneration but which also resonates with the values of contemporary black families. In connecting her family values and the history of black resistance, Shakur positions herself as an inevitable outcome of the politics of her era and she also makes herself much more palatable,

understandable, and sympathetic as a leader because her childhood and values mirror that of so many other black Americans. It is here, in Shakur's childhood, that we see the genesis of her transformation into a cultural nationalist as she privileges black discourses and the black community.

Shakur also provides a staggering critique of (white) history that emphasizes the importance of black liberation heroes, particularly the quintessential revolutionary Harriet Tubman. This regenerative strategy helps to partially feminize black liberation history, though Shakur also praises black men in the liberation effort, which limits her ability to privilege the feminine entirely. These rhetorical strategies help her to normalize black liberation in the context of black history, to place her in the company of black leaders who are already embraced by black communities, and to sketch a history of black repression and resistance that is both historical and contemporary. Black revolutionary heroes, like Tubman, provide inspiration for the work ahead and also illustrate that resistance can be effective in countering state violence. Such exigencies are integral to a rhetoric of regeneration as the impetus for continued activism in the face of such historical *and* contemporary oppressions.

Fourth, Shakur's autobiographical manifesto also helps to feminize the Black Power movement in ways that partially resist the masculinized histories surrounding Black Power by retracing a history of black female cultural resistance through metaphors of (re)birth. Though Shakur is insistent about the role of women in the re(birth) of Black Power, her metaphors are complicated by the naturalization of men's roles in procreation/birth metaphors. She also details the intersectional nature of violence directed at black women and their political and cultural responses to that state-based

repression. Shakur's text is a crucible of resistance that helps to solidify her as a Black Power leader, both through her own writing, and through the testimony of prominent members of the black liberation struggle, men and women. Although she herself is rarely included in lists of Black Power leaders or intellectuals, her personal history and her account of the Black Power movement of the 1960s and early 1970s helps to underscore the importance of black women in revolutionary politics. Shakur's poetry also adds a new gendered dimension in understanding both the influence of the Black Arts movement on black activism and also the ways in which the sexism of Black Power has made the poetry of black women invisible. Critical work examining Shakur's poetry illustrates how literary discourses function as acts of protest, which reasserts a prominent role for black women and Black Power in black liberation organizations and in Black Arts activities.

Finally, this chapter argues that *Assata* re-centers the prison and the political prisoner at the heart of black liberation discourse as a way of transcending the end of the modern civil rights era and as a way of prompting action. Shakur's text provides an account of her confinement and trial as well as of the history of black resistance that most certainly represents the margins of black resistance and which has the power to transform our understanding of historical knowledge. By positioning the police, the judicial system and the prison-industrial complex as enemies, the text utilizes strategies of regeneration that can mobilize new allies into action around the exigency of issues pertaining to black repression. This section also discusses Shakur's insistence upon armed self-defense, as a strategy to counter such enemies, as well as her indictments against nonviolence as a movement tactic. This regenerative strategy positions her in a militant and assertive

history of resistance that recalls Black Power, but which highlights the importance of movement strategies, which are constantly changing as the landscape of oppression and resistance evolves.

Because black liberation histories have been demonized and also hidden by both the government and the media, the memoirs and manifestos of the Black Power movement reassert the resistance politics of black liberation from within the context of prison. Shakur's autobiographical manifesto is also itself, an act of social protest that reconstitutes the Black Power movement by beginning a cycle of protest surrounding incarceration.

Testimony for the Accused: The "Foreword" in Shakur's Autobiographical Manifesto

Autobiography is an act of self-definition. In the case of a revolutionary, penning a life story is what Stephen Butterfield calls "self-assertion with defiance."¹⁹ Assata Shakur's autobiographical manifesto was published in 1987 by Lawrence Hill Books and reprinted in 2001. In an interview from Havana in 1987, Shakur says that she chose Lawrence Hill to publish her text because "they published George Jackson's letters" and she felt she "could trust them with her story."²⁰ Her text begins with two character witnesses who vouch for her legitimacy as a revolutionary voice and who directly address the audience before we are exposed to her own narrative.²¹ This section examines the strategies that Angela Davis and Lennox Hinds use to frame Shakur's autobiography in their forewords and argues that both writers function as character witnesses for Shakur, whose credibility was horribly maligned by the New Jersey state police and by the local media throughout her trials. The structure of their accounts parallels those of William Lloyd Garrison, Amy Post and others who testified to the credibility of the slave narrators

more than a century earlier. In the larger narrative, the comments by Davis and Hinds serve to underscore the need for a new leader and to position Shakur's narrative within the larger framework of brutality and resistance that has characterized black life in America continuously. They connect her struggle to those of other political prisoners, which helps to politicize prisons in this new phase of Black Power.

Former BPP member Angela Davis pens the first foreword in the 2001 release of the book. Her name graces the final page of the foreword and is dated "University of Santa Cruz, March 2000," clearly associating her with the academy, literacy, and authority. Davis begins by establishing her relationship with Lennox Hinds, Shakur's lawyer and the second character witness who follows Davis' foreword but continues by discussing the racial oppression of the 1970s that fueled Shakur's trial and conviction.

Davis says:

In the 1970s, Assata Shakur's image was deployed on official FBI wanted posters and in the popular media as visual evidence of the terrorist motivations of the black liberation movement. Black militants were assumed to be enemies of the state and were associated with communist challenges to capitalist democracy. The protracted search for Assata, during which she was demonized in ways that are now unimaginable, served further to justify the imprisonment of vast numbers of political activists, many of whom remain locked up today.²²

Davis describes the ways that dominant media demonized Assata Shakur as a terrorist and clearly indicates that the war against Shakur in the press was an ideological one, pitting terrorism against freedom, communism against democracy. Davis explicitly addresses the implication by arguing that the demonization of Shakur served to legitimize

the imprisonment of political activists that were categorized similarly. In this way, Shakur's entire text stands as a reconstruction of her "personal image, which has been distorted and even destroyed by official documents."²³

Davis continues her discussion of this climate of fear and racial hatred by evaluating Shakur's character for the reader. She writes, "As you read her extraordinary autobiography, you will discover a woman who has nothing in common with the hostile representations that refuse to expire.... As you follow her life story, you will discover a compassionate human being with an unswerving commitment to justice that travels easily across racial and ethnic lines, in and out of prisons and across oceans of time."²⁴ Here, Davis provides her evaluation of Shakur's character, her struggles and her humanity. Davis stresses how inhumane Shakur's treatment was, how similar she is to the reader, and how she should be revered as an example of compassion, justice and activism; she also though highlights the fact that Shakur's text crosses multiple boundaries of meaning, of time, and of space, which helps to elevate her as a survivor and as a leader.

In addition, Davis comments on Shakur's trial and Shakur's innocence. She notes that under New Jersey state law, "if a person's presence at the scene of a crime can be construed as 'aiding and abetting' the crime, that person can be convicted of the substantive crime itself."²⁵ Shakur's conviction was won despite the testimony of three neurologists that all demonstrated that

her median nerve had been severed by gunshot wounds, rendering her unable to pull the trigger, and that her clavicle had been shattered by a shot that could only have been made while she was seated in the car with her hands raised. Other experts testified that the neutron activation analysis administered by the police

right after the shootout showed no gun residue on her fingers, meaning she had not shot a weapon.²⁶

Davis adds that Shakur was additionally convicted of weapons possession, despite the fact that none of the guns were identified as being handled by her and that she was also convicted for the “attempted murder of state trooper Harper, who had sustained a minor injury at the shootout.”²⁷ Davis’ testimony at the beginning of the text disrupts the official history of Shakur’s arrest and provides an alternative narrative about her trial that makes Shakur a victim of the state and martyr. By speaking here on Shakur’s behalf, Davis recounts the testimony of the trial, acquits her of the charges, and creates a rhetorical space for Shakur to be silent in the narrative about the details of the trial. Davis, however, is also a strategic character witness because she, too, had been wrongly imprisoned as a political prisoner and was a long-time Black Power activist.²⁸ Davis’ comments underscore Shakur’s credibility about police brutality and misconduct, the judicial system, and the prison-industrial complex.

One of Shakur’s lawyers, Lennox Hinds (former president of the National Conference of Black Lawyers and law professor at Rutgers University), provides the second foreword in the 2001 edition of the text. Hinds invites the reader behind the scenes to witness the personal account of Shakur’s life. By describing Shakur’s childhood, Hinds is able to humanize her, to make her more accessible as a leader and to connect her struggle to that of the history of black America. He continues by noting that “it was the racism riddling every aspect of the early life of this sensitive, intellectually gifted, and life-passionate child, as she struggled to establish her own identity, that led her to seek solutions to the catastrophic impact of racism and economic oppression on all

people of color in the United States. It is racist America that provides the context for the making of this Black revolutionary.”²⁹ His appreciation for her role as a black revolutionary makes the idea of black revolution more palatable to a reader because he locates the impulses behind this identity move in the larger socio-economic trends that permeate American society. And, in describing Shakur as a bright child trying to find solutions to racial and economic oppression, Hinds is positioned in a kind of paternal role that authorizes her actions for the reader.

Following his judgment of Shakur’s character, Hinds evaluates her trial from a lawyer’s perspective. He writes, “Assata Shakur did not receive a fair trial in Middlesex County, New Jersey. She had been convicted in the press and in the minds of the general public from the moment she was apprehended in New Jersey and over and over again until her trial.”³⁰ His denunciation of Shakur’s trial foreshadows the lengthy discussion of Shakur’s numerous trials and the caricatures of her in the media. So, before the reader has even encountered Shakur’s version of events, two character witnesses of great stature in the black community have proclaimed her innocence and have provided accounts of her human nature, which humanize her and make her more accessible to the reader, particularly because her credibility was shattered by the media and the FBI.

Hinds concludes his foreword with a note to Assata herself, which bolsters his claims about her importance as a symbolic figure. He addresses her as a “sister” and thanks Shakur for sharing her voice, passion and commitment to black liberation struggle to readers of her manifesto. He adds, “Meanwhile, we in this society must remind ourselves again how we threaten our own interests and rights when we condone by our silence the government’s use of surveillance, attacks on the legitimacy of political

activists, and the use of criminal law to suppress and punish political dissent.”³¹ While he addresses himself to Assata, his "sister" in the struggle for black liberation, he is really orienting himself to the audience and providing a lesson about participating in one's own oppression. He warns the reader that because of community negligence, the government was able to silence Shakur's voice for an extended period of time. He also makes the reader culpable for the consequences of community silence in the face of governmental oppression. As such, the brutality that Shakur receives is part of a larger history of violence that political dissidents often face. By positioning Shakur as a victim of violence rather than a perpetrator, Hinds is able to connect her persecution to the daily struggles of black Americans in a way that cements her cause to theirs.

These strategies by Angela Davis and Lennox Hinds reinforce the illegitimacy of Assata Shakur's trial, provide humanized accounts of her personality, and bolster Shakur's testimony with their own credibility as revolutionary intellectuals. They also discuss the audience's responsibility to civic life in supporting public activism against the government when it seeks out members of subaltern communities to demonize and imprison. This helps to activate readers into activism because it makes them complicit in state violence if they do not act on the behalf of Shakur. Both forewords orient the reader and frame Shakur's narrative and poetry as the writing of a revolutionary, innocent of violence, but committed to the liberation of her people. They also elevate her to the role of leader by addressing her as a sister, a comrade and a freedom fighter who has been unjustly imprisoned. In this way, both Davis and Hinds presage the critiques that Shakur provides about her detention, treatment by the police, her trials and her unswerving commitment to black liberation through writing.

The “Power of Writing” and the Poetry of Liberation

In discussing the means of disciplining prison detainees, Michel Foucault describes “the power of writing,” which is essential to surveillance regimes in prison. The “power of writing” allows the prison administration to accumulate massive documentation about detainees, which permits comparisons and the “organization of comparative fields making it possible to classify, to form categories, to determine averages, to fix norms.” The result is that the individual detainee is reduced to a statistic, “a describable, analysable object” that can be compared to others and measured based on factors of the “population” at-large. Foucault writes, “This turning of lives into writing is no longer a procedure of heroization; it functions as a procedure of objectification and subjection.”³² The prison official, then, is at the center of power in examining and describing the detainee, through systems of surveillance, classification and description, which reify the pseudo-science of the prison. The ban on reading and writing materials for many prisoners is the most pervasive example of the control that prison officials seek to maintain over prisoners; for those inmates who are imprisoned for their politics or who become politicized while incarcerated, the consequences of resisting the surveillance regime increase exponentially. The ban on writing, “itself provoked by the particular aptitudes of political prisoners, serves to condition in an important way, one of the crucial modes of political prisoner resistance: writing.”³³ Writing, then, poses a continued and threatening challenge to the control over “the power of writing” that prison officials wish to assert and, since prisoners cannot leave the confines of their facility or their cell to participate in direct action, writing serves as one of the few available strategies of regeneration.

Autobiographical manifestoes are places of possibility, where convention is blurred or completely shattered as the writer disposes of dominant assumptions, particularly when they are written under the watchful eyes of prison officials. “The ‘I’ of the autobiographical manifesto does not write under the sign of desire or the sign of anxiety,” but instead, provides hope and the limitless opportunities for regeneration.³⁴ By “[c]alling the ‘self’ into the future, the manifesto attempts to actively position the subject in a potentially liberated future distanced from the constraining and oppressive identifications inherent in the everyday practices of the *ancien régime*.”³⁵ To craft an alternative utopian future, the autobiographical manifesto always “foreground[s] the relationship of identities to power. It insists on new interpretations, new positionings of the subject as a means of wresting power, resisting universalized repetitions that essentialize, naturalize, totalize the subject.”³⁶ Often, autobiographical manifestos highlight power structures, like those buttressing the prison-industrial complex, and the importance of interpretive power through the use of “the language of revolution,” which is “future-oriented, explosive, [and] subversive.”³⁷ Revolutionary language helps to break up and destroy traditional power structures, particularly those that represent “the other” but they also help to craft an alternative future, where power is imagined differently, where communities and their relationships to one another resist the neo-colonial structures that govern race, gender and class.

Assata Shakur is part of a large group of writers whose testimony about prison constitutes resistance to the systems of surveillance and classification characterizing prison life. While incarcerated, Shakur was often denied access to writing materials so her ability to express her experience was limited to poems because they are short,

portable and can be written without extensive materials. The prose of her autobiography, however, was written from exile in Cuba. Like many women, Shakur records her experiences in prisons when she can, though she described the effects of the “power of writing” and the “power of speaking” on her after many trips to solitary confinement. This strategy makes Shakur into a martyr because her experience of being silenced serves as a synecdoche of all other prisoners, political or not. For example, when Shakur arrived at Riker’s Island where she awaited her federal trial, she expresses her excitement to be out of solitary confinement and around other black women. The effects of solitary confinement, however, were also very profound and she could only sit and stare. She writes, “I know i must have looked like i was crazy, staring like i was, but i just couldn’t help it. I was overwhelmed. I could barely talk, though. When someone asked my name i stammered and stuttered. My voice was so low everyone constantly asked me to repeat myself. That was one of the things that always happened to me after long periods of solitary confinement: i would forget how to talk.³⁸ Not only is Shakur’s writing limited, but her ability to speak is also damaged by what Foucault calls the “calculated economy of punishments” meant to shape and discipline the body by forcing obedience to the prison warden, so that the prisoner may be constantly surveilled.³⁹ Historically, solitary confinement “was once enforced for ‘corrective’ purposes by allowing the prisoner to look into himself, to introspect and meditate on the nature of his crime and eventually be guided to the right ways, it is also employed to destroy the psychological integrity of the isolated prisoner.”⁴⁰ For Shakur, solitary confinement was used to strip her of her voice, her personhood, and her dignity. Her writing exists as a rebuke to the prison system’s degradation and it serves to correct the “official” accounts of her activities in the BLA.

As the first memoir of the Black Liberation Army, Shakur's text reflects strategies of regeneration by (re)presenting both the ideology of black liberation and also the tactical successes of its most famous member by asking that the reader perform resistance criticism through an alliance with Shakur. This strategy elevates the BLA and its ideology to the forefront of black struggle, in absence of many Black Power leaders and organizations that were decimated by COINTELPRO. In this manner, Shakur's text transcends the Assata Shakur (and certainly the JoAnne Chesimard) of the late 1960s and negotiates a self that is far more complex because the writer is no longer coherent as the object of the FBI's ire. Like other autobiographical manifestos, writings like *Assata* are "texts recording the negotiation of the female self-in-process between the historical fact of displacement and the possibility of textual self-presence."⁴¹ Sidonie Smith calls this the "politics of fragmentation" because the writer has devised a "contestatory autobiographical practice" as a "means to counter the centrifugal power of the old 'self.'"⁴² Genres are transcended and traditional modes of expression are transformed by collapsing types of literary performance with female creativity and voice.⁴³ And, as Caren Kaplan cautions, "Refusing to read testimonial writing by poor and imprisoned women *only* as autobiography links resistance literature with resistance criticism."⁴⁴

By destabilizing the traditional relationship between the author and the reader, a text like *Assata* can read as a layered intervention into a history and memory that is not controlled by those who have been its victims; it also allows the text to become a moment of regenerative and revitalized interest in a political issue. The text, then, holds out the possibility of significant emancipatory power, both through its prose and, particularly, its poetry. The politics of fragmentation and the politics of regeneration, then, are

intrinsically linked in autobiographical manifestos of this phase of the Black Power movement, as black liberation is reconstituted through the discourses of its new leaders. Autobiography and poetry are also interwoven throughout *Assata*, helping to articulate Shakur's criticisms of the state, her innermost feelings about incarceration, her friends and family, and her life story, particularly because these are the parts of her that have been left out of official history and memory. As such, Shakur's text also works to reconstitute a movement that had receded. To do this, Shakur's text moves from poetry to prose and also from her prison experience to her childhood and from chapter to chapter, disrupting the linear pattern of story-telling common to traditional autobiography, but engaging the reader to be sympathetic to the writer and her political ideologies. The "politics of fragmentation" also help to rebuild a collective identity around Black Power.

The following sections begin with an examination Assata Shakur's poetry, which firmly positions her a part of the Black Arts movement and which exhibits a rhetoric of regeneration dependent on a collective identity for black Americans through cultural discourses that emphasize pride, dignity, the importance of naming, and the centrality of the family to black liberation efforts. In Shakur's poetry, we also see the genesis of her conversion to cultural nationalism, which helps to position black culture as something that must continue to be elevated in this new phase of Black Power. We see her poems comment about the future of black liberation, which Shakur sees optimistically, despite her condemnation of the injustices of police, the courts and the prisons of America.

Shakur also discusses black history at length and her discourses on the subject of black and white heroes helps her to undermine the credibility of men like George

Washington and Abraham Lincoln while elevating Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner and other revolutionary black heroes that sought to overcome slavery. This nostalgia for black liberation heroes serves to iterate the history of oppression that continues uninterrupted, to emphasize the cultural leaders that have been martyrs for the freedom of black people, and to situate Shakur herself within a vibrant history of black revolutionary resistance.

In examining the poetry and prose of Shakur, we also see the feminization of black liberation history through the elevation of black female heroes, the metaphors of (re)birth and regeneration that permeate her text and through her narratives about motherhood, childbirth and daughters. This strategy of regeneration helps her to offer her image as a synecdoche of the struggle for black liberation, since women have always been a part of black resistance. It also helps to elevate her as a leader *among women* in this new phase of Black Power, particularly in her role as a mother of her daughter. Women were so underrepresented in the Black Power movement and, when they actually had power, they were ignored as unimportant. Consequently, recruiting black women through tropes of black femininity seems like a strong tactic. Although Shakur privileges a black liberation history that is feminized in significant ways, this move is partial since she also naturalizes the role of men in Black Power and black liberation in this new phase of Black Power by including some of their contributions historically and in the conception of the black family that often reifies patriarchal relationships.

The final section details the strategies of Shakur's writings in re-centering and feminizing the prison experience within the framework of this new phase of Black Power. Here Shakur explores the effects of prison on the black women who work in prisons as well as those who are incarcerated as a way of creating a sense of urgency in struggles

surrounding the prison-industrial complex and political prisoners. In exhibiting the strategies of regeneration, Shakur highlights the brutality of police officers, the judicial system and the prison-industrial complex and ultimately positions herself as a martyr who has the ability to transcend prison and exile to lead the movement against these enemies. For black women readers, this highlights the centrality of these enemies to the everyday lives of black women, which may mobilize them to action.

The Emergent Leader in the Poetry of *Assata*: Lessons of Hope

Shakur punctuates her life experiences by contrasting her harsh treatment during her incarceration to the bold realities of her youth. Her narrative begins with a poem, written in the present tense and titled "Affirmation," which provides a mantra of hope for the wayward who seek hope, love and kindness.⁴⁵ This also provides a positive frame for black liberation, which is a crucial component in recruiting new allies to the receding Black Power movement. To establish herself as a leader of this new phase of the movement, Shakur testifies about her belief system, her personal truth. As a result, most of the lines of this first poem begin with "I believe" or "I have," which firmly position Assata as the legitimate authority over her own life and which demonstrate Shakur's personal, particular truths. These truths include an emphasis on the sanctity of nature and both the "magic" and "wisdom" of the female body. Though she believes in life, she also has seen (masculine) violence, "destruction" and the "death parade" praying and saluting to the "bloodthirsty maggots" of the state. Shakur writes:

I have been locked by the lawless.
Handcuffed by the haters.
Gagged by the greedy.
And if I know anything at all,
it's that a wall is just a wall
and nothing more at all.

It can be broken down.⁴⁶

The presence of the “I” in this particular passage provides documentation of the treatment Shakur received from “lawless” and “greedy” agents of the state. She is able to describe her tormentors but also resist their “truths” about who she “is,” what she has “done,” and what she should do to repent. Ultimately, in both the poem and in the outside world, it is Assata who triumphs over these “greedy,” “lawless” haters” as she reminds us that she literally broke down the wall and escaped her captors; she is the strong leader that can withstand the violence of the state and still be hopeful about the future. Shakur’s message also has the possibility of resonating with the millions of other black men and women who have dealt with the institutionalized racism of the state. This poem, then, provides a foundation of hope for those participating in black resistance projects, in addition to providing a common enemy and a strong ethical component that emphasizes self-determination. Despite the FBI’s constant efforts to destroy liberation movements like the Black Power movement, Shakur asks readers to “become heroes in the cause of liberation,” seemingly working to regenerate the will to resist even those who have been partially successful in destroying the leaders of these movements.⁴⁷

In her strategies to rearticulate a narrative of black resistance that may frame this new phase of Black Power, Shakur echoes many other black writers who view those that uphold “law and order” in the United States as the real criminals. Frederick Douglass certainly expressed this sentiment in his 1845 *Narrative*, “I could regard them in no other light than a band of successful robbers, who had left their homes, and gone to Africa, and stolen us from our homes, and in a strange land reduced us to slavery.”⁴⁸ Former Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver made a similar claim about Robert F. Kennedy when he wrote,

“Robert Kennedy has been in some prison of his character for a long time. He’s a convict, possibly a lifer, and I got the impression that he lives, like convicts, by one law and one law alone: I shall do only that which is expedient for survival so that I will have one more chance outside of these chains.”⁴⁹ Shakur is clearly indicting “lawless” officials of the state for their participation in criminal acts against her, much like Douglass and Cleaver, as a way of inverting her relationship to the culture’s oppressors who pose as allies in the struggle for racial justice. This also serves to link her to some of the most powerful black leaders in U.S. history, which places her squarely at the front of this new phase of the Black Power movement.

Just as Shakur highlights the criminality of the American nation-state, she also affirms her belief in universal notions of life, birth, love and truth, which are repeated throughout the poem, and indeed, the entire autobiography:

I believe in living
I believe in birth.
I believe in the sweat of love
and in the fire of truth.

And i believe that a lost ship,
steered by tired, seasick sailors,
can still be guided home
to port.⁵⁰

Here, we have the introduction of the birth metaphor that permeates her discourse with a constant sense of hope for the future, for new generations who struggle. This poem expresses optimism about sailors lost at sea that should not yet be abandoned. Is she talking about people in black communities that are unaware of or participate in their own oppression? Is she reminding us that white people within the hegemonic structure can change? The ambiguity here is useful because in the context of the larger narrative, it

can be read as a sense of hope for the nation and hope for black liberation. Central to black liberation is the sense of hope that Shakur seeks to extend into future Black Power programs and in the text, this hope is expressed through narratives of Shakur's childhood, her family, and the values important to them: black dignity, self-determination, and community.

Constructing a Collective Identity: Dignity, Self-Determination and Repression in *Assata*

Culture is a primary source for the creation and production of identity, particularly for movements oriented toward social change.⁵¹ Assata Shakur's text frames and is framed by the dialogue about knowledge production, hope, and love that center the black family at the forefront of resistance and her anecdotes about childhood center her adolescence as the environment for her transformation into a cultural nationalist. Her autobiography, though, is also a part of the emerging revolutionary literary aesthetic in the United States which follows in the wake of anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist poets and Négritude, tiers monde writers like Aimé Césaire, Leon Damas, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Franz Fanon, who interrogate their relationship to their families, their communities, the land where they reside, and the nation-state. Like these writers, Shakur uses poetry to bridge the local and the global, her family and the world, which helps her to express anti-colonial revolutionary sentiments from within the framework of cultural nationalism and Black Power, while still situating her activism in an understandable context: her family.⁵² She utilizes the language of Third World resistance to frame her struggle and that of her family against white racism in the United States.⁵³

The values of Shakur's family help her to pay homage to a collective heritage of resistance that fuels her own activism but that also helps to frame contemporary struggles

with the knowledge of the past. Her childhood recollections also serve to ground her observations in the kind of experiences that a reader, particularly a black reader from the same era, might recognize. Her narrative begins interrogating the relationship between the self and the community by examining Shakur's childhood. Shakur writes, "The FBI cannot find any evidence that i was born. On my FBI Wanted poster, they list my birth date as July 16, 1947, and, in parentheses, 'not substantiated by birth records.'" She continues, "Anyway, I was born."⁵⁴ Here, Shakur introduces us to the kind of information that traditional autobiography highlights: her parents and their histories, her sister, and her early childhood in Wilmington, North Carolina. The FBI's inability to locate evidence of her birth is indeed a striking commentary on racial being and nothingness, much like that of Booker T. Washington, who at the beginning of his autobiography writes, "I suspect I must have been born somewhere and at sometime."⁵⁵ This strategy links her to black leaders like Washington who used autobiography to craft ideologies of resistance. She continues by discussing similar themes that appear in many autobiographical manifestos authored by black leaders, particularly personal dignity.

Personal dignity is a theme that pervades the entire narrative and stands in contrast to the narratives of her interactions with the state, which rob her of dignity. She writes that her grandmother and grandfather were fanatic about instilling their grandchildren with personal dignity and she writes, "My grandparents strictly forbade me to say 'yes ma'am' and yes sir' or to look down at my shoes or to make subservient gestures when talking to white people.... I was told to speak in a loud, clear voice and to hold my head up high, or risk having my grandparents knock it off my shoulders."⁵⁶

Shakur grew up with grandparents who insisted on respect and who taught her how to deal with life in the segregated South but these skills have clearly helped to shape the leader that she has become. Her grandfather would tell her, “Don’t you respect nobody that don’t respect you, you hear me?” And, her grandmother would say, “Don’t you let anybody mistreat you, you hear? We’re not raising you up to be mistreated, you hear?” Shakur writes, “more than anything else i learned in life, [these lessons] helped me to deal with the things i would face growing up in amerika.”⁵⁷ As Shakur remembers the values of her grandparents, she notes that for them, “pride and dignity were hooked up to things like position and money. For them, being ‘just as good’ as white people meant having what white people had.” Shakur notes that her “awareness of class differences in the Black community came at an early age” because her grandmother was determined to make sure that Shakur was “part of Wilmington’s talented tenth – the privileged class – part of the so-called Black bourgeoisie.”⁵⁸

These anecdotes provide a very specific moral upbringing that serve as an origin for Shakur’s oppositional consciousness and they also record life in the segregated South, which illustrated to Shakur at a very young age how cruel racism could be. At the same, time, Shakur positions her narratives about her youth against the narrative of surveillance, harassment, imprisonment and violence that has characterized black activist life in the United States from the 1920s on, just by invoking the FBI. Even her infancy is tainted by the far-reaching arms of the FBI, a conspirator in the creation and maintenance of the prison-industrial complex, and the organization charged with destroying community activism and preserving the integrity of the “nation.” In this way, Shakur’s text reinvents

her individual identity but does so while crafting a group subjectivity that is premised upon dignity, empowerment and community support.

For Shakur, origins are important for elucidating shared histories. Central to this project is naming, which is one of the cultural resources that has helped to reclaim the dignity that has historically been stripped from black Americans through the plantation system and through brutality enacted by the police and other government-sponsored forces. While they were living in the South, Shakur and her family would go to Bop City, a popular beach in South Carolina, which her grandparents insisted on calling Freeman's Beach. Shakur writes,

Throughout my childhood, the name Freeman had no particular significance. It was a name just like any other name. It wasn't until i was grown and began to read Black history that i discovered the significance of the name. After slavery, many Black people refused to use the last names of their masters. They called themselves "Freeman" instead. The name was also used by Africans who were freed before slavery was 'officially' abolished, but it was mainly after the abolition of chattel slavery that many Black people changed their names to Freeman. After learning this, i saw my ancestors in a new light.⁵⁹

Joanne Chesimard was born Joanne Freeman (she married Louis Chesimard) and so this synecdoche about her surname, Freeman, is a lesson on reading the histories of black resistance that are embedded in naming. It positions Shakur within a family tradition of resistance that highlights the importance of freedom to black people all the way back to slavery. And, just as her family would insist on calling "Bop City" "Freeman's Beach," Shakur also changes her name from JoAnne Chesimard to one that reflects her new black

identity as she becomes reborn in the black liberation struggle. “Assata” means “she who struggles,” Olugbala (her middle name) means “love for the people,” and Shakur means “the grateful.” These chosen names are fitting for a revolutionary who has given her life for black liberation and who is positioned to lead the new phase of a movement that struggles with the state constantly under threat of violence.

Shakur spends quite a bit of the text discussing the importance of dignity and self-respect but she also tackles issues of self-hatred in black communities. This strategy is common to generational texts of her era and serves to underscore the pervasiveness of racism, as young children internalize inferiority in a white supremacist culture. She talks about calling other kids “nappy head,” “jungle bunnies” and “bush boogies” and lists many of the taunts that children would sling at one another. She remembers that “Black made any insult worse” and that she and her peers “had never heard the words ‘Black is beautiful’”⁶⁰ She continues, “We had been completely brainwashed and we didn’t even know it. We accepted white value systems and white standards of beauty and, at times, we accepted the white man’s view or any other standard of beauty.... And, to varying degrees, we each made them true within ourselves because we believed.”⁶¹ These anecdotes of her childhood are recorded to highlight the extent to which racism permeates even the lives of children and can be read as a justification for cultural revolution and black self-determination. Shakur’s early work with the Black Panther Party and her later work with the Black Liberation Army rejected the negativity surrounding blackness and embracing the black pride advocated by Black Power proponents.⁶² For Shakur, revolutionary action has always involved both cultural

resistance and paramilitary resistance and these stories illustrate how every black child is a potential revolutionary.

Cultural resistance is a central tenet of Black Power and it is spread through processes of cultural identification to movement veterans.⁶³ In her manifesto, Shakur positions black culture against the dominant culture that oppresses black America to demonstrate her fidelity to black people and to black liberation. In “Culture,” she writes:

i must confess that waltzes
do not move me.
i have no sympathy
for symphonies.

i guess i hummed the Blues
too early,
and spent too many midnights
out wailing in the rain.⁶⁴

Here, Shakur asserts a cultural nationalism that elevates the blues over waltzes, which signifies first, a symbol of the artistic imperialism of Europe and second, an art form expressing the horrors inflicted by white America. Harlow adds, “The poets, like the guerilla leaders of the resistance movements, consider it necessary to wrest that expropriated historicity back, reappropriate it for themselves in order to reconstruct a new world-historical order.”⁶⁵ This new order, then, is mobilized to help rebuild what has been destroyed in a movement and to reassert cultural artifacts, discourses, and histories that have been forgotten or erased. Resistance poems like this “actively engage in the historical process of struggle against the cultural oppression of imperialism, and assert thereby their own polemical historicity.”⁶⁶ The tensions between white art forms like the waltz and resistance arts like the blues underlie the larger questions of culture that form the basis of cultural nationalism. Sigmund Ro adds that music played a huge role in

redefining black aesthetics as writers began to privilege Third World forms of expression over white norms, usually by opposing symphony (and other forms of European musical culture) to jazz or blues (and other forms of native expression), metered verse to free verse. Shakur is able to highlight the “anti-humanism of Western art and the destructive intellectual and social values sustaining it” by elevating artistic forms from within black American culture.⁶⁷

Shakur continues by examining her relationship to current culture, even from prison, as she reevaluates the aesthetics that shape black perceptions of liberation activists. She writes:

i understand that i am
slightly out of fashion.
The in-crowd wants no part of me.

Someone said that i am too sixties
Black.
Someone else told me i had failed to mellow.

It is true i have not
straightened back my hair.
Nor rediscovered maybelline.
And it is also true
that I still like African things,
like statues and dresses
and PEOPLE.

And it is also true
that struggle is foremost in my mind.
And i still rap about discipline—
my anger has not run away.⁶⁸

She concludes the poem, “Anyway, i’m really kind of happy/being slightly out of style.”⁶⁹

Shakur’s militancy is no longer “in style” and this characterization suggests that she sees herself as a veteran of a movement that is trying to reconstitute disciplined resistance built around conceptions of self-love. She is shunned by the petite bourgeois blacks that

have built an unholy alliance with the white liberal.⁷⁰ She criticizes those who have given up their afros for chemically straightened hair and who define beauty by the standards of America's white cosmetics companies, like Maybelline. The culture to which Shakur belongs and in some ways is nostalgic for and embraces blackness, Africa, struggle, discipline and anger. Shakur's critique of fashion, culture and the politics of the body remembers Africa and remembers that black *is* beautiful as she indicts the larger culture for being duped by white ideas of black culture.

Important to this struggle, too, is a vibrant history of black resistance that has created the traditions of Shakur and her family. Shakur's poem, "The Tradition," bears quotation at length and is the last bit of writing in the text, the bookend to "Affirmation." She begins and continues to repeat, "Carry it on now./Carry it on." before she describes the places across the globe where "Black People since the childhood of time" carried on the tradition of resistance in "Ghana and Mali and Timbuktu." Shakur remembers and describes the tradition of resistance during the slave trade, on slave ships, and on plantations where slaves

Fed Missy arsenic apple pies.
Stole axes from the shed.
Went and chopped off master's head.

We ran. We fought.
We organized an underground railroad.
An underground.

Shakur writes that the tradition of black resistance continued through literacy and art in newspapers, meetings, chants and cantatas, in poems and blues songs and "saxophone screams."

Black resistance continued in classrooms, churches, courtrooms, prisons, on soapboxes, in picket lines, welfare lines and unemployment lines, in sit-ins, pray-ins, march-ins, and die-ins where it confronted lynch mobs, rifles, water hoses, bulldogs, nightsticks, bullets, tanks, tear gas, needles, nooses, bombs, and birth control. Shakur writes,

In Selma and San Juan.

Mozambique. Mississippi.
In Brazil and in Boston,
We carried it on.

Though the lies and the sell-outs.
The mistakes and the madness.
Through pain and hunger and frustration,
We carried it on.

Carried the tradition.

Carried a strong tradition.

Carried a proud tradition.

Carried a Black tradition.

Carry it on.

Pass it down to the children.
Pass it down.
Carry it on.
Carry it on now.
Carry it on
TO FREEDOM!⁷¹

Shakur looks backward into the history of brutality and resistance and into the memories of black women and men to build the momentum for the regeneration of the Black Power movement. Her poem calls us “to remember ‘our burden of history’ and to rewrite those aporias of discourse that allow oppression to be repeated in different contexts.”⁷² H.

Bruce Franklin notes that the “most collective autobiography of the American prison is not any single work, but the body of poetry by Black prisoners,” which incorporates “the common oral and musical tradition developed in the songs of Black slavery and extended through the songs of Black peonage and imprisonment.”⁷³ Here, Shakur traces the entire history of black liberation work labeling it with the language of Black Power as a strong, proud, Black tradition, laden with dignity and perseverance as a way of remembering the struggles of the men and women who themselves took risks when others would not. It is this collective history and memory that Shakur is asking the reader to participate in as a witness and as an agent of change. As Harlow notes, “The dismemberment of the poetic identity is reconstructed in ties of solidarity with the people themselves. That dismemberment, part of imperialism’s strategy, conditions, however, the new literary and cultural agenda of the poets of the resistance movements and national liberation organizations.”⁷⁴ Through both her people’s history and her family’s history, we are seemingly meant to understand Shakur’s commitment to revolutionary change and cultural nationalism as she inspires new generations to agitate for change. We see the continuities of black resistance and also how she uses history as a cultural resource to press the case for black self-determination.

Shakur writes at length about the culture of a black revolutionary and about the necessity of black self-determination in the struggle for political and social quality:

I felt and still feel that it is necessary for Black revolutionaries to come together, analyze our history, our present condition, and to define ourselves and our struggle. Black self-determination is a basic right and if we do not have the right to determine our destinies, who does? I believe that to gain our liberation we

must come from the position of power and unity and that a Black revolutionary party, led by Black revolutionary leaders, is essential.⁷⁵

Shakur accentuates the importance of strong black leadership, which must always elucidate the vibrant history of black resistance and document the violence and subjugation that still prohibits black self-determination. Shakur suggests that the intellectual production of black leaders is central to the regeneration of black liberation; as a leader, her text is part of the intellectual work of the next generation of black activism.

Shakur's poetry and prose demonstrate a voluntary and exhaustive self-scrutiny that propels the reader to identify with her, to stretch their empathy and to rise up against a system of domination. Her poetry moves her from self-hatred to self-determination, and her audience towards group empowerment, as she makes militancy and the possibility of militant collective action possible once more. She also showcases her mastery of a form, poetry, which has long been the purview of whites. The choice to include her poetry places her as a black intellectual and a black artist where so few women have been included in anthologies, histories or critical works on artistic and intellectual productions of women in various organizations related to the Black Power movement. Shakur's autobiographical manifesto supplies a new space to interrogate strategies of social change because her poetry emphasizes the role of the black female poet "as both activist and leader" in the face of the pervasive sexism, classism, and homophobia in black intellectual circles of the 1960s and 1970s.⁷⁶ Sagri Dhairyam adds, "The only women poets included with any frequency in anthologies of [Black Power] poetry were Gwendolyn Brooks, Nikki Giovanni, and Sonia Sanchez..."⁷⁷ We can see

here, that Shakur's manifesto functions as a feminizing of the organizations of which she was a part (the BPP and the BLA), but also the artistic movement like the Black Arts movement, which is still understood as a masculine space.

These strategies of regeneration emphasize the importance of hope in black struggle. They also connect Shakur to a history of resistance, through culture, through naming and through her family, which prompted her embrace of black nationalism. This trajectory explains to the reader how one interrogates subjectivity to become an activist and it also helps to make Shakur palatable as a leader and as a recruiter of new Black Power allies. In continuing these strategies of regeneration, Shakur sustains a critique of history that elevates black revolutionary leaders: a group to which Shakur belongs.

Revolutionary Education: (Re)membering History, Creating History

Shakur's autobiographical manifesto centers on consciousness-raising, re-education and (re)membering, which epitomize the strategies of regeneration through the (re)writing of self history and black history. COINTELPRO and the FBI's war on black nationalism necessitated a rapid regeneration effort as the recruitment of new members was challenged by the brutality of the state. Activist leaders like Assata Shakur seize the opportunity to provide a counter-history and a counter-memory of the social movement as a whole. They also contextualize their organizations and their own individual lives in the broader struggle. The writings of veteran activists thus function as expressions of grievances but also as instructional, interpretive manuals for understanding the culture of a movement like Black Power.

In her autobiography, Assata comments at length about her (re)education through her association with black nationalist organizations, offering readers with an alternative

history that destabilizes white, male normativity.⁷⁸ Through anecdotal evidence, Assata is able to “correct” the historical inaccuracies and omissions, which perpetuate race, gender and class oppression as early as grade school. She comments, “I didn’t know what a fool they had made of me until I grew up and started to read real history. Not only was George Washington probably a big liar, but he had once sold a slave for a keg of rum. Here they had this old cracka slavemaster, who didn’t give a damn about black people, and they had me, an unwitting little Black child, doing a play in his honor.”⁷⁹ Here, Shakur uncovers the limitations and inherent racism of the nation’s “official” history, which frames racial discourse, and privileges black resistance writing in opposition to the nation’s cultural domination. This dichotomy also recognizes the ways that children are positioned within a particularly racist framework as unwitting participants in the continuation of their own oppression. This focus on her childhood serves Shakur’s goal of feminizing black resistance from the perspective of black girls, whose history is even more marginalized than that of black women. Additionally, Shakur’s re-education is also the reader’s re-education as she pinpoints the ironies and tragedies in black children’s acceptance of dominant history.

By exploring these foundational myths of American society, Shakur is simultaneously able to describe her personal enlightenment about pervasive racism and instruct her readers to interrogate the relationship between historical narratives and institutional racism. Shakur remembers being the only black child in her fourth grade class and reciting Whiteman’s poem “O Captain! My Captain!” because she was excited about Abraham Lincoln. She writes, “Little did I know that Lincoln was an arch-racist who had openly expressed his disdain for Black people. He was of the opinion that Black

people should be forcibly deported to Africa or anywhere else. We had been taught that the Civil War was fought to free the slaves, and it was not until college that I learned that the Civil War was fought for economic reasons.”⁸⁰ Shakur exposes the fallacies of these master narratives about America’s founding fathers and shows that the ideas concerning the nation have been built upon inherently racist assumptions. She writes that her knowledge of history even as an adult was limited, but she says, ”Harriet Tubman had always been my heroine, and she symbolized everything that was Black resistance to me. But it had never occurred to me that hundreds of Black people had got it together to fight for their freedom.”⁸¹ In a rare moment, here, Shakur privileges grass roots organizing in addition to highlighting the importance of leaders to black liberation struggle. She also acknowledges the gaps in her history, which, when filled, led her to understand her relationship to the nation and its history in a fundamentally different way as she recognized the continued subjugation of black people.

Where many other black revolutionaries cite male revolutionaries as their heroes, Shakur breaks tradition to elevate the status of a black female revolutionary. Harriet Tubman is such a foundational figure in black revolutionary history because she was the head of the Department of the South for the entire duration of the Civil War, she was the only American woman to lead both black and white troops in battle, she helped John Brown plan the attack on Harper’s Ferry, she spoke on the antislavery lecture circuit, she planned anti-slavery events with Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany, Wendell Phillips and others, and she was, of course, incredibly active in the Underground Railroad.⁸² In short, Harriet Tubman was a military and revolutionary hero in every way. As a leader of the BLA, Shakur connects herself to the feminized revolutionary history epitomized by

Tubman, legitimizing her resistance and providing a sense of historical continuity surrounding black female revolutionaries. In this way, Shakur continues to feminize black liberation.⁸³

The recognition of an alternative, revolutionary black history affected Assata physically as well as intellectually as the emerging counter-history empowered her. She says, “The day i found out about Nat Turner I was affected so strongly it was physical.... I had grown up believing the slaves hadn't fought back. I remember feeling ashamed when they talked about slavery in school. The teachers made it seem that Black people had nothing to do with the official 'emancipation' from slavery. White people had freed us.”⁸⁴ By offering this anecdote, Assata challenges traditional representations of abolitionists and “Honest Abe” by describing the ways that “History” subverted the narrative of black resistance in the South. This move is empowering because it allows her to dictate a version of history that is inclusive of black radical women, who have been traditionally erased from nationalist political movements. It also explicitly makes black America responsible for resisting oppression just as it castigates white racists for perpetuating inequality. By reframing the Civil War for her readers, Shakur contests the version of emancipation that ignores the resistance work of slaves, former slaves and freedmen in gaining their own freedom and instead, highlights the agency of U.S. blacks, particularly black women, and their role in their own oppression and liberation.

The lesson that Assata teaches in these accounts is one that critiques historical memory and the American educational system while reasserting the importance of black heroines and heroes. She explains:

All we usually hear about are the so-called responsible leaders, the ones who are “responsible” to our oppressors. In the same way that we don't hear about a fraction of the Black men and women who have struggled hard and tirelessly throughout our history, we don't hear about our heroes of today.... Nobody is going to give you the education you need to overthrow them. Nobody is going to teach you your true history, teach you your true heroes, if they know that that knowledge is going to set you free.... As long as we expect amerika's schools to educate us, we will remain ignorant.⁸⁵

Even her strategies for spelling amerika embrace a leftist, New Afrikan grammar in examining the historical omissions of black heroism as Shakur teaches that the silences in history are as important to memory as are the stories that do get (re)told.⁸⁶ Shakur is struggling against the erasure of her own voice from the movement and she is also expressing the importance of heroes to the movements for liberation as a way of connecting her struggles and politics to the larger struggle of black liberation in the United States, which helps to elevate her struggle as a black revolutionary with the martyrs that came before her.

Shakur is, however, trying to answer the demand of writers like Nancy L. Arnez who argue: “We need the revolutionary call again. The Black arts movement of the 1960s must be revived. Our artists must again become our prophets, our visionaries. They must again go to the people with the many deadly truths of our putrid, nonproductive lives.”⁸⁷ Arnez adds:

We need fighting songs, freedom songs again.... We must write stories exploring the Black struggles for power and control of our destiny; stories illustrating the

science of self-determination. Our stories for Black children must focus on our heroes – past and present.... We must prepare our people, young and old, for a protracted struggle for power – for control of the resources of the world.⁸⁸

In using a partially feminized counter-history as a resource mobilized against the incomplete, inaccurate and slanderous history of the Black Power movement, Shakur is able to resuscitate a vibrant, continuous narrative of black heroes and black resistance, which serves to educate new activists with the organizational history of black liberation. Positioning Harriet Tubman at the head of this historical reassessment signifies the historical importance of women to black liberation since this rhetorical strategy, at least partially, disrupts the centrality of traditional male heroes. Such rhetorical moves epitomize the strategies of regeneration because she corrects and documents the black liberation history that is elided by the COINTELPRO propaganda. Counter-history works as a glue, binding together former and current activists and reminds the reader that black women have been a vital part of black liberation through the Underground Railroad and its modern counterpart the Black Liberation Army.

Feminizing Black Power: Metaphors of Birth and Regeneration in *Assata*

Black Power organizations like the BPP and the BLA often saw the reproduction of black revolutionaries as a central commitment. Consequently, the rhetoric of Black Power often became one of regenerating the spirit of the movement by producing children. McNeil and Thompson argue, “tribes, families, and societies may raise their own future generations from infancy or childhood, but few complex organizations are able to do so.”⁸⁹ But, the Black Power movement, in many of its phases and organizations from the Nation of Islam to the Black Panther Party, saw reproduction as a

way of sustaining the fight for black liberation. In her classic treatise on motherhood *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Adrienne Rich writes, “the Black nationalist movement...declared that birth control and abortion are ‘genocidal’ and that Black women should feel guilty if they do *not* provide children to carry on the Black struggle for survival”⁹⁰ Consequently, motherhood and childrearing became the women’s work within the Black Power movement.

For women of the movement, however, reproduction became something of a double-bind because they were often excluded from power if they did not have heterosexual sex or children but having children made it difficult to patrol the neighborhoods at night or go underground, for example. And, though organizations like the Black Panthers tried to mandate that men and women work on the food programs or in the collective daycare, there was often backlash from men.⁹¹ Nonetheless, because of the state’s incessant demand to control black women’s bodies and their reproduction through birth control or force, having sex and children were often places where black women tried to wrench control back from the state.

For black women writers of the Black Power movement, writing and reproduction intersected and created the possibility for women to perform essential tasks of the revolution and thereby, gain power, both over black men who had often excluded them and from the white state that wanted to control their bodies. In writing, they expressed this dilemma by embracing metaphors of birth and rebirth to give them creative agency. Susan Stanford Friedman persuasively argues that, “In contrast to the phallic analogy [of the paintbrush, the pen, the gun] that implicitly excludes women from creativity, the childbirth metaphor validates women’s artistic effort by unifying their mental and

physical labor into (pro)creativity.”⁹² Metaphors of birth are useful in expressing the kind of control over sexuality and reproduction that have been systematically and violently withheld from women, especially black women, and the assertion of this literary device serves to underscore the rebellion of black women against the reproductive technologies, regimes, and norms of white culture.⁹³ The black female author mobilizes the birth metaphor and imagery of female family members and women-centered culture as a way of expressing the (pro)creation of text, child, and community. Because motherhood and authorship have been historically separated in the American culture, the insistence of writers to transgress this boundary serves as an even greater reminder of the resistance that each text performs. This is doubly complicated for black women, who have had both their intellectual production and their wombs policed so intensely by the state from slavery to the present. Friedman adds that “women’s childbirth metaphors have also served for centuries as a linguistic reunion of what culture has sundered, a linguistic defense against confinement,” and for political prisoners, this is especially the case.⁹⁴

Black women have been at the forefront of building and sustaining liberation activism, and Shakur pays homage to black women throughout the text as a way of rewriting and feminizing black history to acknowledge their sacrifices and contributions. For example, Helene Cristol notes that “Shakur devotes pages to her aunt, whose love was crucial to her education, to her fellow prisoners, and to her mother. In spite of differences created by age, class, or ethnicity, these women share a common inheritance – the legacy of struggle against racism and sexism. A common thread links women.... Her experience provides her with a unique standpoint on black womanhood.”⁹⁵ The manifesto constructs Shakur’s aunt Evelyn as a synecdoche of the struggles of black

women in America. In the process, Shakur feminizes black liberation through tropes of birth, rebirth and love rather than reifying the typical male heroes of black history. These metaphorical choices reflect the strategies of regeneration for a movement that was on its last legs due to the surveillance and hostility of the Black Power movement by COINTELPRO.

Although Shakur spends ample time in the text talking about her aunt and other important female figures in her life, she also preserves a role in black liberation for black men. In this way, she does not disrupt the importance of heterosexuality to the future of Black Power. In “Story,” Shakur writes of her dear friend Zayd Shakur, who was killed on the New Jersey Turnpike that fateful night. Shakur occupies her own autobiographical subjectivity with defiance and determination, while remembering her beautiful friend.

She writes:

You died.
I cried.
And kept on getting up.
A little slower.
And a lot more deadly.⁹⁶

This poem occurs in the context of Shakur’s recovery at the hospital after police shot her and beat her on the Jersey Turnpike. A black nurse had given her three books to read while she was recovering under watchful police eyes. One book was full of black poetry, one was called *Black Women in White Amerika*, and the last book was Herman Hesse’s *Siddhartha*. As she read the book about black women, she writes of feeling “the spirits of those sisters feeding me, making me stronger. Black women have been struggling and helping each other to survive the blows of life since the beginning of time.”⁹⁷

Shakur praises black women throughout the text as she recognizes the inherent double-bind of black femininity and the intersectional axes of oppression that operate to constrain black women. Her praise of women in the text, then, reasserts the importance of women in the struggle for justice but also in the everyday struggles of work and home. This strategy makes the text palatable for black women, who were long considered less-than-optimal recruits for the Black Power movement. However, the poem itself is about Zayd Shakur and it heroizes him as the force that made her more determined to resist the state. In this short poem, Zayd Shakur becomes the regenerating force for Assata Shakur, which at least partially displaces her praise of black women in Black Power organizing. This is particularly important because she only acknowledges one other black female leader participating in Black Power activities, Afeni Shakur of the Panther 21, though she praises several men who have been leaders in the Black Power movement.

Despite these tensions, Shakur's interactions with black women in the hospital or in prison are often positive and therapeutic in her manifesto, a stark contrast to her vicious encounters with (white) state troopers or judges. As she read these books in the hospital following the shootout, she recounts how her body began to heal from her wounds and also how she started to regain mobility, empowered by black female intellectualism. She says, "I had three bullet holes. There was a bullet in my chest (it's still there); an injured lung with fluid in it, a broken clavicle, and a paralyzed arm with undetermined damage to the nerves. I kept asking if i would be able to use my hand again. One or two doctors said, flatly, no. The others said, 'Maybe yes, maybe no.' Anyway, I was gonna live."⁹⁸ In the poem and in this section of prose, Shakur's remembrance of Zayd resists his erasure from public memory just as her recovery signals

her defiance of the violence that had left her nearly paralyzed in one arm. She “kept on getting up” as she hobbled around her hospital room and began trying to speak, which was difficult given the damage to her lung. Even as Shakur is mourning the loss of her compatriot, she is expressing that remorse as resistance to white America and she remembers a strong, beautiful black man who the nation would have the public demonize and then forget. Remorse and remembering facilitate a resistance from her medical prison and connect her to the struggle for representation, which also serves to begin healing the black liberation movement and, in this case, assert a primacy for a particular kind of black man who can help to build and grow the revolution. In many ways, Shakur’s homage to men like Zayd Shakur naturalizes the role of men in the revolutionary process, however, Shakur’s own insistence at “getting back up,” though, also reflects a key strategy in the rhetoric of regeneration in relation to the Black Power movement; she is leading by example.

Shakur’s poetry and prose provide a sense of hope that stems from a history of black women’s resistance to racism, sexism and classism in America even as they illustrate the sacrifices that are necessary for the revolution. In her poem “Love,” Shakur explains that these sacrifices are made, but they are gendered:

Love is contraband in Hell,
 cause love is an acid
 that eats away the bars.

But you, me and tomorrow
 hold hands and make vows
 that struggle will multiply.

The hacksaw has two blades.

The shotgun has two barrels.

We are pregnant with freedom.

We are conspiracy.⁹⁹

The prison system exists entirely to shape prisoners into what Foucault identifies as “docile bodies” because of the anxiety about the body that pervades larger Western culture. The modern prison becomes a “policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behavior” where the “human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down, and rearranges it.”¹⁰⁰ However, Shakur sees her determination to love and to become pregnant as a reassertion of control over her own emotions, her body, and its processes. She also sees pregnancy as a means of remembering the control of the state, through the body.

Shakur’s pregnancy is the ultimate act of resistance to the prison’s “policy of coercions” and she likens it to a “hacksaw,” which can cut through the prison bars, and like a shotgun, which can coerce as well as liberate. In this way, Shakur appropriates the male metaphors of resistance (gun, hacksaw) and forges her own body as a weapon, a means of (re)generating and (re)growing the black liberation movement. One might argue that this masculinizes the re(birth) metaphor but regardless, she sees her conspiratorial pregnancy as a powerful act of struggle. Rather than seeing her body in isolation, as a docile, solitary object, she sees it as a part of Kamau (a Muslim deeply influenced by the Nation of Islam, who was tried with Shakur for bank robbery), her partner, her co-conspirator, which also functions as a representational and material act of defiance and regeneration.

For Shakur, acts of love are revolutionary because they build the bonds of trust and solidarity necessary to counter the collective memories of trauma and the violence perpetuated by the state. Birth and rebirth are key metaphors of regeneration, but they

are tropes that black women and men cooperate to (re)produce. Shakur's project of recentring black women's activism resists the erasure of their resistance and serves to empower black women through two dominant images of femininity: that of the mother and of the heterosexual partner.¹⁰¹ This is particularly salient because the Black Power movement was so explicitly raced and gendered. Belinda Robnett observes that, "Black men...were seeking access to the White man's power, and this power is associated with maleness. Moreover, tied to this perception is the view that without power, a man cannot truly be a man."¹⁰² By emphasizing these images of femininity, Shakur's manifesto is able to rhetorically challenge the hegemony of the gendered discourse of Black Power.

This poem concludes with Shakur's description of her pregnancy in jail and her feelings about having a baby whose father and mother would both be locked up for many years.¹⁰³ In the accompanying prose, Shakur reports that when she announced her pregnancy at trial to her lawyers and friends they were ecstatic. She writes that Sundiata Acoli, arrested with her on the New Jersey Turnpike, "was elated" and just "sat there grinning and slapping his knee" as he said over and over, "I think it's beautiful." Shakur writes, "Everyone was in a jubilant mood. I was glad. I hadn't known how they would react."¹⁰⁴ She describes her pregnancy as "joyous," "spiritual," and a "miracle" and remembers:

It seemed so right, so beautiful, in surroundings that were so ugly. I was filled with emotion. Already, i was deeply in love with this child. Already, I talked to it and worried about it and wondered how it was feeling and what it was thinking.... Sometimes i felt so helplessly protective, wondering when my baby would be called nigger for the first time, wondering when the full horror and

degradation of being Black in amerika would descend on my baby. How many wolves hid behind the bushes to eat my child?¹⁰⁵

Shakur's pregnancy provided her with hope to continue the struggle and she saw it as part of a spiritual rebirth as well as a physical process. In this passage, Shakur is also pointing out the vulnerability of her child, like millions more, to racism and hatred. This move also cements her child as an agent of resistance to a process that will outlive Shakur's activism. For many black women, this vulnerability characterizes the births of their children and as Shakur reveals such inner thoughts about motherhood and caring for a child, she further reinforces her suitability as a leader of women.

Although Shakur's reaction to her pregnancy was positive, it was complicated, like many women of color, by poor nutrition and poor prenatal care. After the initial celebration of Shakur's condition, the prison doctor attempted to persuade Shakur to abort the baby and refused to call in a certified gynecologist to examine pains that Shakur was experiencing. The doctor told her, "Don't worry about it. My advice to you is that you should go to your cell and lie down. Just lie down and rest your mind. Just lie down and stay off your feet. And if you go to the bathroom and see a lump in the toilet, don't flush it. It's your baby."¹⁰⁶ Shakur writes that she ran out of his office and cried on her cot, "worried to death." She writes, "[a]s far as I could see, they were out to kill my baby. I couldn't lose this baby now, not now. It was meant to be; this baby was our hope. Our hope for the future."¹⁰⁷ Just as Shakur's own origins were clouded by the state's interference, so was her child under constant threat of death by state authorities. The continuity of racist state repression is unbroken and Shakur centralizes motherhood in prison activism as a space for an interrogation into the treatment of women and children.

This does highlight an area of agitation that has been historically ignored because the victims of prison mistreatment are poor women and children of color, people historically marginalized by the state.

In this strategy of regeneration, Shakur's daughter becomes a symbol of resistance and provides continuation to the struggle of which her mother became a part. By loving a man and having a child in prison, Shakur resists the bodily control that the prison system enacts and her daughter represents a feminized part of the struggle for freedom. At the same time, however, her act of rebellion in having a child also naturalizes the role of men in the birth process, thereby making them an integral, though sometimes marginalized, part of birth and rebirth. In becoming pregnant, "she becomes one in the very long line of outraged black mothers.... Here again the legacy of slavery, which separated mothers and children and refused to recognize maternal love, serves as a powerful context to the birth of her daughter. Like the slave mothers, Shakur has to leave her daughter to the care of her mother."¹⁰⁸ Shakur hopes that her baby will carry on the struggle into then next generation and help rebuild and recreate the movement for black liberation. In an interview on Riker's Island in 1974, she talks at length about the decision to get pregnant. She is asked, "How did you come to the courageous decision to become pregnant while you were on trial and being held on Rikers?" and she says, "What we thought about when we talked about getting pregnant was life and the future. All of us related to the fact that we fight from one generation to the next. And I didn't know if I would even have another chance to have a child.... And sitting in the courtroom with all this shit happening it seemed to be the only thing that made sense."¹⁰⁹

These stories serve to highlight for the reader the racialized, gendered and classed experiences of bodily terror that Shakur faced and the connection that Shakur has to the legacy of black women during slavery. As a mother, Shakur, like countless slave mothers, was terrorized during her pregnancy. Elizabeth Alexander reminds us that “these corporeal images of terror suggest that ‘experience’ can be taken up into the body via witnessing and recorded in memory as knowledge” particularly for those who feel that they might be next in a long line of victims of the U.S. racial tableau.¹¹⁰ By describing the system of gendered, sexualized, raced and classed domination and violence, of which the prison system is one small part, Shakur offers vivid scenes of brutality that contribute to the larger collective memories of the struggle. She hopes that those reading her narrative will know that their fates, their bodies, and their memories are bound up with hers in this nation where the “official” history has completely erased her voice.

However, autobiographical manifestos written by women must always negotiate the possibilities of feminine identity and subjectivity. Some choose to conform to conventional understanding of femininity and some choose to investigate more hybrid possibilities for gender performance, particularly when complicated with explorations of class, race and sexuality. Bella Bodzki and Celeste Schenck argue that these manifestos also “find a way to challenge inscription into conventional feminine identity and autobiographical representative selfhood while exploiting the textual ambiguity of their partnership with significant others.”¹¹¹ Shakur, in particular, uses a lot of ambiguity and strategic silence around her relationship with members of the Black Liberation Army, but particularly Kamau (Fred Hilton), who helped her to conceive her daughter in prison.¹¹²

This silence helps to feminize the history of black resistance, though her rhetorical choices in describing her pregnancy acknowledge the important role that men play in (re)producing the movement toward freedom. Interestingly, in feminizing her history or the history of black resistance she does not discuss her father or her ex-husband Louis Chesimard. These two figures, the husband and the father, are often prominent characters in female autobiography but their absence in Shakur's text evidences just how important it is to her to be writing about black women.

Shakur, does, however, write a poem to her four-year old daughter about her daughter's visit to the Clinton Correctional Facility for Women in New Jersey. Her daughter won't play and begins to hit Shakur through the bars with her little fists. Shakur writes,

I tell her to hit me until she is tired.... She is standing in front of me, her face contorted with anger, looking spent... "You're not my mother," she screams, the tears rolling down her face. "You're not my mother and I hate you." I feel like crying too. I know she is confused about who i am. She calls me Mommy Assata and she calls my mother Mommy. I try to pick her up.... "You can get out of here, if you want to," she screams. You just don't want to."¹¹³

Shakur is devastated by the rejection of her daughter and she spends the night crying on her cot, resolving to leave prison for good. It is after this encounter with Kakuya that Shakur decided to escape but she knew that she could not take her daughter with her, either back underground or into exile. And so she writes, "To My daughter Kakuya":

i have shabby dreams for you
of some vague freedom
i have never known.¹¹⁴

Shakur again makes the connection between birth and freedom in this tribute to her daughter's future. In many interviews, Shakur notes that she has never known freedom, never been able to grow strong and happy without the cultural shame and stigma attached to her blackness and without the poverty of her color. Shakur doesn't want her daughter to be "hungry or thirsty/or out in the cold." She writes, "And i don't want the frost/to kill your fruit/before it ripens."¹¹⁵ Shakur sees the ways in which race, gender and class intersect to constrain her present, her future and the future of her daughter in understanding the ways in which her subjectivity as a poor, black woman of color predict the kind of future her daughter can expect in a culture that does not provide for its own. Instead, Shakur envisions a revolutionary future where her daughter can grow up with dignity, a main theme of Shakur's autobiographical manifesto. She writes,

i can hear laughter,
not grown from ridicule.
And words, not prompted
by ego or greed or jealousy.

i can see a world where hatred
has been replaced by love.
and ME replaced by WE.

And i can see a world
where you,
building and exploring,
strong and fulfilled,
will understand.
And go beyond
my little shabby dreams.¹¹⁶

Shakur has dreams of a better tomorrow when her daughter can live a free life, full of love and compassion, anchored by empowerment and love, rather than the greed and ego of the individualism preached in the United States. Shakur also hopes that her revolutionary dreams for this utopian future are inadequate for the life that she hopes her

daughter will know. Helene Cristol notes that “Against a legacy of rape, violence, and derogatory images of ‘permissive, promiscuous Jezebels,’ she affirms the right to love and to free sexuality.”¹¹⁷ By giving birth, Shakur “becomes one in the very long line of outraged black mothers... Here again the legacy of slavery, which separated mothers and children and refused to recognize maternal love, serves as a powerful context to the birth of her daughter. Like the slave mothers, Shakur has to leave her daughter to the care of her mother.”¹¹⁸

Mothers, daughters, and sisters form the quilt of liberation history. As black feminist scholar, historian and poet Bernice Johnson Reagon notes, “black women “are people builders, carriers of cultural traditions, key to the formation and continuance of our [black] culture.”¹¹⁹ She continues, “If we understand that we are talking about a struggle that is hundreds of years old, the new must acknowledge a continuance: that to be Black women is to move forward the struggle for the kind of space in this society that will make sense for our people.”¹²⁰ Shakur places her activism in this larger historical context of black women’s struggle for liberation in the United States. Shakur’s poem documents her own history as part of the black liberation movement but this move also points to the “centrality of women in the struggle for justice in the United States,” particularly when placed in the company of movement memoirs by Anne Moody, Pauli Murray, Melba Patilo Beals, Elaine Brown, Angela Davis, Anne Moody, and Fannie Lou Hamer.¹²¹ In the company of these other leaders, it appears that black women were leaders who organized and shaped the direction of movement politics. Marla F. Frederick adds, “Even where women’s involvement was not consistently public, their work within the movement was invaluable because of the networks they created....

Without these systems large masses of people would not have joined the movement, or remained committed to its cause.”¹²² Because of the memoirs of women like Davis, Hamer, and Shakur, the intersection of gender, race, and class in the context of the U.S. prison system rise to the forefront of issues surrounding liberation politics. The presence of a memoir like Shakur’s helps to reinforce the importance of black women to the organization, structure, tactics and ideologies of black liberation which feminizes the movement in contrast to the depiction of the black male rage which media outlets often used to stand-in for black liberation projects.

Shakur’s feminization of the Black Power movement extends into the prose of *Assata* as she describes the torture of being a black woman within America’s prison-industrial complex. She describes the molestation of women in prison as they were stripped, searched, and forced to bath with a toxic substance for lice and crabs when first admitted. She writes, “The last stage was the ‘search.’ Every woman who came into the building had to go through this process, even if she had been nowhere but to kourt. Joan Bird and Afeni Shakur had told me about it after they had been bailed out in the Panther 21 trial. When they had told me, i was horrified.” In the last stage, the guard would insert their fingers inside of each woman, searching for contraband. If a woman refused to consent to the internal search, she would be placed in solitary confinement. Shakur writes,

The “internal search” was as humiliating and disgusting as it sounded. You sit on the edge of this table and the nurse holds your legs open and sticks a finger in your vagina and moves it around. She has a plastic glove on. Some of them try to put one finger in your vagina and one up your rectum at the same time. Anyway,

i had an instant, mile-long attitude. I wanted to punch the nurse clear to oblivion. Afterward, the guards had the nerve to tell me that a mistake had been made and a doctor would have to make a complete examination.... He was a filthy-looking man who looked more than a Bowery bum than a doctor. He coughed all over me without even covering his mouth, and his fingernails looked like he had spent the last five years in a coal mine.¹²³

Shakur's account feminizes the kind of treatment for female prisoners throughout the text and exposes the gynophobia and woman-hating prevalent in prison facilities as well as her resistance to the brutalization that she faced. The treatment she describes makes the private horror and humiliation public and palpable for the reader and punctuates the state's dehumanization of inmates. She demonstrates the ways in which the prison system seeks to control the bodies of its inmates and force submission through inhuman, brutalizing bodily practices, much like the plantation culture of the American slave economy. In part, the affirmations and birth metaphors help to confront the patriarchal system of control over their bodies and reassert a "gynocentric aesthetic based on the body."¹²⁴ Passages like the one above also expose such horrible violations of the black female body, that the reader has a physical reaction to the violence enacted upon women, granting permanence to the memory of these details, which may spur the reader to action.

In her keystone text, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, Alice Walker remarks that those who have been most rejected by the American culture have been the darkest skinned black women, who have been policed, assaulted and controlled by lighter skinned men and women. She writes,

And who is being rejected? Those women “out of the middle of the road.” Well, Harriet Tubman, for one. Sojourner Truth, Mary McLeod Bethune, Shirley Chisholm. Ruby McCollum, Assata Shakur, Joan Little, and Dessie ‘Rashida’ Woods. You who are black-skinned and fighting and screaming through the solid rock of America up to your hip pockets every day since you arrived, and me, who treasures every ninety-nine rows of my jaw teeth, because they are all I have to chew my way through this world.¹²⁵

Black feminists and womanists have (re)claimed black women like Shakur as a strong black women in the liberation struggle just as she has claimed kinship with them, and Walker places her in the company of the very same women that Shakur looks to as heroes. Her “Open Letter from 1998” was recently anthologized as a “Key Feminist Statement” in Joy James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting’s *Black Feminist Reader* (2000) alongside the writings of Barbara Christian, bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins, Angela Davis, Toni Morrison, Kimberle Crenshaw and the Combahee River Collective (among others).

Additionally, in Bibi Angola’s anthology of works by and about Assata Shakur, Angola dedicates the book to “Queen Nzinga, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Shirley Graham DuBois, Fannie Lou Hamer, Queen Mother Moore, Rosa Parks, Rosa Lee Watson, Sonia Sanchez, Betty Shabazz, Angela Davis, Safiya Bubakari, Afeni Shakur, and Maxine Cornish-Sample,” but also to Assata’s daughter Kakuya.¹²⁶ Sonia Sanchez provides the “Foreword” and calls Assata Shakur a poet and a “prophet woman” with “infinite powers to interpret life.”¹²⁷ In this text, Shakur’s letters to her supporters, her statements from numerous trials and interviews are compiled and illustrate the extent to

which Shakur publicized the inhumane treatment of women in American prisons, worked to build coalitions of black women struggling from prison, and the inadequate environment in prison for them to exist as mothers. At the same time, BLA men and women speak out in this anthology on Assata Shakur's behalf and assert her role as a leader of the Black Power movement and as an important prison activist. Shakur is very clearly placed within history of black women's revolutionary activism, even as men testify to her leadership in the BLA.

It seems that just as Shakur embraces the birth of her daughter as a moment of regeneration, she also sees her autobiographical manifesto as a moment of (re)birth, producing a whole new history of black women's resistance to which Shakur is intrinsically linked. The childbirth metaphor allows her to defy patriarchal convention and merge the act of creation, in writing the text, with the act of (pro)creation, in having Kakuya. Shakur's counter-history is squarely grounded in the history of the black women who came before her and whose spirit she continues to remember, even as she naturalizes the role of men within the regenerative process of Black Power. By linking her resistance to that of prior generations of black women, inside and outside of America's prisons, Shakur is able to craft a continuous, complex narrative of black women's activism that makes future generations responsible for continuing to defy the social norms and discriminatory practices of the state.¹²⁸ Such constructions in some ways counter the hegemonic masculinity of the Black Power movement while still privileging heterosexuality and constructions of motherhood. Shakur is also able to detail the violence directed toward black women in the culture as a way of uniting black memory against such pervasive raced, sexed and classed abuses. In many ways, Shakur's

accounts of the violence against black people consolidate group affiliations by making blackness and poverty irrefutable, unavoidable signs, which still provides for the possibilities of creative self-definitions as this traumatized collective historical memory is forged.¹²⁹

The Police, Prison, and Assata Shakur

For political prisoners, violence marks their capture, trials and detention. That violence “could be spatial, ideological, physical, psychological, emotional and in relation to interpersonal ties.”¹³⁰ Shakur’s text exposes the state-sponsored violence directed at women and people of color, at political activists, and at the indigent in court—persistent exigencies that necessitate the movement’s regeneration. Shakur’s narrative and poems provide a feminized counter-history of black liberation but they also locate the prison-industrial complex, the FBI and local police at the center of Black Liberation Army efforts and the efforts of black community organization in the wake of COINTELPRO.

Shakur begins by discussing the leadership and goals of the BPP as a way of articulating the COINTELPRO violence that strained the organization and precipitated its collapse. Although she criticizes Huey Newton for being a poor speaker, a man unable to take criticism, and a dogmatic reactionary, she also sees the beginnings of Afrocentric education as the most important aspect of BPP life, though she charges that the political education program had no broad understanding of the complex historical circumstances that foster oppression. She also sees the lack of self-criticism in the Party as problematic and sexist, especially regarding Huey Newton’s public image and the excessive paranoia, which often led to clashes with the police, escalating in violence.¹³¹ As she claims this historical moment as a place where her identity is rooted, she is not a zealot. Rather, she

has taken her place as a black female intellectual providing an insider analysis and a historical context through which to view the Black Power movement. The oppositional tone she takes toward the internal politics of the BPP provides an important feminist rendering of an organization that has been discussed, critiqued and valorized mostly by black men and also provides part of the rationale for why she aligned with the BLA after the Newton-Cleaver split in the organizational structure of the BPP.¹³² Shakur's autobiographical manifesto envisions a black past and a black future which reflects her interest in Afrocentric womanist education and which displaces master narratives about race, class (particularly as it concerns labor) and gender relations in American society. It also sees state violence as the rationale for armed resistance in the Black Power movement.

Given the extraordinarily brutal methods of state agents against black activists in American history, the use of armed resistance was a central debate among black revolutionaries in combating the terrorism of COINTELPRO and the FBI. Although some saw Newton as a zealot about weapons, it is clear that the rationale for self-defense is one that acknowledges the racist extremism that plagued civil rights organizations. Shakur notes that although the debate raged in her head for many years, she finally understood the need for weapons when she was locked down.¹³³ But she also indicts the utility of moral suasion as movement tactic. She writes, "Nobody in the world, nobody in history, has ever gotten their freedom by appealing to the moral sense of the people who were oppressing them...."¹³⁴ She continues, "Those who believe that the president or vice-president and the congress and the supreme kourt run this country are sadly mistaken. The almighty dollar is king.... The rich have always used racism to maintain

power.”¹³⁵ Nonviolence, according to Shakur, provides no real solution to the classed problem of racial injustice and cannot be a legitimate tactic in the struggle for global liberation because it cannot eradicate capitalism.

Because she felt that the BPP was inadequate for pursuing many of the goals that would lead to a true liberation of black America, Shakur joined up with the BLA, which was mostly underground.¹³⁶ Those who joined the BLA “were committed to revolutionary struggle in general and armed struggle in particular and wanted to help build the armed movement in amerika,” though eventually they were forced underground because of COINTELPRO.¹³⁷ However, the FBI was intent upon disrupting BLA activities. Historian Akinyele Omowale Umoja details the extensive anti-BLA campaigns that East Coast police divisions instituted to destroy black liberation efforts:

One campaign in particular was “NEWKILL,” organized to investigate New York police killings for which the BLA claimed responsibility or were suspect. NEWKILL would signal greater repression of East Coast Panthers and their associates, allies and supporters. In an FBI memorandum concerning NEWKILL, J. Edgar Hoover stated, “The Newkill cases and other terrorists acts have demonstrated that in many instances those involved in these acts are individuals who cannot be identified as members of an extremist group.... They are frequently supporters, community workers, or people who hang around the headquarters of the extremist group or associate with members of the group.”¹³⁸ Hoover’s characterization of the movement participants as terrorists, a move that was prominent in Assata Shakur’s trials, precipitated an incredible amount of backlash by East Coast police officers and also an outpouring of support from the federal government,

through programs like COINTELPRO and NEWKILL, which decimated the above-ground operations of many liberation organizations and ended the lives of many activists. By branding Shakur a “terrorist,” Hoover also explicitly linked her to the hostage situations in Tehran and Libya and the bombings of groups like the Irish Republican Army that dominated headlines during the late 1970s and this set up a framework for understanding activism as amoral, anarchistic, and anti-nation. This sets Shakur up as a martyr for the cause of black liberation, which solidifies her as a potential movement leader and as a strong voice of opposition to the repression of Hoover’s FBI and other counter-movement strategies.

The political trials of black liberation members illustrated the extent to which the judges and lawyers were complicit in the violence of the state. Rather than public debate and deliberation about black liberation, the label of “terrorist” was used by the FBI and the media to describe the activities of organizations like the BLA and that label was taken as a fact. Paul Gready writes, “The political trial itself reconstructs and rewrites events as they are perceived by the government, and reproduces for the public the image of a just society threatened by people and organisations who seek its violent destruction, thereby serving to justify actions taken by the state against political opponents.”¹³⁹ Shakur’s damnation of prison-industrial complex is predicated upon her own treatment in the hands of the state. She provides numerous examples of the brutality of the state, particularly as she describes her interactions with the New Jersey police, following her arrest. She writes, “Every day there were three shifts of police. When they changed shifts, the two troopers would salute the sergeant. Some saluted an army salute, but others saluted like the nazis did in Germany. They held their hands in front of them and

clicked their heels.”¹⁴⁰ She adds, “One day one of them came in and gave me a speech about how he fought in World War II on the wrong side.... He said that if Hitler had won, the world wouldn’t be the mess it is in today, that niggers like me, no-good, niggers, wouldn’t be going around shooting new jersey state troopers.”¹⁴¹ By examining the culture of patriarchal white supremacy that permeate state police forces Shakur is exposing the system of lies and deceit that perpetuate race, class and gender inequity. These officers beat her with the butts of their rifles and consistently threatened to kill her for her opposition to their brutality.¹⁴² Such testimony not only helps constitute the collective memories of the violence against African Americans seeking political and economic justice, but it likewise provides the impetus the regenerative efforts underway in the next stage of the Black Power movement, particularly because police brutality and racial profiling have gotten worse, rather than better.

However, at the same time that she exposes the racial dogma of the United States, she is also exposing the weaknesses in white supremacy as a *weltanschauung*. As she details the procession to a Brooklyn federal courthouse where she is to be arraigned in 1973 for a Queens bank robbery indictment (of which she was acquitted), she describes the twelve police cars driving to the courthouse, the New Jersey police officers stationed at every turnpike exit, and the helicopter above the procession. She writes that white fear of black people with guns amazes her and says, “Probably it’s because they think about what they would do were they in our place. Especially the police, who have done so much dirt to Black people - their guilty conscience tells them to be afraid. When Black people seriously organize and take up arms to fight for liberation, there will be a lot of white people who will drop dead from no other reason than their own guilt and fear.”¹⁴³

By exposing the fear of police officers, she is showcasing the potential for power if oppressed peoples take responsibility for their complicity in oppression and rise up. Irrational police fear is an opportunity because it reminds the movement that they have the power to make demands, to be recognized. The exposure of institutional weaknesses represents a regenerative strategy that provides the impetus for the movement and shows the power of the BLA, generally, and Shakur, specifically.

Finally, Shakur provides a critique of prisons and the judicial system that acknowledges the complicated racial history of the penitentiary in the United States. As Harlow notes, “detention and literary memoirs which the prison experience generates contest the social order which support the prison apparatus and its repressive structures.”¹⁴⁴ For Shakur, critiquing the prison system must include an examination of the ways that the prison apparatus harnesses labor. She describes refusing to work without pay in prison when a guard demands that she snap string beans. She tells the guard, “I don’t work for nothing. I a’int gonna be no slave for nobody. Don’t you know slavery was outlawed?” To which, the guard responds, “No, you’re wrong.... Slavery is legal in prisons.” Here, Shakur records the text of the Thirteenth Amendment and concludes,

That explained why jails and prisons all over the country are filled to the brim with Black and Third World people, why so many Black people can’t find a job on the streets and are forced to survive the best way they know how. Once you’re in prison, there are plenty of jobs, and, if you don’t want to work, they beat you up and throw you in the hole. If the state had to pay workers to do the jobs prisoners are forced to do, the salaries would amount to billions.... Prisons are a

profitable business. They are a way of legally perpetuating slavery.... Prisons are a part of this government's genocidal war against Black and Third World people.¹⁴⁵

She is acknowledging the history of peonage and convict leasing that has provided most of the cheap labor in the United States since Reconstruction and is very clear about the consequences of prison labor for jobs outside of prison (for people of color).¹⁴⁶ This history of peonage connects the plight of the prison-industrial complex and political prisoners to a much longer history of state repression and centers the prison system as the enemy. Shakur's critiques of history and of the racist, sexist and classist nature of the prison system and the state police forces also connect the brutality of the state against her to a prolific history of genocide against black America, starting with slavery. The recounting of such race-based brutalities functions as the continued exigencies for Black Power regeneration and as a documentation of the sacrifice made by those trapped in the prison system.

Shakur is not just a writer, but also a witness, as she counters the authority and authenticity of state narratives with the critical eye of a political prisoner. She is no more a neutral, impartial observer than is the state trooper or the media or the judge. As Paul Gready notes, "The foundation of autobiography's privilege as a source lies in the insider's intimacy with events portrayed, the manner in which experience is claimed as one's own."¹⁴⁷ In an interview from Havana in 1987, she elaborates:

And I felt a need to explain to people what that period was all about, what the '60s was about, what COINTELPRO was about, what the Black Panther Party was about, uh, and that a lot of people that were alive in that period are no longer

alive and that a lot of kids that are growing up today don't have any idea of what that time was about. And, I felt that what happened to me and my experiences weren't really that different from what happened to anybody else during that period. And you know I felt that some of the experiences that helped shaped me were universal in terms of the black experience in the U.S.¹⁴⁸

Though she is reclaiming her identity and the story of her life, Shakur clearly sees her experience as representative of millions of black Americans and Third World peoples who have endured the same racial apartheid and brutality of the state that the BLA faced as they demanded an end to the subjugation of U.S. blacks. Her testimony also helps to enhance her credibility as a leader in the black liberation movement and as one who could (re)inspire black people to fight for their right to self-determination. Such strategies, thus, form the foundation of her rhetoric of regeneration. Shakur sees the Black Liberation Army as the contemporary instantiation of the Underground Railroad, as it sought to support the black revolutionaries persecuted by COINTELPRO and other movement-destroying, disinformation campaigns.

Shakur's prison text asserts a collectivity prohibited by prison culture and by traditional autobiographical form and she defiantly asserts her associations and her solidarity with revolutionary causes and peoples, for her own survival and for their liberation. Shakur writes,

No movement can survive unless it is constantly growing and changing with the times. If it isn't growing, it's stagnant, and without the support of the people, no movement for liberation can exist, no matter how correct its analysis of the situation is. That's why political work and organizing are so important. Unless

you are addressing the issues people are concerned about and contributing positive direction, they'll never support you. The first thing the enemy tries to do is isolate revolutionaries from the masses of people, making us horrible and hideous monsters so that our people will hate us.¹⁴⁹

This passage, however, also helps to underscore the strategies of regeneration that are most visible within Shakur discourse of black liberation. Her emphasis here is on community organizing and political work, in building trust among members and in overcoming the nation's demonization of movement participants as terrorists and in triumphing over the isolation of political prisoners by the state.

In addition to recording a feminized counter-history of resistance, Shakur's anti-imperial language represented another rhetorical feature in the service of regenerating the movement for black liberation. And, here, Shakur also emphasizes her martyrdom for black liberation. On July 4, 1973, Shakur was aided by her lawyer Evelyn in the recording of "To My People," an open letter broadcast on many radio stations across the United States.¹⁵⁰ Not only does this fit with the tradition of black manifesto-writing in America but it also emphasizes Shakur's commitment to the Third World, a commitment central to the tenets of Black Power. This letter also positions her as a leader, as a prophet speaking to *her people*. She says, "I am a Black revolutionary, and, as such, i am a victim of all the wrath, hatred, and slander that amerika is capable of. Like all other Black revolutionaries, amerika is trying to lynch me."¹⁵¹ Shakur directs the listener/reader to think critically about the misrepresentations of the media and she asserts political repression is the modern form of lynching, which invokes the racialized and gendered dynamics of Shakur's persecution. Shakur goes on to provide a much more

detailed indictment of the “real” criminals than the poetic form allows. She writes, “Nixon and his crime partners have murdered hundreds of Third World brothers and sisters in Vietnam, Cambodia, Mozambique, Angola, and South Africa..... They call us murderers, but we did not murder over two hundred fifty unarmed Black men, women and children, or wounded thousands of others during the riots they provoked during the sixties.”¹⁵² In these passages, Shakur is using memory to help incite a sense of outrage and exigency to compel readers to make connections between the oppression of the Johnson administration and its continuation in the Nixon administration; she is drawing parallels between the lynch mobs and the criminal justice system.

Shakur’s list of grievances also illustrates the pervasiveness of American imperialism as it spans from the nation’s cops to the Third World. It also provides the rationale for Third World solidarity, which forms a crucial base for the liberation activism Shakur sees as imperative for the future of the movement. Shakur continues her indictment with an indictment of the prison-industrial complex: “The rulers of this country have always considered their property more important than our lives. They call us murderers, but we were not responsible for the twenty-eight brother inmates and nine hostages murdered at Attica. They call us murderers, but we did not murder and wound over thirty unarmed black students at Jackson State – or Southern State, either.”¹⁵³ Here, she shows solidarity with the young people across the nation who rose up against prison guards and national guardsmen. She highlights the brutality of prison and the destruction of black leaders when they are hidden from the view of the public. She continues

They call us murderers, but we did not murder Martin Luther King, Jr., Emmet Till, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, George Jackson, Nat Turner, James Chaney and

countless others.... They call us murderers, but we do not control or enforce a system of racism and oppression that systematically murders Black and Third World people..... For every pig that is killed in the so-called line of duty, there are at least fifty Black people murdered by the police.¹⁵⁴

Here, memory works to invoke nostalgia for the black martyrs that died in the service of black liberation and this passage serves to remind the readers that their deaths should not be in vain. She also highlights the impact of police brutality against black people to make argue that the state is violent and black people are just protecting themselves.¹⁵⁵ Because of the gross abuses of the West, Shakur argues that such revolutionary action is the only way toward freedom and liberation: “There is, and always will be, until every Black man, woman, and child is free, a Black Liberation Army. The main function of the Black Liberation Army at this time is to create good examples, to struggle for Black freedom, and to prepare for the future. We must defend ourselves and let no one disrespect us. We must gain our liberation by any means necessary.”¹⁵⁶ This framework invokes the martyred image of Malcolm X, while acknowledging the importance of armed struggle.

Shakur sees the patriarchal white supremacist culture as the violence that must be resisted and she evidences this claim by using her own experiences as a political prisoner. Shakur’s narrative functions as a source of inspiration for those inside and outside of prison that are activated to challenge the status quo. Helene Christol adds, “a militant autobiography always holds out an appeal to the reader to take up arms on the side of the author. It requires intellectual and moral adhesion to the cause and encourages participation in the fight by rousing indignation and anger and converting them into

action.”¹⁵⁷ This is particularly true of those writing to save their own lives or the lives of other political prisoners. For the militant autobiography, the manifesto form is still the predominant way to persuade participants to agitate and to align themselves with a rich tradition of resistance. For Shakur’s text, in particular, “[t]he logical conclusion of the book is the creation of a new community of enlightened and liberated militants, freed by the performance of the text and the knowledge of the former fights.”¹⁵⁸

Prisons and Black Liberation at the Millennium

Because political prisoners are often maligned as the state reproaches their ideology and actions, their most compelling recourse to correct the “official” history of their lives is writing. Gready notes that “[t]o be a prisoner is to be variously rewritten, to be contested through writing. Through the confession, state witnesses, legislation, the political trial, and prison regulation the political prisoner is violently and relentlessly rewritten. The official ‘power of writing’ is proclaimed. Pain is inflicted and made visible and objectified in the written word enabling it to be denied as personal pain and read as state power.”¹⁵⁹ It is from this place of pain that Shakur’s narrative and poems originate and exist to counter the depictions of her, of the BLA, and of black activists. Shakur is hoping to repair some of the destruction that COINTELPRO wrought on black liberation by exposing her captors and their racist, sexist, classist agendas for black America.

Although Shakur’s text begins to recover and resuscitate an identity for Shakur that had been completely destroyed by the FBI, it does so as an act of solidarity rather than as an act of self-aggrandizement, though she clearly reclaims her life story. Shakur’s legacy for the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army is a life and a

narrative, which help bridge the gap between complacency and praxis, which serves as a model for other leaders. Her poetry and prose provide limitless examples of both violence and resistance, even from inside of the most repressive part of the nation's structure—prison—and provide the motivation and hope for those working inside and outside of the prison for reform. She also details the intersectional nature of oppression, particularly for black women.

Shakur's autobiography is also an important primary text because it recovers her story and her poetry from within a Black Power movement that is generally discussed in terms of its black male leaders, but her story provides a challenge to the dominance of their narrative. Assata Shakur's image has become a rallying point for black activists because she survived the brutality, the horrific prison conditions and the "terrorist" slander to emerge as an ex-patriot who continues to grant interviews and write essays describing the situations of black communities, the historical struggle of black nationalism, the advantages and limitations of black activism and the hope for equality. Shakur uses her autobiography "to educate, to expose, to correct and to document" the history of oppression within the United States and she acknowledges the community of support that the Black Panther Party provided for black youth in America's cities.¹⁶⁰

Like Césaire and the other Nègritude poets, Shakur's poetry deals with the alienation of blackness, the retreat into the solitude of self as an exile of the larger community in which one belongs, and the agonies of muteness in daily American life. Her poetry becomes personally cathartic even as she attempts to transcend the personal for the benefit of all black Americans, particularly black women, as she feminizes black resistance while exploring the intersectional nature of repression. She expresses her

anguish and indignation at the horrific conditions and treatment that she and her fellow humans endure at the hands of the modern colonial power in the United States. Thus, Shakur reconstructs the black female self and revalorizes the black women, who have always resisted the patriarchy of white supremacist culture and whose history of rebellion is erased, forgotten or eclipsed by the anxiety surrounding black male revolutionaries. The (re)birth metaphor also reifies the integral role of men in the regeneration of Black Power, through her valorization of their role in the conception of black children who will carry the mantle of Black Power. Shakur's writing is at once poetic, historical and also polemical. But Shakur is also positioning herself against the erasure of her identity, black women's resistance history, and the collective movement of black people against the abuses of the U.S. nation-state. She is expressing her alterity in relation to the state as she reconstitutes her public persona, for herself as an exile in Cuba and for the American audience who has seen her only through the eyes of the FBI as a "Wanted" criminal.

Her story also functions as a point of regeneration for the Black Power movement as she repositions the prison-industrial complex and political prisoners at the center of black liberation. In an interview in 1997, she says "I believe that the only way that people like myself and others who are in prison or exiled will ever be "safe" is for people to build a strong movement around the issue of political repression. We must build a strong movement to free political prisoners. In conjunction, we must build a strong movement for amnesty for all of those people – those political activists – who were victimized by COINTELPRO...."¹⁶¹ By writing and granting interviews, Shakur is still participating in the struggle for black liberation from exile and she is clearly urging others to build a strong movement around political prisoners. She adds,

...I don't feel that I'm talking for myself, but I think that there are many sisters and brothers who are in my same condition, whether it's in exile, whether it's in prison. Therefore, I think I had a duty to them to try and do all that I can. This goes especially to the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal, who is facing death. We must work and do everything possible to ensure Mumia's release and bring him back into the community where he is so desperately needed.¹⁶²

By linking political prisoners and to those in exile, Shakur continues to insist upon collective mobilization and activism for black liberation and she does so with a sense of both urgency and duty, which help to elevate her as a leader. She locates COINTELPRO and the prison system at the heart of the regeneration of the black liberation struggle in the millennium and is urging her reader to participate in movement activities centered on exonerating these activists, these targets of the FBI, combating the power structure in the process. Her life and work as a revolutionary reflects the new phase of black resistance where people like Mumia Abu-Jamal are likewise central to the movement's regenerative efforts.

Chapter 3: Competing Masculinities: Police Brutality, Prison Brutality, and Black Heroes

The morning of December 9, 1981, changed Mumia Abu-Jamal's life and the anti-death penalty movement permanently. In the early hours that morning, police officer Danny Faulkner stopped a Volkswagen driven by Abu-Jamal's brother, Billy Cook. Cook got out of the car and struck Officer Faulkner in the face as Faulkner attempted to handcuff Cook. Faulkner responded by hitting Cook in the face with a police-issued flashlight when a man darted across the street at Faulkner and Cook.¹ Shortly thereafter, Abu-Jamal was taken to Jefferson University Hospital with a gunshot wound produced by Officer Danny Faulkner's police-issued gun. He arrived at Jefferson University Hospital with the gunshot wound but also with trauma inflicted, as witnesses testified, by the police who encountered the scene of the shootout. Officer Faulkner was pronounced dead on arrival at Jefferson University Hospital while Abu-Jamal was operated on for two and a half hours before being handcuffed to his hospital bed as the primary suspect in the officer's murder.² The weapon was never recovered and all of the eyewitnesses described a man who looked nothing like Abu-Jamal. The murder of Officer Faulkner and the trial of Mumia Abu-Jamal made headline news in Philadelphia, first for the attention it brought to police brutality in a large Northern city like Philadelphia and, second, because of the public outcry over racial politics that surrounded the trial of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

The outcry was understandable since by the early 1970s, Philadelphia had a substantial population of black Americans and a notoriously corrupt police force.³ David Lindorff writes, "in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the entire chain of command of both

Homicide and Vice were being investigated by the FBI. These were the very units that were investigating [Mumia] Abu-Jamal's case."⁴ By 1981, at the time of Mumia Abu-Jamal's arrest, "the Philadelphia Police Department was without a doubt one of the most corrupt and out-of-control big city law enforcement operations in the nation."⁵ Just two years prior to the arrest of Abu-Jamal, the U.S. Justice Department sued the city of Philadelphia in an extraordinary move, and charged Mayor Frank Rizzo (former police commissioner) and eighteen top-ranking police officials "with condoning systematic police brutality – the first such charge against an entire police department in American history."⁶

Frank Rizzo was a polarizing force in Philadelphia. Terry Bisson writes, "Philadelphia's answer to the complex problems of urban decline was a walking, talking (sort of) nightstick named Frank Rizzo, a high school drop-out, boot-in-your-face patrolman whose outlaw style had earned him the nickname, The Cisco Kid."⁷ President Richard Nixon personally supported Rizzo's "law and order" campaign, which mimicked Nixon's own racial politics. Nixon encouraged Rizzo's promotions from beat cop to precinct commander to mayor of Philadelphia while Rizzo promised the residents of Philadelphia that he would "make Attila the Hun look like a faggot" in the 1972 mayoral election.⁸ When Rizzo ran against black mayoral candidate Wilson Goode, in 1980, his campaign slogan was "Vote White."⁹ Rizzo's philosophy was that "fear of punishment is part of every man's life" and he intended to use that philosophy as part of his "crime control" efforts.¹⁰ The lawlessness and racism of Rizzo's police force "was so routine and so pervasive, that the Justice Department was prepared to sue the city's entire police

force for civil rights violations in 1972, until the move was quashed by the Nixon White House.”¹¹

Rizzo gained national notoriety in 1967, when, as the commander of the city’s 7,500-man police department, he clashed with some 3,500 black high school and middle school students who were peacefully demonstrating for a program in black studies. When Rizzo appeared on the scene he ordered the officers into offensive mode, despite the fact that no riot was in progress. He ordered “riot plan number three” and the officers surrounded the students and beat them in front of television cameras, which recorded the entire incident.¹² Following the public beating of Philadelphia’s students, the Black Panther Party created an office in the city to deal with the police brutality that had become a constant threat to the black community. Rizzo used a special unit to harass Panthers and other radical groups which he called the Civil Defense Squad (CD) that used “eavesdropping, phone tapping, using undercover agents, trumped up arrests and nighttime raids” to ensnare Black Panthers. It was Rizzo’s Civil Defense Squad that became the prototype of Nixon’s COINTELPRO campaign to target, harass, disrupt, and destroy radical groups like the Panthers.¹³

By 1969, COINTELPRO had begun monitoring the political activities of sixteen-year-old Wesley Cook, who would soon adopt the name Mumia Abu-Jamal. Abu-Jamal led students at Benjamin Franklin High School in petitioning to change the name of the school to Malcolm X High School and by 1969, sixteen-year old Abu-Jamal was the Lieutenant Minister of Information for the Philadelphia Black Panther Party and from then on became a permanent target of the FBI. Later, in 1981, in the middle of a

successful career in journalism, Abu-Jamal was involved in one of the most high profile trials in the nation's history.

However, Mumia Abu-Jamal's community credentials in Philadelphia were solid. He was named by *Philadelphia* magazine as one of the city's "people to watch" in 1981 as the president of the Association of Black Journalists in Philadelphia and as the recipient of the Major Armstrong Award for radio journalism. He had become known as "the voice of the voiceless" for covering police brutality in Philadelphia but from the age of fifteen to the time of his trial for the alleged murder of police officer Danny Faulkner, the FBI (through COITNELPRO) had compiled over seven hundred pages of files detailing his political and intellectual activities.¹⁴ On the back of a photo of Abu-Jamal in his extensive FBI file, one handwritten word appears—"Dead."¹⁵

This chapter provides a rhetorical analysis of *Live From Death Row* (1995), *Death Blossoms* (1997), and *All Things Censored* (2000), three of Mumia Abu-Jamal's essay compilations produced since July 2, 1982, when he was convicted of the first-degree murder of Officer Danny Faulkner and sentenced to death by Judge Alberto Sabo. With the help of COINTELPRO, the prosecution, judge, and media in Philadelphia have portrayed Abu-Jamal as a long-time Black Panther and an unrepentant, savage cop killer. SCI/Greene Correctional Facility, where Abu-Jamal is on death row, has done everything possible to stifle Abu-Jamal's voice as a journalist and to curb the publication of his stories.

However, several strategies of regeneration are prominent in the writings of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Throughout the texts, he discusses the trajectory of police brutality and repression through the history of black America as evidence of the on-going crisis.

His texts exhibit strategies of regeneration that advance a new Black Power based on the continuity of such oppression in America's cities, prisons and policies. Additionally, he situates himself within a history of black leadership by turning to historical black (male) leaders to inspire new members for the work ahead. In this way, he constructs himself as a synecdoche of the movement's new image and positions himself as a new black martyr. Ideologically, Abu-Jamal dismisses nonviolence as a movement strategy, while still acknowledging Martin Luther King's contribution to civil rights, at least in the short term, because of the pervasiveness of historical and contemporary exigencies of raced and classed violence, police brutality, and injustice that give rise to sustained Black Power agitation. He also positions the police, the courts, and the prison-industrial complex as the enemies in this new phase of Black Power, which gives the movement focus.

First, this chapter examines the function of narrative in the media and courtroom constructions of those convicted of killing police officers. It examines the intersection of black masculinity and class in the portrayal of black men as undesirable and unembraceable in urban centers. And, it looks at how this characterization permeated the treatment of Abu-Jamal by the state. This framework enables us to more clearly understand the constraints that limit black dissent in the United States, both outside and inside America's prisons. It also helps set up Abu-Jamal's arguments about the need for social agitation around issues of police misconduct, injustice in America's courts and the egregious wrongs of the prison-industrial complex.

Second, this chapter analyzes the counternarratives that are provided in Abu-Jamal's texts about justice for black activists in the United States. The section begins by

looking at the testimony provided at the beginning of each text by prominent black intellectuals, all of which refute the charges against Abu-Jamal, proclaim him innocent of the crime of killing officer Faulkner, and begin to position Abu-Jamal as an intellectual, a prophet and a leader. As prominent black intellectuals, these writers underscore Abu-Jamal's importance to black resistance as a part of the new vanguard of prison writers committed to goals of black liberation. They help to legitimize him as a new leader of Black Power and they also help construct the celebrity culture surrounding him, which galvanizes public support globally.

Although the character testimony by these black intellectuals is crucial in both celebritizing Abu-Jamal as a leader and exposing his case to the world, Abu-Jamal also presents counternarratives and anecdotes about abuse by the state and about his political and ideological heroes. These stories have become a primary means for Abu-Jamal to counter the "cop killer" narrative produced by the prosecution and the news media. His writings remind the reader of his credentials as an award-winning journalist to counter the stereotypes deployed by the state surrounding crime and black masculinity. They also expose the state and state-sponsored violence as inherently problematic for black Americans and reassert the centrality of the prison-industrial complex at the center of black liberation discourse. In this way, narratives and counternarratives provide endless resources for exigency and the regeneration of Black Power mobilizing, which has also helped to propel Abu-Jamal to the forefront of new black liberation struggles. Here, Abu-Jamal also comments on his role as a journalist committed to exposing the excesses of the state and he remarks at length about the duty of journalists to highlight brutality and misconduct. These observations highlight his commitment to journalism as a

profession but also to the notion of telling the stories of those who cannot speak for themselves. In this way, Abu-Jamal also begins to solidify his role as a community leader.

Third, Abu-Jamal humanizes death row inmates through narratives about their lives and about the conditions on death row, which helps to remind the reader that his case is hardly unusual. Creating ties between and among death row prisoners helps to broaden the movement against the death penalty to many more individuals and families, who are always potential recruits and allies in the struggle for social justice.¹⁶ A Black Power leader like Mumia Abu-Jamal exhibits the strategies of regeneration by crafting narratives that connect the struggles for racial justice to the entire black community in order to build a new collective identity that seeks to undermine the racialized violence of the prison-industrial complex.¹⁷ In other words, Abu-Jamal's narratives and anecdotes about other prisoners and about his prison experience provide the resources to build his identity as a movement leader and the collective identity of those in prison and outside of prison that agitate for social change.¹⁸ By using anecdotes of inmates, Abu-Jamal is also able to humanize the forgotten millions of the prison-industrial complex in the United States and he is able to add them to the history of racial brutality in the United States. Abu-Jamal is able to use his own experiences from death row to generate momentum for this new phase of Black Power.

Finally, Mumia's strategies of regeneration involve narratives of nostalgia that celebrate dead black male martyrs of the Black Power struggle including Malcolm X and Huey Newton. This strategy places him in the company of two of the most radical Black Power theoreticians and leaders as a social movement intellectual and leader. Because a

leader's voice is an integral part of "change and organizational renewal," the narratives of the social movement leader acquire a primacy in both creating collective identity and shaping movement organizations; the leader's voice, then, is a key feature in the rhetoric of regeneration.¹⁹ Richard A. Couto reminds us "that social movements express a need for broad forms of political change in a voice fostered in organizations but carried by individuals, who are concerned with the welfare of groups."²⁰ In this way, Mumia Abu-Jamal creates a "community of memory" that emerges from a common past built through the "telling and retelling of stories" of men who have personified the "meaning of community," though in this community of memory there are no female heroes of Black Power.²¹ By remembering Malcolm X and Huey Newton, Abu-Jamal is aligning himself to their politics and to their identities as black heroes but he is also mourning the strong, black, male heroes of the 1960s and 1970s. By accessing Abu-Jamal's narratives of nostalgia for these leaders, the reader "can discover a deep-seated, heartfelt, romantic longing for the yesterday that is gone but never forgotten."²² Abu-Jamal's regenerative strategies of the Black Power movement are dependent on nostalgia for black masculine visions of black liberation, which ultimately positions him firmly as a new leader of Black Power politics centered on the politics of prison and death row.

Abu-Jamal's writings detail the exigencies that justify the need to address the continued problems facing black communities: on-going state-sponsored violence, harassment by police, and the burgeoning prison-industrial complex, especially the racism of the death penalty. Abu-Jamal's abilities as a journalist and storyteller assist in his adaptation of these strategies to the organizational context (prison) and the historical moment (when dissent is repressed by the government, particularly around issues of both

domestic and foreign prisons) to explain why his case has attracted so much public comment and why he has become an international celebrity from death row.²³ For many, Mumia Abu-Jamal is the face of the anti-death penalty movement and for the struggle of political prisoners. He has become a leader of the movement despite his incarceration because very few others have the credentials, the community support, or the drive to tell the stories of America's prisons. He is also, like many other political prisoners, writing to save his own life.

Cop Killing, the Death Penalty, and the Construction of the Black Masculine Threat

In many ways, the state constrains the possible avenues of dissent in the United States by proscribing the kinds of behavior that citizens can enact to protest state narratives. States produce narratives that shape the ways in which the state interacts with its citizens; they describe reasonable and unreasonable behavior, sanction punishment or retribution, and create heroes and villains. The ability of the state to craft stories that persuade a reader, a viewer, or a participant of the goodness or badness of a character is central to its ability to maintain order, modify and prescribe behavior, and justify violence against citizens. Walter Fisher argues that the "narrative paradigm insists that human communication should be viewed as historical as well as situational, as stories competing with other stories constituted by good reasons, as being rational when they satisfy the demands of narrative probability and narrative fidelity, and as inevitably moral inducements."²⁴ Within this paradigm, stories compete for meaning on the basis of strong reasons (argumentation and evidence), believable stories, characterization of the players, and moral messages.

The criminal legal setting is certainly a venue where competing stories from the prosecutor and the defense clash based on their interpretation over the events of a given “crime.” James Boyd White has characterized the law as a constitutive rhetoric. He writes that the law can be understood as

the particular set of resources made available by a culture for speech and argument on those occasions, and by those speakers, we think of as legal. These resources include rules, statutes, and judicial opinions, of course, but much more as well: maxims, general understandings, conventional wisdom, and all the other resources, technical and nontechnical, that a lawyer might use in defining his or her position and urging another to accept it.²⁵

If we accept White’s paradigm we can see that in the legal setting, the resources of the field include all of these cultural speech artifacts that are used to craft narratives and arguments. White adds that the lawyer’s language uses and remakes our understanding of society. This language “is a language in which our perceptions of the natural universe are constructed and related, in which our values and motives are defined, and in which our methods of reasoning are elaborated and enacted. By defining roles and actors, and by establishing expectations as to the propriety of speech and conduct, it gives us the terms for constructing a social universe.”²⁶ White sees the language of the law as dependant upon social narratives, common tropes, real experiences and contradictory truths, which legal professionals must assemble into articulate anecdotes. It seems then, that, in the legal setting, the judge or jury decides the verdict based on the success of the prosecutor or the defense in skillfully deploying familiar tropes, anecdotes and arguments.

Because of this emphasis on the familiar, the narratives of the law often follow predictable patterns, particularly in regard to race, gender, class and other identity markers. Anthony V. Alfieri notes, “The actions of prosecutors and defense lawyers reflect and refashion cultural artifacts (caste and color) and social norms (character and community).”²⁷ Therefore, as the lawyers frame their narratives and the plaintiff and the defendant scramble to counter these narratives, the media provides another layer of meaning to the scene by interpreting these narratives through a lens that often relies upon cultural artifacts that favor the prosecution and not the defense. Like the attorneys, the media discourses are also constrained by the social norms, stereotypes, biases and power differentials of the larger culture. So, in many ways, the rhetorical resources of the legal setting are rife with the unfavorable tropes of difference that are circulated by the media.

The narrative strategies of the defense and the prosecution in death penalty cases are particularly problematic in deploying these tropes of difference that are then sensationalized by the media. As Austin Sarat notes, “Narrative provides a link between the daily reality of violence in which law traffics and the normative ideal - justice - to which law aspires.”²⁸ Sarat posits two characteristics that death penalty lawyers face when presenting their cases that have bearing on this analysis. First, he argues that the lawyers that defend inmates on death row face increasing hostility because they are representing (mostly) men (of color) who have been charged with violent crime.²⁹ Simply finding representation for inmates on death row has become increasingly difficult given President Bill Clinton’s legislation that limits the “ability of federal courts to review constitutional defects in death penalty cases.”³⁰

Second, Sarat argues that death penalty lawyers use narratives to preserve the voices of their clients' lives and the circumstances of poverty, abuse and legal neglect that do violence to the nation's communities, often because a conviction is all but guaranteed and this is the most salient contribution that these lawyers can make. He writes, "As the prospect of saving lives diminishes, the importance of saving the stories of those whose lives are lost increases in importance."³¹ Consequently, defense lawyers are often historians of the downtrodden and often critique the legal system to spur social change. For the prosecution, then, the stories of those "put away" gain cultural currency in a culture that relies more and more on tropes of security or "law and order." With this in mind, the death penalty lawyer has two audiences to which she must appeal: the immediate courtroom and the indeterminate group of anti- and pro-death penalty activists and media commentators who disseminate the stories of those on death row. Because the legal sphere is one predicated upon confrontation and competition, the narratives of the defense and the prosecution inevitably vie for attention, be it the gaze of the jurors and judge or the favorable commentary of media outlets covering the case. This is particularly true when dominant metaphors in the political culture deal with "security," "terrorism," and "law and order" because if politicians, police officers and the media create a milieu of insecurity, they must also show that they are increasing the security of a given population through the successful capture, detention and prosecution of individuals deemed a threat to the safety and security of that population.³²

The pervasiveness of what Alfieri and others have labeled "race-talk" codifies the narratives for the landscape of the courts and also normalizes racialized, classed and gendered stereotypes, which makes challenging these stories incredibly difficult. Alfieri

writes, “Within the narrow constraints of the criminal justice system, defense lawyers find scarce opportunity to contest the dominant narratives embedded in laws, institutional practices, and legal relations, even when those narratives inscribe negative racial stereotypes, such as the image of the black male as a social deviant.” Because lawyers rarely believe that there is spillover of racial imagery from law to the public sphere, they often use narratives of racial deviance to tell their defense stories without concern for the consequences of such depictions.³³ Consequently, lawyers, judges and media personalities often uncritically mobilize these racialized, classed and gendered stories and the consequences are devastating for men and women of color in the courts, particularly for those charged with violent crimes and those who are indigent and rely upon court-appointed attorneys.

When these narratives are politicized around tropes of difference, be they racialized, gendered, or classed, it constrains the counternarratives of the accused in significant ways that make mobilizing support (e.g., financial, emotional) difficult. This inevitably hampers the ability of the accused to build momentum to change the system of narrative representation that the rhetoric of the law is built upon, because as White reminds us, the law is constitutive. Therefore, these identities formed by legal rhetoric are both culturally salient. They resonate with many people and they are dependant upon tropes of difference because the prosecutor and the defense attorney are trying to differentiate their narratives and characterizations of the accused.

For black male defendants, at least two narratives bind the accused: that of the defiant black male and that of the deviant black male.³⁴ Alfieri adds, that once the legal identity of lawbreakers is established through familiar narratives of racial defiance or

deviance, “[r]ace-infected storytelling imports historical practices of subordination into the legal identity-making process under the rubric of colorblind treatment. These practices mediate the interpretation of laws and the conduct of legal relations, acquiring the form of race-talk. The repetition of race-talk pushes racially subordinate images outside the criminal courthouse into the mainstream of popular culture and society.”³⁵

The racialized, classed and gendered tableau created here satisfies the public’s hunger for celebrity, it satisfies the state’s need to enact violence on citizens to keep them distracted and docile, and it feeds the rhetoric of “law and order” which constrains the actions and psychologies of the public, who have been conditioned through centuries of stereotypes to fear black men. In these ubiquitous narratives, police officers are the hardworking heroes, black people (usually men) are the pathological deviant criminals, the judge is the benevolent, competent, unbiased master of ceremonies and the torture that takes place in the courtroom and in the prison is seemingly justified because the accused is already understood as a criminal.³⁶ In this matrix of competing narratives, the stories of the deviant black “cop killer” and that of police brutality are battling for the public’s fidelity, particularly within the courts.

The myth of the good cop also contributes to anti-black male sentiment within court culture. Robin K. Magee notes that despite prolific reports of “police brutality and extreme misconduct, the Supreme Court has adopted and inscribed into Fourth Amendment jurisprudence a ‘good cop paradigm.’ The paradigm has given birth to a good cop myth which falsely portrays officers as necessarily law-abiding and chiefly motivated by law enforcement interests.”³⁷ Because of the good cop paradigm, illegal or illegitimate police motives are converted into legitimate ones, racism of police officers is

overlooked, jurors are instructed that all police actions are constitutional and legitimate, and disrespect of black communities is perpetuated by the overwhelming pro-police anti-black sentiment in court.³⁸

The role of narrative in this process of both the media coverage of the accused and the police officer in the trial is absolutely central in understanding how this script of the “good cop” is played out time and time again in the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal.³⁹ One way that the state signifies a person is a threat to the community is to brand them a “cop killer.” Assata Shakur was branded a cop killer even though it was quite clear that she had not handled the weapon and that the bullets that struck her arm rendered it impossible. Mumia Abu-Jamal was branded a cop killer “despite the fact that all eyewitnesses described the assailant as looking radically different from the accused (the killer was uniformly described as being short, over 200 pounds and wearing an Afro-style hairstyle; Mumia is slender, over six feet tall, weighs 170 pounds and wears his hair in dreadlocks).”⁴⁰ Additionally, three witnesses wrote in their statements the night of the shooting that the shooter fled the scene before Abu-Jamal approached Officer Faulkner.⁴¹ Nonetheless, both scholarly sources and news accounts of Mumia Abu-Jamal usually refer to him to as a “convicted cop killer.” For example, Dan Flynn published a monograph in 1999 titled, *Cop Killer: How Mumia Abu-Jamal Conned Millions Into Believing He Was Framed*, which he subsequently distributed on college campuses.⁴² By labeling someone a cop killer, it becomes much easier to contrast them against narratives of the “good cop.”

By deploying “race-talk” that characterizes Abu-Jamal as a deviant black man who cannot be embraced by the community because of he is a “cop killer,” the narratives

available to Abu-Jamal in this realm of political, constitutive legal rhetoric is diminished. And, in labeling Abu-Jamal a cop killer, despite the climate of corruption in Philadelphia, the state, the media and prosecution narratives convicted him of being guilty even before trial began and his ability to counter those narratives in court was significantly diminished as a black man accused of cop killing Abu-Jamal has no other choice but to craft counternarratives of himself that refute the state's characterization of him.

The following sections begin analyzing these competing counternarratives by first, examining the black intellectuals who bridge Abu-Jamal's writings and those of the state. The intellectuals position Abu-Jamal as a hero, a martyr, a prophet, and a new leader of Black Power by elevating his writings, his spirituality, his ability to survive and his commitment to racial justice. They create a culture of celebrity surrounding Abu-Jamal that translates his experience globally and, which help to champion his cause in new spaces where the potential to recruit contemporary allies is likely.

The next section examines Abu-Jamal's own writings about the exigencies that give rise to new agitation surrounding Black Power. Here, Abu-Jamal describes his journalistic ethics, his solidarity with oppressed peoples, and his interest in telling the peoples' stories. He also describes the exigencies of police brutality, prison conditions and death row that highlight the importance of regenerating a movement around black liberation and political prisoners. He does this by humanizing the men of death row to provoke empathy in the reader for these men and to help remember them. As a strategy of regeneration, this makes Abu-Jamal accessible to millions of incarcerated men as a leader and as someone who can articulate their experiences. He becomes a father figure to millions of black men who need a male figure to follow. Not only does Abu-Jamal

celebrate a black masculine notion of leadership for the next phase of the Black Power movement centered on prisons, he also seems to limit the movement's scope to black men only. As a result, black female prisoners are seemingly excluded from the scope of the movement's activity, further marginalizing them within the black community and reifying the patriarchy of the movement and the community.

Finally, Abu-Jamal crafts his counternarrative by eulogizing black male martyrs who have provided the characteristics of leadership that he seeks to replicate. In this way, Abu-Jamal sees himself continuing the work of men like Malcolm X, Huey Newton and Martin Luther King, Jr. He struggles to synthesize the lives and ideologies of these men into a coherent history of black liberation work and implicitly places himself in their company as a new iteration of black male leadership. As Abu-Jamal places himself in this lineage of black masculine leadership, he becomes a new black leader and martyr solely through the replication of black masculinity.

The Emergence of Counternarratives: Police Brutality, Black Activism and Contesting Terrains

Although Abu-Jamal has been understood as a cop killer by many since before his trial began, his texts provide spaces for counternarratives and anecdotes that compete with the state's representations of itself, of justice, and of Abu-Jamal's guilt. Well-crafted anecdotes and counternarratives challenge authority and undermine the universality of a widely accepted grand narrative. Susan Bandes comments on the necessity of anecdotes in culture and writes, "Without the pull of the anecdotal, there is no way to assess the accepted story's continuing viability in the face of new understandings and new information. Its structural choices and assumptions become

invisible, and its narrative viewpoint masquerades as omniscient.”⁴³ Anecdotes are simple stories elucidating the important details that evoke the kind of ethos that opposes the grand narrative, often through an instructional moral lens.⁴⁴ These anecdotes and narratives “mobilize a group to attempt political change,” and they “provide deep and lasting insights into the need and methods of change to individuals who lead social movements or support them despite risks to themselves.”⁴⁵ Prison memoirs and manifestoes utilize narratives and anecdotes to mobilize for change in the spaces where their ideas and even their leaders have been contained, discouraged, or banned from public view.

Despite the fact that Abu-Jamal was branded a cop killer, several spaces emerge to contest that rendering. The first is in the introductory comments to each text by a bevy of black intellectuals. These writings serve to underscore Abu-Jamal’s innocence and they elevate him to the status of leader for his commitment to the movement against the death penalty and to black liberation efforts.

Character Witnesses: Testimony for the Convicted

All of Mumia Abu-Jamal’s texts are prefaced by comments from well-respected and well-known members of the black intelligentsia, which serve to legitimize his discourses, much like those in Assata Shakur’s manifesto. The forewords provide testimony from several influential black writers and social commentators that Abu-Jamal is honest, innocent, and a new voice of black leadership. Forewords by John Edgar Wideman, Cornel West, Julia Wright, and Alice Walker serve to build a counternarrative that places Abu-Jamal within a vibrant tradition of black resistance as a new black leader and a black prophet. Their comments also legitimize his “voice,” which the state has

tried to silence through solitary confinement, a ban on publications of his writings, and restrictions on visitors and the press.

Black novelist John Edgar Wideman makes two important arguments that add to the counter-narrative about Mumia's credibility in his first book, *Live From Death Row*.⁴⁶ First, Wideman argues that Mumia is an authority on the historical subjugation of blacks. He begins by commenting that, "Recalling the horrors of African-American history, accepting the challenges our history presently places on us, is like acknowledging a difficult, unpleasant duty or debt that's been hanging over our heads a very long time, an obligation that we know in our hearts we must deal with but that we keep putting off and evading, as if one day procrastination will make the burden...disappear." Wideman reminds the reader of the continuity of racial oppression and by asking the reader to force their eyes open to see the horrors that characterize their daily life and to move toward action. Wideman is creating an exigency around the plight of contemporary black America and around Abu-Jamal as a leader. Wideman continues by asserting that, "Mumia Abu-Jamal forces us to confront the burden of our history."⁴⁷ No longer a man on death row accused of killing a cop, Mumia is transformed into a lynch mob victim with a voice that compels the reader to confront history and become involved in the black liberation struggle. Wideman adds that Mumia's essays on black (male) leaders insist "on these kinds of gut checks, reality checks. He reminds us that to move clearly in the present, we must understand the burden of the past."⁴⁸ Wideman cautions the reader to see the media portrayals of Abu-Jamal as spectacle. He insists that the reader see Mumia Abu-Jamal as one in a long line of black men carrying on the tradition of resistance under the mantle of America's racial history. In this way, then, Abu-Jamal becomes a leader

following in the footsteps of men like, Malcolm X and Huey Newton who Abu-Jamal celebrates in his essays.

Second, as Wideman links Mumia back to the slave narratives of the antebellum South, he argues that Mumia speaks “truth” about the experiences of blacks in the United States. Wideman expresses the notion that Mumia speaks for a large body of people who struggle without voice and notes that “Mumia Abu-Jamal’s voice is considered dangerous and subversive” as he contrasts Mumia’s voice with the neoslave narratives of contemporary African-American figures like Oprah and O.J. Simpson.⁴⁹ Instead of reinscribing the dichotomous black/white distinction or singling out his own narrative as independent from a larger cultural narrative, Wideman argues that Abu-Jamal anticipates a liberation that is connected to the fate of all black people.⁵⁰ Here Wideman pauses to mythologize Mumia’s voice as a racial leader and prophet:

The first truth that Mumia tells us is that he ain’t dead yet. And although his voice is vital and strong, he assures us it ain’t because nobody ain’t trying to kill him and shut him up. In fact, just the opposite is true. The power of his voice is rooted in his defiance of those determined to silence him. Magically, Mumia’s words are clarified and purified by the toxic strata of resistance through which they must penetrate to reach us. Like the blues. Like jazz.⁵¹

Wideman's choice to mimic folk language contributes to his ability to grant power to these essays and this passage elevates Abu-Jamal to the status of race leader and, as a result, the reader is primed to expect an articulate, defiant, magical writer who speaks truth and who will seduce with his resiliency. Wideman sees Abu-Jamal as part of a speaking tradition that has always existed under a system of brutality and silencing; he is

a modern-day slave whose work is as much a part of black folk life as the blues and jazz. This comparison is strikingly similar to the discourse on culture that Assata Shakur elevates as a part of a black folk tradition of which she sees herself a part and this move by both activists is on that positions their writings in a larger tradition of literary resistance.

Wideman continues by comparing Abu-Jamal's book to the slave narratives of the past in a move that helps Abu-Jamal regenerate Black Power agitation through a remembrance of the resistance to slavery and its importance to black liberation. He writes, "The best slave narratives and prison narratives have always asked profound questions, implicitly and explicitly, about the meaning of life.... Because he tells the truth, Mumia Abu-Jamal's voice can help us tear down walls - prison walls, the walls we hide behind to deny and refuse the burden of our history."⁵² By using the collective pronouns "we" and "our," Wideman is able to include the reader in the narrative process and ascribe culpability to the reader for their participation in either the maintenance of prison walls and inequality or in the struggle for parity. This notion of tearing down the walls of prison was also prevalent in the writings of Assata Shakur because these walls provide an exigency that must be overcome. In the context provided by Wideman, prisons are the new plantations. John Edgar Wideman's comments serve to place Mumia Abu-Jamal within a history of black intellectual resistance and at the forefront of this new phase of struggle as a truth-teller and leader; and, though he is the first to preface Abu-Jamal's texts, he is hardly the last.

For Abu-Jamal's second book, *Death Blossoms*, two other major black intellectuals praise Abu-Jamal and elevate him to the status of celebrity and prophet in

both “Foreword” and the “Preface”: Harvard professor Cornel West and Julia Wright, the spokeswoman for the Support Committee for Political Prisoners in the United States (in France) and the daughter of novelist Richard Wright. Cornel West calls Abu-Jamal’s voice “passionate and prophetic” and argues that his voice “challenges us to wrestle with the most distinctive feature of present-day America: the relative erosion of systems of caring and nurturing.”⁵³ Like Wideman, West proclaims Abu-Jamal a new black prophet, capable of forcing us to see the interlocking systems of inequalities that permeate life in the United States. West cites the rich-poor gap that capitalism has created, the white supremacy that maintains “geographical segregation,” patriarchy and homophobia which are ‘killing our minds, bodies, and souls in the name of the American Dream.’⁵⁴

Although West indicts the system of capitalist ideologies that permeate the American landscape, his analysis is brief and his comments are a mere thirty-seven lines.

West concludes his comments by arguing that Mumia Abu-Jamal has been a victim of the ideologies of Western capitalism and the “American Dream.” He writes, As one who has lived on the night-side of this dream – unjustly imprisoned for a crime he did not commit – Mumia Abu-Jamal speaks to us of the institutional injustice and spiritual impoverishment that permeates our culture. He reminds us of things most fellow citizens would rather deny, ignore, or evade. And, like the most powerful critics of our society – from Herman Melville, Theodore Dreiser, and Nathaniel West to Ann Petty, Richard Wright, Toni Morrison, and Eugene O’Neill – he forces us to grapple with the most fundamental question facing this country: what does it profit a nation to conquer the whole world and lose its soul?⁵⁵

West pronounces Abu-Jamal innocent in the killing of Faulkner and then puts him in the intellectual company of some of the most profound American writers who comment on social injustice. West is very clearly positioning Abu-Jamal as an intellectual, as a critic, as a perpetual journalist who, in this case, transcends race to force America to face the brutality of its institutions. West concludes, “After over fifteen years of nightmarish jail conditions, Mumia Abu-Jamal’s soul is not only intact but still flourishing – just as the nation’s soul withers. Will we ever listen to and learn from our bloodstained prophets?”⁵⁶ Here, at the end of West’s “Foreword,” we see that for West, as for many, Abu-Jamal is a new prophet, a new black leader, a new Malcolm X, a new martyr, stained by the blood of sacrifice for his people. West has been writing for years about the crisis of black intellectuals and also the importance of black prophets; West, too, is often described as a new black prophet.⁵⁷ For him, like many others, Abu-Jamal is both black intellectual and prophet, positioned to lead the black struggle through the millennium.⁵⁸

Julia Wright follows West’s praise by beginning her tribute to Mumia Abu-Jamal with a commentary on silence and voice as she describes Abu-Jamal’s 1995 presence in court when he brought suit against his prison (SCI Greene) and the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections for their violation of his human rights. She writes, “There are all sorts of silences – as many perhaps as there are textures to our sense of touch or shades of color to the eyes.” In the courtroom there was “high-tech noiselessness” as Abu-Jamal entered. Wright remembers, “Ripples of silence froze in his shackled footsteps. As if on’a move waves could be stilled, this was a silence of total paradox: the volatile, scarcely hidden presence of loaded police weapons targeting the reined-in love of members of the family in the courtroom – men, women and children who have been

unable to touch him for fourteen years.”⁵⁹ Wright’s “Preface” deals at length with the sensory deprivation of death row and the struggle to fill the silence with meaning. She also connects Abu-Jamal to a courtroom full of Abu-Jamal’s entire family, biological and spiritual. This authenticates his presence as a community resource and reasserts his roles as father, husband, and brother. She writes,

Nothing, Mumia lets us know, can begin without the *word*. Writing behind locked doors gives durable sound to prison silence, spiritual distance from a madding crowd of politicians and elected judges whose careers are built on the blood of others, creative dimension to the sound and fury of a world lost. In writing, there is a renewed bonding: unshackled hands, grasping notebook, fingers touching pencil, pencil touching paper, paper touched by readers who are in turn touched by meaning.⁶⁰

Just as Julia Wright continues her father’s struggles to rebuild and renew the movement against racial stereotypes of black men and women, Mumia Abu-Jamal continues to forge new paths for the movement against the death penalty and for prison reform. Her testimony solidifies Abu-Jamal as a leader of a new generation of black spiritual leaders and intellectuals also following men like her father, who write specifically to bring the word of God to people and to humanize black Americans in the face of the institutions that perpetuate racial hatred. Like Wideman and West, Julia Wright sees Abu-Jamal’s voice and the stories he tells as absolutely central to his resistance and to his role as a social critic and leader of this new phase of black liberation struggle.

In his third book, *All Things Censored*, Mumia Abu-Jamal begins the text by speaking directly to the reader about how to consume this book and the narratives

contained within it. He writes, “The brilliant Haitian historian Michel Trouillot notes that ‘history is a story about power,’ and about ‘those who won.’ These essays deal with the folk resisting the lure of power, and those struggling to survive against monstrous odds. In that sense, this is their book, for their struggles, their lives are at the core of it.” He adds, “By reading (or hearing) these very words, you are participating in a conspiracy of resistance. I welcome you. For the spirit of resistance is, in essence, the spirit of love.”⁶¹

For Abu-Jamal, reading, listening, and watching the discourses by him or about him is tacit participation in the conspiracy of resistance that has framed black life in America. This language of conspiracy also pervades Assata Shakur’s poems and seems to turn the reader into a co-conspirator of the victim, of the revolutionary, rather than an ally of the state. Consequently, this passage constructs an immediate alliance with the reader and holds the reader accountable for what may or may not happen to him on death row. For the reader, this is a profound move, because it is charged with passion and affection. These are not the words of a savage killer, but the words of a poet, an historian, and a leader.

Poet, novelist and womanist Alice Walker provides the foreword to *All Things Censored* and begins her comments about Abu-Jamal by telling her readers that she will no longer write about his innocence, how he was framed or the necessity of a new trial because as she states, “the evidence speaks for itself.”⁶² She continues by noting that

In every generation there is a case like Mumia’s: a young black man is noted to be brilliant, radical, loving of his people, at war with injustice, often while he is still in his teens, as in the case of Mumia, the “authorities” decide to keep an eye on him. Indeed, they attempt to arrest his life for framing him for crimes he did not

commit, and incarcerating him in prison. There, they think of him as something conquered, a magnificent wild animal they have succeeded in capturing. They feel powerful in a way they could not feel if he were free.⁶³

Walker highlights Abu-Jamal's role as the leader of his generation, speaking about the harassment and violence that still characterize black life in the U.S. Here, she speaks directly to a black audience in a move that works to create solidarity and trust. She tells the reader that losing Mumia Abu-Jamal's voice "would be like losing a color of the rainbow."⁶⁴ For her, too, Abu-Jamal is also a prophet, an intellectual, and an important social critic essential to modern-day black liberation efforts. For Walker, he serves as a reminder of the continuity of racial oppression and the need to struggle and he provides a link to the resistance leaders of the past. The move legitimizes him as a new black liberation hero and as a "framed" black martyr.

Walker also comments on Abu-Jamal's ability as a leader to inspire hope, that resource that resistance is dependent upon. She writes that black people are beautiful, powerful and strong and,

Mumia is us, this amazing new tribe of people that being in America has produced.... We are like the Zapatistas of Southern Mexico in many ways: vastly outnumbered, many of us poor, humiliated on a daily basis by those in power, feeling ourselves unwanted, unseen, and un-named. Mumia helps us know how deeply and devoutly we are wanted; how sharply and lovingly we are seen; how honorable is our much maligned name.⁶⁵

Walker highlights Abu-Jamal's work in building black self-love and self-determination, both key components to Black Power, as a leader of a movement that has always been

dedicated to increasing black pride, restoring black dignity and embracing a collective identity rooted in struggle.

In assessing Abu-Jamal's leadership in this new phase of struggle, Walker also compares him to the Zapatistas who struggle for dignity on behalf of the Indian peoples of Chiapas and led the Chiapas rebellion in 1994. Like the Black Power movement, Tom Haden reminds us that the Zapatistas are also always pronounced dead as a movement, though they resurface every few years to protest Mexican government policies.⁶⁶ This comparison to another Third World movement helps Abu-Jamal cross international borders since it links him to a resistance movement that continues to be relevant to Mexican political life. Walker's comments reveal Abu-Jamal to be a profoundly important leader, an inspiration, a source of hope for the future, a paragon of resistance and an advocate of many of the tenets of Black Power: black self-determination, black pride, and solidarity with Third World peoples.

While literary figures like Wideman, West, Wright and Walker link Abu-Jamal to a history of black leadership and position him as a strong black leader in this new generation of liberation activism, Abu-Jamal's editor Noelle Hanrahan, prison activist and member of Prison Radio, begins the "Introduction" to *All Things Censored* by talking about the limitations of his speech by the prison and the state. She writes, "For over eighteen years Mumia has not only been fighting to stay alive; he has been waging a constant battle for the freedom to write and speak." She continues by characterizing Abu-Jamal as a prolific journalist who has maintained his "dignity and perseverance, despite the unmitigated and unceasing torture" of his confines.⁶⁷ Hanrahan is unrelenting about exposing the "power of writing" in prisons and sketches a very vivid picture of the

surveillance regime and torture to which Abu-Jamal is constantly subjected. She describes the conditions within the prison and asks the reader to “imagine your hands callused, cramped, and swollen from writing each day for hours with the cartridge of a ballpoint pen – legal briefs, letters, essays, your master’s thesis – and writing everything twice because the prison might ‘lose’ the copies you send out.”⁶⁸ Prison life is not about corrections but about the creation of an endless cycle of brutality and torture, which stifles the intellectual work and voice of someone like Abu-Jamal, committed to public service.

Just as dignity is central to Assata Shakur’s narrative, Hanrahan illustrates the ways in which prison life dehumanizes prisoners. She writes, “Imagine before and after your weekly two-hour, completely noncontact visit having to submit to a demeaning psychosexual full-body cavity search: ‘Strip. Open your mouth. Stick out your tongue. Lift your balls. Pull back your foreskin. Turn around. Spread your cheeks.’”⁶⁹ Hanrahan describes the physical torture in prison of cavity searches but she also includes a commentary on the extent of deprivation in prison. She emphasizes the ways that prison life reduces those sentenced to animals, constantly under the threat of psycho-sexual surveillance and assault that are “designed to break down the human connections between the prisoners, their families, and the outside world.”⁷⁰ This kind of description serves to position Abu-Jamal as a martyr, exiled to a life of solitude and physical torture. In building Abu-Jamal’s credibility as a martyr, Hanrahan strengthens his role as an interlocutor for the voiceless. Ironically, “Greene County was once a busy stop on the Underground Railroad, and today bears witness to pilgrimages to visit Mumia Abu-Jamal.”⁷¹ The comparison to slavery is not lost on the reader, who is encouraged to see

the prison system as the newest plantation economy and as a site for the regeneration of Black Power.

Hanrahan sets the tone of the “Introduction” by describing the physicality of prison life for the reader, who is asked to do the work of imagining prison life. For the reader who has never encountered prisons or prison literature, this is an exercise which has the performative potential of turning the reader into an ally. Hanrahan explicitly positions Abu-Jamal as a leader of the dispossessed, as the voice of those who lack representation. She writes, “Yet Mumia transcends prison. He has the rare ability to give voice to the dispossessed among us. The topics of his evocative radio essays reach far beyond his prison walls to illustrate the perspectives and the intrinsic human worth of those who exist outside the privileged upper-class world reflected in the media.”⁷²

Because he is able to transcend prison, the potential for recruiting new allies in the regeneration of Black Power is limitless, though Hanrahan speculates as to why Abu-Jamal’s commentaries from prison are perceived as a threat. She writes, “The answer, I believe, lies in the fact that not only has he dared to survive but he has continued his uncompromising reporting. Mumia’s commentaries from the depths of one of the country’s most repressive prisons are dangerous; they threaten the smooth and orderly functioning of both state-sanctioned murder and modern slavery.”⁷³

Hanrahan depicts Abu-Jamal as a victim, though survivor, of state-sanctioned violence, which runs counter to his image as a radical, political cop killer, though she acknowledges that his journalism form within prison threatens the prison-industrial complex. This is precisely how Abu-Jamal is deployed as Black Power leader: he is well-positioned to comment on the atrocities of prison life in America as a black man and

both his credentials as a committed journalist and as a racial activist are impeccable. His survival instincts fashion him as a resilient and committed speaker and writer whose voice represents the masses of those victimized by state-sanctioned brutality. For those needing a leader, a martyr, and a hero, Abu-Jamal, is all of these.

Listening, like reading, is an active process and Hanrahan prepares reader to become almost becomes a co-conspirator. Hanrahan adds,

State correctional departments, our national government, and the media have systematically attempted to “disappear” prisoners from the nation’s consciousness. We barely hear any discussion of the culture of incarceration in the mainstream media. No prison can hold a prisoner’s voice or completely suppress his or her story; but the practical obstacles to gaining access to places like SCI Greene and to getting prison stories on air, and the fact that reposting these stories requires courage and commitment, keep all but a few journalists and lawyers from venturing behind bars to report reality from inside America’s prisons and jails.⁷⁴

She reminds the reader of the sacrifices necessary to get Abu-Jamal’s commentaries out of prison, highlighting the threat that Abu-Jamal poses to the state while underscoring the plausibility of his claims as a political prisoner. Again, Hanrahan is careful to emphasize his role as a martyr, disappeared from the nation.

The comments that frame Mumia Abu-Jamal’s discourses serve to position Mumia Abu-Jamal as a prominent black intellectual that has spent his life serving the downtrodden. John Edgar Wideman, Cornel West, Julia Wright, and Alice Walker locate Mumia Abu-Jamal as the heir to black resistance, as the new voice of black liberation, as

a competent voice of black intellectualism. By vouching for Mumia Abu-Jamal's innocence, they serve as a mechanism of credibility to help draw others into the movement to save his life and to mobilize against capital punishment. They also have the readership in the United States and abroad that provide entrée into the larger world of black *belles lettres* for Abu-Jamal, the "voice of the voiceless." These writers point to Abu-Jamal as a black leader, a black writer and as a voice of black resistance. Like earlier Black Power advocates who "disappeared" through COINTELPRO, Abu-Jamal inspires the masses despite his incarceration. His resilience as a leader and his status as a martyr are strengthened by the comments of these black intellectuals. Because they assure the reader of Abu-Jamal's integrity and his talent for reporting, he can pontificate about capital punishment, police brutality, prison politics and other prisoners.

Abu-Jamal's Narratives: Exposing Death Row from Within

Because political prisoners often disappear inside the prison-industrial complex, the goal of movement leaders is to encourage movement participants to enact resistance around prison issues. This becomes difficult when the prisoner is removed, when media coverage of prison culture is prevented and often punished, and when the news media is unable and unwilling to cover executions. Therefore, prison texts become the authority on prison life and state-sanctioned violence because only the prisoner is able to translate the experience of prison to the masses. Since political prisoners are removed from the public sphere and prisoners are the only ones privy to the conditions of incarceration, the brutality and surveillance of the regime are necessary to maintain rigid control over the narratives and anecdotes that emerge from prison culture. If the prisoners circulate their accounts of the workings of prison culture, the culture itself is jeopardized. Therefore,

prison officials must do everything in their power to stop accounts of prison life from reaching the public, where people might be inspired to revolt by the horrors of the prison-industrial complex. Although the public does not participate in prison culture writ large, they *can* participate in the exoneration of political prisoners. This is the transformative potential of prison memoirs like those of Mumia Abu-Jamal. Prison memoirs tell the untold stories of those that have been silenced by the state and they counter the narratives that are produced by the state as “official” histories of a given moment, event or milieu.

This section analyzes Abu-Jamal’s counternarratives of state brutality and death row by tracing his transformation into a radical, oppositional journalist in the context of the MOVE siege and police brutality in Philadelphia. As MOVE emerged from the ruins of the Black Panther Party in the 1970s, it developed into a radical black collective led by itinerant teacher John Africa who preached nonviolence, vegetarianism, and exercise. The Philadelphia police targeted MOVE for destruction when Abu-Jamal was chosen to cover the story as a reporter. By examining Abu-Jamal’s emergence as a radical journalist during the MOVE siege, it is possible to see how Black Power can be regenerated by changing the ways that the news media can cover progressive black organizations and the police harassment and brutality that constrain their existence. This section also serves to illustrate how the public resistance of intellectuals and journalists becomes targeted by “law and order” culture for eradication and provides the basis for Abu-Jamal’s own counternarratives about his arrest and incarceration. In this section, Abu-Jamal connects MOVE’s struggle, first, to the struggle of the Black Panther Party and, second, to his struggle as a means of indicting the justice system: the officers who testified against him, the judge who removed him from the courtroom, the prison guards

who restrict his ability to write and receive guests. Abu-Jamal's commentary on the MOVE organization positions it as an heir to Black Power, constantly regenerating Black Power through resistance to police brutality, through an emphasis on black self-determination, and through self-defense premised upon spiritual nonviolence. This portion of the chapter also connects Abu-Jamal to a contemporary liberation struggle for justice aside from his own, and it highlights the urgency of a response to police brutality in America's cities. It also highlights the possibility of a frame-up of this community leader and activist by the Philadelphia police, further emphasizing Abu-Jamal's role as a martyr in this new generation of prison activism and black liberation struggle.

Abu-Jamal begins the counter-history in his texts with anecdotes about the Black Panther Party and his early experiences with journalism and propaganda that provide the context for his emergence as an oppositional reporter. Mumia writes about the police brutality that he and his high school friends experienced prior to his entrance into the Panthers: "Well, my political life formally began with the Black Panther Party. I've been in a sense thankful to the Philadelphia police department for kicking and beating me into the Black Panther Party."⁷⁵ Abu-Jamal also talks about his time in the Ministry of Information doing the propaganda work of the Black Panther Party before becoming a journalist after the BPP split. He writes,

journalism is a tool to change people's consciousness, to give people insight, and in another way, a kind of affirmation that their lives have value and purpose.

When one reads the daily press or listens to what is broadcast on the regular "white" radio stations and TV stations, you will perceive a picture, a slanted picture, of Black life that reflects it in the most improper terms. When media

journalism and propaganda is used to reflect a positive side of people, the side that resists oppression, the side of people's inherent worth, no matter what their property or economy value, then that in itself is revolutionary, because this system tends to denigrate people who are poor. And most of the people on planet earth are poor. That is the kind of consciousness that drove me towards journalism.

And, of course, through the Party I was trained in that field and was bade to write from a radical revolutionary perspective.⁷⁶

As Abu-Jamal describes his training as a journalist, he highlights the race and class consciousness that motivates his style of reporting, though gender is conspicuously absent. He writes, nevertheless, from the standpoint of a revolutionary, which influences his views about black communities, oppression, and class-consciousness. By describing his commitment to accurately portraying black life, he is also promising fidelity to black issues and causes, in turn, elevating him as a modern-day black community leader.

As a well-respected journalist committed to uncovering police brutality in Philadelphia, it is no wonder that Abu-Jamal became a target of the Civil Defense squads, COINTELPRO, and Frank Rizzo. Gabriele Gottlieb adds that although Abu-Jamal was clearly targeted because of his known affiliation with the BPP as a youth, he was also monitored and harassed "because of his affiliation in the 1970s with the radical group MOVE and his critical radio reports concerning the police," who targeted poor people of color.⁷⁷ As an oppositional journalist, Abu-Jamal reminds us that he has always championed the resistance of poor communities of color in an attempt to oppose the brutality of the state. This helps to reinforce Abu-Jamal's role as a "voice for the voiceless" and as a community leader, documentarian, and eyewitness to police brutality.

The police harassment and attempts at eradicating the communal, progressive MOVE organization began as early as 1974, but climaxed in 1978, when Rizzo confronted MOVE at their home in the Powelton Village section of West Philadelphia.⁷⁸ Terry Bisson describes the MOVE siege this way: “On the morning of August 8 [1978], the ex-cop/mayor applied the municipal tool he liked best: The nightstick. Naked, brute force. Hundreds of flak-jacketed riot police moved in. Bulldozers knocked down the fences and splintered MOVE’s outdoor platform [which they had built as a forum to negotiate with police so that the public could view the police brutality]. Cranes knocked out the windows of the house.”⁷⁹ By the time that the MOVE members had surrendered after being flushed from the basement by the high-pressured water from firemen’s hoses, police officer James Ramp was dead and nine of the MOVE members were convicted in the killing and are still political prisoners. They were convicted even though the crime scene was totally destroyed by police bulldozers, no guns were found, and the judge said that he “hadn’t the faintest idea” about who fired the fatal shots.⁸⁰ In many ways, this siege on the communal MOVE house became political justification for the second MOVE siege in 1985. Nonetheless, Abu-Jamal’s commitment to MOVE as a journalist covering their harassment and imprisonment is important because it illustrates how steadfast he is as a leader. He maintained such intense coverage even in the face of extreme brutality by the police; Abu-Jamal’s relationship with MOVE was also the object of intense police surveillance after Abu-Jamal covered the destruction of their communal home in 1978. His sympathetic coverage of the first MOVE siege marks his identification with the radical black organizations that emerged from the rubble of the earlier phase of the Black

Power movement and paves the way for him to comment later on the inspirational teachings of MOVE and its patriarch, John Africa, who helped in his spiritual (re)birth.

The second MOVE siege lasted ten months and dominated Philadelphia's attention in 1985 because it catapulted police brutality back into public conversations about race. In describing the siege, law professor and former Communications Secretary for the Black Panther Party Kathleen Neal Cleaver writes,

It was a stunningly brutal assault. Early in the evening of May 31, 1985, the Philadelphia police dropped a bomb on the roof of a house occupied by MOVE members. The ensuing explosion ignited gasoline stored in a drum on the roof and the flames spread rapidly to the adjacent row houses. Eventually, as firemen stood in abeyance, two streets were engulfed in flames. The conflagration burned out of control, finally killing eleven MOVE members – five of whom were children – and destroying sixty-one homes, as well as damaging over a hundred others and leaving two hundred and fifty people homeless.⁸¹

Only two members of MOVE lived through the second siege: Ramona Africa (age 30) and Birdie Africa (age 13). The rest were either shot trying to escape or forced back into the burning building where they died in the flames. The culmination of the year-long siege of the MOVE house by police divided Philadelphia, which erupted in a storm of protest.

By championing MOVE, Abu-Jamal aligned himself with their ideologies, their resistance, and their role as the new Black Power organization in Philadelphia and with the MOVE members who became political prisoners. In *All Thing Censored*, Abu-Jamal writes about the May 13 bombing and says, “Now cops patrol neighborhoods across

America, armed like storm troopers, with a barely disguised urge to destroy the very area they are sworn to ‘serve and protect’ Are they an aid to the people, or a foreign army of occupation?”⁸² Abu-Jamal sees the police as a standing army that does more destruction to urban communities than good. This kind of characterization builds the exigency for Black Power regeneration because it evokes a disdain for the police as a bastion of violence in America’s cities that must be stopped. His critique of the police and their brutality in Philadelphia is followed by a command to the reader/listener, “Organize this very day to resist it [police brutality], to oppose it, to go beyond it. Demand that all imprisoned MOVE members be released and all political prisoners be freed. That is a beginning. That is a first step we can take. On a MOVE, long live John Africa!”⁸³

Abu-Jamal’s allegiance to MOVE is an important strategy of regeneration. The organization was an explosive force in the Philadelphia community before and after the siege due to its status as a progressive, nonviolent black commune, and his association with the organization links his cause to their repression and to the political prisoners that are still incarcerated. As Cleaver contends, MOVE’s “values were a pastiche of themes exalted during the 1960s social revolution, such as nonviolence, communal living, racial harmony, self-defense, protection of the environment, physical fitness, and nutritional fads.”⁸⁴ The organization’s values and practices were highly criticized but MOVE was also controversial because its existence provoked such police brutality. Abu-Jamal’s fidelity to MOVE’s precepts and to the people of the organization illustrates his tenacity as a black liberation activist. His oppositional reports on the MOVE siege demonstrated an appreciation for the importance of radical black activism after the COINTELPRO

schemes of the 1970s that had all but eradicated black social action from Philadelphia. His alliance with the political prisoners of the organization also propels him forward as a leader of a movement to free political prisoners.

Abu-Jamal recalls his first impressions of MOVE, which from his perspective, coming from a semi-socialist, paramilitary organization like the BPP, was “extraordinarily negative.” Yet, his conversion testimony serves to underscore their importance as a new Black Power organization because of their resistance to police brutality. He argues,

I could not perceive them as revolutionary, because they didn't wear uniforms like the Panthers did. They weren't talking about Marxism, Leninism, Mao Tse-Tung though, as the Panthers were doing.... So, therefore, in the same way that the Philadelphia Police Department beat me into the BPP, the Philadelphia Police Department's repression of MOVE attracted me to MOVE. Because, even though the repression was extraordinarily severe, brutal, and devastating, MOVE continued to rebel and resist....⁸⁵

Abu-Jamal appreciated the resistance of the peaceful activists of MOVE and provided oppositional reporting on their relationship with the Philadelphia police force. In providing this conversion testimony, Abu-Jamal highlights how his perceptions about MOVE, like perceptions of many Philadelphians, were erroneous and he praises the organization for its resistance to the brutality of Rizzo's civil defense force. Here, he also begins to complicate his revolutionary ideology to include praise for groups that resist police brutality, even if they embrace nonviolence. Abu-Jamal's reports on the MOVE siege reminded black Philadelphia of the history of police brutality that constrained their

lives and elevated the MOVE organization to a place of reverence as an emerging Black Power organization that championed the values of black self-love, self-defense, and value for the Earth. Abu-Jamal sees MOVE as a space for regeneration of Black Power and as an organization that could replace the Black Panther Party in Philadelphia, particularly since its political positions on police brutality and state violence were similar to the BPP.

In other words, Abu-Jamal's reporting on MOVE allowed the organization to inherit the mantle of the BPP as an heir to Black Power and has helped to galvanize the international movement against police brutality and the death penalty. By connecting the MOVE organization to the history of black resistance in Philadelphia through groups like the Panthers, Abu-Jamal becomes a bridge between the two organizations since he has been a member of both and a target of police harassment because of his relationship to them as well.

Because of his reporting on the MOVE assault and on the long history of police brutality in Philadelphia, Abu-Jamal was marked by Rizzo's CD Squads and was eventually branded a cop killer. In an interview with Abu-Jamal, journalist Heike Kleffner asks, "Can you say how it happened that you stood trial for allegedly having killed a cop? Do you feel that the Philadelphia police set you up on the night when you got shot and this cop got killed? I remember reading that the then mayor, Frank Rizzo, once said about you that your 'breed of journalism' needed to be stopped by any means." Abu-Jamal answers by saying, "I think it is undeniable that elements of a set-up existed and that my background as a Panther and as what some people called a 'MOVE journalist' or a MOVE supporter were elements in that." He explains that the

Philadelphia Police Department always knew who he was because he worked at the radio station next door. He adds,

And I think that the work I did – because it was not done by other reporters in Philadelphia – put me down as a target to be neutralized. One must look back at the coverage of MOVE around the time of the police siege of their house in 1978 to see how demonised, how inhumane, how animalistic the portrayal of MOVE was. When interviews were done with them that showed that they were good, decent and committed people, it challenged the public perception of who they were.⁸⁶

In his comments about the MOVE siege, Abu-Jamal is quick to analyze the racialized and classed aspects of police portrayals of the black commune, which the state demonized as animalistic and primitive. Abu-Jamal's commitment to the MOVE supporters illustrates his fidelity to those decent and committed black people opposing police brutality.

Embracing MOVE ultimately cost him his freedom and turned him into a martyr after he was branded a cop killer. For Abu-Jamal, the relationship between the police brutality directed at MOVE and his trial as a "cop killer" was quite well-established since he had covered the police corruption in Philadelphia for over a decade. His experience covering the MOVE siege confirmed what he saw as a Black Panther: that the Philadelphia police were out to remove all signs of black activism from the city.

Mumia Abu-Jamal defied the Philadelphia police by covering issues of police brutality and by allying himself with MOVE in the wake of COINTELPRO's decimation of the Panthers in the city. Such defiance certainly elevates Abu-Jamal's role as a leader in this new phase of Black Power and made him into a hero in the black communities of

Philadelphia's West End. Consequently, the prosecution, Judge Sabo, and the news media mobilized imagery of deviance in an effort to reduce Mumia Abu-Jamal to the negative media stereotypes of the BPP, an organization that he had not been a part of since his teenage years.⁸⁷ Abu-Jamal was not allowed to defend himself, and, when he insisted, he was barred from his own trial. And, prosecution witnesses (even those who recanted or changed their stories) were never questioned. Consequently, Abu-Jamal's writings work to oppose the state's deployment of racialized depictions of the deviant black man.⁸⁸ Because the state sees him as both defiant and, therefore, deviant, he must convince the public that he is simply defiant about police brutality, poverty in America's cities and other issues effecting communities of color. In order to transcend the label of cop killer, he offers a competing image of himself, centered on that of credible black journalist and intellectual and his discourse works to counter the stereotypes of black masculinity that straitjacket the American justice system. He also comments on the intersection of race and class in the justice system and on the ways in which this intersection constrains the lives of many black Americans like it has for him, thereby connecting him to a long history of resistance.⁸⁹ These strategies help to regenerate Black Power because they connect both Abu-Jamal and the MOVE organization to a history of resistance to the exigency of police brutality and they highlight the need for new agitation.

At the center of Abu-Jamal's resistance to the deviant black men depiction and to the history of state violence is his argument that the death penalty is a political tool of the state designed to help elect and re-elect politicians. This claim and others like it, frames Abu-Jamal's discussions of death row in terms of its political utility in removing poor

people of color from large cities. This rhetorical move highlights Abu-Jamal's continued commitment to raced and classed assessments of the prison-industrial complex as a leader and it provides an entrée for Abu-Jamal to discuss his eyewitness accounts of the brutality of the prison system. In *Death Blossoms*, he writes,

Politicians talk about people on death row as if they are the worst of the worst, monsters and so forth. But they will not talk about the thousands of men and women in our country serving lesser sentences for similar and even identical crimes. Or others who, by virtue of their wealth and their ability to retain a good private lawyer, are not convicted at all. The criminal court system calls itself a justice system, but it measures privilege, wealth, power social status, and - last but not least – race to determine who goes to death row.⁹⁰

By condemning the death penalty as a purely political instrument, Abu-Jamal sets up arguments about the inhumanity of death row conditions and the routine brutality of inmates. Statements like the one above, place Abu-Jamal in the role of both journalist and witness to the brutality inherent in a system that favors wealthy white people and they create a new space for Black Power agitation: the death penalty. This strategy helps to raise Abu-Jamal up as both a leader and celebrity of the movement against the death penalty, which strengthens his ability to spur change.

Abu-Jamal's oppositional reporting continues to expose the excessive violence of Philadelphia police during the MOVE siege and he uses this experience to voice and record the stories from death row that help to galvanize support for the movement against police brutality and the death penalty. Abu-Jamal also draws upon collective memories of his contemporaries as a way to frame current clashes with the state; this rhetorical

strategy helps to contextualize and reassert the necessity for common struggle around the issues of capital punishment, highlighting the importance of dignity to this process. At the beginning of *Live From Death Row*, he writes, “Don’t tell me about the valley of death. I live there. In south-central Pennsylvania’s Huntington County a one-hundred-year-old prison stands, its Gothic towers projecting an air of foreboding, evoking a gloomy mood of the Dark Ages.”⁹¹ In just the first three sentences of his narrative, he is able to assert his role as an insider and witness to America’s death row. He is not an academic, writing from the outside, but someone who will live within the prison-industrial complex until he dies. This very clearly establishes Abu-Jamal’s credibility as he narrates the conditions of SCI Greene. He continues, “I and some seventy-eight other men spend about twenty-two hours a day in six-by-ten-foot cells. The additional two hours a day may be spent outdoors, in a chain-link-fenced box, ringed by concertina razor wire, under the gaze of gun turrets.”⁹² His language evokes for the reader the austerity and the surveillance inherent in living in a maximum-security penitentiary, yet his tone is measured even as he chronicles the degradation of the state. He comments,

Mix in solitary confinement, around-the-clock lock-in, no-contact visits, no prison jobs, no educational programs by which to grow, psychiatric “treatment” facilities designed only to drug you into a coma; ladle in hostile, overtly racist prison guards and staff; add the weight of the falling away of family ties, and you have all the fixings for a stressful psychic stew designed to deteriorate, to erode one’s humanity – designed, that is, by the state, with full knowledge of its effects.⁹³

Abu-Jamal's damnation of prison culture in the United States highlights the irony of calling such programs "corrections" and also centers the prison as a space of exigency in new black liberation struggles. In prison, nothing is being corrected; the days are filled with silence, drugs, solitary confinement, violence and separation. This kind of depiction helps to undermine the credibility of the judicial system by highlighting the horrors of death row and the unrepentant racism and violence that characterize life there. Just as Assata Shakur is preoccupied with dignity, so too, does Abu-Jamal illustrate how intent the state is on denying dignity and humanity. This description helps to build his case for social action around prisons and political prisoners by creating the exigency that mobilizes people to mobilize and regenerate Black Power.

Abu-Jamal continues by commenting on his reaction to the death sentence by connecting his criticism of capital punishment to the history of lynching that terrorized black communities so routinely in the twentieth century. He writes,

As a black journalist who was a Black Panther way back in my yon teens, I've often studied America's long history of legal lynchings of Africans. I remember a front page of the *Black Panther* newspaper, bearing the quote, "A black man has no rights that a white man is bound to respect," attributed to Roger Taney, of the infamous *Dred Scott* case, where America's highest court held that neither Africans nor their descendents are entitled to the rights of the Constitution. Deep, huh? It's true.⁹⁴

By distancing himself from his youth as a Black Panther, and by also privileging his professional background, Abu-Jamal is able to mobilize his previous affiliations to connect him to a recent history of Black Power and to the longer history of black

resistance to servitude. By substituting “legal lynching” as a term for the death penalty, he also effectively underscores the raced and gendered historical nature of this legal precedent and positions himself in a long line of black boys and men accused and lynched for imaginary transgressions against white society. Additionally, the invocation of the *Dred Scott* decision functions as a rhetorical call to arms about the state of black Americans today and Abu-Jamal’s use of history helps to regenerate interest in black solidarity by calling on such an icon.

Through his use of history and his sense of urgency about the need to represent the conditions of death row, Abu-Jamal is able to connect himself to a long line of black men suffering at the hands of the state, be they lynching victims or part of peonage systems. As a man on death row, Abu-Jamal is also writing to save his own life, so although he is unwavering in his commitment to report on the conditions of death row, he also must comment on his own legal position. He opines:

Perhaps I’m naïve, maybe stupid - but I thought the law would be followed in my case, and the conviction reversed.... Even in the face of this relentless wave of antiblack state terror, *I thought my appeals would be successful*. I still harbored a belief in U.S. law, and the realization that my appeal had been denied was as shocker. I could understand intellectually that American courts are reservoirs of racist sentiment and have historically been hostile to black defendants, but a lifetime of propaganda about American “justice” is hard to shrug off.⁹⁵

His comments here are directed at an audience that certainly believes in at least some of the tenets of American “justice” and he is expressing his frustration, disbelief and anger

at a system that he purports to have had some faith in. By expressing his former belief in U.S. law, he counters the stereotypes of his radical activities in the Black Panther Party and emphasizes the naivety of his views regarding the justice system. His language is that of a convert, someone not quite willing to believe something until he's seen it with his own eyes. His sentiment here is one of bitter disappointment as he provides vivid criticisms of the anti-black state-sponsored "terror" of the U.S. legal system; here he is inverting their label of him as "cop killer" and "terrorist" to expose the lengthy and complicated orchestration of racist state politics. His casual style is punctuated by these indictments of his trial and the legal system, which have the potential to motivate new Black Power agitation..

At the end of the preface of *Live From Death Row*, Abu-Jamal includes a section that explicitly builds his moral ethos as a Black Power leader for those that may or may not know his story intimately. He writes, "I continue to fight against this unjust sentence and conviction. Perhaps we can shrug off and shed some of the dangerous myths laid on our minds like a second skin - such as the 'right' to a fair and impartial jury of our peers; the 'right' to represent oneself; the 'right' to a fair trial, even. They're *not* rights - they're privileges of the powerful and rich."⁹⁶ Abu-Jamal is talking about the gross inequalities in his case by generalizing them as the norm within the criminal justice system so as to press the exigency of a corrupted judicial process. However, his comments also illustrate his commitment to true "justice," which helps illustrate his dedication to struggle. This builds his credibility as a leader.

He continues by indicting the mainstream news media and the federal government, who propagandize the American people. Abu-Jamal warns, "For the

powerless and the poor, they are a chimera that vanish once one reaches out to claim them as something real or substantial. Don't expect the media networks to tell you, for they can't, because of the incestuousness between the media and the government, and big business, which they both serve."⁹⁷ Abu-Jamal is tapping into the general distrust of government and the news media (of which he was certainly a part) thereby inserting himself as the one to "tell it like it is." As a political prisoner and as an oppositional journalist, he is the ultimate insider, exposing the intricacies of race and class even as they operate at a social level, at least to the extent that he is telling the story through a black male subjectivity. This move privileges his classed black male voice as the one to expose the excesses of the state and to be the moral teacher that can use counternarratives, anecdotes, parables to change people's actions. It also establishes Abu-Jamal as a male leader who has survived the brutality of the state and who has seen the transformative strength of Black Power, first as a member of the BPP and now, as a member of MOVE.

Certainly his own preface is an indication that Abu-Jamal acknowledges his position at the head of a movement where his words sketch the racial exigencies surrounding police brutality and prison reform that demand new attention from progressive black organizations that have inherited the mantle of Black Power. While he was unable to express them in a narrative defense of himself in the courtroom, he is able in just the first few pages to establish himself as a credible source by citing statistics, examples and some cognitive dissonance about his feelings toward the judicial system. It is interesting that he chooses to create the enemy out of the amorphous "system" rather than ranting about Judge Sabo or the prosecuting D.A. This can be read as a strategy that

sustains the energy of his narrative even after the appeals have been denied. As Kimberle Crenshaw and Gary Peller note, “the realm of interpretation, ideology and narrative is a critical site in the production of American racial domination.”⁹⁸ Judge Sabo’s courtroom seems to exemplify the white racial domination that silenced Mumia in the public spaces of the courtroom and forced his narrative elsewhere—to his essays. Still, his choice to target the structure of the American penal system has the potential to focus the movement beyond Mumia Abu-Jamal’s own case, to the cases of countless others who are victims of American (in)justice. By commenting on the conditions of prisons, on prison politics, and on the racism inherent in the justice system, Abu-Jamal rises to the role of intellectual as a journalist uncovering the truth and demystifying the experience and as a prophet highlighting the immorality of prison culture.

Remembering Other Prisoners; Re-Masculinizing the Black Power

Stories of either police brutality or prison brutality also help to form the part of the justification for regenerating the Black Power movement. As Austin Sarat notes, “The narrative strategy necessary to write a history of the present in the face of the counternarratives produced in the legal process requires a bold willingness to speak the unspeakable, to tell the story that no one now wants to hear in the hope that future audiences will be more receptive.”⁹⁹ As the historian and the voice for these men, Abu-Jamal uses these counternarratives to indict the state’s claims to justice but it also positions him as a leader of those who are similarly dispossessed. He testifies about death row conditions for men and re-centers the prison as the center of black liberation.

It is in these essays concerning other prisoners, that Mumia Abu-Jamal began his ascent as a leader of the movement for prison reform and death penalty abolition. In

these essays Abu-Jamal focuses exclusively on the effects of the prison system on poor black men and his stories of violence directed at inmates serves as the warrant for regenerating Black Power. His unique role as a journalist reporting from inside the prison system distinguishes him from the other inmates. Barbara Harlow writes, “The writer in prison has a special role to play, amongst his fellow detainees as well as in the eyes of the prison authorities. His writing serves to sustain his memory and sense of self and purpose.”¹⁰⁰ In this capacity, the writer in prison is both an eyewitness to the brutality of prison regimes and also a scribe for the inmate community, recording their lives. The political prisoner writes to maintain his or her own sanity, to record and witness abuses by the state, and to sustain a community of resistance, inside and outside of the prison. In his work on apartheid prisons in South Africa, Paul Gready adds,

The oppositional “power of writing” gained power by being collective. The written word was almost always a means of communication and engagement, a gesture towards solidarity.... The initial formulation of an oppositional “power of writing” was reunion, a collective meeting place in which the fracturing individualization of official rewriting was undermined: written communication between prisoners bolstered morale and solidarity, letters became public property, news was learnt, disseminated and endlessly discussed, and studying was both informal and formal ranging from prisoners teaching each other basic literacy skills to official study for degrees.¹⁰¹

As an act of solidarity, prison writing encourages oppositional thought within prisons and, in the case of the political prisoner, can recruit prisoners for reform efforts.¹⁰²

Gready’s comments illustrate yet another way that Abu-Jamal is able to situate himself as

a leader, even from within prison, as he becomes the resident intellectual, the working journalist, the law-savvy educator and the movement organizer and masthead.

The prison journalist is crucial in building ties of solidarity because they record the histories of those lost inside of the prison system, cut off from family and friends. Prison journalists forge the bonds of solidarity within prisons that account for prisoners' rights movements, they promote literacy in prison, and they help prisoners with legal problems and questions. Journalists and activists in prison serve an important role in translating prison life for those on the outside as well as for those locked away. Former political prisoner Angela Y. Davis adds, "The political prisoner's words or deeds have in one form or another embodied political protests against the established order and have consequently brought him into acute conflict with the state."¹⁰³ The writings of political prisoners become the contested terrain between "official" versions of "history" and "justice" as political prisoners insist on communicating to those outside of prisons the horrific conditions of the prison-industrial complex for poor people, women, and people of color. The process of writing in prison is so taboo that its practice is inherently resistant and it is the building block of prison-centered solidarity movements. As a prison journalist, Abu-Jamal's strategies of regeneration rely on this inherent relationship between those in his position that can testify to prison politics and conditions and the masses in prisons that are looking for someone to lead them, teach them or help them.

Like many political prisoners, Mumia Abu-Jamal makes the choice to include representations of his fellow death row inmates as an act of solidarity, particularly surrounding male prisoners, which continues to marginalize the importance of black women prisoners in the regeneration of Black Power. Abu-Jamal's narratives about other

prisoners show the pervasiveness of torture in the prison and also refute the idea that the conditions or treatment he receives are specific to him. His counternarratives serve to underscore the pervasiveness of terror upon the bodies of all of those incarcerated and also to show the power of the state to inflict that power upon all of its citizens. In his first essay, “Teetering on the Brink Between Life and Death,” published also in the *Yale Law Journal*, Mumia describes the control that the State Correctional Institute at Huntington has over the lives of its inmates. They are routinely “denied family phone calls,” “shackled for refusing to violate [their] beliefs” and are on the road to extinction, not to parole.¹⁰⁴ He comments, “As in any quasi-military organization, reality on the row is regimented by rule and regulation. As against any regime imposed on human personality, there is resistance, but far less than one would expect.”¹⁰⁵ This is in part because of the twenty-two hours a day that they spend in their “cages,” as Mumia frequently calls them and partly because of the lack of access to the outside world and to hope.¹⁰⁶ Like Assata Shakur’s memoir, Abu-Jamal comments on the importance of hope and how difficult it is to remain optimistic and resistant to the brutality of the state. As Abu-Jamal emphasizes the regimentation of death row, his words invite the reader to empathize with the men that share death row and to understand the inhuman conditions that characterize the ends of their lives. Abu-Jamal’s text reflects the strategies of regeneration by highlighting the failures of prison policy and practice that must give rise to new agitation around the prison.

Abu-Jamal’s strategies of regeneration also center upon the effects of inhumane prison practices on the body and he notes that visits are a form of particularly intense psychological humiliation where the visitor and the prisoner are separated by a glass

partition, in a closed room. The prisoner is viscosly strip-searched before being handcuffed and seated in front of the visitor.¹⁰⁷ As Mumia notes, “The ultimate effect of noncontact visits is to weaken, and ultimately to sever, family ties. Through this policy and practice, the state skillfully and intentionally denies those it condemns a fundamental element and expression of humanity - that of touch and physical contact...”¹⁰⁸ His description of the dehumanization of the death row inmate rouses empathy, concern and certainly shock because Abu-Jamal discusses the effects that these brutal regimes of power exercise over the family. Abu-Jamal’s description of prison also serves to underscore the real victims of the justice system: the families of those incarcerated. The effects of prison brutality are felt outside of prison walls as parents are separated from children and families are stressed and strained by even traveling to see an incarcerated loved one. In his strategies to articulate the degradation of life on death row, Abu-Jamal connects the pain inflicted on the inmate’s body to the black family, skillfully placing the black family at the center of prison resistance. This move reinforces the necessity of black families in new expressions of Black Power and, since the same forms of prison brutality touch millions of families, his potential converts are numerous.

In “Descent Into Hell,” Mumia’s description of the maltreatment of those incarcerated on death row is even more disturbing and it helps to illustrate the urgency of the need for new Black Power organizing centering upon death row incarceration. He describes a prisoner cuffed to a steel grille in the psychiatric unit whose tremors indicated massive drug use of psychotropic drugs. He says, “The spark? Powerful mind-bending drugs, prescribed to prisoners liberally, especially in light of a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that allows prison officials free rein to drug prisoners insensate.”¹⁰⁹ He concludes

this depiction with the story of fifty-seven year old Robert Barnes, who threatened suicide if placed in the strip cell they call “the hole.” Though he had a history of psychiatric problems and had issued a suicide threat, the row was overcome during midday meal by the smell of burning hair. Robert Barnes had set himself on fire because he had been placed in the hole for 24 hours. When he was pronounced dead, over 70 percent of his body was burned.¹¹⁰ This kind of story illustrates the extent to which prisoners are resisting their inhumane conditions from within the prisons, but also serves to underscore the necessity of transformation from social movement organizing on the outside.

Mumia follows up Barnes’ story with numerous accounts of violence directed at death row inmates with batons, dogs, water hoses, lashes, and mace. He describes solitary confinement, dementia, and horrifying racism perpetuated by an entire brigade of white men with weapons.¹¹¹ Mumia describes violence directed at a man named Timmy that erupted into a huge brawl in Huntington prison one night. He says, “Armed, armored squads went from cell to cell, pulling, cuffing, punching, bludgeoning, kicking, brutalizing naked prisoners. Men were handcuffed, seized, dragged outside. And thrown into cages, naked, beaten and bloodied.”¹¹² Stories like this one serve to reinforce Mumia’s outrage at the conditions of death row and yet, his story is told in a matter-of-fact manner, without the hostility that might characterize the narratives of a man waiting to be executed. The tone is mild and professional, underscoring the horrors of life on death row for the reader and highlighting the exigencies that make social action necessary. His story reflects the style of oppositional journalism that he has embraced and serves to connect him to his fellow inmates by passing their history and their stories

along because their voices have been silenced by prison violence. These stories illustrate the severity of the crisis in America's prisons and are a call to action on the outside of the prisons to agitate for prison reforms.

Because Abu-Jamal is an eyewitness to this additional form of state violence, he has an even greater credibility as a storyteller and this forms part of the basis of his celebrity as a prison journalist and death row inmate. Paul Gready remarks, "The foundation of autobiography's privilege as a source lies in the insider's intimacy with events portrayed, the manner in which experience is claimed as one's own."¹¹³ He continues, "The crucible of incarceration with its textures of violence, pain and suffering seems universally to demand 'factually insistent' narratives."¹¹⁴ In autobiographical prison manifestos, the writer is compelled to function as a witness to the daily degradation of prisons because prison writing is deemed authoritative and authentic through conceptions of truth that demand eyewitness accounts.¹¹⁵ Therefore, a prison journalist like Abu-Jamal assumes the role of reporting on prison conditions, prison politics, and the lived reality of inmates. These stories constitute the exigencies that prison activists must embrace to articulate their reasons for prison reform but they also serve to humanize inmates in the face of such horrific state violence.

As Abu-Jamal testifies to the police brutality and prison brutality that he has witnessed as both a journalist and inmate, he is able to articulate for the public the kinds of state violence that precipitate Black Power agitation and that, once again, demand action. In this way, his strategies of regeneration embrace the use of eyewitness accounts to build movements that center on prison reform. These strategies also have the cumulative effect of elevating Abu-Jamal, this professional journalist and ultimate

insider, with the role of leader. As a black male leader, Abu-Jamal becomes one in a long line of Black Power activists and leaders who have been “disappeared,” either through incarceration or through assassination.

Regenerating Black Male Leadership

In an effort to continue the lineage of black male leadership in the wake of Black Power's decline, Abu-Jamal includes a selection of essays that link the everyday lives of the men on death row to the men of the Black Power movement and to social justice advocacy. This move emphasizes the continuity between the men in prison and those working on the outside for black liberation; however, this regenerative strategy also masculinizes black liberation history and normalizes the role of black men as the sole leaders of Black Power campaigning.

In *Live From Death Row* and in *All Things Censored*, Abu-Jamal utilizes a regenerative strategy of eulogizing that embraces Malcolm X and Huey Newton as heroes and celebrities in the black community. By commenting on the black male leaders of Black Power that came before him, Abu-Jamal is exhibiting a rhetoric of regeneration for black liberation by making black masculinity the center of prison dissent, with him as the new masthead. He is marking himself as a son of the Black Power movement, since he was in fact a young man when the BPP was founded in Philadelphia, and the legitimate heir to Black Power in this new phase. And, by using nostalgia for martyred black militants, Abu-Jamal is able to move backward into the past for familiar resources that help to make a liberation movement for the future intelligible, and this includes discussions of Black Power heroes and spiritual leaders. His use of the past, of history, helps us to cope with present landscapes. Abu-Jamal mobilizes nostalgia for the great

black martyrs of the 1960s and 1970s as a way of appealing first, to the baby boomers who watched the Black Power movement grow and marketed from it, and second, to the young people who have become consumers of the ideals and images of Black Power heroes through hip-hop and film. This kind of nostalgia is a useful resource for social movement organizing because it creates intense emotions about something that is understandable, familiar to people and often reminds them of their youth and vitality. In the case of Malcolm X, Huey Newton, and even in his remarks later about Martin Luther King, Jr., nostalgia is seemingly disguised as “a forward-looking restorative impulse” that seeks to restore the past in the future.¹¹⁶

While Mumia Abu-Jamal reports on the conditions from death row, he also places himself in the company of “bad” black men like Malcolm X and Huey Newton, who have become black liberation heroes to black boys and men. By choosing men like these, Abu-Jamal is elevating a particular brand of black masculinity that he very clearly appreciates and, in some ways, emulates. Using the work of Lawrence Levine, Charles P. Henry writes that two types of hero have emerged from black literary history: “the badman who transgressed totally all of the moral and legal bounds of society, and the strong, self-contained hero who violated not the laws or the moral code but rather the stereotyped roles set aside for blacks.”¹¹⁷ The first kind of hero is what Henry calls a *bad badman* and the second is a *moral badman*. Abu-Jamal glorifies the bad badmen in an attempt to use them to legitimize his role as a Black Power leader by appropriating their popularity, celebrity and credibility as men who protected their people and their neighborhoods. Malcolm X converted to Islam in prison and was a favorite among prisoners, particularly after his *Autobiography* was published, and as Chairman of the

Black Panther Party in Oakland, Huey Newton condemned police brutality and did time for the alleged slaying of a white police officer. Both heroes survived prison, Malcolm X had a spiritual (re)birth while he was incarcerated, and both became advocates against white violence, police brutality and prison reform.

To begin, Malcolm X is often cited as both the beginning of the modern literary renaissance of the “bad nigger figure” and he “was widely admired by blacks as a result of it.”¹¹⁸ If Malcolm X is the beginning of the modern bad black man hero and also the modern template for the autobiographical manifesto of the Black Power movement, it seems quite significant that Abu-Jamal moves backward through history to eulogize him in a section entitled “Musings, Memories and Prophecies.” The section title is important, since it signifies a movement to muse about Abu-Jamal’s own memories of Black Power from earlier years. These memories serve as a regenerative strategy that link Abu-Jamal’s work with the BPP in the past to his work for social justice in the present. But the title also belies that fact that Abu-Jamal confers the status of prophet upon each of the martyrs of Black Power, a move that must be underscored since Abu-Jamal seems to elevate himself as a prophet in their absence.

In this section, Abu-Jamal positions himself as an heir to Malcolm X, who is often cited as the originator (along with Robert F. Williams) of the Black Power concept.¹¹⁹ Abu-Jamal writes, “The Black Panther Party considered itself the Sons of Malcolm” and borrowed his notion of black self-defense from his teachings.¹²⁰ This would, of course, make Mumia a son of Malcolm even as it suggests that the origins of Abu-Jamal’s ideology of self-defense are with the BPP. It also repudiates the possibility of a daughter of Malcolm emerging to take up the mantle of Black Power and serves to underscore the

absence of female heroes in Abu-Jamal's memories of black liberation struggle, in effect limiting the potential of Black Power regeneration. Here, black women are elided as he indulges in nostalgia for the earlier phase of Black Power, despite the visible presence of strong black women.¹²¹

However, Abu-Jamal's embrace of heroes like Malcolm X establish his ideological origins in the camp of those who favor self-defense, allying him implicitly with Black Power and the ideals of Malcolm X. Continuing, Abu-Jamal adds that Malcolm X fought his entire life against racism, which he saw as an evil against humanity. He writes, "He stood for - and died for - human rights of self-defense and a people's self-determination, not for 'civil rights,' which, as the Supreme Court has indeed shown, changes from day to day, case to case, administration to administration."¹²² Abu-Jamal is linking himself to a rigid black male tradition of militancy with his approval and his selection of Malcolm X as a hero. His is also endorsing the distinction between "civil rights" and "black liberation" as well as stressing the imperative of black self-determination. For Malcolm X, Mumia Abu-Jamal and even Rap Brown, civil rights are created and given by white nationalists; black liberation is asserted and taken by the black masses. It is in sections like these, that Abu-Jamal emerges as a black revolutionary, openly aligning himself with the black heroes that embraced self-defense and black self-determination. By eulogizing Malcolm X and Huey Newton, Abu-Jamal is tapping into collective memories about the "badness" of these figures, their status as martyrs of Black Power, and also to their resonance in prisons, since both recruited heavily from prisons for their respective organizations. Abu-Jamal is looking back into the past for resources to help him craft a liberation movement for the future.

By looking into the past, Abu-Jamal can mobilize familiar stories, heroes and histories that make new social movement organizing more intelligible to a new generation of activists. In an essay titled, “The Lost Generation,” Abu-Jamal talks about this new generation, the hip-hop generation, and how are lamented as lost in media consumption: television and rap music. He says that this generation has been “locked out of the legal means of material survival” and has, instead, been shown the excesses of capitalism while politicians “spit on their very existence.” But Abu-Jamal, ever the optimist and leader, asserts:

They are not the lost generation. They are the children of the L.A. rebellion, the children of the MOVE bombing, the children of the Black Panthers, and the grandchildren of Malcolm; far from lost, they are probably the most aware generation since Nat Turner’s; they are not so much lost as they are mislaid, discarded by this increasibly racist system that undermines their inherent worth. They are *all* potential revolutionaries, with the historic power to transform our dull realities. If they are lost, then *find* them.¹²³

Abu-Jamal sees the hip-hop generation as a potential audience, as a group that can be mobilized with the images of Black Power martyrs, and by invoking such figures, he tries to tap into the alienation and rage that characterize the attitudes of black youth. By seeing these people as the children and heirs to the Black Power of Malcolm, the Panthers and MOVE, he is recruiting them to regenerate Black Power around issues of incarceration, poverty, and police brutality in America’s cities.

As a black nationalist hero, Malcolm X is often invoked in a fairly static capacity as exclusive provenance of angry young black men but when he is invoked by Abu-

Jamal, a martyr like Malcolm X stands as a cultural resource and celebrity, revered by black men and boys in America.¹²⁴ Michael Eric Dyson argues that this invocation transfers Malcolm's moral authority to contemporary readers of his texts and somehow authorizes them to appropriate him at will. He adds, "Malcolm's moral authority was fueled by a moral magnetism so great that it continues to attract people who were not yet born when he met his gruesome death."¹²⁵ Many emerging black leaders "have held up Malcolm's Promethean accomplishments of mind and body – which constitute a style of black leadership barely glimpsed in our age – as models of black cultural achievement."¹²⁶

With this framework for understanding how Malcolm X continues to circulate, we can see why an imprisoned black male activist would link himself to that firebrand of black nationalism; Malcolm's celebrity as a (black male) cultural leader and icon seems to be unsurpassed and by paying homage to him, someone like Abu-Jamal can marshal the adoration of black youth to re-imagine black solidarity around the prison-industrial complex and around him as a leader. For example, Abu-Jamal writes that Malcolm X's "message of black self-defense and African-American self determination struck both Muslim and non-Muslim alike as logical and reasonable, given the decidedly un-Christian behavior displayed by America to the black, brown, red and yellow world."¹²⁷ By embracing the black nationalism that Malcolm was known for, Abu-Jamal is using his historical presence as an advocate of self-defense to re-inspire a new generation to the politics Black Power by appealing to them with Malcolm's rhetoric and strength. In many ways, the cult of celebrity surrounding Malcolm X's speeches, life-writing and activism is appropriated by Abu-Jamal to help build his own credibility and celebrity as a

black nationalist above and beyond his childhood affiliation with the BPP. Finally, this section connects Malcolm X, the fallen Black Power martyr of times past and the originator of modern black revolutionary ideology, with the imprisoned martyr who always admired him. The bond between the two emphasizes the continuity of Black Power and revolutionary black nationalism.

Likewise, Mumia includes a nostalgic narrative for militant revolutionary Huey P. Newton that reappropriates the culture surrounding Black Power for himself. Such connections amplify his role as a leader today, given Newton's status as an insider in the early days of the Black Panther Party.¹²⁸ Mumia begins by commenting on the personal characteristics that he admired in Huey. He says that he met the Newton once “when he came to Philadelphia and I was assigned to bodyguard duties. I doubted he knew my name, but I loved him. Huey - self-taught, brilliant, taciturn, strong-willed - molded the righteous self-indignation and rage of an oppressed people into a national, militant, revolutionary nationalist organization.”¹²⁹ Interestingly, the positive characteristics that he associates with Huey Newton all appear to be ideals that Mumia is attempting to live up to as he pens books from death row. Abu-Jamal also writes about the love he had for Newton’s revolutionary spirit, again aligning him with a black nationalist position that is imbued with the anger, indignation, and righteousness of the Black Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s. This nostalgia places Abu-Jamal alongside Newton as another fallen hero of Black Power as a way of signifying Abu-Jamal’s status as a comrade, as an imprisoned martyr and as a leader of prison movements regenerating Black Power.

Although Abu-Jamal praises Newton for tapping into the voice of rage that spoke to many urban blacks, this underscores the neglect of black women and queer black folk

in his musing, reminiscing and eulogizing of black liberation heroes. Black feminist bell hooks, in particular, has been an outspoken voice of black rage but even she notes that, “our efforts to create renewed black liberation struggle are seriously impeded by the fact that in diverse settings the assumption prevails that we need only to listen to patriarchal men, that our very capacity to move forward as a people depends on strong black male leadership.”¹³⁰ In hooks’ estimation, this regenerative strategy not only leads to a complete dismissal of black female feminist praxis, but it also promotes and encourages the uncritical acceptance of black male leadership and patriarchy.¹³¹ It is important to note that in these three texts, Abu-Jamal does not comment upon the rich history of black female resistance at all; that history has been eclipsed by the masculinity of black men who were elevated to positions of power within black organizations. Mumia Abu-Jamal is remembering and is nostalgic for a gendered and decidedly masculine history, and by pledging himself to this partial past, he is regenerating a movement for black liberation which still refuses to recognize the sacrifices, the leadership, and the realities of black women and queer black folk.

Nonetheless, Abu-Jamal concludes his nostalgia for Newton by admiring his conversion of poor, disenfranchised black people into social revolutionaries. Just as he describes Newton as the political figure that helped generate the movement for black liberation among the inner city blacks, Abu-Jamal sees himself as a new black leader mobilizing a regeneration of black liberation activism. And, just as Newton was interested in the *lumpen* and the voiceless, so too is Abu-Jamal positioned as an historical expert on the relationship between working class blacks and the intelligentsia. He says:

His courageous spirit touched the downtrodden, black America's so-called *lumpen-proletariat* classes, and energized them into a balled fist of angry resistance, prompting FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's observation that the party posed 'the most serious threat' to America's internal security. Huey woke up the historically ignored strata of black life and put them in the service of people via free breakfast programs and free clothing programs, and organized communities of self-defense.¹³²

Abu-Jamal posits Newton as the only revolutionary voice for the entire black community and as the one-sided benevolent father figure of the lower class black strata. He also praises the community programs that made the Panthers an integral part of their community and made them heroes. By reminding the reader that the militancy and the community programs went hand-in-hand, Abu-Jamal is linking himself to this positive tradition of Black Power.

The nostalgia for fallen leaders is often a useful cultural resource in linking a present movement for change with a previous social movement. This process of consuming nostalgia is normalized but, combined with hindsight, it can "enable us to comprehend past environments in ways that elude us when we deal with the shifting present. Because they seem more comprehensible, images from the past often dominate or may wholly replace the present."¹³³ Cultures "retain traces of our past to be sure of our enduring identity and to preserve a continuity that reassures us of our collective history."¹³⁴ In this way, nostalgia can be helpful in tracing the permanence in, say, hierarchies of racialized oppression and historical resistance to those policies of exclusion and repression that characterize an era. By marshalling nostalgia for the excitement and

inspiration of martyrs like Malcolm X and Huey Newton, Abu-Jamal is able to seize the celebrity and heroism of these men as badmen, as leaders, as black revolutionaries. Abu-Jamal positions himself as the next heir to Black Power by appropriating their leadership styles and ideals. He is also able to target those who are also nostalgic for these figures, potentially reigniting their interest in a new social movement directed at his liberation, the liberation of all political prisoners, and in the prison system reform.

Although it is often helpful to read the past into the present, particularly from the standpoint of social movement activists, nostalgia often compels people “to do nothing more than remain where they stood, to keep old ways familiar, even to flee the present and the future into a nostalgically golden yesteryear secluded somewhere far off among remembrances of things past.”¹³⁵ Activists must resist the urge to prefer “*things as they are perceived to have been*” and instead focus on what can be done now, in the present, with the resources available.¹³⁶ To simply indulge in nostalgia reifies the past in the present and acts as tacit consent for the status quo. Although Abu-Jamal’s unique insider status provides credibility for his claims about prisons and prison activism, his nostalgia for the brand of black male leadership embodied by Malcolm X and Huey Newton erases the contributions of women of color in Black Power movement agitation and induces his readers to long for a leader like himself who more closely resembles the black leaders of the past. By using nostalgia for the martyrs of Black Power’s previous phase of agitation, Mumia has positioned himself as historian and social critic, as leader and as black prophet, though potentially at the expense of finding new strategies for social movement organizing and recruiting.

Aside from the black intellectuals who speak on Abu-Jamal's' behalf in each text, many black activists also place him at the head of this masculinized history of black liberation. In Chinosole's collection of essays, *Schooling the Generations in the Politics of Prison*, Mumia Abu-Jamal and Assata Shakur are the subject of the first two sections of essays designed to discuss this next generation of prison activism. In the section on Mumia Abu-Jamal, Assata Shakur provides the first essay titled, "Message to Mumia." She writes, "His language, his strength, and his intelligence remind me of one man: El Hajj Malik Shabazz, otherwise known as Malcolm X."¹³⁷

Shakur establishes a lineage of black masculine activism that begins with Malcolm X and ends with Mumia Abu-Jamal, re-masculinizing black leadership even, perhaps, at the expense of her own role and that of other women in the next stage of the Black Power movement. She sees Abu-Jamal as the continuation of the persuasive skills that made Malcolm X so famous and Shakur continues with the comparison:

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a man who has truly carried on Malcolm's tradition, and the tradition of so many of our freedom fighters who have risked their lives for the freedom of our people. This year as I celebrated Malcolm's birthday, I couldn't stop thinking about Mumia.... Mumia, political activist, revolutionary, and humanist has followed faithfully in Malcolm's footsteps. We can feel Malcolm's energy working through Mumia; we can feel Mumia's energy carrying on Malcolm's legacy.¹³⁸

To Shakur, Abu-Jamal is the heir to Malcolm X's vision of black liberation; he is a freedom fighter. The language employed by Shakur implies, perhaps, a (re)birth of Malcolm's energy through Abu-Jamal, which only enhances his strategies of

regeneration, positioning him explicitly as a son of Malcolm. She adds, “If Malcolm X were alive today, I know he would be fighting to save Mumia’s life. If Malcolm were alive today, I know he would be fighting to free all political prisoners. In the name of Malcolm X, I make a special appeal to you, Sisters and Brothers, to fight tooth and nail to save Mumia’s life and to free him from the grips of his oppressors.”¹³⁹ As an exiled member of the generation of activists prior to Abu-Jamal, Shakur’s words place him as the successor of Malcolm even as he places himself there. She also directly addresses the readers in an effort to compel them to do the work that Malcolm would do, were he still alive. She asks the reader to be like Malcolm in their action, reflecting nostalgia for him as a man and a Black Power leader.

Shakur also characterizes Abu-Jamal as a living hero in the company of other black revolutionary martyrs, victims of the plantation system and COINTELPRO. She writes:

As you honor our forefathers and foremothers, I urge you all to honor our living heroes. When you honor the names of Nat Turner, Harriet Tubman, and Malcolm X, I urge you to honor the names of Geronimo ji Jaga, Sundiata Acoli, Mutulu Shakur, and Mumia Abu-Jamal. I urge you not to forget, and not to betray our living heroes. If we ignore their struggle, we are ignoring our own. If we betray our living history, then we are betraying ourselves. We could not save Malcolm X, but we can save Mumia. We can save him, because we love our Brother, and we need our Brother to help us fight for our freedom.¹⁴⁰

In this passage, Shakur links Abu-Jamal to a history of black liberation and encourages new generations of activists to channel Malcolm X in the hero-worship of Mumia Abu-

Jamal because for Shakur, the two leaders are inextricably linked. She also explicitly references Malcolm X's status as a Black Power martyr by underscoring the fact that he is no longer alive to do the work around political prisoners that the present generation must now take up. She links the everyday lives of black folk to the life of one political prisoner in a move that enhances Abu-Jamal's own strategies for elevating himself to the status of Black Power leader.

Although Shakur includes her favorite black heroine Harriet Tubman in this list of famous black activists, she too falls into the trap of masculinizing history to help elevate Mumia Abu-Jamal to the status of black liberation hero, even over herself as a leader. She overlooks so many other brave black women who worked just as hard, without pay and often recognition to build black liberation movements throughout the nation's history. By reducing black resistance history to the names above, the lives and struggles of black women are occluded by the constant narratives of black male clergy and movement leaders. Shakur's reification of Black Power masculinity implicitly condones charges of the movement's misogyny and sexism. Even this strong feminist leader works to construct Abu-Jamal and Malcolm X as the heroic leaders of the movement and Abu-Jamal as the future of the next phase of Black Power. Shakur concludes the essay by repeating parts of the poems in her autobiographical manifesto. She writes, "Let us carry on our tradition to freedom." She then inscribes the essay with the stanza from her poem "Affirmation" that begins, "I have been locked by the lawless."¹⁴¹ By concluding her comments about Abu-Jamal with this poem, Shakur is reiterating her hope in the future through Abu-Jamal as a new generation of Black Power leadership. By equating Malcolm X and Mumia Abu-Jamal, she is granting Abu-Jamal cult-like status as a black

hero that at least partially diminishes her role in the movement while reifying patriarchy in this next phase as well.

Through nostalgia, Mumia Abu-Jamal and those who write on his behalf, like Assata Shakur, pay homage to the black male leaders that came before him and in whose footsteps he treads, which excludes the leadership of black women. Men like Malcolm X and Huey Newton become cultural resources appropriated by Abu-Jamal as a way of infusing the future struggle with the nostalgia for the past. This helps to mobilize the hip-hop generation by passing down the mantle of resistance from older Black Power advocates to the people who must now lead the charge. By mobilizing Malcolm X and Huey Newton in this manner, Abu-Jamal masculinizes the history of black resistance because in his texts, only black men replicate this leadership, in either the absence of black women or with the explicit approval of black women, and it continues through a lineage of black male martyrs. Assata Shakur's testimony to Abu-Jamal's centrality in the next stage of the Black Power movement stands to reify the role that men will play within the regenerative phase, further normalizing the patriarchy of the Black Power movement in a more contemporary context. This move prefigures Abu-Jamal as a leader of Black Power and as a figure of black masculine resistance to state-sanctioned violence, following these fallen heroes. By eulogizing Malcolm X and Huey Newton, two of the great philosophers of Black Power, Abu-Jamal aligns himself with their politics, their symbols, and their celebrity and becomes the living martyr of Black Power. In this way, the continuity of black male leadership is continued and assured, at least through the duration of Abu-Jamal's sentence.

Abu-Jamal emerges as a celebrity and a Black Power leader but he also transforms into a father-figure for the black male prison population. In this way, he is a secular leader who centers the prison-industrial complex in the regeneration of Black Power. Abu-Jamal transcends his role as the son of Malcolm, Huey, the BPP, and Martin to become a father. This regenerative strategy combines all of his leadership roles into the ultimate role of the martyr-prophet who can generate new sons, in this new generation of Black Power activism. In an essay titled “Father Hunger,” he writes, “Without a father, I sought and found father-figures like Black Panther Captain Reggie Schell, Party Defense Minister Huey Newton, and indeed, the Party itself, which, in a period of utter void taught me, fed me, and made me part of a vast and militant family of revolutionaries.”¹⁴² The metaphor of family is continued as he adds, “Many good men and women became my teachers, my mentors, and my examples of a revolutionary ideal – Zayd Malik Shakur, murdered police when Assata was wounded and taken, and Geronimo ji jaga (a.k.a Pratt) who commanded the party’s L.A. chapter....”¹⁴³ Missing from such configurations are his sister, his daughters, or his female comrades. Only one woman is named in passing (Assata) as he memorializes Zayd Shakur. These men are the ones that punctuate the movement in the early phase of Black Power and Abu-Jamal remembers them as leaders, heroes, and revolutionaries. This discussion of the father-yearning of his youth illustrates Abu-Jamal’s vulnerability but more than that, it again reinforces this paternity of Black Power as Abu-Jamal sets up himself as a new “father” of Black Power to the men in his all-male prison. This implicitly excludes black women prisoners certainly as leaders but also as followers, which reifies the kind of black male leadership of the past.

This notion of fatherhood sets up Abu-Jamal to be the father and savior of the men on death row and in prisons across America, thereby completing his ascension as a prophet and leader of poorer black men in particular. He writes, “Here in death row, in the confined sub-stratum of a society where every father is childless, and every man fatherless, those of us who have known the bond of father-son love may at least re-live it in our minds, perhaps even draw strength from it. Those who have not – the unloved – find it virtually impossible to love.”¹⁴⁴ As a result of this denial of father-love, the men of death row started calling Abu-Jamal “Papa,” because of their father-hunger. Abu-Jamal notes that while he had his own father, the Party and men like “Geronimo, Delbert, Chuck, Mike, Ed, and Phil; Sundiata, Mutulu, and other oldheads,” the other men on death row have had no one.¹⁴⁵ For Abu-Jamal, the absence of the father creates a masculinity crisis that cannot be overcome without substitute or other-fathers who help to instill codes of masculinity within each succeeding generation. Being embraced as “Papa” by other inmates elevates him to the position of the “Father” of the black male masses, thereby completing his transformation. He adds, “I was in denial. For who was the oldhead they were calling? Certainly not me? It took a trip, a trek to the shiny, burnished steel mirror on the wall, where I found my father’s face staring back at me, to recognize reality. I am he...and they are me.”¹⁴⁶

In this Cincinnatus moment, Abu-Jamal emerges as the reluctant prophet, transcending his role as father to his own children and becoming the father to “the people.” He becomes a black father to mostly men who are fatherless, much like Malcolm X and Martin Luther King and John Africa and the men of the BPP. In such transformations, his transition from death row prisoner to black male hero is total. The

prison, then, becomes re-centered as the place of salvation and as the place of the regeneration of black masculinity, passed along through men, without women as comrades, wise ones, lovers, daughters, friends, and spiritual equals.

Mumia Abu-Jamal: Death Row Celebrity, Intellectual, Leader and Father

Imprisoned writers, particularly those on death row, provide a very important function for those outside of America's prisons. The significance of Abu-Jamal's manifestos is that for those incarcerated or, as Dylan Rodriguez has phrased it, those "juridically dead," writing from prison is an act of assertion in the face of misinformation, stereotype and misconduct. Political prisoners, then, are struggling against the erasure promoted by the state and the media, which attempt to remove them from discussion of the political. Felons are politically disenfranchised in most states and are further removed from public debate by the restrictions on their speech and writing. Mumia Abu-Jamal's case highlights the corruption and brutality that permeate police departments, courtrooms, and prison in America and illustrates the tenacity of his own struggle to overcome this repression and emerge as a leader of a new generation of Black Power activists, committed to a struggle where the prison is central. In this way, we see Abu-Jamal as the heir to the movement toward black liberation, as a celebrity, an intellectual, a Black Power leader, and as a prophetic father figure.

As black scholars and intellectuals testify to Abu-Jamal's innocence as well as his importance as a political writer and Black Power leader, we see in his own writings a political and spiritual calling to expose the police, the courts and the prisons as broken appendages of justice that must be reformed. In his essays, Abu-Jamal sketches the exigencies that must mobilize people to act around the issues of police misconduct,

injustice in court, the misappropriation of the term “cop killer,” and around the prison-industrial complex. As a journalist, Abu-Jamal is committed to a revolutionary oppositional consciousness that infuses his writings with raced and classed analyses of the justice system writ large, rendering invisible a critique of his own gender politics.

In elevating himself as a leader, Abu-Jamal’s stories of other prisoners help to raise him up as a man of the people, as a spiritual father-figure to the men on death row, and as a witness to the atrocities that they endure. Abu-Jamal’s commitment to these men is reflected in his revolutionary black nationalism, whose origins are found in the lives and works of Malcolm X and Huey Newton. These fallen Black Power leaders become templates for Abu-Jamal’s brand of black masculine leadership, they provide a cultural resource for nostalgic longing that allows Abu-Jamal to appropriate the ethos of these leaders, and they remind the reader that Abu-Jamal is a kind of martyr occupying an ideological space between Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. Like Assata Shakur’s manifesto, Abu-Jamal’s texts rely on regenerative strategies for Black Power that use nostalgia for the past to propel the movement forward through the celebration of black leaders, though Abu-Jamal relies exclusively on men. However, Abu-Jamal seems to predicate the regeneration of Black Power upon black male leadership, at the expense of black women who have been an integral part of the radical black liberation struggle. This move serves to preclude the possibility of black women participating in the Black Power community, which reifies black patriarchy and authorizes a very singular vision of leadership. This strategy highlights the drawbacks of relying upon nostalgia for black leaders: it brings all of the traditional ideological constructs circulated within past police activities and contexts to the present, including sexism.

In short, Abu-Jamal's writings help to position him as a celebrity and new leader of Black Power agitation. His texts exhibit strategies of regeneration that appeal to the reader to become involved in activism around the prison-industrial complex, and they utilize the nostalgic past, exclusively male Black Power martyrs, the history of racial brutality and narrative to promote black nationalism and resistance work. Abu-Jamal's text becomes a mandate for social change, as he writes at the end of *Death Blossoms* in a section called "A Call to Action":

The choice, as every choice, is yours:

to fight for freedom or be fettered,

to struggle for liberty or be satisfied with slavery

to side with life or death.

Spread the word of life far and wide.

Talk to your friends, read, and open your eyes –

even to doorways of perception you feared

to look into yesterday.

Hold your heart open to the truth.¹⁴⁷

Chapter 4: Badmen, Rebellion, and Violence

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was well-known for its participation in the nonviolent direct action programs in the American south during the 1960s, however, by the beginning of 1966 the tide began to turn and ideological battles raged in SNCC between the old guard, led by executive secretary James Forman and chairman John Lewis, and the new guard, led by Stokely Carmichael and later H(ubert) “Rap” Brown.¹ Because of the growing dissatisfaction with the nonviolence of the group, the disappointment with traditional modes of political power, the increasing influence of Malcolm X’s separatism, and the war in Vietnam, SNCC split into two factions. The first was still committed to an interracial struggle for civil rights.² The second, based in Atlanta, Georgia, embraced Malcolm X’s separatism and advocated the tenets of what came to be known as Black Power, including the doctrine of self-defense, and followed Stokely Carmichael, who was elected chairman in 1966.³

Carmichael’s leadership ushered in a black separatism under the aegis of Black Power that popularized the slogan, but which also began to undermine SNCC’s ability build multiracial coalitions to address the struggles in the South. As the organization began to embrace Black Power, SNCC “rejected the use of white organizers, accepted self-defense, and replaced the goal of integration with that of black pride and separatism. Some of SNCC’s workers even spoke of guerrilla warfare against the white power structure.”⁴ SNCC became a Black Power organization under Carmichael’s guidance but the increasing militancy of many black members created intense strain among the white members of the organization who had survived the violence of SNCC’s campaigns in the South. Many SNCC veterans like John Lewis and Julian Bond resigned due to the

emphasis on Black Power and their absence undermined SNCC's projects in the South, while also hampering the organization's ability to secure funding from its northern sources.⁵

SNCC's break with moderate civil rights leaders came in August of 1966, first, when Carmichael and others protested the Vietnam war at the August 6 wedding of the President Johnson's daughter and, later that month, when they protested against Johnson's civil rights legislation.⁶ Due to SNCC's vocal opposition, the House of Representatives replied by amending the bill "to make it a federal crime to cross state lines to incite or carry out a riot or other violent civil disturbance" and Carmichael along with other militants were held responsible for urban rebellion in the North.⁷ As brilliant and tenacious as Carmichael was as both an activist and theorist of Black Power, his reign as the chairman of SNCC came to a conclusion in 1967 because of the internal struggles over membership and because he understood that his presence in SNCC was a distraction and a danger to the future of organization. The break with the white activists and veteran organizers of SNCC, the alienation of SNCC from the mainstream civil rights groups, and the ire of the Johnson White House made it impossible for Carmichael to stay on at SNCC. His promotion of Black Power made the organization more visible, but ultimately hindered its ability to create real and lasting change.

In May of 1967, twenty-three year old activist H. "Rap" Brown succeeded Stokely Carmichael as the chairman of SNCC and he tried to regenerate Black Power agitation after Carmichael's resignation. Brown's style reflected his growing militancy, he "was initially chosen for the post because it was believed that he would be less abrasive and less vulnerable to charges of irresponsibility and extremism" than

Carmichael.⁸ James Forman wrote that Brown's "way of speaking, his whole style, has a grass-roots quality that gave him mass appeal."⁹ It was this kind of appeal that made Brown a popular speaker on the topic of Black Power and it also marked him as a target by the federal government.¹⁰

The summer of 1967 found Brown in the national spotlight for the urban rebellions sweeping across northern American cities, which helped to mark him as a dangerous militant. The city of Newark, New Jersey, erupted after police officers rushed crowds that were upset about what they perceived to be egregious instances of police brutality. The riot lasted for five days and nights, killing twenty-six people, injuring 1,004, and ending with the arrest of 1,397.¹¹ Just one week later, on July 23, the Detroit rebellion began and when it ended, 42 people were dead, 386 injured and 5,557, were arrested.¹² In places like Prattville, Alabama, Atlanta and Detroit, Brown "went further than Carmichael in urging his listeners to take up arms against white society" for the impending racial revolution that Brown deemed inevitable.¹³

The Newark and Detroit rebellions prompted Brown to speak in Cambridge, Maryland, a town with a population of 14,000 residents, one-fifth of which were black and who invited him to speak about the unrest in the city due to the unfulfilled promises of the city's fathers.¹⁴ On July 25, 1967, Brown spoke for forty minutes about racial pride and told the city's residents, "If America don't come around, we going burn it down, brother."¹⁵ He also "warned that black people were faced with genocide as a result of poor living conditions and the drafting of young blacks to fight in Vietnam. He told blacks to take over white-owned stores" and "advised blacks to prevent whites from coming into their community."¹⁶ Although no violence occurred during Brown's speech

in Cambridge, shots were fired between black residents and city police after the speech. According to police, Brown led rioters to Cambridge's business district where they burned and looted stores and a black primary school that Brown had derided as inferior to white schools was also burned.¹⁷ The confrontation in Cambridge and the presence of Rap Brown precipitated a clash between the local police officers and black residents. Louis C. Goldberg adds that because of the unfavorable media coverage of Brown's militancy, his "mere presence [in Cambridge] evoked images in the minds of white leadership that there was an organized conspiracy afoot to lead Cambridge's Negroes in a rampaging pillage of the town's white business district."¹⁸ The rebellion in Cambridge was long in coming but Brown became the scapegoat for the eruption of black rage against consistently racist white policies.¹⁹

At a Washington, D.C. press conference the following day after his arrest for allegedly inciting the riot in Cambridge, Brown appeared, "calling President Johnson a 'white honky cracker, an outlaw from Texas' and charging that his arrest was the result of a conspiracy involving Johnson and state authorities. He also said that FBI director J. Edgar Hoover was conspiring with them to discredit SNCC and shift the blame for all the rioting from L.B.J." to him.²⁰ In light of the FBI's surveillance of Brown through COINTELPRO during these years, Brown was not far off the mark.

In the wake of Cambridge and the rash of urban rebellions, President Johnson appointed the (Otto) Kerner Commission to assess the causes of the violence. That same day, Brown declared that violence was "as American as cherry pie," a comment that would haunt him throughout his life. The Kerner Commission reported that although blacks explained riots as the response to segregation and discrimination, whites often

explained the causes of riots this way but they often saw it as provocative violence. It also noted that “while few” blacks perceived “the riots as caused by ‘leaders’...nearly a quarter of the white sample cite[d] radical leaders as a major cause.”²¹ This data reveals the extent to which the white public and white public officials blamed black leaders for the urban rebellions that characterized the late 1960s and it also provides the rationale for the intense political repression that the FBI launched against the leaders of the civil rights and Black Power movements. The Commission also noted that the media exaggerated the mood and effect of the rebellions and also noted that the media “failed to report adequately on the causes and consequences of civil disorders and the underlying problems of race relations.”²² Because the media sensationalized urban rebellions and focused on leaders as the agitators (rather than white racism, segregation, discrimination and violence), it is easy to see how someone like Rap Brown was targeted by the FBI, particularly after giving speeches in cities that later rebelled.²³

After the Cambridge incident, a wave of legal troubles followed Brown around the country. In his definitive study of SNCC, Clayborne Carson writes, “The legal actions taken against Rap Brown decreased his ability to attract the support of urban blacks, but these actions had far greater significance than was immediately apparent in the summer of 1967. They established a pattern for the subsequent suppression of highly-publicized radical leaders.”²⁴ Because he was charged with inciting riots, Rap Brown became the target of extreme state repression and found his way to the top of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover’s Rabble Rouser Index.²⁵ Hoover was particularly threatened by the popularity of orators like Rap Brown, who he feared would become a “black

messiah.”²⁶ He also saw Brown as the epitome of a new kind of mobile troublemaker, who would travel across the country inspiring rebellions in the cities.²⁷

The surveillance and harassment of Brown began at the end of the 1960s but continued much later and led to a long rap sheet for Brown. For example, Sundiata Acoli notes that on the night of March 9, 1970, a car bomb exploded in a car killing Ralph Featherstone and Che Payne [two SNCC activists] outside a Maryland courthouse where Rap Brown was to appear the following day on the ‘Inciting to Riot’ charges. However, instead of appearing, Brown went underground to Canada and his name was placed on the FBI’s “most wanted” list. A year later, he was arrested for the robbery of a Harlem so-called “dope bar,” and was given a sentence of five to ten years.²⁸ Brown completed his sentence, converted to Islam in jail, and took his new name, Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin.²⁹

Finally, Rap Brown, now Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin, made headlines again in 2001 when he was captured and arrested in Lowndes County, Alabama, after fleeing the scene of a shootout with two sheriff’s deputies that killed one and wounded the other while they were serving him a warrant for failing to appear in court on an outstanding theft charge. At the time of his arrest he had spent over twenty years as a Muslim imam at an Atlanta mosque. He was given life imprisonment instead of the death penalty.

This chapter begins with an examination of the politics of urban rebellion and the performativity of black masculinity in Rap Brown’s autobiographical manifesto *Die Nigger Die!*, which was authored in 1969 while under house arrest, but was subsequently re-released in 2002 after its author was arrested and tried for murder. It also analyzes the strategies of regeneration in *Die Nigger Die!* but argues first, that Brown’s ascendancy in

SNCC helped consolidate that organization into the movement for Black Power by creating an organizational ethos that eschewed white participation. The exclusion of the white liberals who had long been allies of SNCC represented a strategy of black separatism that went further than Carmichael's Black Power agenda, but which helped to brand it as a dangerous association bent upon violent revolution. As chairman of SNCC, Brown began a rhetorical campaign that made Brown the target of the intense FBI surveillance and repression that eventually undermined his efficacy as an organizational leader. The repression of Brown led to the writing of *Die Nigger Die!*, which exhibits strategies of regeneration that extend Brown's influence as a Black Power leader beyond SNCC and beyond his incarceration and exile.

Second, the chapter considers Brown's manifesto *Die Nigger Die!* in the context of 1969 to highlight the strategies of regeneration that figure into Brown's analysis of Black Power. It begins by analyzing poet Don L. Lee's "Introduction" to the text, which reaffirms the importance of blackness and self-pride and which comments at length upon the title of Brown's text.³⁰ Then, the chapter contends that Brown's style, his performance as a black badman in games like the dozens, and his interest in both self-defense and violence in the text, create an ethos surrounding Black Power that is exclusively masculine, though tropes of rebirth also permeate descriptions of Brown's conversion to Black Power. Brown's status as a master of the dozens and his insistence upon the destruction of white authority, especially the police, makes him a hero in his community and, later, a celebrity.

Third, this chapter considers Brown's descriptions of the exigencies at the end of the 1960s that make the resurgence of Black Power crucial in the movement for black

liberation *in Die Nigger Die!* At the center of Brown's discourse is a theme about the problems with both white culture and "Negro culture," which causes the self-hate that makes black communities willingly submit to the nation. In examining the relationship between white culture and "Negro culture," Brown positions middle-class "Negro culture" as an exigency that prevents true black liberation. He also excoriates John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Robert Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey and other so-called white liberals for their hypocrisy and lack of a real commitment to black issues. Here, he positions Malcolm X as the antithesis of the politics of integration and uses him to make ideological claims about black nationalism as political separatism. His nostalgia for Malcolm X mirrors that of Mumia Abu-Jamal and Assata Shakur in the previous chapters, since Brown is clearly appropriating Malcolm X's ethos and his ideologies as a strategy of regeneration that accentuates Brown's own leadership and martyrdom. He also uses this strategy as a *entrée* into prose condemning nonviolence, upholding the right to armed self-defense, and contemplating the necessity of violence as a movement tactic. As Brown's ideologies about black nationalism develop throughout the text, it is clear that his interest in the symbol of the gun, Third World peoples, and in black revolution build an image of masculinity for him that is predicated upon the same hierarchies of privilege and power that white patriarchy has established. These strategies of regeneration help to explain to the reader why new Black Power agitation is necessary and to locate where it should be directed.

Finally, this chapter examines the transformation of Rap Brown into Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin in prison. By examining Al-Amin in the context of the Muslim prisoners' movements and the racial climate following September 11, 2001, we can

understand how texts travel through time to make similar or different claims than they did in decades past. In this case, just as Rap Brown was re-born as Jamil Al-Amin, the text likewise undergoes a transformation in the post-September 11th climate, in which its discourse about state power, white supremacy and the surveillance regimes of the nation transcend the racial politics of 1969 to engage the racial politics of the millennium. The “Foreword” of the 2002 reprint of *Die Nigger Die!* by Ekweume Michael Thelwell works to regenerate Black Power by enabling Brown’s manifesto to move beyond the first phase of the Black Power movement in the 1960s and into the next phase, where incarceration and the politics of both racial identity and the prison-industrial complex are centered. Thelwell repositions Brown as an important Black Power leader of the 1960s and illustrates how COINTELPRO surveillance led to his incarceration, house arrest and exile, forcing him to regenerate Black Power through his writings.

His new “Foreword” also argues that Brown has become a new person as a Muslim cleric still persecuted for his rejection of white values. And that he must be embraced now because of his current incarceration. In this way, reading the re-release of *Die Nigger Die!* becomes a new space for the regeneration of Black Power as Al-Amin seeks exoneration from the murder conviction. Regardless, the move to re-release the text only enhances his emergence as a martyr, again removed from public activism by the state. Brown, then, as an historical figure, is a narrative resource used by both the state, to sentence him, and by Al-Amin, who reminds the American public of the unbroken continuities of racialized oppression in the legacies of COINTELPRO and American imperialism abroad and at home. This move forces the reader to acknowledge the dangerously intolerant milieu that is constructing the American political landscape, which

leverages Brown's claims to leadership in 1969 and Al-Amin's claims to leadership in 2002. Al-Amin re-release of the text in 2002 reminds readers of the similarities in political climates between the racial repression of COINTELPRO and the state-sponsored surveillance and brutality authorized by the Patriot Act after September 11, 2001. And, by re-releasing *Die Nigger Die!* at the height of his trial, Al-Amin is able to access the Black Power sentiments of Rap Brown that are relevant to his persecution as a community leader. But, before we can understand how Brown's text functions now, we must examine how it regenerated Black Power in Carmichael's absence from SNCC.

Die Nigger Die!: Black Power after Carmichael

The resignation of Stokely Carmichael from SNCC in 1967 provided an opportunity for Rap Brown to redirect the momentum of SNCC into new action because they were part of what Nancy Whittier has termed a "micro-cohort," or a "cluster of participants who enter a social movement within a year or two of each other and are shaped by distinct transformative experience that differ because of subtle shifts in the political context."³¹ According to Whittier, micro-cohorts are short-lived but the shared perspective dominates their collective identity.³² The declining popularity of nonviolence, the rise of the Black Panther Party, the assassinations of both Malcolm X (1965) and Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968), and the mobilization of urban blacks all helped to shape the micro-cohort to which Carmichael and Brown belonged. Brown's framing of the black liberation struggle in as Black Power and black separatism went further than Carmichael's as he "encouraged alienated young blacks to rebel against white authority" and, consequently, "became a symbol for millions of white people who wanted to strike out against the visible symbols of black militancy."³³

In the case of early Black Power treatises, of which Rap Brown's autobiographical manifesto is a part, the discourses must do a lot of the ideological and definitional work of the micro-cohort in the movement to identify problems in the organization and with the state, articulate new goals, often purge membership and simultaneously recruit new members, inspire new political action, and craft ideology.³⁴ New theoretical treatises by leaders like Rap Brown contained strategies of regenerating Black Power that radicalized black liberation efforts to transcend the end of SNCC and its contemporary organizations. Many scholars argue that this ideological move doomed SNCC to failure as an organization, though in a compelling analysis, Nancy J. Weiss writes,

Far from crippling the movement, the creative tension between moderates and militants facilitated the accomplishment of its goals. Without the pressure from direct actionist in the streets, leaders of the white establishment would have been much less ready to negotiate with moderate civil rights leaders. Later, without the rhetoric of black separatism and the resort to violence, the urgency of addressing fundamental issues of civil rights and economic opportunity for blacks would have been much less compelling.³⁵

In choosing to narrow the black struggle to revolutionary black separatism, Weiss argues that Black Power forced the federal government to cave in to pressures from moderate civil rights groups. However, without the community organizing of groups like the Black Panthers or the emphasis on black entrepreneurialism of the Nation of Islam, Rap Brown's strategies in regenerating Black Power presaged the ideology without action that maintains a part of revolutionary black messages and identity construction even today.

Some people accepted the framing of civil rights as a “black revolution” in this manner from leaders like Rap Brown, but many who had been engaged in resistance from much earlier, did not. And, when supporters did embrace the “black revolution, they often had nowhere to put their energies except to rebel in America’s cities.

Brown’s rhetoric exhibited strategies of regenerating Black Power after Carmichael left SNCC but his manifesto also displays these strategies after the repression of Brown lead to his continued surveillance and arrests by the state. Because of his incarcerations, his house arrest, and his time in exile, *Die Nigger Die!* served as a text that demonstrated Brown’s leadership, his ideologies concerning Black Power, and the exigencies that necessitated continued Black Power agitation in 1969. In many ways, Brown’s manifesto is a bridge between Carmichael’s notion of Black Power and the Black Power of the 1970s and beyond because he sees the generational capacity for revolution in black America. On the very first page of *Die Nigger Die!* Brown writes,

But who would ensure my freedom? Who would make democracy safe for Black people? America recognized long ago what negroes now examine in disbelief: every Black birth in america is political. With each new birth comes a potential challenge to the existing order. Each new generation brings forth untested militancy. America’s ruling class now experiences what Herod must have at the birth of “Christ”: “Go and search...and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.” America doesn’t know which Black birth is going to be the birth that will overthrow the country.³⁶

Brown’s rhetoric surrounding the black liberation struggle in 1969 relies upon the metaphor of birth as central to the regeneration of Black Power that he sees critical in

sustaining black activism. However, Brown masculinizes this understanding of birth because as Hazel Carby writes, “in the general political and social imagination the birth of future generations is most frequently feminized, while revolution is often represented as a homosocial act of reproduction: a social and political upheaval in which men confront each other to give birth to a new nation, a struggle frequently conceived of in terms of sex and sexuality.”³⁷ The replication of Black Power in 1969 is masculinized and also racialized, since Brown sees black people being the only possible harbingers of revolution. In Brown’s future, there is no hope for multiracial, cross-class mobilization for social change: there is only revolution.³⁸

In using this masculinized form of the birth metaphor, Brown also attempts to convert and inspire Black Power advocates, first, by emphasizing the coming black revolution and the possibility that anyone could be a black Christ, sent to rectify the racial inequality of America. This explicitly positions him as a leader of the black masses, as a likely black Christ. But, he also promotes Black Power by reconstructing the black masculine hero, the messiah, the badman, much in the manner of Malcolm X. Although Brown is part of the Black Power movement, he is continuing the black folk tradition of the badman and passing it on to the new generations of black children that will “overthrow the country.” In this way, his strategies of regeneration are premised upon the birth metaphors that are also featured in the writings of Assata Shakur.

The following sections study the strategies of regenerating Black Power that construct Brown as a leader by tracing his role as community hero and later, as a Black Power celebrity, from his childhood to his twenties. As a black badman and dozens champion, Brown asserted his rhetorical prowess and his black masculinity earlier in his

life, which became central components in the strategies of regeneration at work within his manifesto. By embracing black cultural forms, Brown was able to lay the groundwork for the cultural aspects of his political nationalism, which helped sustain Black Power. He was also able to identify police officers and other figures of white authority as threats to black pride and black self-determination, which augmented his political ideologies and provided a reason for new Black Power agitation.

As Brown's political nationalism emerged, he began to examine the relationship between class and political privilege. This next section details his critiques of both white authority and the middle-class of black America that he calls "negro America," for its embrace of *civil rights* over Black Power. Here, Brown embraces the revolutionary ideologies of self-defense, violence, metaphors of the gun and Third World solidarity as key strategies in the regeneration of the Black Power movement.

Finally, the last section details Brown's position as a leader after his conversion to Islam, his arrest in 2000, and his life sentence for murdering a Fulton County police officer. Ekwueme Michael Thelwell offers an "Introduction" that places Brown's arrest and trial in both the context of COINTELPRO operations that never ceased but also in the context of the new PATRIOT Act, designed to remove militant Muslims and other socially progressive activists from the public sphere. Brown's text transcends the racial climate of surveillance and brutality of the later 1960s only to reemerge as an oracle, predicting the repression characterizing the racial climate surrounding September 11th. The re-release of the text allows *Die Nigger Die!* to work within the framework of the "War on Terror" to regenerate Black Power because the structures that the first phase demonized are again repressing black activists, particularly those who are Muslim.

This section also details the ways that the reissue of the book in 2002 positions Brown as the same black badman as 1969, which is problematic for Brown's gender politics, but which bolsters Brown's claim to legitimate racial leadership in the late 1960s and also to leadership as a Muslim cleric following his conversion to Islam and as a political prisoner. In this way, "Rap Brown" becomes a cultural resource, himself an object of nostalgia, for Al-Amin to draw on after his rebirth to Islam. Simultaneously, "Rap Brown," the historical persona, becomes an enemy to the state in the prosecution of Al-Amin. This kind of tension between the historical figure and the contemporary activist highlights the constraints of the self-defense ideology for the regeneration of Black Power today. Even as it illustrates resistance to the state, it provides the justification for state repression and is an endless source for the state to characterize Black Power activists as "terrorists."

Black Heroes, Bad Badmen, and the Dozens: Resisting White Authority

In black history and folklore, the "bad nigger" has historically been an audacious figure with heightened sense of injustice. In the "Introduction" to *Die Nigger Die!*, Don L. Lee (now Haki Madhubuti), the famous poet of the Black Arts Movement, writes at length about the role of the "bad nigger" in black liberation and argues that black men must embrace both blackness and masculinity as strategies for survival and resistance. He begins this essay by arguing, "When a Black man looks at Black people with a Black mind and Black soul, it is immediately apparent that Black people possess certain unique characteristics which not only distinguish them from whites and negroes, but which have greatly contributed to the survival of blacks."³⁹ Here, Lee begins by reifying blackness and masculinity, since he is asking black men to revel in their blackness. Lee considers

embracing blackness to be an act of resistance toward middle-class black life and values, or “Negro culture,” and white life and values, a distinction that is also made in the text by Brown. He continues, “Any action or behavior which is not endorsed by whites, negroes consider ‘acting like a nigger’.... The conversation in negro America has always been, ‘What are we going to do about them niggers?’ never, ‘What are we going to do about them white folks?’”⁴⁰ Lee implicitly suggests that a cultural conversation to address the racism of white America across the entire spectrum of black performativity. And, until that happens, he sees “acting like a nigger” as an important identity move to differentiate between black men who are fighting against cultural imperialism and those “negroes” who are passively accepting the white agenda for “civil rights.” Lee adds that while “negroes” stereotype poor blacks as “niggers” to conform with white opinions about poor blacks, “whites say this about *all* Blacks.”⁴¹ He says, “To be Black in this country is to be a nigger. To be a nigger is to resist both white and negro death. It is to be free in spirit, if not body. It is the spirit of resistance which has prepared Blacks for the ultimate struggle.”⁴² Lee very clearly sees being a “nigger” as an act of resistance to white social mores and values that prepares a someone for black liberation struggle.

Although “negroes” think that the white power structure respects them for putting down those black men who are labeled “niggers,” Lee reminds them that whites do not make the same distinction. Lee is encouraging all black folk to identify as “niggers” because that binds them together as an act of solidarity acknowledging that their rights must be fought for, not given. He continues;

Among Blacks it is not uncommon to hear the words, “my nigger,” (addressed to a brother as expression of kinship and brotherhood and respect for having

resisted), or “He’s a bad nigger!,” meaning, He’ll stand up for himself. He won’t let you down. He’ll go down with you..... Negroes and whites have wished death to all Blacks, to all niggers. Their sentiment is “Die Nigger Die!” - either by becoming a negro or by institutionalized or active genocide.⁴³

According to Lee, using the term “nigger” among black men creates solidarity, a group identity centered upon resisting middle-class “negro” values and white genocide. Being a “nigger” is something to be proud of because it indicates loyalty and the instinct to continue fighting to the death. In this way, Lee’s “Introduction” sets up Brown’s own arguments about the importance of black male resistance to the regeneration of Black Power. And again, we see that sisterhood or the resistance of women is completely elided by such expressions of black brotherhood in the new phase of Black Power activism.

Don L. Lee’s “Introduction” to *Die Nigger Die!* stresses the history of resistance contained in the flagrant disavowal of deference to whites and in the disregard for white values that have been embraced and replicated in black middle-class communities. This history of resistance is found within the folk archetypes and historical heroes of black life in America in the “bad nigger” or the “black badman.” Robert G. O’Meally writes, “if we count Gabriel Prosser, Nat Turner, and Jack Johnson as magnificent badmen in Afro-American history, and Stagolee, Casey Jones, and John Henry as badmen in Afro-American folklore, the difference in white and black perspectives is clear. For blacks, black badmen represent not so much fearful as exemplary figures.”⁴⁴ He adds, “These badmen...were so bad...that they threatened to live forever in the eternal arch of myth: to kick ass (as the vernacular would have it) for one lifetime and to take names for the

next.” The badman makes such an impact on the popular imaginary because, “the badman violates social conventions and spaces, virtually at will and thereby represents not just black disdain for American oppression...but the ability to face hardship and to win. The improvising trickster fakes and shifts to freedom; the rawhide-skinned badman blasts and socks to freedom.”⁴⁵ When the badman does not win, he “nonetheless goes down swinging or shooting, not sorry for his deeds, requesting no mercy at all.”⁴⁶ Black badman folk heroes act within the black community, which becomes a catalyst for badman behavior, though it has been noted that folklorists tend to overlook the role that violence against blacks plays in the emergence of badmen.⁴⁷

Although black badmen abound in black folklore, fiction, and history, there seem to be two kinds of black badmen: “the *bad badman* and the *moral badman*.”⁴⁸ No law governs the bad badman and he is quick to use violence to settle a dispute, often against other blacks.⁴⁹ The bad badman is also stylish and verbally adroit, which illustrate his primacy and role as a leader within a community of male peers. On the other hand, moral badmen believe in working within the system of American institutions to meet their goals. They “achieve their victories by annihilating stereotyped conceptions about black strength and aggression under pressure; by coolly beating the white man at his own game.”⁵⁰ Ultimately, the badman lore preserves the black hero, provides hope for a new beginning, and encourages black Americans to fight their enemies more directly. These badman tales speak to the “unsinkability of the human spirit.”⁵¹

As Don L. Lee’s “Introduction” reveals, Rap Brown can also be added to this category of bad badmen, particularly in terms of his style and his attitude toward violence. Both his peers and the white establishment understand Brown as a “bad nigger”

and his style embraces an aesthetic that complements this complicated landscape. Black Power historian Hugh Pearson notes that, “Since his election to the leadership of SNCC, Brown had completely transformed himself. His natural was larger than Carmichael’s, and he constantly wore sunglasses. He no longer sported fratboy-like clothing, choosing instead casual street clothes.”⁵² His style included a large afro, sunglasses, and casual clothes. He is often pictured in a beret and boots, similar to the uniform of the Black Panthers, which helped to build this style of the freedom fighter and revolutionary.⁵³ Cornel West notes that “black men have different self-images and strategies of acquiring power in the patriarchal structures of white American and black communities. For most young black men, power is acquired by stylizing their bodies over space and time in such a way that their bodies reflect their uniqueness and provoke fear in others.”⁵⁴ By stylizing their bodies, manner of speech and attitudes to express their individuality and provoke awe, respect and, most importantly, fear, many young black boys and men seek to both emulate and resist the structure of white patriarchy that constrains their existence much like Rap Brown.

The badman or the “bad nigger” is understood as raced heroes but the importance of gender to this identity construction cannot be overemphasized. As Hazel Carby observes, “In many complex ways the politics and language of gender overdetermine the representation of the black male rebel and produce a politics and aesthetics of the of the black male body.”⁵⁵ She adds, “It is in this sense that the racialized and gendered discourse of the body in...subversive and revolutionary texts connects with the politics of the black male body enacted in the practice of lynching. As an erotic and phallic form of masculinity was assumed and subsumed in representations of the black male rebel, so the

eroticism and phallic nature of the ritual dismemberment of black male bodies was an essential part of the attempt to deny to black men the power to resist, rebel, or revolt.”⁵⁶ As black men locate their masculinity in their bodies, in their style, in their challenges to white authority, the white nation reacts with violence.⁵⁷ This provides the racialized and gendered rebel with ample opportunities to showcase his power and resistance.

By understanding a figure like Rap Brown as a “bad nigger,” as Don Lee’s “Introduction” suggests, the reader is asked to participate in a strategy of Black Power regeneration that links Brown to this entire bodily history of black male resistance from slavery through the present. He is linked to the masculine leaders and martyrs of slave revolts, to prison revolutionaries, and to Black Power’s martyr, Malcolm X. This nostalgia for “bad nigger” leaders, lets both Lee and Brown position the Black Power movement against both the middle-class black folks who agree with integration and the piecemeal legislative reforms that constituted “civil rights” and the white “liberals” who pledged to help black America find jobs, homes and education but did not address the psychological and emotional legacies of the centuries-old state brutality that continued to constrain black self-determination. Of course, one of the results of this move is, again, the exclusion of bad black women and the erasure of the history of black female resistance. More than this, however, the move to embrace “black niggers” helps to reaffirm that the history of black resistance has always been masculine and that any move to assert black leadership must be done by replicating this brand of black masculinity through boys and through men.

Black Heroes: Boyhood and Manhood

In the replication of black masculinity, the central “problem” of being both black and male for many is the passage from boyhood to manhood. As a result, the intersection of blackness and masculinity seems to be at the heart of the Black Power discourse used to regenerate Black Power by male leaders, particularly as they describe their own adolescence. As Hazel Carby reminds us, black boyhood has always been a vulnerable time for young men, as the lives of Emmett Till and many others have proved. She writes that “racism shrank the youth of most black boys into a ‘tasteless sycophancy’ which not only disrupts adolescence but dooms these young men to a life of mimicry, to a mere...parody of masculinity, a parody which results in their being denied a full role in the patriarchal social and political order.”⁵⁸ Because black boyhood has been fraught with dangers from the white establishment, particularly as black boys became gendered at the turn of the twentieth century, young black men have created their own avenues to garner power from the white state. The emergence of the modern incarnation of the “bad nigger” of the “bad badman,” then, is a place where the intersection of masculinity and blackness produce sites of resistance.

In *Die Nigger Die*, Rap Brown tackles this intersection of blackness and masculinity through anecdotes about his boyhood, where he traces his emergence as a black badman, a “bad nigger” and a community hero. Brown begins by discussing how boys grow into men in Black communities. At the Blundon Orphanage Home, where his formal education began, Brown learned quite a bit from the missionaries about how to perform for white folks. Brown says, “It was operated by white missionaries whose role was similar to that of whites in Africa. Civilize the savage through Christianity. Savages in this case being Black kids from families too poor to support them.”⁵⁹ There, “[y]ou

had to excel in either fighting, running or tomming”); Rap writes that he perfected all three.⁶⁰ He adds, “We didn’t even have time for a childhood. If you acted like a child, you didn’t survive and that’s all there was to it.”⁶¹ Without a childhood, young boys became men quickly under the watchful eyes of benevolent whites and they emulated the stronger, tougher boys in their neighborhoods.

Brown remembers the childhood heroes who earned their respect on the streets of the neighborhood and he talks about the process through which boys become leaders in their communities. He writes,

In this world, the heroes were bloods who will never be remembered outside our Black community. Cats like Pie-man, Ig, Yank, Smokey, Hawk, Lil Nel - all bad muthafuckas. Young bloods wanted to be like these brothers. They were the men in our community. They had all the women and had made their way to the top through sports and knowing the streets. So to us, the most important thing was to excel in athletics.⁶²

Brown sees these male heroes as an important part of his youth and crucial in his understanding of how to prove his manhood: through women, sports, street smarts. In this passage, the replication of generations of young black male leaders again takes place through other men, rather than through women; women are merely property, commodities that indicate status, rather than part of any kind of struggle.

In the passage above, the reader also sees Brown’s approval other bad “muthafuckas,” who are the templates for his Black Power leadership style and who gained their positions through fighting, sports and competition. Brown tells the reader that he established his reputation the same way and he boasts, “Once I’d established my

reputation, cats respected it.”⁶³ But he sees this space of black boyhood as a place where young black boys were “perpetually at war” because of the tribes and gangs that parceled out neighborhoods in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.⁶⁴ For black boys, mobility was really limited by gang activity unless you were recognized to be a bad muthafucker, and then you could move more easily through neighborhoods without having to fight.⁶⁵ Brown sees this hierarchy of black masculinity being perpetuated by white and “negro” institutions like schools.⁶⁶ And, although he seems to be acutely aware of the ways in which the competitiveness of the streets spills over into other facets of life in the form of “black-on-black” violence, he still heroizes the bad badmen of his neighborhood who had the respect to move unobstructed through different parts of town. This strategy of regeneration highlights the ways that Black Power becomes palatable to urban black men because it acknowledges their frustrations and their propensity for both resisting and conforming to white patriarchy through violence.

In acknowledging the complexity of this transition from boyhood to manhood, Brown attributes the permanence of this warring tribalism among black youth in urban communities to the brainwashing of white culture that pervaded the orphanage but also to the poverty that characterizes black life, particularly in the South. In his critique of this intersection between class and race, Brown argues that black boys and men hardly find themselves living the “American Dream.” Brown writes, “You grow up in Black america and it’s like living in a pressure cooker. Babies become men without going through childhood. And when you become a man, you got nothing to look forward to and nothing to look back on.”⁶⁷ The crisis of black masculinity for Brown leads young black men to take up drinking, drugs or religion to cope with the poverty of their present and the lack

of a future. He adds, “America is the country that makes you want things, but doesn’t give you the means to get those things.”⁶⁸ This intersectional critique underscores the sense of worthlessness that pervades many impoverished communities and gives the reader insight into the origins of Brown’s cultural nationalism through these observations, which expose that a black man’s worth in America is directly related to his property. If you don’t have property, you don’t exist.⁶⁹ The alternative to this paradigm is to become a Black Power activist, and his strategy here is to recruit among the hopeless by giving them a framework for their anger and to direct their energy at the state, rather than at each other. This also allows us to see why Brown views “race war” as an inevitable consequence of race relations: he sees no hope, only the cycles of despair that have characterized black life in the United States for centuries. Here, we see how Black Power regeneration has the capacity to tap into the black men who have lived similar experiences in America’s cities as Brown describes the lack of self-worth permeating black communities because of capitalism.

In the absence of a real future, Brown became increasingly involved in the dozens, a verbal duel that ruins the reputation of an opponent by making fun of him through taunts that rhyme. Here, Brown learned the skills that helped him become a Black Power leader and that informed his recruitment of new members when he began to regenerate Black Power as the chairman of SNCC. Brown writes,

In many ways, though, the Dozens is a mean game because what you try to do is totally destroy somebody else with words. It’s that whole competition thing again, fighting each other. There’d be sometimes 40 or 50 dudes standing around and the winner was determined by the way they responded to what was said. If

you fell over each other laughing, then you knew you'd scored. It was a bad scene for the dude that was getting humiliated. I seldom was. That's why they call me Rap, "cause I could rap."⁷⁰

Hubert Brown is reborn as "Rap" by playing the Dozens, a game which elevates black community members as heroes and bad badman as the winners verbally destroy their opponents. He also creates a community of followers, performs for an audience and is judged by his peers. In games like the dozens, black men sorted out the neighborhood hierarchy through these codes of masculinity. For Brown and others like him, dignity and respect became important components to the conception of black masculine self developed in adolescence, especially in combating the self-hate and the rivalries cultivated by the competitive atmosphere of their neighborhoods.⁷¹ Building a reputation was crucial to a positive self-image and to the creation of celebrity that elevates community members to the status of leader, a position that Brown won through his skills at these rhetorical games. Such established leadership is a central feature of this next phase of the Black Power movement because it is based upon self-reliance, black pride and black cultural forms.

As Brown recalls his prowess at the dozens, he is also underscoring his appreciation for black cultural forms, which also seems like a place of origin the cultural nationalism reflected in his strategies of regeneration. He continues, "Hell, we exercised our minds by playing the dozens.... And the teacher expected me to sit up in class and study poetry after I could run down shit like that. If anybody needed to study poetry, she needed to study mine. We played the Dozens for recreation, like white folks play Scrabble."⁷² Brown was disinterested in traditional white literary forms like poetry

(similarly to Assata Shakur) and white pastimes and, even in his choice to disengage from school, he is performing this bad badman stance. This helps build his ethos as a Black Power leader because he is demonstrating his commitment to black lifestyle even as a young black boy and helps to regenerate Black Power because his leadership is anchored by a childhood built upon the same values that Brown espouses as a leader of SNCC. Brown's narrative of his youth makes his interest in self-defense an obvious extension of the social hierarchies of his childhood and illustrates for the reader, how embedded this sense of tribalism and fratricide is in the complexities of self-hate that often permeate disenfranchised communities. It also underscores the importance of self-reliance and security in the regeneration of Black Power, since *insecurity* is the foundation of black boyhood.

In the anecdotes about his childhood, Brown also highlights the centrality of illegitimate "authority" exercised by the state, even against young boys. Consequently, the illegitimacy of state authority provides the warrant for the emergence of bad badmen and "bad nigger" behavior. In Brown's characterization, white authority simultaneously creates first, white supremacy and second, submissive, accommodationist black behavior; for Brown, this process begins at childhood when power structures are first indoctrinated as he explains:

One of the basic problems any Black child has to deal with growing up is authority. First, there's the big white world that forces a white God and white Jesus on him and has him worshipping somebody that doesn't even look like him. There's that big white world telling him what's right and what's wrong and how to do and how not to do and all of it is designed to keep him oppressed, to keep

him down. And all of that is reinforced by negro america, which is a mirror of the big white world and does the white world's job inside the black community.⁷³

Brown contends that the white political and spiritual leaders create a system of authority that excludes black people, customs and culture. Brown indicts the idea that what is good for white America is good for Black America and he traces the origins of this line of thought to the accommodation of religion. By internalizing Christian religion rather than confronting slaveowners, Brown argues that black Americans began to internalize their own oppression and perpetuate their submission to white power structures through accommodationism. This strategy of regeneration allows for no compromise with white America: only a total loyalty to Black Power and to black heroes and messiahs. While this move clearly helps delineate Black Power enemies and serve to the regeneration of the movement, it also helps spur the change in consciousness that Black Power demands and upon which it is premised.

In his anecdotes about college, Brown highlights the difference between legitimate and coercive authority, which helps frame his regeneration of Black Power.⁷⁴ He writes, "If authority is to be used, it should not be a coercive type thing.... People should adhere to rules because they respect them and not because some position mandates that respect.... [W]hen you're in a certain position and you tell a cat to do something with no grounds for it, it provokes a type of rebellious behavior."⁷⁵ In this contrast between legitimate and coercive authority, we are encouraged to see Brown's childhood as a rebellion against his authority and synecdoche of struggle, as his rebellion continued to college, SNCC and right into Black Power. This theme of illegitimate white authority becomes a key component of Brown's conception of his identity as a bad

badman and also a crucial part of his strategies for regenerating Black Power because he sees it as the source of oppression—an exigency for the next phase of Black Power. The rebellion against illegitimate white authority in the form of the police, the FBI and the White House is then reified in the next stage of Black Power as well.

Brown's discussion of the difference between respect and authority is accompanied on the succeeding page (which faces this text) by two pictures. At the top of the following page is a round slogan from Johnson's administration, which says "LBJ for the USA" as Johnson looks sternly at the reader who is presumably internalizing Brown's message. Below the singular image of Johnson is a picture of President Kennedy who seems to be signing legislation in the presence of Hubert Humphrey and eight other self-congratulating white men. In both images, LBJ is at the forefront and is the only figure positioned to directly address the reader with his stern, Texas scowl. Brown's dialogue on respect and authority is framed by the LBJ picture but the conversation continues on the following pages replete with images, this time of Hubert Humphrey, who's head is pasted onto the body of Tarzan (complete with loincloth), with Fay Wray at his feet. Next to the image is the slogan, "America's Number One Hero." On the facing page, Brown writes, "In this country, authority is a cover for wrong. I don't respect wrong and I don't respect authority that represents wrong. And old cracker ass Lightning Bug Johnson knows that's true, because I told him myself."⁷⁶ Here, Brown recalls his visit to the White House as the Chairman for the Non-Violent Action Group (NAG) during the Selma March. He recalls Johnson as "arrogant as hell and mad 'cause we were there. His whole attitude was, 'What you niggers doin' here takin' up my time.'"⁷⁷ Brown remembers that when their statement was handed to Johnson, he didn't

read it and instead threw it across the table at the group. According to Brown, the group was polite with Johnson but Brown began to get insulted by the accomodationist tone that the NAG folks were using with Johnson. He says, “It was obvious that everyone was tommin’ and no one was going to speak on the issue. So, I started off by telling Johnson, ‘I’m not happy to be here and I think it is unnecessary that we have to be here protesting the brutality that Black people are subjected to. And furthermore, I think that the majority of Black people that voted for you wish that they had gone fishing.’”⁷⁸

Johnson’s response was not recorded, at least not by the President himself, for there is not a single mention of Rap Brown in his own memoir, *The Vantage Point*, nor a discussion of the meeting with Brown and other black leaders.⁷⁹

Brown’s opinion of Johnson was clearly unfavorable, but he also castigates the abuses of the LBJ White House and degrades the President’s racial politics. In this rhetorical strategy, Brown elevates himself as a bad badman through his use of language that destroys Johnson’s credibility as a man. Of Johnson himself, Brown adds, “To me, Johnson was a dude who used his position against people and I can’t buy that.... The President ain’t nothing but another man. And Johnson was a big-eared, ugly, red-necked cracker.... And when I was tearing into Johnson’s ass, Humphrey, who is supposed to be a ‘liberal,’ was getting madder than a pimp with dogshit on his shoe. So I looked at him and knew where he was at. The little red punk.”⁸⁰ This invective serves to ally Brown against the establishment and its coercive authority because as far as Brown is concerned, the White House did nothing to earn his respect or to offer its support for the Black community or its issues. His language here also helps to undermine the “authority” of Johnson on civil rights issues, replace his civil rights leadership with

Brown as a leader, and dismiss the White House as uninterested in genuine black self-determination, all of which service the goal of regenerating Black Power.

Although the nation is taught to see the president as a hero, Brown's own badman image contrasts greatly with his descriptions of Johnson and Humphrey. His conflict with Johnson at the White House confirms that he saw himself as a badman and refused to capitulate to Johnson's demand for deference from the civil rights leaders. In this move to become the bad badman, Brown also implicitly contrasts himself with the "Uncle Toms" of the mainstream civil rights organizations and uses the anecdote to elevate himself and his ideology above what he perceives is the same egregious accommodationist practices that "negro Americans" had perfected since slavery. Because Brown's interactions with Johnson and Humphrey were so imbued with the same contempt and racial politics that legitimized segregation, he saw the loyalty to them as undermining black self-determination. As the bad badman, however, Brown usurps the power from Johnson and Humphrey and triumphs over them as a badman because he is able to expose them for their own racism in the face of their so-called support for civil rights. Since Johnson can't and won't lead on civil rights, Brown will, and he will do so through regenerating Black Power.

Next, Brown moves from a description of himself as a bad badman into the theoretical underpinnings of black nationalism and the coming black revolution. Exposing and undermining the civil rights leadership of the Kennedys, Brown sets himself up as a hero opposed to their brand of white, paternalism guised as "civil rights." He also demonizes the police, who he sees as pawns of the white establishment. And, as he sets himself up as the leader of this new phase of Black Power he also begins to

delineate the theories about black nationalism that inform his regeneration of Black Power activism, including his philosophy of self-defense and the utility of violence in forging a collective identity for black America that is not built upon white norms of beauty or intelligence, white gods, white nationalism, or the white political aims of the White House. As a leader, Brown emerges as a badman who encourages rebellion against white and “negro” America and sees embracing blackness as the only strategy of self-determination possible for black America..

Framing the Black Revolution: The Exigencies of Black Power

The intersection of the aesthetics of urban black masculinity and the performance of rebellion, then, need to be understood as a leadership style centered on the body. Henry stresses that “both the myth and the reality of the black badman constitute a continuing historical source of revolutionary vision” that should be understood as a distinct leadership style, rather than castigated as pathological, dysfunctional or nihilistic if not linked directly to the benevolence of whites.⁸¹ Rap Brown’s autobiographical manifesto is an example of this intersection between urban black masculinity and rebellion that form the template for black male leadership at the end of the 1960s. As a leader, he begins to articulate his argument for revolution, beginning with an indictment of the binaries that perpetuate discrimination and violence in U.S. culture. Here, Brown locates the need to rebel that is so central to his ideology and to his style as a bad badman and as a “bad nigger.” Brown writes,

All of white america is a structure of institutions that says to Black people, “Nigger, you ain’t shit.” All standards of excellence, beauty, efficiency, and civilization are such that any comparison between Black and white is designed to

favor white and put down Black. And it's ground into a Black person every minute of every day, whether you're at work or whether you're out trying to have some fun, it's Nigger, you a'int shit. "Die Nigger Die!" Then, if one examines negro institutions and community structures he finds the message is the same.

"Die Nigger Die!"⁸²

Here, then, is the source for the title of the manifesto and the phrase repeated throughout the text as a synecdoche for white attitudes about blacks. Passages like this also emphasize the cultural aspects of Brown's nationalism. He argues that the entire culture is premised upon these white values and white standards, which are replicated by the black institutions that form the backbone of the black middle-class. He adds, "Everything black is bad. That's white nationalism."⁸³ This is the basis of Brown's own oppositional consciousness and the underlying reason that he cannot perform accommodationism: at its core, accommodationism privileges whiteness by asking non-whites to accept and conform to existing white norms and behaviors. Brown's regenerative strategy labels accommodationism and integration as the ultimate enemies to authentic black self-determination, which also positions him as a badman in absolute opposition to mainstream civil rights leaders.

Like Don Lee in the "Introduction," Brown delineates between the three Americas coexisting in the nation-state: white america, negro america and Black america. He says, "The threat to the existing structure comes from Black America, which exists in contradiction to both white and negro america. It is the evolution of these contradictions that has given rise to the present revolutionary conditions. Revolution is indeed inevitable, and, as the cycle of change closes around america's racist environment, the

issue of color becomes more pertinent.”⁸⁴ He sees himself, as a black badman, as a revolutionary messiah squarely in the camp of black America as he reminds Americans about the politics of color that dominate their daily existence. Brown writes, “In other words, whites control both white america and negro america for the benefit of whites. And because of this kind of external control by whites in their own self-interest, negroes who structure their communities after those of whites are forced to enforce values of whites. They attempt to explain away their lack of control by saying that they are just members of the larger community of ‘americans.’”⁸⁵ By supporting white values, mores, and institutions, “negro america” is reifying whiteness and internalizing self-hate for not *being white*, according to Brown. Accomodationism, as a strategy of civil rights, is doomed, according to Brown, because the agenda and the tone of the discussion is controlled and approved by whites. Brown’s text, then, provides a strategy of regeneration that crafts an exigency for agitation premised upon the rejection of accomodationism and the acceptance of black revolution. The bad badman and “bad nigger” personas are part of his strategy for rebuking accomodationism but so are ideologies of black separatism.

Brown continues in this vein, arguing that white institutions perpetuate colorism in black communities. Whiteness becomes the benchmark as a standard of beauty, morality, respectability, intelligence and historical successes. Of white America, Brown comments, “They have always known that if they could justify and make their actions legal, either through their religion, their courts or their history (educational system), then it would be unnecessary to actually rectify them because the negro would accept their interpretation”⁸⁶ In this argument, the “negro” becomes the translator of white racism by

placing it under the banner of American patriotism; white institutional racism then permeates “negro” institutions in the same manner that it does in the larger structure of the nation. For Brown, this translation work uses nationalism as the language that codes racism. He says,

White america’s most difficult problem thus becomes how to justify and not rectify national inconsistencies. If white nationalism is disguised as history or religion, then it is irrefutable. White nationalism divides history into two parts, B.C. and A.D. - before the white man’s religion and after it. And “progress,” of course, is considered to have taken place only after the white man’s religion came into being. The implication is evident: God is on the white man’s side, for white Jesus was the “son” of God.⁸⁷

The argument here is that the blending of religious myth with history renders counter-histories and myths of progress moot. Rather, white cultural icons like Jesus stand in for all that is good and right. And a black Christ-figure like Brown is necessary in combating the white Christian nationalism that has permeated both white and “negro” America. This kind of philosophy certainly makes his transition to Islam in the 1970s much easier as Brown argues that Christianity has also been an obstacle for black self-determination and has been a strategy of co-optation by the state of moderate civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King.

The characteristics of “negro America” seem to be a replication of the color caste that privileges lightness over darkness, straight hair over kinky hair, Anglo features over African features, white middle-class values over Black community issues⁸⁸ And, here again he articulates the replication of white structural and racist norms. He says,

“Negroes assume that what is good for white america is good for negro america,” including the narrow acceptance of body qualities enforced by white ideologies. For Brown, like Assata Shakur, this brainwashing and cultural prejudice is internalized at a young age for black people through education. He says, “Education in america has to be viewed as propaganda machinery. All educational systems are propaganda machines, but for Black people, the american educational system is a propaganda machine we don’t need. It propagandizes against us. It makes us hate ourselves.”⁸⁹ For Brown, the cultural nationalism of Black Power *is* political, just as the direct action agenda is political. Here, the cultural aspects of blackness as central to the creation of oppositional consciousness and black solidarity, which informs his regeneration of Black Power.

In contrast to his critiques of “negro America,” Brown presents some arguments about “Black America,” which provide the direction for new black agitation and the focus for the regeneration of Black Power. Brown seeks strength in black communities through black self-determination. He writes, “In Black america the bonds are tighter. The fight is for freedom, not whiteness.”⁹⁰ He continues,

Negroes have always been treated like wild, caged animals by the white man, and have always felt the passions of caged animals (because they were living in cages), but they would always act civilized with whites, that is, what white people told them was civilized. But inside, the “civilized” negro was an undying hate. This hate, however could only be released in negro america. If it was ever released in white america, it would prove to whites that negroes were savages. That hate became self-hate.⁹¹

Brown argues that for “negroes,” self-hate was a coping strategy, a survival mechanism to deal with the impetus to embrace the promises of the United States and yet deal with the reality of its institutionalized racism. Likewise, he sees accommodationism and other strategies of the black middle-class as coping mechanisms that have long outlived their usefulness. In these indictments of white nationalism, Brown elevates a black rebellion predicated upon black culture and black pride, like Shakur, which helps form his regeneration of Black Power.

It is at this point that Brown begins to describe the promises of Black America for he sees this as the place where revolution will begin. He argues that “Black america” is important as a distinction because it is the space where folks self-impose their exile from both whites and “negroes.” It is a place that offers a “humanism uncommon to white and negro america” because it accepts those that are dually rejected from black and white America for being too Black or too poor.⁹² He argues also that, blackness is not a color but a way of thinking.⁹³ For him, claiming blackness buys unity and freedom from the racist history and institutions that fuel self-hate and this becomes the basis for the collective identity that Brown uses to regenerate Black Power.

For Brown, self-exile and rebellion are the foundations of black culture in America and he links his ideology to that of the leadership of slave revolts. This strategy of regeneration unmask the continuity of resistance while simultaneously acknowledging that leaders of slave revolts are widely held as heroes and yet used violence to break free from their bondage. He says, “It is self-evident that people always rebel against oppression and there has been one continuous rebellion in Black america since the first slave got here.”⁹⁴ This is an important argument to forge, first, because it

asserts a continuous legacy and counter-history of black America, which declares resistance and revolution as intrinsic to the culture. Like Assata Shakur and Mumia Abu-Jamal, Rap Brown argues that his struggle is a continuation of the black liberation struggle and that he, as an agent of resistance, is an heir to the struggle of slaves on the plantation. This strategy of regeneration makes it possible for Brown to assert that where we find oppression, we necessarily find revolution as well as accommodation.

Second, Brown's argument about the continuity of rebellion is also important because it locates self-hate in the black community as a result of their quiescence to white norms of beauty, intelligence, nationalism, patriotism, etc. It is wise to underscore his appreciation for the interplay between dominant ideology, subaltern cultures, and self-hate since his depiction makes it quite simple to see how "Black america" and "negro america" come to be positioned against each other, by whites and by the communities themselves. Each large community seeks to preserve its boundaries by maintaining the differences that make it distinct. Brown's understanding of the way that "race" works as a trope of difference for white culture and the way that "color" and "class" work for black America is a useful tool in explicating the relationships between these sub-strata of U.S. culture. Brown makes it possible, then, to see how (white) nationalism fuels the growth of "negro america" while needing to simultaneously suppress the revolution burning inside of "Black america." This simultaneity constitutes the power (read: history) of white America. Brown adds,

The biggest difference between being known as a Black man or a negro is that if you're Black, then you do everything you can to fight the white folks. If you're negro, you do everything you can to appease them. If you're Black, you're

constantly in and out of trouble because you're always messing with "the man."
 If white folks say its more cultured to whisper, you talk loud. If white folks say
 gray suits are fashionable, you go buy a pink one. If they say america is great,
 you say america ain't shit.⁹⁵

"Blackness," then, constitutes the kind of identity that Brown offers for those who seek to oppose the arbitrary authority exercised in their communities and the systems of power that make it impossible for black Americans to be equal. This strategy of regeneration makes positive connotations of blackness a prerequisite and helps to form the basis of Brown's cultural nationalism as a Black Power leader.

Brown inserts Mao Tse-Tung as a testimony for how to understand the oppositional stance of black solidarity. He writes, "Chairman Mao says, 'Whatever the enemy supports, we oppose. Whatever the enemy opposes, we support.'"⁹⁶ Framing his understanding of the white maintenance of the status quo through the words of Mao is a move that allows Brown the textual basis for this revolutionary ideas even as it testifies to his own literacy of revolutionary movements. This revolutionary maxim illustrates the fundamental nature of antagonism between accomodationism and black solidarity, which forms the basis of Brown's strategies of regeneration.

It is here that Brown also condemns integration as an historical *strategy* of the movement for black liberation. To Brown, integration is an instantiation of the pervasiveness of white nationalism and the ways in which it invisibly marks motives and ideas attributed to social groups. He says,

What they [the press] didn't understand was that none of us was concerned about sitting down next to a white man and eating a hamburger. Anybody who thinks

that is reflecting white nationalism. That's the white supremacist attitude. Nothing is good unless it can be done in the company of white people. We would've been some kind of fools to get beaten up, spat on and jailed the way a lot of folks did just to sit down at a lunch counter beside a white person.⁹⁷

Brown argues that the civil rights movement was concerned with “controlling the animalistic behavior of white people.... We were letting white folks know that they could no longer legislate where we went or what we did.”⁹⁸ Brown explains that the civil rights movement was never concerned with being able to get close to white people and their culture but it was about trying to reign in the violent, uncivilized behavior of whites against blacks whether in public places.

As Brown traces his oppositional consciousness to his youth, we get a sense of the evolution of Brown into manhood, which forms the basis of his celebrity. This strategy of regeneration allows Brown to become a hero like the black male leaders that came before because it frames his life in terms of the resistance that has characterized his action since he was youth. In this way, Brown replicates the resistance of the gang members in his neighborhood and the boys who played the dozens in addition to replicating his status as a black leader through the archetype of the badman that characterized the lives and stories of men like Nat Turner and Malcolm X. This masculinized strategy of regeneration sees a legacy of leadership in black men and wholly disregards the potential of black women to resist and discounting the history of black female leadership (much of which Brown witnessed in SNCC).

His political philosophies about whiteness, moderate civil rights leaders, and radical black separatism are all couched with the language of his authority as a man who

can rap, who can tell it like it is, and who can explode at any minute because of the pressures and strains on him from the white world. Because Brown has met with the President and with civil rights leaders, his leadership is also enhanced by eyewitness accounts and anecdotes relating to his power and strength in the company of those opposing Black Power. Brown's authority on the machinations of the race crucible in the United States pervades *Die Nigger Die* and makes Brown's declarations as a leader so compelling. In many ways, too, Brown's critiques of the solidly middle-class, Christian background of much of the mainstream civil rights movement highlight the ways that gender and class interacted to form identity in his regeneration of Black Power. To understand Brown's articulations of the exigencies that demand a new phase of Black Power, we must examine his characterizations of white authority and "Negro America" in the context of some specific examples. Brown's text regenerates Black Power at the end of the 1960s, not only by highlighting the problems with white culture, norms and values, but also by constructing enemies out of President Lyndon Johnson, Attorney General Bobby Kennedy, the FBI and local police.

Enemies of Black Power and Strategies of Confrontation

Brown's strategies for regenerating Black Power demonize white authority generally, but he also creates an exigency surrounding specific cultural figures: President John F. Kennedy, Attorney General Bobby Kennedy, and both the FBI and local police. Brown's understanding of the broken promises of liberalism in the Kennedy White House really underscore the extent to which the civil rights movement was on its own, particularly the in the South. This sense of betrayal fuels Brown's disenchantment with the agenda of mainstream black organizations and forms part of the basis for his

transition to Black Power. In his rhetoric of regeneration, Brown also links his critiques of liberal democrats and their stance of civil rights with Malcolm X's and in this move, he accesses the nostalgia that helps to reassert the importance of Black Power. In elevating Malcolm X, Brown also positions himself as a revolutionary martyr, following in Malcolm's footsteps. Ultimately, Brown argues that enemies like the Kennedys, the FBI and the local police cannot be met with nonviolence, but instead, must be met with self-defense and violence.

Although the lack of protection from the FBI concerned the civil rights workers, so did the apparent disdain of Attorney General Bobby Kennedy, according to Brown. He writes, "In Mississippi, civil rights workers were killed, because Bobby Kennedy said the federal government could not protect them. In Alabama, civil rights workers were killed and the federal government would not move against Wallace. And yet negroes cried over the Kennedys worse than they would've cried for their own mamas."⁹⁹ This theme of the betrayal of civil rights workers by the Democratic Party, which claimed to represent them is the same betrayal felt by U.S. blacks at the federal legislation including the Three-Fifths Compromise, the *Dred Scott* case, the Reconstruction Amendments and the rise of Jim Crow. The federal government, despite its insistence on support for civil rights did nothing to help the movement and did everything they could to destroy it, including both passive and active support of white supremacists in the South. This political pandering is what creates the exigency for social change; it becomes part of the problem rather than part of the solution. This reaction by supposed liberals is what helps to propel mainstream activists into Black Power as Brown seeks to regenerate it after Carmichael's resignation.

In addition to condemning the racial politics of the Kennedys and their lack of protection for civil rights workers, Brown is also explicit about the fact that the police are enemies of black social organizing and they will never transcend their brutality because the system will never ask them to do so. Brown explores this betrayal by the Democrats and federal law enforcement at length and he prefaces his comments by noting that many people do not want to hear this kind of critique. He says that if an incident of violence happened, “you’d call the FBI and they’d come out there and trick you into believing that they were going to see that you got some justice. You had to believe them because they represented the federal government. And you didn’t want to face the fact that the federal government wasn’t on your side.”¹⁰⁰ This further confirms that law enforcement has always been an enemy of the movement because they *chose* not to protect civil rights workers. Brown’s tone here is of a reluctant convert who was forced to face the fact that the federal government was not going out on a limb to support civil rights activists who were working in the South. This narrative strategy also helps recruit new Black Power members from the disillusioned civil rights workers who also saw the betrayal of the Kennedys.

Brown extends his critique to local police forces in America’s cities by arguing that they are servants of the same white system that represses black people and that even the black officers are pawns in a larger scheme of white power. He writes,

Cops serve the system, just like the army in Vietnam. The system allows cops to be what they are. In D.C., they recruit actively down south for policemen. Most of the negro cops in D.C. have a high school degree and two or three years of college, while the white cops don’t even finish high school. But the people with

position are white cops – all the way down the line. Out of the 16 or 17 precincts in Black D.C., they had one negro Captain, seven negro Lieutenants, 13 or 14 Sergeants in a police force of some 5,000 odd men.¹⁰¹

Brown connects the make-up of community surveillance with the self-policing of the grassroots organizations. The police would attempt to monitor and patrol poor communities, but their own prejudice, racism, education and lack of training made them enemies of the same populations that they were sworn to serve. For Brown, this example is overshadowed by the same relationship between the soldiers in Vietnam and the South Vietnamese people that they were sworn to protect, rather than annihilate. This passage illustrates Brown's solidarity with Third World peoples in Vietnam because they are fighting the same white authority structure; Black Power advocates are fighting the police and the Vietnamese are fighting the U.S. military. Both are military forces trained to repress indigenous peoples and movements through force, despite their supposed interest in true equality. This strategy appeals to young urban men like him and also to those harboring growing dissatisfaction with the war in Vietnam and the draft. Mobilizing new Black Power advocates against a standing domestic army creates a readily available enemy and resource to build exigency for continued Black Power agitation.

Brown then uses a comparison between JFK and Malcolm X to illustrate his point about the way in which black America understood these promises from prominent white liberals like the Kennedys. Here, he elevates Malcolm X as a black hero because he advocated self-determination and was embraced by black folk who did not care what white people thought of them. He writes,

John and Bobby Kennedy were enemies of Black people, but negroes were more upset when John Kennedy was killed than they were when Malcolm X was killed. In fact, negroes hated Malcolm because when John Kennedy was killed, Malcolm said, "The chickens will come home to roost." Now, everybody talks about Malcolm like they loved him so much when he was alive, but that's a lie and they know it. When Malcolm was killed, the majority of negroes reacted the same way white people did. They were glad because they had been told that Malcolm was going around stirring up trouble. Negroes have a hard time accepting anything Black unless it's been legitimized by white people. John Kennedy was legitimate. Malcolm X was not.¹⁰²

Instead of legitimizing the white nationalism of the status quo, as embodied by an icon of such magnitude as JFK, Brown urges his compatriots to heed the revolutionaries, like himself, whose intellectual job it is to make the status quo uncomfortable and responsible for its social atrocities. This helps build Brown's credibility as a Black Power leader and martyr and continues to help him to regenerate Black Power in northern cities among urban blacks. Brown sees Malcolm X as an ideological stalwart in the face of the liberalism that so often betrayed civil rights workers, both fashioning and solidifying himself as the militant firebrand of Black Power for the battles in America's cities.

Rap Brown's regeneration of Black Power reflects the revolutionary black male ethos of many of his contemporaries, but particularly Malcolm X. Brown's willingness to write frankly about structures of whiteness propels him forward as a "black leader," following in the footsteps of the martyred Malcolm X. He writes, "A lot of people say that its regrettable that Malcolm got killed. But Malcolm was not an individual. His life

didn't belong to him. No revolutionary can claim his life for himself. The life of the revolutionary belongs to the struggle.... Death is the price of revolution."¹⁰³ Brown's rhetoric of regeneration situates Malcolm X as a martyr of Black Power because he was self-sacrificing and always fighting. Just as a Malcolm was a revolutionary, so is Brown, and by highlighting Malcolm's service to black people, we can see the kind of leadership model that Brown is emulating in his regeneration of Black Power and the way that he sees himself as a self-sacrificing revolutionary martyr.

This discussion of the broken promises of white liberals and the law enforcement community's surveillance and repression of black people provides a transition to discussions of weapons that illustrates the tenacity to which Brown maintained the importance of self-defense to the regeneration of Black Power. The mainstream civil rights and grassroots organizations wanted to invoke the police to protect them by patrolling their neighborhoods but were ultimately complicit in their own oppression, according to Brown. Brown is quite open about the fact that he and his brother Ed constantly carried firearms because of their complete confidence in their ability to use the weapons and in their judgment about when the necessity to use that weapon was a life or death issue. He writes, "Give me a gun before you even give me somebody to work with. A gun won't fail you. People will. I found that out early. I never went on any large demonstrations 'cause I knew that if somebody hit me I wasn't just going to stand there and take no beating. I've been tear-gassed, but they're never put dogs on me or nothing like that."¹⁰⁴ Brown's comments about civil disobedience direct the reader to understand the absolute necessity of self-defense, given the racist realities of the police force in the United States. But this also illustrates Brown's defiance of the violence of the state,

furthering his strategies of regenerating Black Power by showcasing his tenacity and his ability to survive as a badman despite such violence.

In this logic, the gun became indispensable as a symbol of militancy, as a reassurance of protection and as a substitute for sell-outs. Brown lauds the material advantages that he has accrued because of this militant badman posture. He says, "I've been in a lot of police stations and I've never been beaten. I've never been hit in a police station 'cause I make it very clear that if you get me, I'm gonna get me somebody. And the cops don't know which one of 'em it's going to be."¹⁰⁵ This fear of violence maintains the status quo, both from the side of the police and from the side of the militant but it also lends credence to Brown's ethos as a black badman, willing to fight police officers on their own turf. This helps to explain Brown's celebrity status and it also ensures that regeneration continues, through this stalemate with police officers. From this paradigm, we can see that this kind of ideology ensures that leaders and followers are jailed and the material conditions of racism, poverty, brutality and sexism in black communities remain unchanged.

In Brown's opinion, the militant must be willing to back up their threat of violence in the same way that law enforcement does. Robert Scott and Donald Smith have pointed out the importance of "symbolic destruction" in rhetorics of confrontation: "[h]arassing, embarrassing, and disarming the enemy may suffice, especially if he is finally led to admit his impotence in the face of the superior will of the revolutionary."¹⁰⁶ This is certainly the case with Brown, who argues that everyone is able to defend themselves but that not many people are willing to do so. Instead, they choose alternative strategies of co-existing in the status quo with racial violence: some accommodate, some

assimilate, and some choose non-violent protest as their means of dealing with their inability to protect themselves from the violence of the state. Brown says, “Nonviolence might have been tactically correct at one time in order to get some sympathy for the Movement, but for me as an individual it just never worked. And, I didn’t try to convince myself that it would work.”¹⁰⁷ For Brown, the police harassment of the movement and the lack of a response from the Justice Department was enough for him to understand that white racists were never going to become nonviolent, therefore, he felt that the movement should be armed. This tactic encouraged confrontation with police officers because it called attention to Black Power and it also helped to position movement advocates as (masculine) peers of the police because both were willing to enforce their agendas with violence. Although this strategy served to expose the police as perpetrators of violence against black America, it also legitimized violence in the state as a way of enforcing anyone’s ideology.

Brown turns here from the quandary of self-defense and nonviolence to a polemic about violence as a movement tactic. He writes, “I began to recognize then the value of being violent. I knew I hadn’t done anything to make them white muthafuckas shoot their B.B. guns at me, so I knew that the world didn’t run on love. The only thing that was gon’ keep white muthafuckas off you was you!... America has made it clear that she respects only violence.”¹⁰⁸ Brown emphasizes the difference between white violence in America (justified) and black violence in America (crime), although this does make the response to racism and individual responsibility. He continues with a commentary on Black violence, which bears a longer quotation in full:

So the question is not can Black people be violent. They send us to Vietnam and brag about what good fighters we are. It's legitimate for a Black man to go over there and kill 30 Vietcong and get a medal, but you come back here and kill one racist, red-necked, honkey, camel-breathed peckerwood who's been misusing you and your people all your life, and that's murder. That's homicide, because the white man has the power to define and legitimize his actions. He can legitimize violence. At this point, we must address ourselves to defensive measures, something that will counteract that violence.¹⁰⁹

By linking white violence against blacks in the U.S. to the war in Vietnam, Brown is implicitly highlighting the similarities between the Vietnamese and black Americans: both are oppressed and colonized by white military violence, either in the form of police, in the United States, or the U.S. military, in the case of Vietnam. Brown links black Americans and the Vietnamese here in a rhetorical move that positions both groups as Third World people, dominated by white colonial interests. Although this move is common in Black Power texts, it does highlight the ways in which Black Power seeks to help explain the lack of moral distinction that people in the U.S. have toward violence. Where the Vietnamese people have the right to fight against the U.S. invasion, so too, does the whole of black America have the right to rise up against the domestic army of the American police.

For Brown, violence is also a tactical strategy, rather than simply a response to violence, especially in urban rebellions and confrontations. Brown argues that violence builds solidarity between people and says, "One significant thing about Detroit and Newark was that the violence created a peoplehood.... And afterwards, there was a real

sense of community among the people, a real feeling of pride and togetherness. It came from the fact that they had fought together. It also came from the fact that the honkey cop kills Black people because they're Black.¹¹⁰ This kind of sentiment is reminiscent of Franz Fanon's notions of the importance of violence as an unbreakable bond among people and as the basis of collective identity in struggle. And, although Brown talks about peoplehood here, he seems to really be discussing black masculinity because of his interest in violence and the gun as symbols of revolution. Brown adds, "When the people cannot find a redress of their grievances within a system, they have no choice but to destroy the system which is responsible...for their grievances. The government is the lawbreaker. The people must be the law enforcer. We cannot allow the government to be an outlaw, particularly when the crime is against the people."¹¹¹ It is clear from these passages that Brown sees violence as an inherent part of the racial politics of the United States. This serves as a warrant for his claims about the importance of self-defense, his demonization of the police, and his exploration of the utility of violence as an avenue for black liberation. Urban rebellion does, however, have the potential to limit Brown's regeneration of Black Power because it increases the likelihood of imprisonment for leaders and members of the Black Power movement.

Nonetheless, black masculinity and the role of the badman function within these strategies of regenerating Black Power to demand that young black men perform in confrontations with white liberals and police officers. In the case of urban rebellion, the black male body figures prominently into the construction of both black identity and white identity in clashes between urban populations and white police officers. Herman Gray writes, "This figure of black masculinity consistently appears in the popular

imagination as the logical and legitimate object of surveillance and policing, containment and punishment. Discursively this black male body brings together the dominant institutions of (white) masculine power and authority – criminal justice system, the police, and the news media – to protect (white) Americans from harm.”¹¹² The rebellions in cities like Detroit and Newark became spaces that allow for the emergence of black revolutionaries to voice the dissatisfaction with the pace of dismantling white supremacy, especially because they featured confrontation with the (white) police of those cities. As Goldberg argues, this space was also inherently masculine:

It would, perhaps be more appropriate to consider the development of a major ghetto riot, and the appearance of symbolic leaders arguing that violence is legitimate, as but different reflections of the process of polarization going on throughout society. It is the role of “spokesman for rebellion” created by the fact that ghetto rebellions are occurring which is significant, and not Brown or Carmichael specifically. Previously that role was singularly filled by Malcolm X; now new men are moving to fill the gap, rushing to keep up with events more than they are guiding them.¹¹³

In the vacuum created by the death of Malcolm X, men had to fill the role of symbolic leader in his stead, carrying his rhetoric and his ideology through the rebellions following the assassination of King. The goal of many young black protestors and revolutionaries at this time “was to disrupt police order, to make police ‘lose their cool,’ to produce situations in which police worked until they ‘dropped in their tracks’ . . . *they are interested not in killing policemen but in humiliating them.* As [black Americans] have been rendered powerless for so long, as the police have continually disrupted the

activities of the ghetto, the disorder becomes the grand opportunity to turn the tables.”¹¹⁴ By this account, Brown is clearly a “spokesman for rebellion,” articulating the concerns of urban blacks (men) and articulating an enemy highly visible in their communities: police officers. His performance of violent confrontation and his elevation of Malcolm X illustrate how Brown sees himself filling the void of masculine leadership that Malcolm’s assassination left. Through his rhetoric of both self-defense and violence, Brown shifts away from the gun as a symbol of violence and toward the notion that violence is an important tool in the revolution, particularly in bringing a government to heel for its repression.

Urban rebellions are conspicuously gendered in both practice and in memory, which makes their utility as a proving ground of black masculinity priceless in the regeneration of the Black Power movement after 1968. Rebellions “serve the functions of ‘ritual ceremonies’ in which manhood is demonstrated. Many acts of confrontation (e.g., laying bear the chest and taunting police to shoot), which have a great intensity and seriousness about them are also dramatic posturing – open and public proof to both oneself and the police that things have changed. The test has dangers, but afterwards one can never go back to what he was before.”¹¹⁵ Rebellions, then, become a new training and proving ground for black revolutionary masculinity.¹¹⁶ As men like Brown and Mumia Abu-Jamal (and women like Assata Shakur) serve prison time for their confrontations with police officers and the justice system, they emerge as symbolic leaders of a movement of Black Power that has always had a strong connection to and presence in prisons. They become celebrities in their communities as “bad niggers” and “bad badmen” and are elevated as figures that need to be emulated. The men of the

Black Power movement of the 1960s confronted white police officers as much to ward off police brutality and to restore dignity to their communities as they did to perform a masculinity that was not at the mercy of white America.

Brown is, therefore, a symbolic leader demonized by white elites and revered by urban blacks for his performance of black masculinity and the bad badman stance that authorized his rhetoric of confrontation.¹¹⁷ Demonizing arbitrary white authority and the liberal politics of men like the Kennedys, Lyndon Johnson, and Hubert Humphrey along with his critiques of law enforcement help Brown regenerate Black Power through a rhetoric of confrontation. This strategy was critical of nonviolence and instead embraced self-defense and proactive violence as reasonable tactics Brown's repertoire of confrontation. By emulating a figure like Malcolm X through nostalgia and praise, Brown is able to elevate himself as a new Black Power leader and martyr whose revolutionary ideologies commit him completely to the struggle for black liberation. Despite his faltering ability to build organizations as he had in the heyday of SNCC due to state repression, Brown's legacy at the end of the 1960s is most certainly his insistence upon Black Power as a social movement ideology and his status as a target of the FBI's emerging counter-intelligence programs. His conversion to Islam in the 1970s has complicated his relationship to the nation even further, particularly because the Muslim movement in prisons has always been a similar threat to the national order. The rest of this chapter will deal with the relationship between Jamil Al-Amin and the nation since his conversion. But first, we must examine the relationship between Muslim movements and the prison system to understand why Amin was, in many ways, *more* of a threat to white supremacy than Brown ever was, particularly in the wake of September 11, 2001.

Black Militants and Islam: Re-releasing *Die Nigger Die!*

We know that Rap Brown's analysis of race relations was salient for his audience at the time of the first publication of *Die Nigger Die!* in 1969 because it went through seven printings. The re-release of the book includes a new "Foreword" titled, "H. Rap Brown/Jamil Al-Amin: A Profoundly American Story," by Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, the W.E.B. DuBois Chair at the University of Massachusetts and former comrade with Brown in SNCC, that illustrates how the book and its author travel through time and space to be understood differently in the post-September 11th climate of anti-Muslim, anti-dissent politics. In the new "Forward," Thelwell begins by repositioning Al-Amin as an important Black Power leader of the 1960s and by detailing the COINTELPRO schemes to disappear him; this illustrates how crucial strategies of regeneration were as leaders were imprisoned or driven underground. Second, the "Foreword," argues that Al-Amin is no longer Brown. He has become a religious cleric who, despite his denunciation of violence as a means of social change, has been persecuted by the same kind of governmental forces that tried to eradicate him in the 1960s and 1970s. Thelwell argues that Brown was such an important Black Power leader and his ideas were so potent and threatening to the state that the FBI continues to see him as Brown, rather than Al-Amin. However, a kind of third persona seems to emerge from the decision to re-release the text that blends Brown's Black Power ideologies and Al-Amin's commitments to Islam. Finally, Thelwell argues that Al-Amin was framed and that the circumstances surrounding his current incarceration are suspect.

These rhetorical choices by Thelwell encourage the reader to see Al-Amin as an endangered Black Power leader and Muslim martyr who needs support because he must

be exonerated. This is particularly important since Al-Amin's trial took place just after September 11, 2001, and because Muslims in the United States faced severe limitations in court because of anti-Muslim sentiment. Thelwell, implicitly argues that because Al-Amin was a Black Power leader who advocated violence and is now an activist Muslim, that he has been imprisoned as a part of the legacy of Black Power and its relationship to COINTELPRO. So, by re-releasing the text during his trial, the *Die Nigger Die!* seems to be positioned to capitalize on new readers to support Al-Amin and to regenerate Black Power by bringing the text back into circulation. This helps position Al-Amin as a leader of both Black Power and activist Islam, it helps to elevate him to the status of political prisoner (again) and it makes it easier to link his cause to others like Assata Shakur and Mumia Abu-Jamal, and it facilitates Al-Amin's martyrdom as a Black Power leader and as a Muslim cleric. To understand the way that Al-Amin's re-release of the text works in 2002, we must first examine how Thelwell sees the text travel.

Thelwell begins his "Foreword" by arguing that *Die Nigger Die!* is a crucial artifact of the Black Power movement whose messages have traveled from the past to the present. He begins, "This autobiographical political memoir by H. Rap Brown is a vital American historical document – historical almost in the sense of a message found in a time capsule, a missive from another age. But it remains of considerable interest for what it tells us about social and political attitudes, behaviors, and expectations of a time – so my students believe – long past."¹¹⁸ Rather than understanding Brown and Brown's text as static construction of a context long gone, Thelwell encourages us to see *Die Nigger Die!* as a living text, whose messages change over time. John Angus Campbell makes a similar argument when he encourages us to provide accounts "of how a specific

rhetorical object – the political consciousness of a people as materialized in their language – creates new rhetorical situations as it moves across time.”¹¹⁹ To do this kind of rhetorical investigation, we must look at the instances when the discourse in question is re-introduced into the political lexicon for this is where radical reflection occurs prompted by the interrogation of individual consciousness and through the forging of collective identities. Campbell adds, “radical reflection occurs when in the present moment of danger an individual (or an individual speaking on behalf of a people) reaches into the magazine of cultural memory and brings forward a fragment of the past around which to crystallize resistance to a present danger.”¹²⁰ When the reader or the listener encounters this discursive past in a new present, they embark on the journey of radical reflection and in their judgment, they notice the similarities between the past and the present. “In affirming a previous self-interpretation as their present self-definition, a people treat an entire tradition as though it were a text, ‘invent’ a relevant parallel to the present case, and rally to repel a perceived threat,” writes Campbell. By utilizing this paradigm, we are able to see the ways that *Die Nigger Die!* bridge 1969 and 2002 to perform its criticisms “at a variety of discursive sites over time.”¹²¹

Thelwell encourages the reader to see the re-release of *Die Nigger Die!* as a text that has traveled to tell us as much about Black Power leaders of the 1960s and 1970s as it does to remember those leaders today. He argues that Rap Brown was an important Black Power leader of the 1960s that must be remembered for his importance to blacks struggle. In the “Foreword,” Thelwell provides a brief sketch of Brown’s participation in SNCC and the COINTLEPRO surveillance, detainment, and capture of him as a member of the Black Power movement, which serves to illustrate the kind of power the state

conferred upon him at the end of the 1960s. Thelwell writes, “Subsequently released FBI documents make it clear that this process of paralysis by indictment and legal intimidation was by no means limited to H. Rap Brown. It was a deliberate, across-the-board COINTELPRO strategy designed to cripple radical organizations by misusing the courts.”¹²² He continues, “It was of little importance to the government whether or not they had a legitimate case strong enough to secure a conviction. The point was to silence and immobilize leadership while forcing groups to redirect energy and resources into raising funds, organizing legal defenses, and publicizing their cases.”¹²³ The legal spectacles of the Chicago Seven and the Panther Twenty-One trials, among many others, made the black militants into heroes but they also atrophied the Black Power movement by removing leaders from the public eye for months or years at a time. Thelwell argues that this is precisely what happened with Al-Amin’s arrest in 1972 after the alleged “armed robbery.” Ultimately, Thelwell’s comments here illustrate how central Brown was to Black Power that the state had to “disappear” him and this underscores Brown’s role as a Black Power leader in the past and now, in his current phase of incarceration..

Thelwell argues that Brown had to go into exile because of the persecution of Black Power leaders and notes that Brown’s friends and supporters in the movement were stunned when large a *New York Times* headline proclaimed his capture, gun shot and seriously wounded, following a running gun battle with police during ‘an attempted hold-up’ of an uptown Manhattan bar” after two years underground.¹²⁴ He adds, “C’mon, that was completely at odds with the political principles we considered ourselves to share with Rap. And, besides, why would he, having successfully eluded capture for so long, now choose to chance so dubious, dangerous, and criminal an enterprise? It just simply

made no sense.”¹²⁵ Thelwell talks about how the story on the street was that Rap Brown and other like-minded individuals were running drug dealers out of a blighted Brooklyn community. In this explanation, it seems that Brown was at the bar (located conveniently near a local police precinct where dealers would pay off their police protectors) to reinforce warnings to the dealers not to push in their Brooklyn neighborhood. But either Brown and his crew walked into an ambush or the police and the pushers started something with them. Regardless, “Rap served five years of a fifteen-year sentence. Having theoretically discharged his debt to the law, and re-emerged into society as Jamil Al-Amin, H. Rap Brown, for all intents and purposes should have been history.”¹²⁶ These kinds of statements by Thelwell illustrate how the nation disappeared Black Power leaders or drove them underground through trumped-up charges, which highlights how important strategies of regeneration have been to the survival of Black Power ideology and black liberation struggle. Because Brown has been both exiled *and* imprisoned, *Die Nigger Die!* is a critical text that helps us locate his importance to Black Power regeneration through the 1970s and again today because Thelwell argues that the Black Power ideologies of the text are still relevant and that Al-Amin is still relevant as a leader.

Additionally, Thelwell observes that while Al-Amin does not repudiate any part of the 1969 version of the book he “did have some concerns about whether the vernacular earthiness of some of the street language was now entirely seemly. He also found a number of pejorative street-corner references to certain women to be regrettable, even embarrassing, but decided to let them stand as originally uttered.”¹²⁷ Al-Amin had the chance to revise the 1969 text or provide a new introduction but chose to let his ideas

stand rather than censor his former self. While this may allow us to try to read the text through the lens of 1969, it also reifies the rigid black masculinity that the book advances and does very little to temper the commitment to violence clearly advocated in the text. By letting the manifesto stand as it was written in 1969, the persona of Rap Brown, and all of the strategies of regenerating Black Power in the text remain intact.

However, Thelwell argues that Al-Amin is no longer Brown, despite the fact that Al-Amin provided no written addendums to the original 1969 text. Instead, he depicts Al-Amin as an ascetic Muslim cleric and devout imam. Thelwell writes, “Al-Amin’s embrace of Islam, however, proved neither facile nor expedient, as his emergence as a bookish Muslim cleric and his years of work in faith-based social improvement have demonstrated. The fiery young rebel who speaks out of the pages of this book has long since evolved into an austere religious scholar, disciplined by faith and projecting the aura of a spiritually dispossessed ascetic.”¹²⁸ There is tension here, though, in seeing Al-Amin as someone totally removed from Brown but then understanding that Al-Amin did not amend the re-released of *Die Nigger Die!* Because the original text is not revised, Al-Amin seems to occupy a kind dual space where he is both Brown, the Black Power firebrand, and Al-Amin, the Muslim cleric. This allows Al-Amin to harness his critiques of the state from 1969 to apply to the context of the present without actually having to utter them again. Thelwell highlights the fact that *Die Nigger Die!* was relevant and served a purpose for the Black Power movement in 1969 when it was first released but that it serves another purpose now since Al-Amin is a Muslim. Therefore, Al-Amin’s leadership as an imam and as a scholarly cleric merges with his persona as a Black Power leader to produce a third persona that is both a Muslim and a black radical.¹²⁹

This third persona illustrates how explosive Brown was as a Black Power leader but also highlights how Al-Amin's sympathizers want him to be seen as a bookish imam who has changed his opinions on the utility of violence. Thelwell posits "two utterly incompatible and mutually exclusive stories" that may explain why the specter of Rap Brown is still alive in public memory. He writes, "One is the narrative of H. Rap Brown, the armed militant, prone to violence, 'revolutionary' or 'criminal' depending on your take. This old narrative is preserved alive and well in the computerized memory banks of law enforcement and in the film clips and sound bytes of media, a convenient ghost to be summoned up at will over the next thirty years."¹³⁰ In this way, Thelwell argues that the state's version of the Rap Brown from 1969 is preserved through time as a constant enemy of the state. Yet it is more obvious that Brown has also been resuscitated by Al-Amin himself by allowing the republication of *Die Nigger Die!* to stand without changes. In this way, the Brown in *Die Nigger Die!* can defend Al-Amin by making claims about the repression, harassment, and broken promises of white nationalism and can reassert a role of black militancy and solidarity.

Nonetheless, Thelwell uses Al-Amin's brother Ed Brown, another former SNCC member, to explore how the state continues to see Brown as the militant firebrand of 1969. Ed says:

Something happens. Say the first attempt to bomb the Trade Center, right? They feed their infallible profile into their computer. Muslim...radical...violent...anti-American, whatever, who knows. Anyway, boom, out spits the names, H. Rap Brown prominent among them. Next thing the Feds come storming into the community and haul Jamil in. This actually happened. Of course it's stupid.

And every time they have to let him go. But how do you stop it? A goddamn nightmare, they never quit.¹³¹

Because Rap Brown declared himself to be an enemy of the state in 1969, Ed Brown argues that the state will consider him an enemy until he is in jail for life or dead.

Although Rap Brown became Jamil Al-Amin, Ed Brown argues that the state recognizes him now as the militant extremist that they feared in 1969 but also a radical Muslim, disenfranchised with the United States and liable to use terrorism to bring it down. In this way, Ed Brown argues that the Rap Brown of 1969 and the Jamil al-Amin of 2000 alloy into what the government fears most from both identities. His comments illustrate that the state-sponsored harassment of Al-Amin never stopped after the 1960s or his conversion to Islam, which elucidates the need for a regeneration of Black Power agitation and critiques of white institutions, including the police and the courts. From Ed Brown's comments then, the re-release of *Die Nigger Die!* can be seen as a strategy of regenerating Black Power to address the continued abuses of the state and its agents.

Instead of reading Al-Amin as a Muslim terrorist and black revolutionary, Thelwell asks the reader to understand Imam Al-Amin as the bookish (rather than violent), "ascetic scholar/teacher and community leader, widely perceived to have renounced violence – only to have his hard-won peace plagued at regular intervals by the ghost of the past persona, conjured up to that end."¹³² Here, Thelwell is working to recover an identity for al-Amin that is circumscribed by police harassment and frame-ups for being a radical black Muslim. This certainly helps to make his case that Al-Amin has constantly been fingered for crimes he did not commit, of which, this most recent arrest might be similar. The denunciation of violence that Thelwell asserts is problematic,

however, because *Die Nigger Die!* is most committed to violent destruction of the white nation state of the texts in this study. It seems that Thelwell's assertion of this vision of Al-Amin does very little to undermine the unrelenting strategies of Black Power regeneration that characterize *Die Nigger Die!* Perhaps this characterization of Al-Amin is meant for the Muslim audience of the text's re-release as a way of assuaging their concerns about the violence advocated in the text? Perhaps we are to read these statements about Al-Amin renouncing violence as a kind of strawperson argument or as a thinly veiled attempt to exonerate Al-Amin for his murder charge? Regardless, Thelwell's brief assessment of Al-Amin's character does not destabilize the power of Brown's text to regenerate Black Power ideologies of masculinity, self-defense, violence as a movement tactic of the nostalgia for other black heroes who embraced similar strategies, like Malcolm X.

Before examining Thelwell's rhetoric regarding Al-Amin's current phase of incarceration, we must scrutinize the facts of the case. It seems that on March 16, 2000, Fulton County Deputy Sheriff Ricky Kinchen was shot and later died and Deputy Aldranon English was wounded after being shot by a man outside of Al-Amin's corner store in the West End of Atlanta while serving a warrant for Al-Amin's arrest.¹³³ Al-Amin was arrested in Lowdnes County, Alabama, on March 20, 2000, following a four-day manhunt and was subsequently flown back to Atlanta where he was subsequently he was indicted for murder in connection with the shooting death of deputy Kinchen after Deputy English picked him out of a line-up.¹³⁴ He was charged despite the fact that in English's statement on the night of March 16, he claimed to have wounded the shooter and the police were following leads from a trail of blood leading away from the scene

where the shooter escaped; Al-Amin was not wounded and showed no signs of injury when he was brought back to Atlanta. The following month, the FBI revealed that they monitored Al-Amin between 1992-1997 for everything from domestic terrorism (i.e. bombing the World Trade Center in 1993, for which Abu-Jamal was detained) to gunrunning, to at least fourteen homicides in Atlanta, which certainly illustrated the extent to which the state still perceived him to be a threat as a Black Power leader and as a pillar of the American Muslim Community. At the beginning of May of 2000, the state announced that it would pursue the death penalty against Al-Amin for the shooting of Deputy Kinchen. The next month, Otis Jackson (26 years old) confessed to killing Kinchen but later recanted, however, Al-Amin's defense team was not notified of the confession. Al-Amin was arraigned on January 19, 2001, with a trial date to be set later in the year.

The trial of Jamil Al-Amin for the shooting death of Deputy Kinchen was scheduled to begin on September 13, 2001, but due to the massive outpouring of anti-Muslim sentiment in the U.S. following the terrorist attacks on September 11 of that year, his trial was moved to January 7, 2002, with Judge Stephanie Manis presiding.¹³⁵ In many cases like Al-Amin's, judges hoped that brief continuances would help to preserve a fair trial after September 11, however, "the ensuing war in Afghanistan, heightened terror alerts, and continued threats of new domestic attacks have sustained a certain level of animus toward Muslims in the United States."¹³⁶ Judge Manis also imposed a gag rule on Al-Amin because he had proclaimed his innocence to his congregation in a letter from prison after he was arraigned. He was prohibited by this gag order from speaking to the press, printing any statements, having more than one lawyer (severely jeopardizing his

defense), he was under twenty-three hour lockdown, he was prohibited from seeing visitors aside from one lawyer, and his phone calls and mail were screened. On March 9, 2002, a jury convicted Al-Amin of murder and on March 13, 2002, Al-Amin was sentenced to life in prison without parole.¹³⁷

Al-Amin's current phase of incarceration would seem to be at least a little suspect, which Thelwell eludes to, though Thelwell stops short of proclaiming Al-Amin's innocence. Instead, he argues that police brutality provided the context for the events of March 2000 as Atlanta was "traumatized by a series of shootings of unarmed black men in urban centers, most of them innocent of any crime, at the hands of police. In black Islamic communities, in particular, feeling were extremely raw over the police shooting of a devout, law-abiding, unarmed young African Muslim named Amadou Diallo...."¹³⁸ He notes that the Diallo killing was the subject of numerous sermons in mosques across America and the acquittal of all four cops reinforced the notion that the police were not to be trusted, particularly by black Muslims. This kind of commentary seems to bridge the Rap Brown of the 1960s and 1970s who regenerated Black Power through strategies that highlighted the police as enemies and the Al-Amin of today, who as a black Muslim, surely condemned the slaying of young black men in Atlanta as well as Amadou Diallo. Rather than making this connection explicitly, Thelwell chooses to imply that the slayings of so many innocent black men in March 2000 authorized the police to enter Al-Amin's "Muslim community, under the cover of darkness, heavily armed...[and] wearing flakjackets to bring in a respected and beloved religious leader, a figure of a fixed address and regular and predictable habits, at night" particularly "in the service of a warrant for charges they describe as relatively minor...."¹³⁹ Thelwell's comments here set up the

reader to understand Al-Amin's current incarceration as more of the same kind of COINTELPRO-style harassment that apparently continued through the 1990s and, which manifested in what appeared to be a police assault. Thelwell wonders if this was "abysmally poor judgment or deliberate provocation" and although he does not tackle the answer to this question, the reader is left to understand the events of March 2000 as the latter.

As he pontificates on the significance of the police brutality in Atlanta and in New York, Thelwell concludes his statement with direction for how to read the re-release of Brown's text. He writes, "It is now time for the state and his fellow citizens to speak. In the national mood following the horrific events of September 11, it will be instructive to see what they say."¹⁴⁰ By preempting *Die Nigger Die!* with the framework of September 11, Thelwell implies that the manifesto travels to regenerate its ideologies and strategies for confronting the state even during the climate following the terrorist attacks in 2001. And, other scholars note that as Al-Amin's trial date neared, the Muslim community began to fear the worst - that Al-Amin would be convicted not because of his guilt but because he is Muslim.¹⁴¹ Several major polls in the aftermath of September 11th confirmed that the general American public was suspicious of Muslims and felt that the federal government should tightly monitor them.¹⁴² Many American Muslims became the victims of hate crimes across the United States and in the FBI Hate Crimes Report following September 11th, the organization found that "incidents targeting people, institutions and businesses identified with the Islamic faith increased from 28 in 2000 to 481 in 2001. Muslims previously had been among the least-targeted religious group."¹⁴³ As the former Rap Brown, Al-Amin was a likely candidate for the death penalty because

in the climate after September 11, 2001, the anti-Muslim sentiment added to the lingering racial hatred of black militancy and made finding an impartial jury difficult. Because Deputy English fingered Al-Amin as the shooter, despite the fact that the medical report presented in court found him uninjured, the narrative of the “good cop” was unassailable, particularly because the trial followed the terrorist attacks.

For many Muslims, Al-Amin’s trial was about more than the fate of Al-Amin himself; it “would test whether a Muslim could really get a fair trial in post-September 11th America.”¹⁴⁴ Jury selection in the trial was effected by the anti-Muslim climate and 1500 prospective jurors were called – more than three times the usual amount. When jury selection began on the third day, the jurors were evacuated by a bomb scare that shut down the courthouse.¹⁴⁵ Attorney James Curry Woods writes,

Al-Amin's trial serves as an example of the potential problems Muslims may face in American courtrooms as a result of the anti-Muslim atmosphere that has permeated the United States since the September 11th terrorist attacks. While criminal defendants facing terror-related charges are more likely to bear the brunt of the anti-Muslim sentiments, litigants of all races and claims may find that changes in American attitudes have affected the jury system as a whole and on many different levels.¹⁴⁶

Woods argues that Al-Amin’s trial was in fact a symbolic showdown between the values and attitudes of white America and those of the black Muslims that are making up an ever-increasing population in the United States. His trial was also an example of how racial hatred and fear still contribute to a climate that circumscribes black behavior, particularly when it does not conform to white norms.

From these statements, we can see that Thelwell's "Foreword" positions Al-Amin as a kind of third persona blending the Black Power leadership of Rap Brown and the asceticism of Al-Amin into a figure that emerges full of contradictions. Al-Amin does not directly denounce any of the claims of *Die Nigger Die!* and they are left to stand as his commentary on race relations while the trial phase of his most current charge was ongoing. However, by implying that Al-Amin's most recent arrest is a part of the legacy of both Black Power and COINTELPRO, Thelwell's rhetoric encourages a regeneration of Al-Amin as a Black Power leader and as a black Muslim resisting the same white structures that have always worked to silence and disappear black heroes. By asking the reader to understand Al-Amin's recent charges and his trial through a post-September 11th climate, Thelwell's new "Foreword" locates *Die Nigger Die!* as a discourse that has the potential to recruit new followers of Al-Amin, either for his Black Power ideologies or for his commitment to Islam. This kind of regenerative strategy has the possibility to build a movement around Al-Amin both during his trial and after the verdict, particularly after a conviction. It also positions Al-Amin as a Black Power martyr of the past and of the present, with his religious commitments apparently intensifying his repression.

Die Nigger Die!: Then and Now

Die Nigger Die! is a remarkable text because it exhibits many of the strategies of regenerating Black Power that have continued to be deployed by political prisoners. It illustrates the kind of constraints upon Black Power while Carmichael was the head of SNCC and the ways that Rap Brown sought to regenerate interest in Black Power after Carmichael resigned from the organization and the federal government began to persecute activists like Brown. It advances a black masculinity that embraces the

performance of the “bad nigger” or the bad badman, which replicates the kind of hierarchies prevalent in white organizations and which limits the ability to regenerate Black Power to black men only. By displaying this kind of masculinity throughout the text, Brown is elevated as a Black Power celebrity and leader by himself and by Don L. Lee.

The manifesto also displays a rhetoric of regeneration that sees “Negro” or black middle class communities and individuals as part of the exigency for Black Power. It sees the potential for the state to co-opt a few black leaders and make them into agents of the state in the name of civil rights. In their vein, the manifesto also sees white liberals like the Kennedys, Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey and the men of the FBI and local police as enemies of Black Power that provide a constant source of exigency for the movement to organize against. Rap Brown argues that the federal government and the police cannot be trusted to ensure that black people are protected in the United States and in confronting them, he becomes a hero and a survivor, much like Malcolm X. By invoking nostalgia for Malcolm X, Brown is able to ally himself with the Black Power ideologies that preceded him and become a martyr dedicated to black liberation.

Rather than using appeals to nonviolence, the manifesto demonstrates a rhetoric of regeneration that emphasizes the importance of confrontation with the state, thereby allowing black badmen to assert themselves. It highlights the importance of the gun as both a symbol of Black Power and as a tool in the struggle for black liberation. And, it undermines the notion of nonviolence only to advocate a replication of state violence and self-defense.

Finally, the text itself regenerates Black Power through its re-issue in 2002, during Al-Amin's trial. And, the new "Foreword" by Ekwueme Michael Thelwell repositions Al-Amin as an important Black Power leader and martyr of the 1960s and he asserts that Al-Amin is no longer Brown but a beloved imam. From these two statements, a third persona emerges that blends the Black Power of Brown and the commitments to Islam of Al-Amin to create a leader who bridges these two resistance communities in the United States to regenerate Black Power for new readers who can rally around his ideologies and his imprisonment. The re-release of *Die Nigger Die!* without revision authorizes the text to stand, unchallenged, in assertion of militant black masculinity and violence as useful Black Power tactic, despite the fact that the regeneration of these ideologies is hampered by a lack of appeal for black women. And, in the context of September 11, we can see how understanding Al-Amin as a continued threat to the nation augments the exigency for Black Power regeneration, both to save Al-Amin from the death penalty or prison time and to provide a space for renewed critiques of the state that engage new activists to agitate for Muslim political prisoners in the struggle for black liberation.

Chapter 5: Traveling Through Time: Tracing the Legacies of Black Power

Regeneration

The autobiographical manifestos of political prisoners help us to interrogate what our relationship is to the “political prisoner,” to prisons, and to what Joy James has called “visionary, risk-taking struggle.”¹ In reassessing our relationship to political prisoners, Houston A. Baker asks, after witnessing the communicative effect, the “group-identity-formation effect” of the white American site of incarceration,

how can we be surprised by the emergence of a post-civil-rights-era “prison” consciousness in Black America? From George Jackson to the hyper-success of Sanyika Shakur’s *Monster*, there is a continuity in the development of black publicity rather than a recurrent novelty. The Black Muslims, Black Panthers and such “independents” as Eldridge Cleaver, all contributed, as did an accomplished poet like Etheridge Knight, to the resonances of this black public sphere of incarceration.²

This black public sphere of incarceration has produced some of the most significant discourses of social change for black liberation and as a consequence, prisons have been a fertile recruiting ground for emerging Black Power leaders. Because prison manifestos and other prison discourses are produced under such scrutiny, surveillance and brutality, and because these productions link so many millions of people through shared experience, it is no wonder that they have traveled beyond the prisons themselves. It also is no wonder that the “I” has become the “we.” This is particularly true, because as Evelyn Williams notes, “The orientation of political prisoners is international, global rather than personal, philosophical, and critically

analytical. They consider the legal situation in which they find themselves entrapped after they are arrested as simply a microcosm of the larger society's imprisonment of all of its Black citizens...."³ Political prisoners are an important resource for the culture because some often refuse to submit and because many are perceived to be a source of heroism and exigency within the African American community, in particular.

Although the political manifestos of incarcerated Black Power advocates from Malcolm X, George Jackson, and Angela Davis to Assata Shakur, Mumia Abu-Jamal and Rap Brown/Jamil Al-Amin have been vital in the articulation of black resistance politics for the larger culture, the terrain of black struggle also includes other forms of black cultural production that have often been ignored. Soul music and the blaxploitation film culture of the 1960s and 1970s informed the emerging hip-hop culture, rap music and the film industry's preoccupation in the 1990s with Black Power, through vehicles like John Singleton's *Boyz in the Hood* (1991), Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* (1992) and Melvin and Mario Van Peeble's *Panther* (1995).

The marketing of Black Power to the hip-hop generation has been substantial.⁴ James writes, "Through books, videos, and CDs, political representations are purchased and circulated with the intent of creating greater demand not only for the 'product,' but also for social justice, release campaigns, opposition to expanding police and military powers, and executions and state violence."⁵ She adds that both academics and activists market their treatises "on human rights abuses and conditions of the imprisoned, the 2.5 million people locked in U.S. penal institutions, and the perpetuation of torture and slavery through the Thirteenth Amendment."⁶ The

marketing of oppositional political culture has been extremely useful in the politicization of an event or person, the creation of activist celebrities who help fundraise, in building organizations and publicizing a cause, and in the distribution of first-hand accounts of government repression.

In their circulation, autobiographical prison manifestos and other images and productions of prison life help to create this oppositional consciousness by documenting histories of people who have been silenced by the state; their assistance to our critical collective memory cannot be overstated. Houston A. Baker writes, “Critical memory judges severely, censures righteously, renders hard ethical evaluations of the past that it never defines as well-passed. The essence of critical memory’s work is the cumulative, collective maintenance of a record that draws into relationship significant instances of time past and the always uprooted homelessness of now.”⁷ Consequently, prison manifestos are a crucial component in articulating the oppositional consciousness of Black Power that moves from the past to the present through collective memory.

In producing a collective memory, the manifestos of this study also allow their authors to become *living martyrs*, to borrow a term from rapper Common. As scholar Harry A. Reed has noted, “History would seem to be a search for truth.... Memory, on the other hand, the stuff of making heroes, martyrs, and larger than life portraits, has a more difficult time accepting the blemishes of any normal life.”⁸ Living martyrs travel through memory and are understood as unblemished leaders who self-sacrifice for the good of their people. They are often compared to dead martyrs (e.g., Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr.) either through their own discourse or the

discourse of others and are circulated nostalgically to help inspire historical resistance. This circulation in tandem with a nostalgia for dead martyrs also helps enhance their own martyrdom, which often fuels new activism. In the case of this study, living martyrs would use violence to liberate their people or self-defense to protect them, and they are often living under the sentence of death for their discipline and unwavering commitment to their people.

This chapter examines popular culture as a means to assess the legacies of the manifestos of Assata Shakur, Mumia Abu-Jamal and Rap Brown/Jamil Al-Amin as well as the celebrity and leadership each activist is afforded. In many ways, these leaders function in such popular culture texts as *living martyrs* whose discourse transcends the walls of confinement and combines with their leadership images to become persuasive forces in facilitating the regeneration of the Black Power movement. Thus, while their manifestos exhibit a rhetoric of regeneration, their own images, which they helped create, also function as a regenerative force and reveal the ways in which such martyred images function in popular culture.

Typical martyrs are important cultural images because they are the very definition of self-sacrifice in the name of social change. Roxanne L. Euben argues that martyrdom is “an act of political suicide, the literal end of an actor and of her very capacity for agency.”⁹ Malcolm X has, of course, been the most referenced martyr of civil rights and Black Power because, as Jacob U. Gordon notes, his “premature death provided the black masses and a sizable number of young militant leaders with a significant martyr image for years to come.”¹⁰ Likewise, Martin Luther King, Jr. has been often called a martyr because his assassin, James Earl Ray, was a

white man, because he seems to have presaged his own martyrdom in his speech, “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop,” and because for many people “King’s death symbolized the death of his dream.”¹¹ These martyrs are often used by the authors examined in this study as starting points to reference the contributions of *living martyrs* to movements for social change. Living martyrs are an extension of both the celebrity and the ideologies of those martyrs who have been forcibly removed from political activism and whose agency is restricted in ways that their followers find unjust. Consequently, such conditions of self-sacrifice, perceived injustices, defiant acts against the white power structure, linkages to past heroes, and their rhetorical leadership elevate their status as victim, hero, *and* celebrity, ultimately resulting in their image circulation as living martyrs.

The notion of the living martyr is often quite visible in the music associated with black nationalism. Since music has been an essential part of black liberation struggle from slavery to the present, the first sections analyze the role of music, particularly rap music and music from within the hip-hop culture, to understand how the hip-hop generation has promoted oppositional consciousness and circulated the messages and images of the three activists in this study. To this end, these sections also explore the ways that rap music and the Internet cast each activist as a living martyr, embodying the principles of struggle that are necessary for black liberation. The sections also focus on the importance of the Internet in connecting both black liberation activism and the messages of regeneration that are exhibited in the Black Power manifestos for the hip-hop generation.

First, the chapter looks at the ways in which Shakur's strategies of regenerating Black Power are reflected in several hip-hop songs by artists like Common and Paris. This section illustrates how Shakur's notions of black pride, black liberation history and feminizing Black Power are found in hip-hop culture. Shakur's messages also abound on the Internet, where more recent statements are posted and where rap artists comment on her leadership in black liberation struggle. Within these songs, Shakur's martyred image functions as the impetus for the further interrogation of the prison-industrial complex and police brutality. From these examples, and from the Hands Off Assata! collective on the Internet, we can see that Shakur's strategies of regenerating Black Power have permeated new arenas of black liberation activism and continue to circulate and influence Black Power projects, with Shakur as a central celebrity and leader.

Second, the chapter considers the ways that strategies of regeneration found in Mumia Abu-Jamal's texts find their way into hip-hop culture and onto the Internet. Here, groups like Mumia 911 connect his messages about Black Power to the Black Panthers, the plight of Assata Shakur, police brutality and prison resistance. This kind of music positions Abu-Jamal as a leader and as a living martyr that the hip-hop generation must follow and support. Abu-Jamal's own comments on hip-hop albums and in the Internet illustrate his continuing relevance as a black liberation leader because his raced and classed critiques of American foreign policy assert the centrality of state violence in foreign and domestic prisons, where torture is routine and due process is thwarted. Organizations that support Abu-Jamal have posted his essays in audio form so that listeners will have the opportunity to hear his

commentaries. Abu-Jamal also functions as a living martyr for activist organizations surrounding issues of political prisoners, prison policies, and the death penalty.

Third, the chapter considers the circulation of Rap Brown/Jamil Al-Amin's martyred image in the music of Public Enemy, where the controversy over releasing a song with Rap Brown and Abu-Jamal compelled MTV to ban the video. It also examines the music of rap group The Coup, where Brown's critiques of capitalism, police brutality, and COINTELPRO are connected to the repression in cities like Oakland in the 1990s to illustrate the continuity of revolutionary thought and armed resistance. On the Internet, political prisoners like Abu-Jamal speak on Al-Amin's behalf to testify to the biased media coverage of his case, the problems with being both black and Muslim in America after September 11, 2001 and the importance of Al-Amin to his community. Since his ability to communicate with those outside of prison has been severely limited by prison censorship, articles like these and organizations like the Jericho Movement have heralded his cause by labeling him a political prisoner and linking his incarceration with other political prisoners, exhibiting his circulation in such discourse as a living martyr.

Fourth, the chapter considers the potential problems with the regeneration of Black Power through strategies like the reification of armed struggle and self-defense, the badman and "bad nigger" posture and the commodification of these two ideologies for the hip-hop generation without a plan for action. Conversely, the chapter also considers the productive aspects of self-defense and the "bad nigger" pose because they become expressions of black self-reliance and pride and they do provide a sense of security. The strategies of regenerating Black Power found in, say,

Shakur's texts is also positive for further agitation because it feminizes black liberation history and heroes and makes the female point of view accessible for new Black Power activists. Highlighting the pervasiveness of police brutality and the repression of political activists is also a strategy of Black Power regeneration that is a sustaining force in black liberation agitation because it connects the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s and the COINTELPRO repression to those leaders today and their struggles within the War on Terror.

Finally, the chapter looks at the ways that the War on Terror continues to constrain black liberation activism, particularly the on-going attempts to regenerate the movement. It highlights the continuities between the repression of the Cold War and COINTELPRO and that of the Patriot Act in the current milieu. It also looks at the centrality of prisons, political prisoners and foreign policy to understand why the prison-industrial complex is at the core of what many political prisoners perceived to be an American quest for empire, assessing the centrality of these living martyrs to the future of such regenerative efforts.

Music, the Internet and Black Liberation in the Hip-Hop Generation

In the history of black resistance, song represents a key strategy of mobilization and opposition. Frederick Douglass in his *Narrative* writes about the impact of slave songs on the psyches of those listening: "I have sometimes thought that the mere hearing of those [slave] songs would do more to impress some minds with the horrible character of slavery, than the reading of whole volumes of philosophy."¹² He continues, "They told a tale of woe which was then altogether beyond my feeble comprehension; they were tones loud, long, and deep; they

breathed the prayer and complaint of souls boiling over with the bitterest anguish. Every tone was a testimony against slavery, and a prayer to God for deliverance from chains.”¹³ Even at the turn of end of the nineteenth century, a black revolutionary like Douglass appreciated the role of music in resistance politics because they were able to utter the kinds of horror that did not lend themselves to words alone. These songs became early resistant texts to white supremacy and domination.¹⁴

SNCC and CORE also understood the power of the slave spirituals, and used them in the 1960s as inspirational texts among the participants of mass protests. The slave songs in these contexts served to remind organizers of the legacy of both brutality and resistance in the United States and to inspire them to fight against segregation. Houston A. Baker reminds us that these groups rewrote many of the traditional religious gospels and hymns “to fit the mounting struggle and spectacle of the movement.”¹⁵ To this, Taylor Branch adds:

At first, the SNCC leaders accepted the songleader role because of their appreciation for movement singing, and the elders conceded them the role because music was of marginal importance to the normal program. But the SNCC leaders soon developed a manipulative guile about the music. Their *a cappella* singing took the service away from established control by either the preachers or the organist. The spirit of the songs could sweep up the crowd, and the young leaders realized that through song they could induce humble people to say and feel things that otherwise were beyond them.¹⁶

Song became an intrinsic part of the resistance experience in the 1960s as groups like SNCC embraced music as a cultural tradition that would become a new means of social struggle.

By the mid-1960s and early 1970s, popular music embraced Black Power, but groups like the Black Panthers understood the power of music for the revolution and began producing their own music from within the organization to inspire action.¹⁷

Black Panther Elaine Brown (no relation to Rap Brown) wrote and recorded the Black Panther National Anthem and also cut a deal with Motown records to produce several albums of Black Power songs.¹⁸

Today, rap music expresses the frustration of urban black America following the 1960s and 1970s. Histories of rap music and hip-hop culture abound, so this chapter will not reproduce them, however, it is useful to understand that both rap music and hip-hop culture began in Queens, New York, in the late 1970s. Here, young black and Puerto Rican people began “rapping” about each other and playing the dozens over background beats.¹⁹ Contemporary rap music began its ascendancy after the L.A. riots in 1992, and it tackled the legacy of the Reagan administration in the neighborhoods where Black Power organizations were eradicated by COINTELPRO.²⁰ Rap music has taken the vestiges of Black Power, particularly the fantasies of destruction, and wed them to dance beats to express the same kinds of racial and class disenchantment that Black Power advocates were describing in the 1970s. Consequently, “rap songs invoke groups that *are* doing something, as well as the black radical heroes and traditions of the recent past, such as Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, H. Rap Brown and MLK.”²¹

Several groups emerged on the West Coast from the gangs that proliferated in the wake of the Black Panthers to give voice to the frustration that continued to build in America's cities. Artists like N.W.A., Public Enemy, Ice-T, Ice Cube, Poor Righteous Teachers, produced music criticizing the Reagan/Bush era for neo-colonial politics in the cities and exposing the continuation of poverty, drugs (crack, in particular), unemployment and housing concerns.²² As COINTELPRO quickly silenced Black Power, the "law and order" campaigns of the Reagan administration helped to reignite black resistance through music and "...what many of the black rap artists were and had been producing...was a contemporary, reverberant echo of historical black soundings of the scene of violence.... It was an articulate cry to the world about the insufferable poverty, relentless police brutality, and frustrated hopes of the black urban scene."²³ Issues of the Black Power movement remained unresolved and the urban youth of black America began to respond by singing, rather than organizing.²⁴ The decline of Black Power and the rise of rap music led the young people of L.A. and Oakland to become celebrities through music, where they continued the critiques of Black Power.²⁵ Black Power, then, has been the source of inspiration for a lot of production in hip-hop culture.²⁶ The following sections examine this phenomenon and consider how rap music and the Internet evidence the legacies of the regenerative strategies advanced by Assata Shakur, Mumia Abu-Jamal and Rap Brown.

Feminizing Black Martyrdom: Rap, the Internet and Assata Shakur

Assata Shakur has been a site of contestation from within popular culture as a leader, a hero, and a living martyr of Black Power. She has been praised in rap

music, most notably in Common's song, "Love Song for Assata" from the album *Like Water For Chocolate* (MCA: 2000) and Paris' "Assata's Song" off the album *The Devil Made Me Remix* (2004).²⁷ Both songs highlight her struggles as a black woman, praise her pride and dignity and acknowledge her as a Black Power hero. Her image, thus, functions as a living martyr in such sites of popular expression.

Shakur and Rap Music

The legacies of Shakur's strategies of resistance are apparent as Common recalls the highlights of her autobiographical manifesto: the shootout on the Jersey turnpike, her hospitalization and incarceration, the birth of her child, and her escape. He begins the song by invoking "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of the Ancestors," "the Spirit of the Black Panthers," and "the Spirit of Assata Shakur" and says, "We make this movement towards freedom/ For all those who have been oppressed, and all those in the struggle."²⁸ Common is invoking God, the history of repression that faced black ancestors, the resistance of the Black Panthers and Assata Shakur herself as he pledges himself to the spiritual journey that *is* black resistance. He dedicates the song to oppressed peoples and those who struggle, clearly echoing Shakur's sentiments about the important of black history, black resistance, and black liberation.

The chorus of the song is provided by Cee-lo and it reifies Shakur as a beautiful soul and as a hero. He sings:

I'm thinkin' of Assata, yes.
Listen to my love, Assata, yes.
Your power and pride is beautiful.
May God bless your soul.²⁹

These kinds of sentiments echo the words of Lennox Hinds at the beginning of Shakur's manifesto, where he directly addresses Shakur to thank her for sending her

“vital voice” and her passion and commitment to black people.³⁰ And, throughout the song, Common describes her with love and says that he and Shakur are “shaped from the same mud,” clearly declaring his loyalty to her. He praises her power and her pride, acknowledging the basis for her cultural nationalism.

Probably the most moving part of the song is Common’s description of Kakuya’s birth and the attempts by the prison doctor to abort Shakur’s child, where Common elevates her decision to have a child to continue the struggle. He sings:

Found peace in the Panthers she went on trial with
 One of the brothers she had a child with
 The foulness they would feed her, hopin’ she'd lose her seed
 Held tight, knowing the fight would live through this seed
 In need of a doctor, from her stomach she's bleed
 Out of this situation a girl was conceived
 Separated from her, left to mother the Revolution
 And lactated to attack hate³¹

Common sees Shakur as a survivor of repression and as a mother of the Revolution, clearly feminizing her role in the regeneration of Black Power. In the last several lines of this passage, he clearly views the birth of Kakuya as a strategy of resistance in the continuation of black liberation struggle. Common says, “All of this shit so we could be free.”³² Here, he is expressing his gratitude for a woman who struggles so hard to free her people. Common points to Shakur’s self-sacrifice for her people as a way of elevating her as a living martyr.

At the end of the track, Assata Shakur speaks to the listener about freedom. She says, “Freedom! You askin me about freedom? Askin me about freedom? I’ll be honest with you. I know a whole lot more about what freedom isn’t than about what it is, ‘cause I’ve never been free.”³³ Common’s biography of Shakur elevates her as a black liberation hero and is complemented by Shakur, who speaks for herself

in the song. As Common narrates her life as a fugitive and revolutionary, he participates in an affirmation of her role in black liberation struggle and in her status as a black hero who has survived immense violence as she worked to free black people from repression. This move has the potential to introduce Assata Shakur's voice and sentiments to a whole new audience through Common's indie scene in New York, helping to promulgate her strategies of regeneration even further in the Black struggle.

In an interview for *Alphabeats*, an online 'zine, Common explains that he wrote the song after traveling to Cuba with the Black August organization and meeting Shakur.³⁴ He says that meeting her was "one of the most special movement of my life. It was like meeting my mother. Like meeting a sister. Meeting a cool friend. She's a living martyr, really, like somebody who sacrificed their life for freedom for all people. It was like meeting history, like meeting the revolution right there."³⁵ Common's description of Shakur as a "living martyr," helps solidify her position as a leader in the black liberation struggle and justify her circulation in hip-hop culture where the regenerative work of Black Power is ongoing. He sees her as the revolution itself, as an inspiration for future interaction, as a beautiful, kind, sister in struggle. Even as her manifesto exemplifies the strategies of regeneration, her martyred image also acts as a further regenerative force for Black Power activism.

The legacy of Shakur's feminization of the Black Power movement is clearly visible in the music written about her. In "Assata's Song," for example, rapper Paris sees Shakur's story of struggle and survival as the story of all black women and he dedicates the song "To all the sisters."³⁶ The song is about Paris giving respect to

women for their hard work as he apologizes for being insensitive in his youth to the constraints upon black women living under the white supremacy of “Amerikkka.” He sings:

Thinkin’ of you, and how the perception came to pass
 Of a Queen bein just a piece of ass
 So I ask you how that sound
 That’s for the sisters I misses the last time ‘round
 Because I can’t forget what you been through
 I can’t forget the hardships and what you do
 So I’m payin’ you the ultimate respect
 Because I love you and that’s what you should get.³⁷

Although Paris does not mention Shakur by name aside from the title, he sees the struggle of women as similar and he is paying homage to the hardships of their lives.

The song is also about women respecting themselves and leaving abusive relationships because black women need to love themselves and elevate themselves, just as Paris is giving them respect. He sings:

And sista you don’t need a man
 Who cheats and mistreats and beats you bad
 It’s better to have nuttin than something at all
 And end up like a case bein worse than a close call.³⁸

Both songs elevate Assata Shakur, as a black woman and Black Power revolutionary, and they show solidarity between black men and women who resist, revealing the ways in which *Assata* acts to regenerate the Black Power movement. Although this song seems to be about empowering women, it also privatizes and personalizes women’s issues, rather than highlighting those that are central to the politics of Black Power. This move by Paris highlight the double-bind that often arises when black women break gender, race and class roles to become revolutionaries. Even while they are revered for their role in the struggle, and their hardships, often the

characterization of their work fails to acknowledge their leadership and, instead, inscribes them with more domesticated images of their work for liberation. Paris' lyrics then, remind us of the tension within writings about black female liberation heroes and underscore the importance of Shakur's insistence upon feminizing black resistance in her manifesto.

Shakur and the Internet

Assata Shakur's messages travel through hip-hop and they also very clearly travel through the Internet, which is a crucial tool in organizing the hip-hop generation. The most important organization to her cause is Hands Off Assata!, a coalition of "activists, artists, scholars, elected officials, students, parents, attorneys, workers, clerics and community members who are standing in solidarity against the latest attack on Assata Shakur," namely the increased bounty on her head and her placement on the terror watch list. The website states, "We know that Assata is not a terrorist and contest the use of that term by the government to denounce people who are not terrorists but who stand in opposition to US policies."³⁹ Activists who rally around Shakur see her as a hero and a martyr rather than as a "terrorist," which is reflected on the essays posted on their site.

On the website, hip-hop and Internet activism meet as Hands Off Assata!, posts Common's lyrics for "A Love Song for Assata" and also rapper Mos Def's statement about the increased bounty on Shakur's head titled, "Assata Shakur: The Government's Terrorist is Our Community's Heroine." He writes,

My first memory of Assata Shakur was the "Wanted" posters all over my Brooklyn neighborhood. They said her name was Joanne Chesimard, that she

was a killer, an escaped convict, and armed and dangerous. They made her sound like a super-villain, like something out of a comic book. But even then, as a child, I couldn't believe what I was being told.... I saw someone who looked like she was in my family, an aunt, a mother. She looked like she had soul.⁴⁰

Mos Def feminizes his account and writes that Shakur is a heroine and a mother—someone who could have been part of his family. His comments combine a recognition of her activism with her sense of woman-ness just as Shakur's own discourse positions her role in the black liberation struggle within the framework of motherhood. He writes that the government's depiction of her was a caricature and that even as a young child he resisted such an account.⁴¹ Mos Def provides the resistance history that Shakur is a part of and it includes black men and women who were black liberationists and civil rights activists victimized by state-sanctioned violence.

Shakur's open letter from April 1, 1998, is also featured prominently on the Hands Off Assata! website. The letter was written as a response to an NBC series aired in 1998 on Shakur that she felt was racist and inaccurate. Shakur begins by introducing herself as "a 20th century escaped slave." She continues, "Because of government persecution, I was left with no other choice than to flee from the political repression, racism and violence that dominate the US government's policy towards people of color."⁴² She indicts the NBC broadcast of her interview with Ralph Penza and writes that the network deliberately aired a photo of some other woman widely circulated by the federal government in the bank robbery case of 1973, of which she

was acquitted, and where several witnesses indicated that she *was not* the same woman who robbed the bank.⁴³ She situates the interview with Werner Foerster's wife in the raced history of brutality in America and adds that Foerster's wife was "deliberately included to appeal to people's emotions, to blur the facts, to make me look like a villain, and to create the kind of lynch mob mentality that has historically been associated with white women portrayed as victims of black people."⁴⁴ Here, she explicitly links the mediation of her by NBC to the lynch mobs of the early twentieth century to indict what she feels is blatantly racist coverage, full of misinformation. Her statements here echo Mos Def's comments about the posters that vilified Shakur in the 1970s. She is illustrating that the repression of the 1970s continues.

She also takes aim at then-New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whiteman while reasserting her role as a mother and grandmother. Here, she again feminizes her resistance. She writes, "As I watched Governor Whitman's interview the one thing that struck me was her 'outrage' at my joy about being a grandmother, and my 'quite nice life as she put it here in Cuba. While I love the Cuban people and the solidarity they have shown me, the pain of being torn away from everybody I love has been intense. I have never had the opportunity to see or to hold my grandchild."⁴⁵ Shakur notes that Whitman campaigned on the pledge to raise Shakur's bounty, presumably so that the Fraternal Order of Police in New Jersey would endorse her. Shakur's comments here highlight her role as a mother and grandmother and underscore the persecution that has characterized her life and the lives of millions of black Americans, particularly black women.

Finally, in a passage that bears quotation at length, Shakur elucidates her concerns about the millennium and the problems facing black youth and the hip-hop generation, including police brutality and the prison-industrial complex. She writes,

But at this moment, I am not so concerned about myself. Everybody has to die sometime, and all I want is to go with dignity. I am more concerned about the growing poverty, the growing despair that is rife in Amerika. I am more concerned about our younger generations, who represent our future. I am more concerned that one-third of young black are either in prison or under the jurisdiction of the 'criminal in-justice system.' I am more concerned about the rise of the prison-industrial complex that is turning our people into slaves again. I am more concerned about the repression, the police brutality, violence, the rising wave of racism that makes up the political landscape of the U.S. today. Our young people deserve a future, and I consider it the mandate of my ancestors to be part of the struggle to insure that they have one. They have the right to live free from political repression. The U.S. is becoming more and more of a police state and that fact compels us to fight against political repression. I urge you all, every single person who reads this statement, to fight to free all political prisoners. As the concentration camps in the U.S. turn into death camps, I urge you to fight to abolish the death penalty. I make a special, urgent appeal to you to fight to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the only political prisoner who is currently on death row.

Shakur begins with a move that reasserts her living martyrdom through the language of self-sacrifice that makes the struggle more important than her own life. She then re-centers police brutality, the prison-industrial complex, the death penalty and political prisoners in the context of the poverty and racism that continue to characterize the racial landscape of the United States. This move reflects the strategies that work to regenerate Black Power in her autobiographical manifesto. She also urges all readers to become activists in these causes and to free Mumia Abu-Jamal and all political prisoners.

Shakur's presence in hip-hop and on the Internet illustrates the legacy of her regenerative strategies on behalf of the Black Power movement. We can see hip-hop activists like Common and Mos Def positioning Shakur as a leader, a living martyr, a feminized icon of struggle, and a mother—all of which are generated in Shakur's writings. Her celebrity is heightened by her role as a hero at the forefront of the hip-hop generation and it helps her to highlight the new agenda for Black Power agitation, which must deal with police brutality, prison polices, the death penalty and political prisoners, who were incarcerated for their movement leadership. As her images circulates within popular culture as a living martyr, the legacy of her writings and thus her image as a Black Power leader become yet another regenerative force within the next stage of the movement.

Blurring Boundaries: Music, Grassroots Organizing and Mumia Abu-Jamal

Certainly Mumia Abu-Jamal has been a catalyst in the production of albums about Black Power issues centering upon political prisoners, prison conditions, police brutality and capital punishment.⁴⁶ In recent rap music, Abu-Jamal is not only an

object, but an active participant in these messages about prisons and police brutality.⁴⁷

A partial, though representative, list would include: KRS-One, “Free Mumia,” *D.I.G.I.T.A.L.*; Jello Biafra, “The Murder of Mumia Abu-Jamal,” *If Evolution is Outlawed, Only Outlaws will Evolve*; Immortal Technique feat. Mumia Abu-Jamal, “Industrial Revolution,” *Revolutionary*; Anti-Flag, “Mumia’s Song,” *Mobilize*; Ricanstruction, *Abu-Jamal; The Unbound Project, Volume One*. Many of these albums contain old essays of Mumia’s or newer commentaries on police brutality, the prison-industrial complex and other exigencies that serve to regenerate Black Power.

Abu-Jamal and Rap Music

Additionally, a group of rappers including Aceyalone, Black Thought, Zack de la Rocha of Rage Against the Machine, The Last Emperor, and Chuck D of Public Enemy created a supergroup called Mumia 911 that released a single on *The Unbound Project* album dedicated to saving Abu-Jamal from death row.⁴⁸ Former Rage Against the Machine frontman Zach de la Rocha has called Abu-Jamal “one of America’s most renowned and dedicated activists” and former bandmate Tom Morello has argued that the decision for a new hearing in 2001 for Abu-Jamal was due in large part “to persistent public outcry.”⁴⁹ The benefit concerts and albums by these musicians have been boycotted by the Fraternal Order of Police, which “has compiled a list of hundreds of artists, celebrities, and venues associated with Mumia-supportive efforts for ‘identification purposes,’ including numerous hip-hop groups.”⁵⁰ Nonetheless, these artists continue to advocate on behalf of Mumia Abu-Jamal on the tracks dedicated to him and his messages of police brutality and the politics of prisons.

The “Mumia 911” single characterizes Abu-Jamal’s incarceration on death row as “an attempted assassination” and “murder” as many of hip-hop’s most dedicated activists rhyme about the necessity of freeing Mumia Abu-Jamal and the police brutality that continues to plague American cities. Dead Prez rap,

Long live the Panthers, comrades with answers
 Freeing all political prisoners of war
 Freeing the poor, open the door, keep your hands off Assata
 Stop the ism schism prison economy that we live in
 Impeach the president, keep on fighting ‘til they give in.⁵¹

As they champion the Black Panthers, they see freeing all political prisoners as crucial in the struggle for justice. They give a shout out to Assata Shakur and to her grassroots organization, Hands off Assata! and demand that then-President Bill Clinton be impeached as the fight for black liberation continues.

Dead Prez also address the persistence of police brutality in their portion of the track. They rap,

I say fuck the police ‘cuz they’ve been killing us for years
 This ain’t no free country niggas get murdered for their ideas
 Free Mumia means all Africans let go
 ‘Cuz just livin in the ghetto puts you on death row
 You don’t know? You seen they tried to do Assata
 Until some real niggas organizes themselves and went and got her.⁵²

Dead Prez invoke N.W.A.’s anthem “Fuck Tha Police,” as they connect police brutality to inner city oppression in ways that resembles the strategies of regeneration reflected in Abu-Jamal’s writings.⁵³ They compare the inner city to death row and argue that the state persecutes people for their ideas, in particular, Abu-Jamal and Assata Shakur. This connection again links both leaders in their struggle for black liberation. Abu-Jamal and Shakur are held up here as heroes, celebrities, and living

martyrs, positioned in the long line of Black martyrs that gave rise to ideology of black nationalism and black activism for generations.

Clearly, police brutality and death row are centered in the black liberation struggle, but the song goes one step further to make Abu-Jamal into a spiritual leader.

The Last Emperor rhymes:

In the physical world, one man cannot die twice
 In the spiritual world, one soul cannot fly twice
 Yet could this be the second time they crucify Christ?⁵⁴

The comparison to Christ makes Abu-Jamal into a living martyr but also a savior of mankind in a way that reflects Abu-Jamal's conception of himself as a prophet. Just as Abu-Jamal sees himself as a prophet, reborn in the image of John Africa and other black heroes, The Last Emperor sees him as a new figure of sacrifice. This comparison also elevates Abu-Jamal to the role of living martyr, sacrificing his life for those of his people. The Last Emperor predicts that if Abu-Jamal is executed, "There will be a peasant uprising like the French Revolution," so we must "Free the Voice of the Voiceless, defender of oppressed people."⁵⁵ The Last Emperor is predicting a mass uprising that will avenge the death of Abu-Jamal, should this leader be executed by the state. This illustrates the tenacity of the hip-hop community to defend Abu-Jamal and their loyalty to him as a leader and comrade, furthering evidencing his role as a living martyr for black liberation.⁵⁶

In an interview about the role of new revolutionaries in the United States and the importance of black liberation, M1 of Dead Prez argues that glorifying gangsta culture diverts attention from real black liberation heroes who are serving time in prisons, like Mumia Abu-Jamal, former Black Panther Geronimo ji jaga Pratt, and Dr.

Mutula Shakur, Ph.D. (who was convicted of helping to liberate Assata Shakur from prison). He says:

People look at revolutionaries as something so off, as if they don't have the ability to have that edge. But the reality is, it's more revolutionary spending time behind prison walls than being a gangsta – they bust their guns for us, they live and die for us. I wanted to make that correlation, because when you say Geronimo Pratt, I want you to think revolutionary-but-gangsta. When you hear about a brother named Mutulu Shakur, Tupac's stepfather who is 18 years behind enemy lines now, that's RBG! Mumia Abu Jamal...these are the people who are not getting their just due! Y'all are too busy bigging up them other fake gangstas, and these dudes are not getting their just due for 30-something years!⁵⁷

Here, M1 argues that men like Abu-Jamal are leaders and heroes, who have fought for their people and faced repression and imprisonment. M1 is praising men like Abu-Jamal for his self-sacrifice and for the discipline in fighting for their people, even from prison. His comments also emphasize how men like Abu-Jamal are understood as the “real gangsters,” because of their revolutionary actions. This seems to highlight the way that the “bad nigger” posture continues to circulate and that it even transcends the commodification of gangsta rap, which M1 sees as a cheap imitation of real revolutionary posturing.

M1 continues by arguing that armed struggle is a possibility for which black people must be ready after interviewer Kenny Rodriguez compares the men in the

passage above to Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, martyrs in their own right, to ask about the legacy of the slogan “any means necessary.” M1 comments:

I don't think there's any absolute strategy. Because of the nature of this system, I do not think we can escape an attempt at our freedom – self-determination, economically, and all of that – without some sort of bloodshed.... I am of the idea we should get to that point, at least the highest point we can, with the least violence possible. But I think we should be prepared for the day when we have to take arms. Because they take arms all the time, and they have no problem showing us that they're doing that! But what I don't wanna do is run out here in a way – because what I'm saying is not just for me. This is for people who I think deserve a shot at being revolutionaries, because that's some real get-down shit! That doesn't mean you can't be an artist, even a porn star, or whatever you wanna be – but being a revolutionary is some shit!⁵⁸

The comparison of men like Mumia Abu-Jamal to Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, clearly elevates him to role of a living martyr but M1 also illustrates how being a revolutionary, even today, is a commitment to Malcolm X's slogan and to the ideologies of self-defense that promote self-determination and economic stability in ways that exemplify the rhetoric of Abu-Jamal. Abu-Jamal's strategies of regeneration, thus, continue to circulate within popular culture just as his image as a living martyr functions to inspire on-going Black Power mobilization.

Abu-Jamal and the Internet

Like Assata Shakur, the Internet has also embraced Abu-Jamal as a leader, a living martyr and as a force of social change. Online 'zine writers like Carrie Ching at alternet.org argue that he "owes much of his renewed fame to the publicity he's gained through hip-hop." Ching contends that in "speaking to youth in a language they identify with Mumia-centered 'raptivism' has become a focal point for a new generation of activists searching for something to believe in." She continues, "He's a symbol, a figure to rally around, a focal point for a new generation of activists searching for something to believe in. And in his climb to revolutionary fame, he's created an entire new culture of activism -- with hip-hop in the forefront as the medium of expression -- a community where movements are created and communicated which reach far beyond just the life and death of Mumia Abu-Jamal."⁵⁹ Many people like Ching see Abu-Jamal as a hip-hop activist or raptivist who is a living martyr. Even though incarcerated, Abu-Jamal achieves almost larger than life fame through his capabilities of spearheading new social movements and a "new culture of activism" that transcend the importance of his own life as an individual.

This new culture of hip-hop activism is worldwide and includes groups spanning hip-hop culture and ethnic culture elsewhere. Ching writes that although Abu-Jamal is a "symbol of the fight against African American political repression, his appeal stretches beyond the boundaries of culture, community, even country. Latin hip-hop group Ozomatli -- which frequently rallies for the Zapatista revolution in Chiapas -- has been known to give a shout-out to Mumia at their concerts."⁶⁰ Abu-Jamal, then, as a living martyr transcends even the boundaries of nation to circulate

among discourses of people revolting for their own freedom around the world, like Chiapas. This, too, reminds us of the comparison that Alice Walker makes in her introductory notes to *All Things Censored*. In these observations, Walker also linked Abu-Jamal to the struggle of the Zapatistas, to remind us that Abu-Jamal inspires black people to fight like the Zapatistas for freedom and dignity, despite the odds and the repression of the state.

The legacy of Abu-Jamal's strategies of regenerating Black Power appears all over the Internet, which helps to bolster his celebrity status as an activist leader and his role as a living martyr.⁶¹ The websites dedicated to Abu-Jamal connect him to the hip-hop community in ways that circulate their words to larger communities in an effort to regenerate interest in black liberation and prison issues and to help build mass movements, even globally. These websites connect a plethora of activists who rally, meet, publish, discuss and agitate around the issues of political prisoners, black liberation and prison moratoriums and they form the basis of the Free Mumia! movement, whose immediate goal, is of course, the immediate release of Abu-Jamal. Such discourse likewise illustrates how the strategies of regeneration in his early texts have traveled to the present context, stressing the continuity of repression and resistance, and centering the prison as the nexus of political resistance and black liberation struggle.

Being the Object: Rap Brown/Jamil Al-Amin's Presence in Popular Culture

Like Assata Shakur and Mumia Abu-Jamal, the hip-hop nation has also rallied around Jamil Al-Amin and his presence on the Internet is unmistakable. On May 12, 2001, for example, Mos Def, Jurassic 5, Dilated Peoples, Planet Asia, Mystic and

Zion I played the “Hip Hop for Consciousness Concert” at the Watts Labor Community Action Center to raise money for Al-Amin’s defense fund and other hip-hop shows have been dedicated to his defense. Although many hip-hop stars have performed for Al-Amin’s defense, he has been somewhat less of an influence on hip-hop culture than Shakur or Abu-Jamal, probably due to the fact that he is not on death row and he has only been in prison six years. However, some notable examples illustrate the ways that hip-hop artists connect Al-Amin to the struggles of other political prisoners, evidencing the legacy of his strategies of regeneration as well as his regenerative force as a living martyr.

Al-Amin and Rap Music

For example, Public Enemy’s song “Gotta Give the Peeps What You Need,” of their album *Revolvelution* includes lyrics and images about freeing both Rap Brown and Mumia Abu-Jamal.⁶² The line “Free Mumia and H. Rap Brown,” is repeated several times throughout the song as pictures of the two leaders are flashed on the screen. MTV tried to ban the video of the song in 2002 because of the references and images of the two men.⁶³ On their behalf, in his “Beyond the Terrordome” section of the Public Enemy website, Chuck D comments on the MTV ban:

In a climate where they’re playing the hell out of Nelly and Khia, dumbing American kids...down to; 'its so hot I'ma take my clothes off down from my neck to the crack of my ass with a shot of courvosier' [sic]. No offense to the prior two artists, because I really don't think they know any better. I'm

pulling the race card here because MTV has admittedly reduced black faces to black face.⁶⁴

Chuck D argues that MTV's censorship of the video illustrates how they want all of the artists to be stereotypes of blackness, either partying and happy or homicidal against blacks. Chuck D sees the censoring of the images and language of these political prisoners as a move to make him into a blackface performer. Ultimately, MTV conceded a bit and asked Chuck D to leave the images but edit out the word "free" before giving shout-out to the two political prisoners and he adds that this request is "something you never say to a black person (maybe why they would never understand DEAD PREZ's 'Let's Get Free').... The edit allows the video to be seen, but compromises and weakens it, which music is supposed to hurdle anyway."⁶⁵ This controversy with MTV over the images and lyrics associated with Abu-Jamal and Rap Brown, at least for Chuck D, speak to a larger problem of editing progressive black politics out of the hip-hop generation. Perhaps this is why artists like Dead Prez, Common, Mos Def, Immortal Technique, Public Enemy and others insist upon making their music about Black Power. Because global media corporations like Viacom (who owns MTV) control the content of what they air, underground, indie hip-hop is what's left to spread the Black Power messages contained in the works of leaders like Abu-Jamal and Rap Brown/ Jamil Al-Amin.

Rap Brown/Jamil Al-Amin is also connected to other political prisoners in a song like The Coup's single "Dig It!" The song is about black rebellion and begins with an homage to *The Community Manifesto*, Mao Tse-Tung, and armed guerillas like Che Guevara, before they sing:

How now brown cow, I'm down with the Mau Mau
 Clown downtown tried to put us in the dog pound
 like H. Rap Brown with the situation⁶⁶

By linking the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya (against British colonialism), the song echoes Brown's own fidelity to Third World rebellions and to his anti-colonial and anti-imperial ideology. The references to prison (through the euphemism of dog pound), police (through the euphemism of the clown), and Rap Brown, illustrates how Black Power messages of armed rebellion and prison resistance circulate through hip-hop, particularly as The Coup take on this "bad nigger" posture against the state. This is especially true since Brown says repeatedly in his manifesto that he was never beaten in jail or ever took any abuse from a cop. Brown says, they knew he would fight back.⁶⁷ But The Coup continue:

Point Black says. Fuck five-oh! That's the spirit!
 Cheer it, spat out, the fat that I consumed
 Knew that I was doomed since my date of birth
 to be the Wretched of the Earth, never had a dream that was American.⁶⁸

Here, The Coup take a shot at the police (five-oh or 5-0), acclaim Franz Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth*, which heavily influenced Rap Brown and other Black Power advocates, and echoes Brown's sentiments about how the American Dream is bankrupt. Later in the song, E-Roc of The Coup sings:

Tying to kill the movement with the new COINTELPRO
 Leaders they killed, if I said it, it would threaten 'em
 They only see my back because I'm three steps ahead of 'em!⁶⁹

Even in 1991, Oakland natives The Coup are able to connect the repression of the 1990s in California with the COINTELPRO of the 1960s and 1970s that killed certain leaders of the Black Power movement and they also evince the "bad nigger" posture that shows them ahead of the police and aware of the brutality leveled at them. In this

way, we observe the warning of Brown being filtered through the Oakland consciousness of hip-hop culture two decades later. In a song like, “Dig It,” we see how the strategies of regeneration in a book like *Die Nigger Die!* are circulated and connected to contemporary struggles in ways that highlight the persistence of government repression, police brutality, and COINTELPRO and the necessity of oppositional texts that resist the violence of the state.

Additionally, national chairman of the New Black Panther Party for self-defense, Malik Zulu Shabazz has positioned the organization as a legacy of the 1960s dedicated to honoring the struggles of living martyrs like Jamil Al-Amin, who are often the subject of revolutionary rap music. Shabazz says, “It is true, we are the Black Panther Party resurrected, but we are dedicated to scientifically correcting and eliminating the mistakes that the Panthers made in the past and accentuating that which is needed in the present.”⁷⁰ Shabazz argues that the importance of revolutionary rap music is central to new black liberation struggles and he notes that the corporate interests do not want these messages to circulate in wider popular culture. He argues that corporations will not fund politically conscious rap

[b]ecause they know if the rappers get a revolutionary message, that if the rappers start to clean up their act and rap revolutionary rap, the game is over. The enemy, and those who control the distribution of rap, shut down revolutionary rap and would only fund gangster rap after [the 1992 L.A. rebellion against police brutality]. We saw an extreme rise in gangster rap and the elimination of revolutionary rap.⁷¹

The explosion of gangsta rap is problematic because, as Shabazz notes, political prisoners are central to black liberation and their plight has been circulated in hip-hop culture. He notes that Imam Jamil Al-Amin's case is central to the New Black Panther Party and he argues that "we must support him, because he has given us so much and fought for us on the frontlines. We cannot let him just languish in jail." Here, Shabazz elevates Al-Amin as a living martyr because of his sacrifice and the time he is serving for his commitment to black liberation. Shabazz adds,

I would also like to advocate for the cause of Mumia Abu Jamal, of course, as well as the cause of Dr. Mutulu Shakur, Brother Sekou Odinga, Sundiata Acoli, Brother Mufundi Lake and all of our other political prisoners who have fought for us. Many are being persecuted behind bars. Many don't ever receive a letter or words of inspiration from us.... As an attorney, I am fighting as many cases as I can, but I want to ask all of the other attorneys who will read this article to take some time out of your work to give back to those who helped us get where we are.⁷²

Shabazz links Al-Amin to the plight of other political prisoners and living martyrs who have fought for the black liberation struggle and he calls black lawyers (of the variety who read *The Final Call* regularly) to donate their services for those who have struggled to make them free.

The connection between hip-hop culture and political prisoners extends to Jamil Al-Amin, as artists like Chuck D and the Coup and new black leaders like Malik Zulu Shabazz highlight the importance of the music in spreading messages about the importance of political prisoners to black liberation struggles. Their words

also highlight how Al-Amin has become a living martyr whose critiques of police brutality and praise of Third World revolutions still circulate in the broader culture.

Al-Amin and the Internet

Al-Amin's messages and strategies of regeneration also proliferate on the Internet, though his own writings are not available because of the gag order from his trial and the censorship of his writing. For example, Al-Amin's personal website covers his biography, excerpts from his books, copies of the signed confession of Otis Jackson complete with analysis and FBI notes, and offers ways to help Al-Amin's cause.⁷³ One of the most recent essays posted on his official website is by Mumia Abu-Jamal, who writes that Al-Amin's press coverage was biased:

Imam Jamil has already received what can only be called a biased and prejudicial press, which has sought to depict him as a dangerous, violent radical. In every substantive news report there has been coverage of his brief membership in the Black Panther Party, but there has been little reportage of his other associations, and much less of his life as a Muslim Imam, who worked as an anti-drug activist and for the betterment of the entire community.⁷⁴

By highlighting the news coverage of Al-Amin, Abu-Jamal's comments also underscore the extent to which this mediation of all three of the activists in this study was subjected to the same uncomplicated label. But Abu-Jamal continues by addressing why his positive contributions to the Muslim community in Atlanta are problematic to the white community and to the state. He writes, "At the time of this writing, the jury is being selected in a murder trial. This is especially troubling in

light of the recent World Trade Center plane-bombings, as it has unleashed a national flurry of hatred against many in the Islamic community. When fear and hatred enter the mind, logic rarely lingers.”⁷⁵ In these observations, Abu-Jamal connects himself in solidarity to another former Black Panther accused of killing a cop but he also acknowledges that the climate of September 11, 2001, will also effect the way that he is mediated and understood as a black Muslim. Abu-Jamal’s narrative here stands in for the comments of Al-Amin whose words are legally restricted from public circulation.

Finally, former chairperson of the Black Panther Party, Elaine Brown, writes that Al-Amin has been a hero in his community and he has been a Black Power leader for decades. She writes, “Most significantly, despite the savage inundation of black communities all over America with crack cocaine, Al-Amin is acknowledged by everyone to have virtually eliminated drug use and trafficking in his West End community. In this, he has stayed the course of freedom even as other blacks have abandoned it for each little individual step up on the illusory ladder of American success.”⁷⁶ Brown sees Al-Amin’s community activism in Atlanta to be part of the reason why he was framed. She argues that, “The government players may have changed, but the destructive campaign continues. The police case against Al-Amin today is eerily similar and as suspect as the one in 1967 leveled against Black Panther Party founder Huey Newton.”⁷⁷ Here, she links Al-Amin to martyr Huey Newton in a move that suggests that COINTELPRO is not dead. This strategy allows Al-Amin to be understood as a living martyr working as a community activist like Newton was at the time of his arrest for the shooting of a police officer. She concludes the article

with these words, “Let blacks and whites of good conscience remember that Al-Amin is deemed under the law to be innocent until proven guilty. Let us at least reserve judgment until the facts in this case are reviewed and the truth revealed. In the meantime, let us blacks, especially, remember our history and refuse to allow ourselves or our heroes to be defined by racists and their collaborators.”⁷⁸ Even in this piece in 2000, Elaine Brown is urging black people to refuse collaboration with the state and its depiction of Al-Amin. She sees him as a hero and a living martyr persecuted by the COINTELPRO-like programs of the state, like so many of martyrs that came before him.

In the context of September 11, 2001, and new COINTELPRO-like programs, Jamil Al-Amin has also been the subject of Internet agitation by organizations like the New Afrikan Jericho Movement, which recognize the existence of political prisoners in the United States and seeks amnesty for all of them, including Jamil Al-Amin. They argue that his 23-hour a day lockdown since September 11 is racist, that he has been denied religious rights, that he has been denied legal rights, and they seek support in letter-writing, phone complaints and donations for his legal fund.⁷⁹ On prisonactivist.org, Herman Ferguson has written about the Jericho Movement and has called Al-Amin one of the black communities “strong warriors.” He adds, “We must not allow the world to forget this political prisoner, Imam Jamil Al-Amin, formerly known as H. Rap Brown, who has been a valiant freedom fighter and Islamic leader all of his adult life!”⁸⁰

In his address on the tenth anniversary of the Million Man March, Conrad Worrill (National Chairman of the National Black United Front) has argued that the

Jericho Movement is crucial in liberating the political prisoners who have been incarcerated for their political activism. He adds we must work harder in “calling for the release of our political prisoners and prisoners of war that include Jalil Bottom, Charles Sims Africa, Debbi Sims Africa, Herman Bell, Kojo Sababu, Lorenzo Stone Bey, Mark Cook, Mumia Abu Jamal, Mutulu Shakur, Ojore Lutalo, Phil Africa, Richard Mafundi Lake, Robert Seth Hayes, Sekou Kambui, Sundiata Acoli, and Jamil Abdullah Al-Amin.”⁸¹ In issuing this call, Worrill also links these living martyrs to Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Huey Newton, and Elijah Muhammad, all of whom were under the surveillance of the FBI and who were victims of COINTELPRO.

These websites highlight Al-Amin’s community activism, his Islamic outreach work, and his position as a political prisoner to illustrate that he has been fighting for black people and for black freedom his whole life. Al-Amin is also understood as a living martyr on the Internet on these websites that work to create an activist network around the individual prisoners by linking many organizations together to agitate. Yet, they also seek to highlight the treatment of these black liberation figures in the climate of the War on Terror, which has markedly changed their treatment by the state and which provides an exigency for continued agitation on their behalf.

By examining the messages of Black Power in hip-hop culture, we can see the legacies of each activist’s strategies of regenerating the movement for black liberation. Assata Shakur’s feminization of black struggle and emphasis on black pride and black culture are reflected in the hip-hop songs about her and they are

found as well on the Internet, where she is revered as a living martyr and a leader of black liberation struggle. Like Shakur, Mumia Abu-Jamal has been a presence in the hip-hop community and the Internet for years and it is here, where we can see the legacies of his activism and the strategies of regeneration that have circulated in the larger culture. Rappers have characterized him as a living martyr and black prophet and they have elevated his ideologies of self-defense and his critiques of the prison-industrial complex and police brutality. Abu-Jamal, then, has been circulated by hip-hop culture and has inspired and participated in resistance movements, which have solidified him as a black leader.

Finally, Jamil Al-Amin is understood as a political prisoner in the hip-hop movement dedicated to his defense and on the Internet. In both spaces, artists and political activists see Al-Amin as a revolutionary, in the tradition of fallen heroes like Huey Newton. Rappers like Chuck D and The Coup see him as the persona Rap Brown and they highlight his “bad nigger” posture as a resistance to police brutality and the prison system. Al-Amin has been embraced by both communities and elevated as a living martyr because of the longevity of his activism, his sacrifices for the people and his unwavering dedication to black liberation. In understanding the consequences of such regenerative strategies, we must also assess the potential liabilities of these tactics.

Regenerative Liabilities for Black Power: Self-defense, Badmen, and Commodification

Certainly self-defense and armed struggle have been central tenets in the struggle for black self-determination. They have also been common refrains in the

strategies of regeneration found in the Black Power manifestoes examined in this study. In his history of black self-defense, Christopher B. Strain writes that someone like Rap Brown “saw a genocidal conspiracy in the backwaters of the South, where black people were starving; in the jungles of Vietnam, where a disproportionate number of black men were killed in combat; and wherever American diplomacy stretched across the globe.”⁸² It was this paradigm that fed Black Power in the 1960s and 1970s and it is a similar preoccupation that fuels the ideology of Black Power today through the works of Jamil Al-Amin, Assata Shakur and Mumia Abu-Jamal.

In addition to self-defense, the image of the badman and the “bad nigger” have accompanied calls to arms from Black Power circles and have been an inextricable part of the strategies of regeneration of all three activists. The marriage of self-defense and the “bad nigger” persona has been commodified in the contemporary milieu by rap music and the consequences have constrained black liberation agitation by offering the self-defense ideology and “bad nigger” pose, without a coherent strategy for social change.

However, the notion of self-defense as a key strategy of regeneration engenders a number of problems. First, black self-defense has been understood by white society as “violence” and, consequently, white communities have countered Black Power and the idea of armed black struggle. Black leaders like Rap Brown and Assata Shakur have had a hard time articulating a program for self-defense aside from individuals or groups carrying guns to protect themselves from the police or white supremacists and this has made self-defense a problematic movement strategy because it exacerbates a circle of violence in unproductive ways for the Black Power

community.⁸³ Mumia Abu-Jamal's text *Death Blossoms* also embodies the difficulty in regenerating a movement platform based upon self-defense because at some level, he recognizes the problems associated with meeting violence with violence. Thus, it has been difficult for many people to distinguish between actual self-defense and the organization of the movement around guns and proactive violence, particularly with all of the talk of "revolution." This is compounded by the fact that Black Power leaders seemingly understood "nonviolent" social protest as political passivity, when in fact, nonviolent organizing was quite successful in mobilizing black mass movements around issues that really improved the material quality of life for many people, particularly in the South.

Second, the perception of Black Power advocates abandoning a nonviolent movement and using firearms really threatened to undermine the efforts of the movement. Many of the same black organizers who abandoned the SNCC and CORE for Black Power, ended up destroying the mass movements that they spent so much precious time, money and blood building.⁸⁴ This is perhaps most apparent with Rap Brown and the Black Power cohort in SNCC. In abandoning interracial struggle for the black revolution, this cohort eventually destroyed the organization. However, in the case of the Black Panther Party, Assata Shakur went underground with the Black Liberation Army because the BPP was tearing itself apart, due in part to paranoia from COINTELPRO missions to destroy the Party and due in part to the split between Newton and Cleaver. Likewise, Mumia Abu-Jamal writes that he left the BPP because he did not want to fight other Panthers when the split in the organization occurred. He says, "I think that period [of the split between Newton and Cleaver]

reflected the destruction of the Party as a national presence, because, once it was split between coasts – between the Central Committee and reigning Party members of the West coast and some of the most active chapters of the East Coast – then, for all intents and purposes it lost its effectiveness.”⁸⁵ In the case of SNCC and the Black Panthers, the self-defense platform really contributed to the destruction of those organizations, but the “any means necessary” slogan is still just too powerful for them to relinquish it as a regenerative strategy.

Third, it seems likely that the emphasis on armed self-defense did not deter conflict, but incited it and fed the violence that the state was seeking to enact. Christopher Strain notes that on an episode of CBS’s *Face the Nation* in 1969, Bernard Nossiter was interviewing the BPP’s David Hillard and wondered “if storing caches of firearms was not ‘an invitation for the police to take action.’”⁸⁶ It seems that the security that firearms bought was more illusory than real, especially if we look at the decimation of a group like the Panthers through FBI raids, assassinations and frame-ups. For example, Assata Shakur talks at length about the harassment from the state by inmates in prison who were provoked into hurting her or trying to kill her because she continued to support the Black Liberation Army. She says that the prison officials would incite women to move on her and they placed women in her building who were not serving long sentences, “just to stir up trouble.”⁸⁷ The retribution for Black Power was often violence, as Shakur testifies. This confirms that even when Black Power leaders were imprisoned, the state-sanctioned violence continued unabated as the state worked on ridding itself from such activists.

Fourth, a large part of the problem of self-defense, of course, is the gendered image of the bad badman and the “bad nigger,” that figures like Mumia Abu-Jamal and Rap Brown rely on in their strategies of regeneration. These archetypes reinforce the fear of black men that Black Power advocates have often hoped to capitalize on and which form an important strategy for regeneration. They also serve to create enemies out of the state, be it the police or the president, and to defy white authority through their own renegade brand of leadership. Such constructions of the enemy go hand-in-hand with the glorification of black men and the masculinization of black liberation history, which elevates those who commit acts of violence against whites and the white nation. These Black Power leaders become celebrities in their communities as “bad niggers” and “bad badmen” and are elevated as figures to be emulated. This strategy appears in all three discourses and, in the case of Assata Shakur, even works to undermine some of her work that recovers a leadership role for women in the resistance movement. Nonetheless, in the case of the Black Power movement of the 1960s, black men (and sometimes women) confronted white police officers as much to ward off police brutality and to restore dignity to their communities as they did to perform a masculinity that was not at the mercy of white America. As the movement began to replicate and regenerate, this image was dominant in style, in confrontational rhetoric and in alliances with Third World struggles that were also armed and fighting against a predominantly white American authority and military power. Such images reified white notions of the threatening black male in particular, which furthered the attention given to these leaders and

exacerbated the likelihood that they would become the object of surveillance and ultimate incarceration. The rhetoric of violence, then, helped manifest violence.

Fifth, the regenerative strategy of embracing Malcolm X as a hero, prominent in all three activists' writings, is also problematic within this badman paradigm because, although he helped to build an organization that he later rejected (the Nation of Islam), his use by Black Power advocates split them apart from grassroots organizing. Malcolm X's intellectual legacy did not bridge the chasm between black leaders and the mobilized black masses of the Civil Rights Movement. And, despite his rhetorical support for black militancy, Malcolm himself did not lead a protest or insurgent movement, nor did he create a program for self-defense as a political strategy.⁸⁸ Black Power leaders like Rap Brown, and later Assata Shakur and Mumia Abu-Jamal, "popularized Malcolm's brand of rhetorical militancy, but they had little success in building politically effective mass movements. Black power militancy produced lasting ideological and cultural contributions but also fomented destructive ideological and cultural conflicts within the black militant community."⁸⁹ As Mumia writes in another essay on Malcolm X titled, "The Man Malcolm," "Malcolm truly has meaning when we of this age understand his message of self-defense, as the Panther did as MOVE does, today."⁹⁰ Abu-Jamal traces Malcolm X through the Panthers and through MOVE, just as Shakur does in her tribute to Mumia, thereby continuing the struggle through new organizations and leaders. Nonetheless, there is no comprehensive plan offered for organizing and crafting tactics of agitation aside from indulging in nostalgia about heroes like Malcolm X.

Finally, the gendered consequences of this paradigm that idealizes Malcolm X are particularly problematic as all three activists in the study perpetuate the lineage of black male liberation struggle often at the expense of black women who have been integral in Black Power agitation. In particular, the style, the badman personas and the articulations of men in the Black Power movement have tended to be concerned almost exclusively with men, with the exception of Shakur's feminization of black liberation history.⁹¹ In replicating the same ideologies and agendas of Black Power, proponents are also reproducing the domination that seems to be inherent in both self-defense and the badman poses. Outlaw culture and the images of badmen (whether bad or moral) permeate black history and folklore, "with the development of electronic media, the badmen (Shaft and Superfly) have been glorified, while active participation in black folk culture has declined. Young black men have shifted from the mythic to the real" and "they are more concerned with demonstrating their 'badness' (style) than with achieving any goal or accomplishing any purpose."⁹² In the case of popular culture, the consequences for the "bad nigger" persona after the decimation of many Black Power leaders has been gangsta rap, which glorified misogyny, guns, drugs and gang culture. Kalí Tal comments, "Gangsta rap seems to embody this dilemma perfectly – adopting the posture of the Black man with the gun without the ideologies that motivated Black liberationists."⁹³ The movement's regeneration, then, is premised upon replicating masculinity and black male heroes and popular culture only underscores how central masculinity is to this identity project.

Ultimately, the strategies of regeneration in the next stage of the Black Power movement exhibited ideologies without a plan for action. The commodification of black subcultural lifestyles substituted for such actions steps, which is problematic as commodification is seldom linked to political change and progress, and instead can do little to elevate the material conditions of black communities.⁹⁴ Regina Austin notes that in the style and posture of the B-boys and fly girls of the hip-hop generation, their “power to discomfort” and pose as a threat highlights their rejection of a subordinate status while confirming and compounding their vulnerability to police, who “read their behavior literally.”⁹⁵ Again, we see the pose as something that provokes violence because it proclaims the potential for violence. But the commodification of this style without substantive strategies for social and political change ignores the class divisions in black communities, encouraging black consumerism and reifying racist and classist conditions within African American communities.⁹⁶ In many ways, black leaders function this way, as commodities that are bought and replicated on t-shirts and logos and on CD jackets and posters.⁹⁷ Instead of reading or listening to the messages for change, consumers buy the pose, the style, the revolutionary aesthetic and, as a result, become more alienated from the culture that leaders often seek to transform. In her discussion of black consumerism, Austin argues that blacks must work to increase economic cooperation across class divisions and to get experience in secular businesses, where they can create a shared sense of identity, trust and a renewed purpose to strengthen the community instead of buying into the consumerism targeted by white corporations to the hip-hop generation.⁹⁸

Though it seems that self-determination and pride are at the center of even these material changes in the black community, none of the activists in this study have such a pragmatic plan for social change. As we shall see, Shakur comes the closest for delineating a strategy to deal with the important critiques that Black Power offers, while also being astute about the potentially deleterious consequences of the strategies that Black Power activists have often embraced to regenerate Black Power. *Rewriting Black History, Rebuilding Black Self-Reliance, and Recentering the Prison*

As discussed, there are potentially negative consequences to constructing self-defense as a key strategy of regenerating Black Power. However, at the same time, the strategies seem to exhibit important strategies of empowerment for the Black Power movement that must likewise be recognized. It seems, then that although self-defense and the badman pose provoke additional violence from the state and can potentially lead to overarching black masculine myths of leadership, there are potentially positive aspects to these strategies as well.

First, if we understand self-defense as “an analog of self-reliance” and a willingness to fight, then we can see that in many ways, security became a mindset, rather than an actual pledge to carry weapons.⁹⁹ Just the act of pledging to defend one’s person “in many ways came to symbolize the larger quest for Afro-American rights and racial equality,” and this sense of shared struggle, shared history, pride and self-reliance seems to be the most significant legacy of these strategies to regenerate Black Power.¹⁰⁰ In other words, self-defense was about respect, or perhaps more appropriately, the *disrespect* of white America who refused black Americans as individuals.¹⁰¹ As Christopher Strain reminds us, the “primacy of self-defense during

the Black Power phase of the civil rights movement had deep roots in Afro-American history” and the shared memories and history of physical and psychological violence was a powerful enough drive to want some sort of comfort from white supremacy.¹⁰²

Self-defense became an important part of the identities of Mumia Abu-Jamal, Assata Shakur, and Rap Brown because it was the most impressive identity strategy of their generation and the one that was embraced by their organizations. Brown saw the violence of the South during his fieldwork with SNCC, Shakur saw the COINTELPRO disruption of the breakfast and literacy programs of the Panthers and saw many of her comrades die at the hands of the police. And of course, Abu-Jamal saw the corruption brutality of the Philadelphia police as a Panther and as a reporter. Certainly his comments on the MOVE bombing are an example of how self-defense can be so central to ideas of dignity, as black people come together in solidarity to defend themselves from unprovoked police violence. Even as the activists talk about their childhoods the police and white authority are perpetual sources of indignity, so to be able to recuperate some pride, dignity and strength seems to be central in understanding their strategies of regeneration in the manifestos.

Second, the rewriting of black history to include black liberation heroes, a history of self-defense, and lessons on white authority and supremacy works to demystify the history of black resistance, which is hardly mainstream. As all three activists recount their youth, and the lessons of their time as Panthers or as members of Black Power organizations in the 1960s and 1970s, history is at the center and so is the project of reimagining a black history of collective struggle. This is particularly salient because the Black Power movement in its first phase and in its next stage was

largely about a change in black consciousness, which was facilitated by the remembrance of collective resistance.

Assata Shakur stands out here because instead of reimagining an entirely black male history of resistance, her elevation of Harriet Tubman along with her use of the language of (re)birth provide a women's rendering of Black Power that makes her text quite accessible to a new generation of black women seeking to participate in the black liberation struggles. In revering black women and their contributions to black resistance, Shakur is creating space within the discourse of Black Power for histories of black women who have resisted both the masculinization and patriarchy of black nationalism and the white supremacy of the state. While she does further the centrality of men in the next phase of the movement as well through her rhetoric of rebirth and her tributes to Abu-Jamal and Malcolm X, her feminized histories of women heroes of black liberation, nevertheless, have been mostly edited out of the manifestos of males leaders of Black Power, as we can see from Mumia Abu-Jamal's manifestos and that of Rap Brown.¹⁰³ As such, Shakur's manifesto highlights some of the troubling contradictions surrounding gender that consistently marked women's experiences in Black Power and testifies to the important place that these narratives have in the regeneration of the Black Power struggle.¹⁰⁴ And, in the process, her "treatment of reproduction, sexuality and motherhood definitely breaks with Black cultural nationalism's idealized gender ideology of men as warriors and women as nurturers," since in her text, she is both warrior and nurturer.¹⁰⁵

Third, in the service of self-determination and black pride, is the theme of hope in the manifestos, which functions as a regenerative strategy predicated upon

energizing new movement participants around new leaders. Brown sees hope through self-defense in 1969 and in 2002 he sees it in Allah and in Islam. Abu-Jamal sees hope through spiritual renewal and through a new generation of activists that must be “found” and transformed into agents of change by a new prophet. And, Shakur sees hope through her re(birth) as a mother and through the birth of her daughter. All three activists see hope as a regenerative strategy that will help to cut against the harsh realities of police violence, incarceration, and the continuity of COINTELPRO-like surveillance, harassment, and disappearance, particularly for new activists.

Finally, the centering of police brutality and the prison-industrial complex is an incredibly significant part in the regeneration of Black Power activism because of the legacy of COINTELPO and the authorizations of the Patriot Act and the White House that have seemed to declare war again on activism, particularly Black Power. In understanding all three manifestos, we must see the cycle of protest, violence and incarceration as central to new Black Power projects because prison writings are crucial in connecting activists in the regeneration of Black Power. As Barbara Harlow writes, “Prison writing, whether the literary works composed by detainees during their incarceration or the works because of which they are arrested in the first place, serves as a critical and sustaining link between prisoners inside and those struggling outside the prison walls.”¹⁰⁶ She reminds us that, “[w]riting and communication, however, function just as significantly inside those walls in establishing and maintaining the solidarity amongst prisoners.”¹⁰⁷

We must also understand the legacies of these manifestos in terms of their connections to larger structures in the United States while still recognizing that the

three activists in this study are either in prison under intense surveillance or in exile outside of the United States. Mumia Abu-Jamal's case is significant because it is a marker of the

history and the legacy of radical movement in the United States. Much of the significance of Abu-Jamal's case lies in the fact the fight for his life is a continuation of an endless struggle against slavery, racism, poverty and state-inflicted oppression. The passion, however, surrounding the case, especially in the United States, also points to a struggle about the historical meaning of radical movements, especially that of black radicalism.¹⁰⁸

Of the three Black Power activists in this study, Abu-Jamal has circulated the most widely through hip-hop culture, the anti-death row movement, the prison moratorium movement and elsewhere.¹⁰⁹ Less notably, his journalistic reporting and spiritual comments do not make for a concrete organizing strategy for Black Power regeneration. He is mostly a figurehead in several movements that draws new members to the cause by the virtue of his celebrity and his living martyrdom where he crafts messages about the exigency of black liberation struggle and the regeneration of Black Power. Even though he does not offer a blueprint for social change, Abu-Jamal nevertheless wields a great deal of clout for political prisoners and is able to generate a lot of social protest. Such publicity is remarkable especially given that he has been on death row for so many decades¹¹⁰

Assata Shakur, conversely, seems to advance the most coherent strategy for future change of the three activists. From Riker's Island, she wrote, "[m]ore political activity on the inside and outside [of prisons]. Women in here can be helped by

seeing a growing struggle against oppression and racism on the outside. Many of the women have no where to go when they leave here. They would be helped if it were possible to find them some kind of way to survive that is not destructive to them.”¹¹¹

Here, it is the recognition of the outside that prisoners have been disappeared from the culture that makes a difference individually and as a mass movement. Shakur added, "There will be many periods of intense activity and there will be many lulls, periods of calm before the storm. History has taught us that." She also urged her readers to use

these periods of calm to consolidate our forces. We should be using this time to work toward ideological clarity and development. We should work in disciplined study groups and examine our rhetoric, our premises, principles and our current history, political and economic theory, international struggles and world politics, etc. We should be using this time to improve our skills in mobilizing, organizing, printing, martial arts, communication and propaganda, etc. Amerika is the most media oriented country in the world we have got to find ways of utilizing the media to educate the people. We should also be using this time to engineer an overall strategy so that when the next period of activity develops, we are not like chickens in a hurricane but can offer leadership and direction and truly serve as a vanguard force.¹¹²

Shakur acknowledges the ebbs and flows that mark continued social struggle but sees the present as an opportunity to begin rebuilding organizations, refining ideologies and tactics for becoming media savvy, and training new leaders as the struggle unfolds. She also sees the prison at the center of the struggle for black liberation,

which illustrates how Black Power agitation continues unabated, even within the repressive climate of the War on Terror.

Finally, Jamil Al-Amin has had the least to say about organizing Black Power for the future due to the censorship of his writing. He sketches the new exigency in the world in *Revolution by the Book*, where he writes, “We look at Western society, today, and see the many ills that have been in process for years. We see crises coming to light which, before, we did not have any idea existed: their lack of morals and ethics, their corruption is being exposed today.”¹¹³ Al-Amin has turned to vague declarations of the excesses of the West but seems to offer no strategy other than a conversion to Islam and faith in Allah. He has abandoned the organizing principles that he learned in SNCC and has not offered them since his conversion, at least in any available texts. Certainly, Al-Amin’s case is remarkable in highlighting the post-September 11 implications for Black Power activists and Muslims, among others. However, his gag rule and the conditions under which he is kept have prevented new texts from being released that discuss the situation from his vantage point. Because of the regimes of surveillance that constrain him in prison due the “War on Terror,” we must be prepared to make connections ourselves.

The Constraints of the War on Terror and Tenacity of Black Power Ideologies

In many ways, the political climate in the United States since September 11, 2001, has been one that has exploited the same fears, racial ignorance and hate that fueled COINTELPRO in the 1960s and 1970s. Understanding the post-September 11, 2001, climate as a continuation of the brutality of the 1960s and 1970s is crucial in recognizing the importance of the regeneration of a movement like Black Power

because the repression is similar, the goals are similar, and the heroes are similar. The only changes are in tactics and in audiences. This contextualization also illustrates the pervasive constraints that limit the activism in the present and in the future for political prisoners and exiles like the three activists of this study.

With the passage and re-authorization of the Patriot Act, the most vulnerable citizens in the United States have been its political activists, especially those who had escaped the terrorization of the FBI and CIA at the pinnacle of black liberation. The White House authorized the revival of military tribunals, the Department of Justice approved FBI surveillance and subsequent detention of thousands of suspects, the Department of Homeland Security was created along with plans to monitor the Internet, and Attorney General John Ashcroft replaced crime-fighting with finding terrorists, routinely ignoring Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.¹¹⁴ Most disturbing, particularly in light of the COINTELPRO repression of the 1960s and 1970s, is the fact that the Bush administration has de facto repealed President Gerald Ford's 1976 executive order banning political assassinations.¹¹⁵ This fact highlights the magnitude of the War on Terror for political prisoners and activists of all kinds and reminds us of the continuity of state-sponsored repression in the United States. The progression of state-sponsored repression persists in limiting the resistance of Black Power proponents, now and in the future. It also illustrates how significant Black Power writings are in regenerating support for mass movements opposed to this level of surveillance and repression and in understanding the dynamics of global capitalism, Third World politics, self-defense, militarism, racial oppression and resistance.

Just as Black Panthers like Angela Davis were branded a communist threat to the nation in the 1970s, now political activists organizing around issues of prisons and race are branded terrorists and anti-patriotic and the themes of the Cold War come full circle.¹¹⁶ Since 2001, patriotism has replaced intelligent, polemical discourse on “terrorism,” which has been problematic for activists who are protesting American policies. Former political prisoner Laura Whitehorn argues that terrorism dominates the mass media and the consciousness of the American people to such a degree that it becomes impossible for the public or the state to distinguish between different kinds of armed protest. She writes that “If it is an armed act, it is terrorism. Overlooked is that it is now more impossible than ever to differentiate between the armed revolutionary activities of the 1970s and 1980s and the terror of September 11. The first targeted the military and attempted to protect civilians, aiming to end injustice and promote humane values; the latter destroyed indiscriminately and with brutal rage.”¹¹⁷ The fervor of white nationalism, of patriotism, further obscures the politics surrounding political prisoners.¹¹⁸

There were a high number of civilian casualties of Black Power and other social movements of the era engaged in more confrontational behavior with the cops, but Whitehorn credits the new coalitions within the radical Left with tackling the issue of political prisoners and rallying around Mumia Abu-Jamal, in particular. She writes that Abu-Jamal was a crucial part of reconstituting the radical left, which “helped to prevent the government from silencing us, the political prisoners, or in isolating us from the movements on the street. On a more personal level, it probably helped to minimize the erosion of one’s personality, the emotional damage any

prisoner suffers after a term of incarceration.”¹¹⁹ Rallying around political prisoners helps to keep people united around a cause and it helps the prisoners to stay connected to the outside and to work for prison reform. This illustrates how social movements about prisons exist to support prisoners individually but also serve as a launching point for political programs designed at breaking down the prison-industrial complex and the racialized, gendered, and classed assumptions that form its foundation. In such a climate as this, political prisoners become even more important because they remind us of the continuity of racialized, gendered, and classed oppression sanctioned by the state against those who resist official policy. In the post-September 11th climate, Whitehorn contends that the public needs to “organize our communities to embrace the demand for release of political prisoners” and “convince academics, entertainers, and cultural figures to sign onto this demand” in addition to providing funding for legal services.¹²⁰

In the framework of this study, the War on Terror has affected all three participants whose writings seek to regenerate Black Power. Of course, Jamil Al-Amin is a Muslim, Assata Shakur has converted to Islam and Mumia Abu-Jamal is part of a black collective, so they are immediately suspect, particularly since all are former Panthers convicted of killing agents of the state.¹²¹ All of the three activists believe in either armed struggle or in the politics of self-defense and, with the crisis rhetoric and heightened sense of fear surrounding political protests, Islam, and prisons, it is not surprising their ideologies seem even more threatening in the War on Terror. Most obviously, in the case of Assata Shakur, the language framing her status as a fugitive changed. In May of 2005, Fidel Castro rejected “calls to hand over a

black militant convicted of killing a New Jersey state trooper and recently put on the terror watch list, saying she is an innocent victim of racial persecution.”¹²² The black militant in question was, of course, Assata Shakur and after the bounty was raised by then-Governor Christine Todd Whitman, bounty hunter Louis Faccone was dispatched to bring her back alive. New Jersey State Police Superintendent Colonel Rick Fuentes says, “The goal is to bring back a fully functional, no-assembly-required fugitive back home to New Jersey so she can finish out the term of her imprisonment.”¹²³ By changing the language describing Shakur from “cop-killer” to “terrorist,” the state is switching the narrative frame through which we view her resistance. And, she becomes a “terrorist” that must be “hunted down” and brought to justice in the United States, where she can be disappeared again.

Additionally, Mumia Abu-Jamal still languishes on death row. He avoided the death penalty at the very last minute in August of 1995 and then in December 2001, a federal district court upheld his conviction and commuted his sentence to life in prison without a retrial. Both Abu-Jamal and the State of Pennsylvania appealed this decision to the Third Circuit Court of appeals, where the case is still pending.¹²⁴ Throughout his time on death row, Abu-Jamal argued quite forcibly that the MOVE bombing on May 13, 1985, was a continuation of the COINTELPRO agenda and that the persecution of both him and MOVE are part of the strategy to discredit black mass movements. He describes the MOVE bombing as an “overt government attempt to destroy, wipe out, totally eliminate the MOVE organization.”¹²⁵ He argues that the MOVE bombing and his frame-up are all part of the Cold War policies that built COINTELPRO and that the FBI and the local police learned their lessons about

eradicating black organizations by their failure to destroy the Philadelphia Panthers. The level of orchestration in the MOVE attack led Abu-Jamal to consider the FBI a terrorist group and he says its “function was to terrorize radicals, revolutionaries, opponents of government programs, to stigmatize and isolate them from the general population.”¹²⁶ This argument links the COINTELPRO programs to the Cold War as a backdrop for the U.S. war on indigenous movements abroad and black liberation movements at home and connects this history to the current climate. Abu-Jamal argues that the government is playing the role of “terrorist” to groups that oppose the current administration’s policies.

Finally, the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) has become a major tool in rehauling the COINTELPRO schema for domestic surveillance, harassment and detention in an effort to “discredit the entire heritage of liberatory struggle embodied in the movements of the 60s.”¹²⁷ According to historian Ward Churchill, the targets of the JTTF have been people who have “come to symbolize the period’s more unequivocal modes of resistance and/or lesser-known people who, by virtue of their on-time membership, now symbolize the organizations from which today’s activists might draw the greatest inspiration.”¹²⁸ Certainly Assata Shakur has been part of this project, but as one of the most visible proponents of Black Power, Jamil Al-Amin has probably been the most prominent target. This is remarkable “not only because of his iconic stature, but because the charges against him were fresh,” instead of old charges or unsolved cases pinned to a relatively obscure activist.¹²⁹ Since September 11, 2001, Al-Amin has been under twenty-three hour a day surveillance in lockdown, unable to call his family, accept mail, take phone calls or meet with his lawyers. His

gag rule prohibited him from talking to the media about his case and from addressing his congregation, though he was able to send out one communiqué before the gag rule. Conservative pundits connect him to Muslim fundamentalists in the Middle East as a way of discrediting his community activism in Atlanta and his service to civil rights and Black Power.

From this framework, we can see the continuity of racial oppression and covert repression that has characterized black life in the United States and which continues to give rise to Black Power agitation. This cycle does, however, prompt several questions about the utility of a rhetoric of self-defense that has enabled the state to justify its repression of political activists. But, to examine the interaction between repression and resistance further, we must excavate the legacies of Black Power regeneration outside of popular culture.

Ultimately, these three activists have helped to contribute positive, though complicated, regenerative strategies to new Black Power agitation in the manifestos that they have released since Black Power was pronounced dead. Their autobiographies function as intermediaries between prison and the outside, between history and the present, and between selves long gone and selves (re)born. Their texts travel through time to connect the current struggles with the past in an effort to elucidate the continuity of repression in America. Through a rearticulation of black self-reliance and self-defense, black history and heroes, and a recentering of the prison in new Black Power struggle, they have helped Black Power to survive even as the U.S. government still hunts it. Their texts remind us that collective memory and writing are central to the creation of oppositional agency and consciousness in social

movements and they are all instantiations of embodied resistance. Although these figures have certainly become both leaders and living martyrs, it will be incumbent upon new Black Power activists to build upon their work by continuing to highlight the centrality of prisons to American imperialism abroad, the War on Terror and politics of repression domestically. The legacy of the regeneration of Black Power, black liberation activism, and anti-war activism is the reinvigoration of grassroots movements that address the collective grievances of the culture.

End Notes: Introduction

¹ John H. Bracey, Jr., August Meier, and Elliot Rudwick, *Black Nationalism in America* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1970), xxvi.

² Bracey, et. al, *Black Nationalism in America*, xlvii-xlviii. This project will distinguish between moderate black nationalism (or reformism) and radical or revolutionary black nationalism. Bracey et. al write, “In the area of *politics*, black nationalism at its mildest is *bourgeois reformism*, a view which assumes that the United States is politically pluralistic and that liberal values concerning democracy and the political process are operative.” They continue, “In contrast, *revolutionary black nationalism* views the overthrow of existing political and economic institutions as a prerequisite for the liberation of black Americans, and does not exclude the use of violence” [in Bracey, et. al, *Black Nationalism in America*, xxviii]. Although many radical or revolutionary black nationalist organizations often included elements of reformism, those groups who were solidly reformist adhered to the liberal framework of the nation rather than subscribing to the total overthrow of the nation’s institutions. Radical black nationalists were unequivocal in their support for self-defense and often supported separatism either within the United States or through emigrationism, where many reformists pushed a nonviolent, integrationist agenda. But the relationship between reform and revolution is a precarious one. This is not to say that the reformists have not been perceived as radicals by the state, but it is to say that compared to other groups struggling for social change, reformists might not present the most extreme program for change. Black Power activist Jonathan Jackson, Jr. elaborates, “The challenge for a radical in today’s world is to balance reformist tendencies (political liberalism) and revolutionary action/ideology (radicalism)...Because revolutionaries are particularly vulnerable, a certain degree of reformism is necessary to create space, space needed to begin the laborious task of making revolution” [Jonathan Jackson, Jr., “Foreword,” *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books, 1994), 4].

³ Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as Told to Alex Haley* (New York: Ballentine, 1964), 303. Malcolm X’s position on integration and also on the problems with nonviolence was

influenced by the rhetoric of Monroe County, North Carolina, activist Robert F. Williams, whose work with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) complemented Malcolm X's work. See Timothy B. Tyson, "Robert F. Williams, 'Black Power,' and the Roots of the African American Freedom Struggle," *The Journal of American History* 85 (September 1998): 540-70. Tyson reminds us that Williams and Malcolm X were close and often spent time together when Williams was in Harlem. In fact, Williams often spoke at Malcolm's Mosque No. 7. See also Marcellus Barksdale, "Civil Rights Organization and the Indigenous Movement in Chapel Hill, N.C., 1960-1965," *Phylon* 47 (1986): 29-42; Marcellus Barksdale, "Robert F. Williams and the Indigenous Civil Rights Movement in Monroe, North Carolina, 1961," *The Journal of Negro History* 69 (Spring 1984): 73-89.

⁴ Malcolm X, *Autobiography*, 303-7. Organizations that saw themselves as more revolutionary than both the status quo and the integrationists included the Nation of Islam, the Black Panthers, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (after 1966), the Congress on Racial Equality (after 1966), the Black Liberation Army, and the Revolutionary Action Movement.

⁵ Haines writes, "Since taking office, Kennedy had been very reluctant to send Congress any civil rights legislation at all, and for good political reasons. Kennedy eventually asked Congress for a modest piece of legislation on February 18, 1963, but the bill only asked for minor voting and educational concessions because JFK was trying to shield himself for the election. This strategy backfired, as Kennedy was faced with the crisis in Birmingham. The Administration needed a response to the growing agitation for civil rights and the race crisis that was percolating in American cities" [in Herbert H. Haines, *Black Radicals and the Civil Rights Mainstream, 1954-1970* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 162-3; see also Jeffery O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2004), 63-5]. Consequently, as formerly moderate groups shifted their rhetorical strategies to embrace more revolutionary ideology, there were few moderate civil rights leaders and organizations to push for integration. CORE and SNCC were two groups that eschewed self-defense in favor of non-violence, but they were the first groups to embrace Malcolm X's revolutionary black nationalist vision. In November 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas and, although Johnson was able to

influence the passage the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by Congress, 1963 marked a watershed year for the movement towards equality. The cooperation between the moderate civil rights leaders and the white establishment continued, but from this point on, the tension between non-violent, integrationist activists and those advocating revolutionary self-defense and black nationalism characterized the movement for equality.

⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York, NY: Verso, 1991), 6; Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 27.

⁷ Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 13; Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 75; Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6; Saskia Sassen, "The Repositioning of Citizenship: Emergent Subjects and Spaces for Politics," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3 (2003): 49.

⁸ Eric J. Hobsbawm argues, "What makes a nation is the past; what justifies one nation against other is the past and historians are the people who produce it" [in Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today," *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London, UK: New Left Review, 1996), 255].

⁹ Bracey, et. al, *Black Nationalism in America*, xxvi.

¹⁰ However, as fellow historian Jeremiah Wilson Moses notes, "Black nationalism differs from most other nationalisms in that its adherents are united neither by a common geography nor by a common language, but by the nebulous concept of racial unity" [in Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1978), 17]. Racial unity is the strategy that has mobilized groups to redefine their relationship to dominant nationalism.

¹¹ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 3.

¹² The BLA broke from the BPP after the expulsion of Geronimo ji-jaga Pratt to protect and defend black communities with a counter-insurgency guerrilla organization led by Pratt. These groups conceived of themselves as radical due to their demands for large-scale social change and due to their opposition of more reformist political aims. Radical black nationalists demanded an intellectual and

social revolution in America that would drastically change the political, social, economic and intellectual institutions in America. Their critique of the status quo tackled capitalism, militarism, the American academy, and white supremacy, among other things. They also opposed non-violence, believed in self-defense, demonized integration and demanded separatism, though groups approached these issues differently.

¹³ John D. Hazlett, "Generational Theory and Collective Autobiography," *American Literary History* 4 (Spring 1992), 82. Howard Schuman and Jacqueline Scott add that a true generation is present "where events occur in such a manner as to demarcate a cohort in terms of its 'historical-social' consciousness"; consequently, the civil rights movement, generally, and Black Power, specifically, would be a boundary of a generation [in Howard Schuman and Jacqueline Scott, "Generations and Collective Memories," *American Sociological Review* 54 (June 1989), 359].

¹⁴ Hazel Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 13.

¹⁵ Carby, *Race Men*, 13.

¹⁶ Although radical black prison activism is not limited to these three activists, as evidenced by the important contributions of men like George Jackson and others, this study is limited to black power writers who have penned life-writing, who are still alive, who were convicted of killing white police officers, and are still incarcerated or in exile.

¹⁷ Hazlett, "Generational Theory," 88.

¹⁸ Sidonie Smith, "The Autobiographical Manifesto: Identities, Temporalities, Politics," *Autobiography and Questions of Gender*, ed. Shirley Neuman (Portland, OR: Frank Cass and Co., 1991), 189.

¹⁹ Smith, "The Autobiographical Manifesto," 189.

²⁰ Joyce Ladner, "What Black Power Means to Mississippi," *Black Experience: Transformation of Activism*, ed. August Meier (Chicago, IL: Aldine Pub. Co., 1970), 131.

²¹ See Richard Wright, *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1954); Ben L. Martin, "From Negro to Black to African American: The Power of Names and Naming," *Political Science Quarterly* 106 (1991): 83-107; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

1981), 10; Joel Auerbach and Jack L. Walker, “The Meanings of Black Power: A Comparison of White and Black Interpretations of a Political Slogan,” *American Political Science Review* 64 (June 1970): 367-8.

²² Ogbar, *Black Power*, 4. Emphasis in original.

²³ James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (New York: NY: Macmillan, 1972), 457.

²⁴ Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), xvi; Jacqueline S. Mithun, “Black Power and Community Change: An Assessment,” *Journal of Black Studies* 7 (March 1977), 265-7.

²⁵ Julius Lester, *Look Out, Whitey! Black Power's Gon' Get Your Mama!* (New York, NY: Dial Press, 1968), 93. If blackness was a critical ingredient to the revolution, power was just as intrinsic. In her ethnography of Mississippi's civil rights activists, historian Joyce Ladner writes, “many Negro activists in Mississippi had immediately embraced the black-power slogan - because of the already widely-held belief that power *was* an effective tool for obtaining demands from the ruling elite in Mississippi.” She continues, “Since many of the efforts Mississippi Negroes made to change the social structure – through integration – were futile, they began to reconceptualize their fight for equality from a different perspective, one designed to acquire long-sought goals through building bases of power” [in Ladner, “Black Power in Mississippi,” 133]. The slogan was a pragmatic approach to activism in the South and it empowered black organizers to assert their ideas and politics. Ladner also notes that with the shooting of James Meredith on his March Against Fear, Negro activists felt “justified in calling for ‘audacious Black Power’” [in Ladner, “Black Power in Mississippi,” 133]. For only with Black Power, they contended, would black people be able to prevent events like Meredith's shooting.

²⁶ James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1969), 6. “By any means necessary” is of course a phrase from one of Malcolm X's most unforgettable speeches, “The Ballot or the Bullet,” delivered April 3, 1964, in Cleveland, Ohio. “By any means necessary” was embraced by Black Power advocates to show their dedication to the struggle for equality. Many proponents of Black Power argued that black people would devise strategies to end

oppression as they became appropriate and as their needs and goals changed in the struggle for equality and freedom from white supremacy. The phrase is also the title of a posthumous compilation of Malcolm X's statements on black militancy. See also Malcolm X, *By Any Means Necessary* (New York, NY: Pathfinder, 1970).

For a very articulate discussion of this appropriation of Malcolm X's phrase, see Mike Wallace's interview with Stokely Carmichael which originally aired on CBS on September 27, 1966, in the video, *Black Power, White Backlash - 1966*, produced by Alice Bigart and Sam Roberts (Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 2000); Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 12-17.

²⁷ Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 8.

²⁸ Stephen Butterfield, *Black Autobiography in America* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974), 219.

²⁹ This radicalism began while he was a member of the Nation of Islam (from 1952-1964) but continued even after he left that organization to create the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) in 1964, which continued the work that he started on his *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca.

³⁰ Malcolm X, "The Founding Rally at the OAAU," *By Any Means Necessary*, 54-5.

³¹ The Black or African Diaspora refers to the diaspora created by the migration and culture of Africans across the globe. The Black or African Diaspora includes Europe, the Caribbean, and the Americas. Although much of the diaspora descends from those kidnapped and sold into slavery, the modern diaspora also includes a large number of voluntary emigrants.

³² Haines, *Black Radicals*, 63-4.

³³ Haines, *Black Radicals*, 64.

³⁴ Charles V. Hamilton, "How Black is Black," in *Black Poets and Prophets: The Theory, Practice and Esthetics of the Pan-Africanist Revolution*, eds. Earl Anthony and Woodie King (New York, NY: New American Library, 1972), 24. Robert L. Heath adds that this "redefinition creates polarization based on common identities, attitudes, beliefs, and value priorities. This polarization provides unity for blacks and a position of power from which to negotiate racial harmony. Integration assumes that black people are acceptable in white society because they are like white Americans.

Polarization created by confrontation provides a situation of division that can be reconciled only by white people's acceptance of black people as black people. This is the power of Black Power" [in Robert L. Heath, "Dialectical Confrontation: A Strategy of Black Radicalism," *Central States Speech Journal* 24 (Fall 1973), 170].

³⁵ Eldridge Cleaver, "The Land Question and Black Liberation," *Post-Prison Writings* (New York: NY, Random House), 39.

³⁶ Charles E. Fager, *White Reflections on Black Power* (Grand Rapids, MI: William E. Erdman's Pub. Co., 1967), 31.

³⁷ See *Soul: Black Power, Politics, and Pleasure*, eds. Monique Guillory and Richard C. Green (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1998).

³⁸ See Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1988); Molefi Kete Asante, "The African Essence in African American Language," in M.K. Asante and K.W. Asante, *African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990); Ama Mazama, "The Afrocentric Paradigm: Contours and Definitions," *Journal of Black Studies* 31 (March 2001): 387-405; Kariamua Welsh and Molefi Kete Asante, "Myth: The Communication Dimension to the African American Mind," *Journal of Black Studies* 11 (June 1981): 387-95.

³⁹ For an excellent historical discussion of the imagery and utility of Africa in the rhetoric of black America see Marion Berghahn, *Images of Africa in Black American Literature* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977).

⁴⁰ Vivian I. Davis, "Black American Literature: A Cultural Interpretation," *MELUS* 8 (Summer 1981), 13, 16. Darwin T. Turner notes that, "Even since Phyllis Wheatley, most Black American writers have been forced to publish their books through white firms. It is impossible to know how many books continuing a Black American tradition have been rejected because prospective publishers were unfamiliar with the form or style" [in Darwin T. Turner, "Introductory Remarks about the Black Literary Tradition in the United States of America," *Black American Literature Forum* 12 (Winter 1978), 143]. It is also difficult to know how white perceptions of the literary market historically constrained the publication of black texts for fear of alienating white audiences but evidence of this tendency can be found in publisher reluctance surrounding works of Langston Hughes

and Charles Chesnutt [in Turner, "Black Literary Tradition," 143].

⁴¹ Davis continues, "It must be noted, however, that these publishing houses never became the chief means by which black writers got their materials into print because they were new enterprises not yet financially secure. White publishing houses continued to be the main outlet of black fiction – hardback and paperback" [in Davis, "Black American Literature," 16].

⁴² Davis, "Black American Literature," 16-17.

⁴³ Patricia Liggins Hill, "'The Violent Space': The Function of the New Black Aesthetic in Etheridge Knight's Prison Poetry," *Black American Literature forum* 14 (Autumn 1980): 115.

⁴⁴ Neal contended that the role of the black artist "is to speak to the spiritual and cultural needs of Black people" [in Larry Neal, "The Black Arts Movement," *The Drama Review: TDR* 12 (Summer 1968), 28].

⁴⁵ Neal, "Black Arts Movement," 28.

⁴⁶ Neal, "Black Arts Movement," 40.

⁴⁷ Hill, "'The Violent Space,'" 115-21.

⁴⁸ Leroi Jones, "Black Art," *Black Magic: Collected Poetry: 1961-1967* (New York, NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 11. Just as a new aesthetic emerged for black writing in the 1960s, free jazz emerged as a new musical space, particularly due to the influence of Black Power [see John D. Baskerville, "Free Jazz: A Reflection of Black Power," *Journal of Black Studies* 24 (June 1994): 484-97].

⁴⁹ David T. Haberly, "The Literature of an Invisible Nation," *Journal of Black Studies* 7 (December 1976), 136.

⁵⁰ H. Bruce Franklin adds, "In contemporary American prison literature, the central theme is America, prison house of the Black nation. But – and here is the crucial point – this consciousness, developed through the Afro-American historical experience, and brought to its highest level in the narrative and poetic art of prisoners, has now transcended the experience of one people. On one side is its internationalism; it perceives itself and is seen around the world as part of a global revolution of Third World peoples. On the other side, it has broken through to a class perception of U.S. social reality, and hence has deeply influenced not only white inmates but much of the white populace. It is

no accident that millions of white Americans have been profoundly affected by works written by Black convicts” [in H. Bruce Franklin, *The Victim as Criminal and Artist* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1978), 249-50].

⁵¹ Haberly, “Invisible Nation,” 145. See also Keith Louis Walker, “In Quest of the Lost song of Self: Aimé Césaire and the Problem of Language,” *Callaloo* 17 (February 1983), 120. See also Serge Gavronsky, “Aimé Césaire and the Language of Politics,” *The French Review* 56 (December 1982): 272-80.

⁵² Haberly, “Invisible Nation,” 147.

⁵³ Stokely Carmichael, “The Highest Political Expression of Black Power is Pan-Africanism,” In *Black Poets and Prophets*, eds. Woodie King and Earl Anthony (New York, NY: Mentor, 1972), 30.

⁵⁴ Carmichael, “Pan-Africanism,” 34. Carmichael cites twentieth-century figures like Marx, Malcolm X, Ho Chi Mina, Mao Tse-Tung, Fidel Castro, and Kwame Nkrumah as revolutionaries who have understood the incredible importance of writing and recovering history as a cultural resource in reassessing the relationship that they have with the nation-state in which they reside and through which they understand their relationship to the world.

⁵⁵ It is important to note that cultural nationalism played some part, however large, in all of the Black Power organizations because each group was grappling with the changes that needed to be made in black communities to change the ways that black people viewed themselves and the larger American political culture.

⁵⁶ Haines, *Black Radicals*, 64.

⁵⁷ Fager, *White Reflections*, 29.

⁵⁸ For a case study of the competition between the uses and interpretations of Black Power in its competition with integration and mainstream civil rights discourse, see Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); see also Lewis M. Killian, “Black Power and White Reactions: The Revitalization of Race-Thinking in the United States,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 454 (March 1981), 44.

⁵⁹ Lewis has written about his training in nonviolence in Nashville, Tennessee, where he learned about Gandhian principles of pacifism, love, and justice from James Lawson. Lewis wrote, “We learned about Reinhold Niebuhr and his philosophy of nonviolent revolution. We read Thoreau. We studied ancient Chinese thinkers like Mo Ti and Lao-tzu. We discussed and debated every aspect of Gandhi’s principles, from his concept of ahimsa – the Hindu idea of nonviolence passive resistance - to satyagraha – literally, ‘steadfastness in truth,’ a grounding foundation of nonviolent civil disobedience, of active pacifism” [in John Lewis, *Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1998), 85]. Clearly, the church was at the base of the civil rights movement [in Karen Wells Borden, “Black Rhetoric in the 1960s: Sociohistorical Perspectives,” *Journal of Black Studies* 3 (June 1973): 426].

⁶⁰ Lewis, *Walking*, 85-6. Emphasis in original.

⁶¹ Of non-violence, its most loyal adherent Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. noted, “...non-violent direct action is a method of acting to rectify a social situation that is unjust and it involves engaging in a practical technique that nullifies the use of violence or calls for nonviolence at every point.... [T]he love ethic is another dimension which goes into the realm of accepting non-violence as a way of life.... I think that non-violent resistance is the most potent weapon available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom and human dignity. It has a way of disarming an opponent. It exposes his moral defenses. It weakens his morale and at the same time it works on his conscious” [Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Interview with Kenneth B. Clark, *King, Malcolm, Baldwin*, ed. Kenneth B. Clark (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 23; See also Adam Fairclough, “Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Quest for Nonviolent Social Change,” *Phylon* 47 (1986): 1-15].

⁶² Rhoda Lois Blumberg, *Civil Rights: The 1960s Freedom Struggle* (New York, NY: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 144. Blumberg writes that “Malcolm had a significant overall impact on the civil rights movement in several ways. First, he directly influenced a number of black leaders and organizations, such as Stokely Carmichael and SNCC as well as many youth. Second, he was able to reach members of the lower socio-economic class as no other contemporary leader could. Finally, in contrast to the civil rights leaders, he provided a radical, anti-white position” [in Blumberg, *Civil Rights*, 144].

⁶³ Later, Black Power advocates, particularly in the BPP, would shun Malcolm's early hatred for all white people (a position that he would later reverse after a pilgrimage to Mecca) in favor of a "Rainbow Coalition" of activist partnerships among diverse organizations.

⁶⁴ Malcolm X had a profound effect on Bobby Seale, who begins his narrative, *Seize the Time*, with his reaction to Malcolm's assassination. See Ogbar, *Black Power*, 192. The Black Panthers for Self-Defense took their name from the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) that chose the panther (from the mascot of Clark College in Atlanta) as their symbol. Later the LCFO became known as the Black Panther Party the name was borrowed and modified by the Oakland group of Bobby Seale, Bobby Hutton and Huey Newton.

⁶⁵ Carmichael and Hamilton, *Black Power*, xi.

⁶⁶ Lester, *Look Out, Whitey!*, 10.

⁶⁷ Judith Rollins writes, "it was during the 1960s that many Americans of color began calling themselves 'Third World Americans,' demonstrating their identification with Third World nations" [in Judith Rollins, "Part of a Whole: The Interdependence of the Civil Rights Movement and Other Social Movements" *Phylon* 47 (1986), 65].

⁶⁸ Carmichael and Hamilton, *Black Power*, xix.

⁶⁹ Eldridge Cleaver, "The Land Question and Black Liberation," 43.

⁷⁰ Nat Turner (1800-1831) was a Virginia slave who, aided by seven other slaves, killed his master Joseph Travis and his family and began a rebellion that was joined by only 75 sympathizers but which left 50 whites dead. The state militia was sent in to end Turner's rebellion but they were defeated. More than a hundred innocent slaves were killed in retaliation for the slaughter of the Virginia militia. Turner was hanged on November 11, 1831.

Gabriel Prosser (ca. 1775-1800) was also a Virginia slave, however, he bought his freedom and planned a slave revolt inspired by the revolt in Haiti for the spring of 1800. He planned to sack Richmond and create a new black nation but the plot was uncovered and he was hanged in Richmond.

West African Denmark Vesey (1767-1822) bought his freedom after winning a lottery, set up shop as a carpenter in Charleston, S.C., and began plotting a slave revolt for July 14, 1822, that was ultimately betrayed before it was carried out. Vesey was hanged in the gallows for his scheme and has

been heroized for his liberation work [See Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1943)].

⁷¹ Black Power spread through the United States and also to places like the Caribbean and Africa, “where it reinforced decolonizing efforts in the Third World” [Rollins, “Part of a Whole,” 66]. See also Bert J. Thomas, “Caribbean Black Power: From Slogan to Practical Politics,” *Journal of Black Studies* 22 (March 1992), 392-410; William R. Lux, “Black Power in the Caribbean,” *Journal of Black Studies* 3 (December 1972), 207-225; David Lowenthal, “Black Power in the Caribbean Context,” *Economic Geography* 48 (January 1972), 116-134.

⁷² Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1963), 94.

⁷³ Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 93.

⁷⁴ For an extended analysis of Fanon’s rhetorical strategies in arguing for resistance, see Robert L. Scott and Donald K. Smith, “The Rhetoric of Confrontation,” *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 54 (February 1969), 1-8.

⁷⁵ Fager, *White Reflections on Black Power*, 37. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁶ Arthur Flannigan Saint-Aubin, “TESTERIA: The Dis-ease of Black Men in a White Supremacist, Patriarchal Culture,” *Callaloo* 17 (Autumn 1994), 1056.

⁷⁷ See “Black Power: A Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, July 31, 1966,” in *Black Power and Urban Unrest*, ed. Nathan Wright, Jr. (New York, NY: Hawthorne Publishers, 1967), 187-194. Here, a large group of black laity sought to clarify the issues that the slogan “Black Power” brings to the forefront of the civil rights debate. It addresses four groups: the leaders of America, white church leaders, black citizens and the mass media and tries to highlight the social inequities that make rebellion essential in the struggle for equality. This statement arose from the fact that nonviolent appeals to white Christian conscience failed and the civil rights problems remained. Former SNCC activist and NAACP chairman Julian Bond writes about the fact that despite the media’s fascination with and constant reporting of the radical black left, like the Black Panthers, many Americans have a distorted idea of what they stand for [see Julian Bond, *A Time to Speak, A Time to Act*, (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 100]. See also Parke G. Burgess, “The

Rhetoric of Black Power: A Moral Demand?" *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 54 (April 1968), 122-133.

⁷⁸ Lester, *Look Out, Whitey*, 11. This fear of backlash was certainly present at the March on Washington in 1963. The problem of white liberalism and paranoia became even more pronounced with the rise of Black Power. See also Charles B. Turner, Jr., "The Black Man's Burden: The White Liberal," *Dissent* 10 (Summer 1963): 215-219.

⁷⁹ Lester writes that Black Power was a natural evolution for civil rights activists because psychologically, it freed black Americans from the expectations of white people; but that did not mean that it was accepted by white America. Lester writes, "Whites would have no trouble accepting Black Power if they were not the victims of their own fantasies of what a Negro is. Not only do they believe their own fantasies, they cannot accept any black who does not conform to their fantasies. Many blacks have been killed for not doing so" [in Lester, *Look Out, Whitey!*, 33].

⁸⁰ Robert H. Brisbane, *Black Activism: Racial revolution in the United States, 1954-1970* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1974), 171.

⁸¹ This led Johnson Publishing Company chair and *Ebony* magazine's founder John H. Johnson to reflect on the black condition in America in 1968. He wrote, "And so we stand today, a nation more divided black against white than at any time in history. The promise of the March on Washington is dead. Dr. Martin Luther King is dead. Very much alive is a virulent white racism that threatens to destroy not only black people but American democracy" [in John. H. Johnson, "Publisher's Statement," in *Black Power Revolt*, ed. Floyd B. Barbour (Boston, MA: Extending Horizons Books, 1968), vi-vii].

⁸² Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 17-20. The political landscape changed as more and more people saw integration as a problem rather than a solution. See also James Baldwin James Baldwin and Margaret Mead, *Rap on Race* (London, UK: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1971), 10, 244-5; Irving Howe, "In This Moment of Grief," *Dissent* 15 (May-June 1968): 197.

⁸³ King had never come out in full favor of Black Power, though his messages were tailored to the rhetoric of Black Power advocates. King said, "It is absolutely necessary for the Negro to gain power, but the term 'Black Power' is unfortunate because it tends to give the impression of black

nationalism.... We must never seek power exclusively for the Negro but the sharing of power with white people. Any other course is exchanging one form of tyranny for another. Black supremacy would be equally as evil as white supremacy.” Martin Luther King, Jr., quoted in Lester, *Look Out, Whitey*, 99. See also Robert L. Scott, “Black Power Bends Martin Luther King,” in *Rhetoric of Black Power*, eds. Robert L. Scott and Wayne Brockriede (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1969), 166-167; John T. McCartney, *Black Power Ideologies: An Essay in African-American Political Thought* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992), 95-6. For King’s comments on the black revolution, Black Power, and his assessments of the urban rebellions in places like Watts, CA, see Martin Luther King, Jr., “The President’s Address to the Tenth Anniversary Convention of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Atlanta, Georgia, August 16, 1967,” in *Rhetoric of Black Power*, eds. Robert L. Scott and Wayne Brockriede (New York, NY: Harper and Row 1969), 146-165.

⁸⁴ Julius Lester, *Look Out, Whitey!*, 30.

⁸⁵ Manning Marable, “From Freedom to Equality: The Politics of Race and Class,” in *Soul: Black Power, Politics and Pleasure*, eds. Monique Guillory and Richard C. Green (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 95. For a longer discussion of the white backlash that presidents from Truman to Nixon faced in their various flirtations with civil rights [see John A. Salmond, *My Mind Set On Freedom: A History of The Civil Rights Movement, 1954 - 1968* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), 107-126; Robert Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound: A History of America’s Civil Rights Movement* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Co., 1990), 262-287].

⁸⁶ Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2001), 35-6

⁸⁷ Schulman, *The Seventies*, 36.

⁸⁸ Nixon’s strategy “welcomed the votes of disgruntled segregationists,” most notably by recruiting Strom Thurmond and several of his segregationist protégés to work on a platform to rally white Southerners and to appeal to their fears of Black Power. As a result, the southern strategy “appealed to crucial swing voters in the 1968 election, helping the Republican standard-bearer to win Virginia, the Carolinas, Florida, Tennessee, and Kentucky.” This southern strategy dramatically changed the way in which electoral politics were calculated and highlighted the importance of the

Sunbelt South in national politics. It also embraced fear as a political tool for mobilizing white elites against ethnic minorities in the United State who sought equality [in Schulman, *The Seventies*, 36].

⁸⁹ Marable, "From Freedom to Equality," 95. James A. Banks adds, "A 'law and order' cult has emerged to stem the tide of the black revolt. Promises to bring law and order to the streets guarantee public officials election victories, yet few constructive actions have been taken by national and local leaders to eliminate the hopelessness, alienation, and poverty which breed crime and violence. Although the law and order movement is directed primarily toward the poor, the black, and the alienated...the most costly and destructive crimes in this nation are committed by powerful syndicates, corrupted governmental officials, and industries that pollute our environment, and not by the ghetto looter and petty thief" [in James A. Banks, "Racial Prejudice and Black Self-Concept," *Black Self Concept*, ed. James A. Banks and Jean Dresden Grambs (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 1972), 6].

⁹⁰ In a dialogue with anthropologist Margaret Mead, James Baldwin described black America's shift in tactics due the hostile climate characterized by the ascendancy of Nixon and Reagan and the assassination of King. He argued that the movement for Black Power was "an *absolute* reaction, a reaction of real fury, because a whole generation is now growing up - is grown up - which is unlike my generation. This generation knows. It has seen it with its own eyes and has heard it with its own ears: the nature of the lies the white people told black people for generations.... What they are doing is repudiating the entire theology, as I call it, which has afflicted and destroyed - really, literally destroyed - black people in this country for so long. And what this generation is reacting to, what it is saying, is they realize that you, the white people, white Americans, have always attempted to murder them. Not merely by burning them but murdering them in the mind, in the heart" [Baldwin, *Rap on Race*, 10-11]. For Baldwin, the Black Power movement was asserting kinship among all black people based on a common history of horrific violence and inequality. Black urban youths refused to sit idly at the lunch counter silently protesting segregation.

⁹¹ Oakland was politically active in black politics first, because black student unions organized there and second, because the city was the birthplace of both the Black Panther Party and Ron Karenga's Us organization. Reagan's "law and order" campaign focused on eradicating radical

black activists from the political scene and his campaign to destroy black activism included the very public anti-communist witch hunt to force Angela Y. Davis from the University of California for being a Black Power activist and member of the Communist Party U.S.A.

⁹² Ladner, “Black Power in Mississippi,” 132. Robert Weisbrot adds, “[King] had focused too narrowly on an issue, open housing, that had little practical meaning to slum dwellers unable to afford homes in white neighborhoods even had townfolk welcomed them and realtors sought them out. Local blacks, for their part, expected far too much from one man, It was not King so much as his followers who harbored a messiah complex over his leadership, and it invited disillusionment” [in Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound*, 184]. Clearly, King learned quite a few lessons about the difference between organizing in the Northern cities [Salmond, *My Mind Set On Freedom*, 140-144; Borden, “Black Rhetoric in the 1960s,” 428].

King also became an outspoken opponent to the war in Vietnam and began to seriously question the moral foundation of the United States [in Salmond, *My Mind Set On Freedom*, 143]. It is because of this failure at integration (in the case of King in Chicago it was integrated housing) that Black Power had the opportunity to radicalize civil rights programs. As Alex Poinsett writes, “Since integration has always been more rhetorical than real, some black nationalists dream of securing a patch of American real estate – perhaps five states or so – where black people, at last, can develop their own economy. But they are not powerful enough, either numerically or militarily, to seize nationhood and their white oppressors have not so far indicated a willingness to grant it” [Alex Poinsett, “The Economics of Liberation,” in *The Black Revolution: An Ebony Special Issue* (Chicago, IL: Johnson Publishing Co. Inc., 1970), 211]. This has been an inherent problem with the revolutionary black nationalist cause: while it makes serious strides in correcting racist assumptions of skin color, it fundamentally fails at persuading the nation state to willingly give up power, land or money. Without a military or numerical advantage, the Black Power movement has succumbed to the rhetorical setbacks that integration did.

⁹³ Baldwin notes that it was devious to say to the inner city youth, “We Shall Overcome.” Instead of “We Shall Overcome,” inner city kids began doing what no one else had done for them: they began valuing each other in the way that previous generations had never valued their youth, and they

enlisted those sympathetic with the cause to build a resistance movement which took responsibility for its own emancipation. They did this because their hero, Malcolm X, was himself a “child of the ghetto” [in Tom Kahn and Bayard Rustin, “The Ambiguous Legacy of Malcolm X,” *Dissent* 12 (Spring 1965): 188-205].

⁹⁴ Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002), 106.

⁹⁵ Qtd. in Churchill and Vander Wall, *COINTELPRO Papers*, 106.

⁹⁶ Franklin E. Zimring, Joel Eigen, and Sheila O'Malley, “Punishing Homicide in Philadelphia: Perspectives on the Death Penalty,” *The University of Chicago Law Review* (Winter 1976): 232.

⁹⁷ Zimring et. al, “Punishing Homicide,” 233.

⁹⁸ Robert L. Young, “Race, Conceptions of Crime and Justice, and Support for the Death Penalty,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 54 (March 1991): 67-75.

⁹⁹ For example, see John Kaplan, “The Problem of Capital Punishment,” *University of Illinois Law Review* (1983): 555-6.

¹⁰⁰ Susan Bandes, “Patterns of Injustice: Police Brutality in the Courts,” *Buffalo Law Review* 47 (1999), 1275. This is due to doctrines of “federalism, separation of powers, causation, deference, discretion, and burden of proof” [Bandes, “Patterns of Injustice, 1275]. See also Barbara E. Armacost, “Organizational Culture and Police Misconduct,” *The George Washington Law Review* 72 (2004): 453-546.

¹⁰¹ Bandes, “Patterns of Injustice,” 1276.

¹⁰² Bandes, “Patterns of Injustice,” 1290-2. Also, due to police union complaints, in 1992, a “five-year statute of limitations on administrative proceedings was established, with complaints over five years old held inadmissible in internal investigations. Thus police, attorneys, and the community were deprived of another avenue for tracking individual or precinct-wide patterns of brutality” [Bandes, “Patterns of Injustice,” 1292].

¹⁰³ Bandes, “Patters of Injustice,” 1278.

¹⁰⁴ See Ashley Paige Dugger, “Victim Impact Evidence in Capital Sentencing: A History of Incompatibility,” *American Journal of Criminal Law* 23 (1996): 375-404. Dugger writes, “There are assorted types of information provided through a victim impact statement or victim impact evidence in general. This type of evidence in capital sentencing generally can be categorized as the victim’s family’s statement of the effects of the crime on them personally or, alternately, others’ comments on the victim’s suffering. This evidence sometimes includes the victim’s family’s opinion of the defendant and of what sentence the defendant should receive” [Dugger, “Victim Impact Evidence,” 381-2]. She continues, “The most obvious problem with these categories is that people are giving statements about something other than their personal experience. Therefore, comments such as those made by the family members as to what sentence the defendant should receive are not only emotional and biased (as can be expected), but also uninformed. . . . As a result, some forms of statements tend to be inaccurate, passionate pleas that skew the evidence” [Dugger, “Victim Impact Evidence,” 382]. See also, Wayne A. Logan, “Seeing Through the Past Darkly: A Survey of the Uses and Abuses of Victim Impact Evidence in Capital Trials,” *Arizona Law Review*, 41 (1999): 143-92; Catherine Gusatello, “Victim Impact Statements: Institutionalized Revenge,” 37 (2005): 1321-40; Katie Long, “Community Input at Sentencing: Victim’s Right or Victim’s Revenge,” *Boston University Law Review* 75 (1995): 187-229.

¹⁰⁵ See Stephen B. Bright and Patrick J. Keenan, “Judges and the Politics of Death: Deciding Between the Bill of rights and the Next Election in Capital Cases,” *Boston University Law Review* 75 (1995), 760-835.

¹⁰⁶ Bandes, “Patterns of Injustice,” 1279-80. See also John V. Jacobi, “Prosecuting Police Misconduct,” *Wisconsin Law Review* (2000): 789-848.

¹⁰⁷ Bandes, “Patterns of Injustice,” 1280.

¹⁰⁸ Bandes, “Patterns of Injustice,” 1305.

¹⁰⁹ Bandes, “Patterns of Injustice,” 1306.

¹¹⁰ Bandes, “Patterns of Injustice,” 1309.

¹¹¹ Bandes, “Patterns of Injustice,” 1322. She writes, “Charges of systemic police brutality are themselves often perceived by police supervisors, internal affairs investigators and even high level officials like the police chief or the mayor, as threats to the maintenance of order – since they may lead

to scandals,” which may interfere with the department’s effectiveness in fighting crime [In Bandes, “Patterns of Injustice,” 1322].

¹¹² O’Reilly, “Racial Matters,” 139.

¹¹³ Many people in the general prison population had long given up on the Christian notions of virtue, salvation, redemption, and justice because of the treatment that they found in America’s economy, its streets, and its justice system. Malcolm X says that the reason that radical black nationalism and acceptance of the Nation of Islam has become popular in prison is because “the average so-called Negro in prison has had experiences enough to make him realize the hypocrisy of everything in this society, and he also has experienced the fact that the system is not designed to rehabilitate him or make him turn away from crime. Then when he hears the religious teaching of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad that restores to him his racial pride, his racial identity, and restores to him also the desire to be a man, to be a human being, he reforms himself” [Malcolm X, Interview with Kenneth B. Clark, *King, Malcolm, Baldwin*, ed. Kenneth B. Clark (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 23].

¹¹⁴ The FBI began in 1908 but the FBI surveillance of Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican nationalist and founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and the Bureau’s insistence that he be deported from the U.S., signaled the shift in resources from the domestic crime of the republic (larceny, burglary, organized crime, assault, etc.) to the apprehension of civil rights workers and nationalists of all sorts. The FBI also kept files on leading labor union leaders, including A. Philip Randolph, in an attempt to influence the bargaining ability of American’s cheapest labor sources. It was only a matter of time before they began monitoring the new generation of black activists, and no one was spared. Not even liberal hero Martin Luther King, Jr. was spared from the FBI’s surveillance and constant disruption. See William W. Keller, *The Liberals and J. Edgar Hoover: The Rise and Fall of the Domestic Intelligence State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 102-10; Churchill and VanderWall, *COINTELPRO Papers*, 91-164.

¹¹⁵ See Kenneth O’Reilly, “The FBI and the Politics of the Riots, 1964-1968,” *The Journal of American History* 75 (June 1988), 92-102; Keller, *The Liberals and J. Edgar Hoover*, 135-6.

¹¹⁶ They were most notably worried about the rhetorical stylings of men like MLK, Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael and James Farmer.

¹¹⁷ Ward Churchill and Jim VanderWall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 2002), 37-62.

¹¹⁸ For the purposes of this study, the term "assassination" will be used to describe the intentionally targeted political murders undertaken outside of the victim's own political and social group [See Churchill and VanderWall, *Agents of Repression*, 199]. The COINTELPRO papers detail the FBI's involvement in the surveillance of black leaders like Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr. among others.

¹¹⁹ Churchill and VanderWall, *COINTELPRO Papers*, 117-150. Chapter 1 will more explicitly detail the repressive atmosphere that Hoover cultivated and the impact that it had for social movement organizing around civil rights issues. This climate of repression clearly removed the activists and their ideas from civic life which has made it easy to overlook the corpus of resistance writing. See also Baxter Smith, "FBI Memos Reveal Repression Schemes," *The Black Scholar* 5 (April 1974): 43-8.

¹²⁰ Borden, "Black Rhetoric in the 1960s," 429. Many scholars date the "modern civil rights movement" from the 1950s to the end of the 1960s and offer more varied reasons for its recession, linked to suburbanization of black communities, rising employment, wages and socioeconomic status, concessions by the state in terms of Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the role of the FBI in disrupting the movement, and the election of Richard M. Nixon [see John M. Stahura, "Suburban Development, Black Suburbanization and the Civil Rights Movement," *American Sociological Review* 51 (February 1986): 131-144; Curlew O. Thomas and Barbara Boston Thomas, "Black's Socioeconomic Status and the Civil Rights Movement's Decline, 1970-1979: An Examination of Some Hypotheses," *Phylon* 45 (1984): 40-51; Aldon D. Morris, "A Retrospective on the Civil Rights Movement: Political and Intellectual Landmarks," *Annual Review of Sociology* 25 (1999): 517-539; JoNina M. Abron, "The Legacy of the Black Panther Party," *The Black Scholar* 17 (November-December 1981): 33-7]. Sociologist Doug McAdam has also argued that the decline of

civil rights mobilization and black insurgency dated from 1966-70 and can be attributed to a declining organizational structure, the declining salience of racial politics, a growing sense of pessimism about the success of agitation for social change, and conflict among groups vying for social change [in Doug McAdam, *Political Process and Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 181-229].

¹²¹ Joy James, *Imprisoned Intellectuals: America's Prisoners Write on Life, Liberation, and Rebellion* (Oxford, UK: Rowan and Littlefield, 2003), 3.

¹²² James, *Imprisoned Intellectuals*, 3-4.

¹²³ Kevin Djo Everett, "Professionalization and Protest: Changes in the Social Movement Sector, 1961-1983," *Social Forces* 40 (June 1992), 958; See also Nancy Whittier, "Political Generations, Micro-Cohorts, and the Transformation of Social Movements," *American Sociological Review* 62 (October 1997) 760.

¹²⁴ Everett, "Social Movement Sector," 958.

¹²⁵ Everett, "Social Movement Sector," 959.

¹²⁶ Assata Shakur comments on this very dilemma with the women of Riker's Island Women's House of Detention, "They have not been exposed to collective struggle. They are into individual struggle. There is a lot of fear. The fact that they are women adds to all of the oppressiveness, both outside and in here.... But the fact that they keep me isolated doesn't stop me from trying to do what I have to do" [Assata Shakur, "Partial Interview with Assata Shakur at Riker's Island Women's House of Detention," *Assata Speaks... and the People Speak on Assata*, ed. Bibi Angola (Bibi Angola, 1980), 8]. She adds that the organizing is difficult because women are constantly coming and going from Riker's. She says, "Many of the women see themselves as little girls who have done wrong and, therefore, believe they must have their asses slapped by society. They don't understand that this society has determined what their mothers and fathers are and that, therefore, this society – their real parents – is solely responsible for their acts" [Shakur, "Riker's Island," 8].

¹²⁷ In this study, the term prison-industrial complex refers to

¹²⁸ Butterfield, *Black Autobiography in America*, 231.

¹²⁹ Smith, "The Autobiographical Manifesto," 191.

¹³⁰ Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J. Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1989), 171.

¹³¹ Peniel E. Joseph, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 21.

¹³² See H. Porter Abbott, "Organic Form in the Autobiography of a Convert: The Example of Malcolm X," *CLA Journal* 23 (1979): 125-46; Thomas W. Benson, "Rhetoric and the Autobiography: The Case of Malcolm X," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60 (1974): 1-13; Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "The Rhetoric of Radical Black Nationalism: A Study in Self-Conscious Criticism," *Central States Speech Journal* 22 (1971): 151-60; David P. Demarest, "The Autobiography of Malcolm X: Beyond Didacticism," *CLA Journal* 16 (1972): 179-87; Paul John Eakin, "Malcolm X and the Limits of Autobiography," *Criticism* 18 (1976): 230-42; Bashir M. El-Beshti, "The Semiotics of Salvation: Malcolm X and the Autobiographical Self," *The Journal of Negro History*, 82 (Autumn 1997): 359-367; Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Islam as Pastoral in the Life of Malcolm X," *Malcolm X: The Man and His Times*, ed. John Henrick Clarke (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1969): 230-42; Barrett John Mandel, "The Didactic Achievement of Malcolm X's Autobiography," *Afro-American Studies* 2 (1972): 269-74.

Only Margo V. Perkins' discussion of the autobiographies of female black panthers (Assata Shakur, Angela Davis and Elaine Brown) has treated first-person Black Power life-writing in a book-length project, and her work deals with how these three activists as *women* describe their personal experiences with the Black Panther Party. See Margo V. Perkins, *Autobiography as Activism: Three Black Women of the Sixties* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2000).

¹³³ The lack of scholarly inquiry into radical black activist autobiography and life-writing is even more startling because the second half of the twentieth century saw an explosion in the number of black autobiographies, first-person narratives, and life-writing published by social movement activists, particularly black women. For a partial list, see Selwyn R. Cudjoe, "Maya Angelou and the Autobiographical Statement," *Black Women Writers (1950-1980)*, ed. M. Evans (Garden City, NJ: Anchor Books, 1984), 7. A brief overview of this corpus would include: James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York, NY: Dial Press, 1963); Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (New York: McGraw-

Hill, 1967); David Hilliard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party* (Boston, MA: Little & Brown, 1993); Mary King, *Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement* (New York, NY: Morrow, 1987); Elaine P. Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992); Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973); Huey P. Newton, *To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton* (New York, NY: Random House, 1972); Bobby Seale, *A Lonely Rage: The Autobiography of Bobby Seale* (New York, NY: Times Books, 1978); Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1991); Angela Davis, *An Autobiography* (New York, NY: Random House, 1974).

¹³⁴ Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

¹³⁵ Lyon, *Manifestoes*, 27.

¹³⁶ Rollins, "Part of a Whole," 65. Most social movement scholars agree, however, that social movements seldom have obvious beginnings or endings because they are constantly in flux as supporters join and leave and as new organizations and movements respond to the weaknesses of the status quo [in Suzanne Staggenborg, "Social Movement Communities and Cycles of Protest: The Emergence and Maintenance of a Local Women's Movement" *Social Problems* 45 (May 1998), 181]. Jenkins and Eckert argue that there were three major reasons for the decline of the movement: "partial victories that demobilized moderates," "the militant's shift to a new 'northern strategy,'" and white backlash which "created a restrictive political environment" [in J. Craig Jenkins and Craig M. Eckert, "Channeling Black Insurgency: Elite Patronage and Professional Social Movement Organizations in the Development of the Black Movement" *American Sociological Review* 51 (December 1986), 816]. See also Verta Taylor, "Mobilizing for Change in a Social Movement Society" *Contemporary Sociology* 29 (January 2000), 224.

¹³⁷ Dylan Rodriguez, "Social Truth' and Imprisoned Intellectuals," *Social Justice* 30 (2003), 66. Emphasis in original.

¹³⁸ Rodriguez, "Social Truth," 70.

¹³⁹ Rodriguez, "Social Truth," 68. Emphasis in original.

¹⁴⁰ See Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, *Liberation, Imagination and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001).

¹⁴¹ Wayne Parry, "A 1970s radical on the run joins bin Laden on 'the list,'" *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 3 2005, http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/local/states/new_jersey/11549380.htm (accessed May 23, 2005)

¹⁴² In this study, references to H. Rap Brown will indicate writings or actions written prior to his conversion to Islam and to him as a historical persona referred to after the conversion. All references to Jamil Al-Amin will indicate writings or actions after the conversion.

¹⁴³ Charles Tilly, "Social Movements and (All Sorts of) Other Political Interactions- Local, National, and International – Including Identities," *Theory and Society* 27 (August 1998), 470. Tilly writes, "Let me stress the fact of invention....Rebellions, revolutions, avenging actions, rough justice, and many other forms of popular collective action have abounded, but not the associating, meeting, marching, petitioning, propagandizing, sloganeering, and brandishing of symbols that mark social movements" [in Tilly, "Social Movements," 470].

¹⁴⁴ Jean L. Cohen, "Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements," *Social Research* 52 (Winter 1985), 665.

¹⁴⁵ Cohen, "Strategy or Identity," 665-6.

¹⁴⁶ Cohen, "Strategy or Identity," 666. Collective identities, then, form in relation to "allies, competitors, enemies, authorities, and multiple audiences" which "frequently play parts in movement interaction" and complicate the emerging collective identity of the social movement group, especially as counter-movements emerge [in Tilly, "Social Movements," 467-8, 470; James W. Vander Zanden, "Resistance and Social Movements," *Social Forces* 37 (May 1959), 313].

¹⁴⁷ David S. Meyer and Nancy Whittier, "Social Movement Spillover," *Social Problems* 41 (May 1994), 277.

¹⁴⁸ Richard A. Couto, "Narrative, Free Space, and Political Leadership in Social Movements," *The Journal of Politics* 55 (February 1993), 59.

¹⁴⁹ Couto, "Narrative," 61.

¹⁵⁰ Francesca Polletta, "It Was like a Fever...": Narrative Identity in Social Protest," *Social Problems* 45 (May 1998), 142. Emphasis in original.

¹⁵¹ Couto, "Narrative," 61.

¹⁵² Couto, "Narrative," 61-2.

¹⁵³ Couto, "Narrative," 61.

¹⁵⁴ Kenneth McNeil and James D. Thompson, "The Regeneration of Social Organizations," *American Sociological Review* 36 (August 1971), 629.

¹⁵⁵ Because of high attrition rates for veterans in Black Power organizations, history has become a vital, contested space as those imprisoned or in exile sought to record the history of their organizations, resistance and conditions. McNeil and Thompson write, "Even if every new member were a replica of every veteran member in all other respects, a high rate of regeneration could have significant consequences for the organization, for the newcomer is less familiar with the organization's recent history, its activities in process, its...customs...than he is with the 'formal' preparation for joining the organization" [in McNeil and Thompson, "Regeneration," 628]. In the case of Black Power, those who theorize the ideologies of the organization or movement in manifestos are the leaders who help shape the movement culture.

¹⁵⁶ Meyer and Whittier, "Spillover," 279.

¹⁵⁷ McNeil and Thompson, "Regeneration," 635. They add that black liberation campaigns "advanced in the 1960s less because attitudes of individuals were changed than because one generation was moving out of the political arena and another was moving in" [McNeil and Thompson, "Regeneration," 635].

¹⁵⁸ Couto, "Narrative," 61. As Rhys Williams has pointed out, "*How* a social problem is framed has enormous implications for a social movement's ability to recruit members, mobilize action, and reinforce member commitment" [Rhys H. Williams, "Constructing the Public Good: Social Movements and Cultural Resources," *Social Problems* 42 (February 1995), 126; emphasis in original].

¹⁵⁹ Scott and Smith, "The Rhetoric of Confrontation," 6.

¹⁶⁰ Williams, "Cultural Resources," 125.

¹⁶¹ Williams, "Cultural Resources," 129.

¹⁶² Barbara Harlow, *Barred: Women, Writing and Political Detention* (Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1992), 48.

¹⁶³ Joy James, *The New Abolitionists: (Neo)slave Narrative and Contemporary Prison Writings* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2005), xxxii.

¹⁶⁴ James, *The New Abolitionists*, xxxiii.

¹⁶⁵ Edward C. Banfield, *The Unheavenly City: The Nature and Future of Our Urban Crisis* (Boston, MA: Little and Brown, 1970), 45.

¹⁶⁶ This perspective is influenced by the work of black women, who have historically led the way in describing, narrating and theorizing the multiple oppressions that have shaped the lives of black peoples in the United States. Historian Darlene Clark Hine writes, "Black women historians have enriched our theoretical discourse and at the same time have claimed and made more visible the deeds of their and our forbearers. Their analyses of the intersections of race, class, and gender, of womanist consciousness, and of the culture or art of dissimulation or dissemblance have challenged both Black and women's historians in profound ways. Furthermore, their continuing search for new and more effective strategies to present, and metaphors to illuminate, the new knowledge has this far created and inspired many to question and review how we teach and understand both the politics and poetics of difference" [in Darlene Clark Hine, "International Trends in Women's History and Feminism: Black Women's History, White Women's History: The Juncture of Race and Class," *Journal of Women's History* 4 (Fall 1992), 125]. Hine praises black women for their thrilling, groundbreaking work in understanding their own intersectional oppression and identity. She argues that the best way to hone intersectional analysis is to do cross-race, cross-gender, cross-class histories to empower the historical participant and to liberate the historian.

¹⁶⁷ This recognition is also informed by the limitations of my own subjectivity as a working poor white woman who understands that knowledge is both situated and limited (see, for example, Donna J. Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and Privilege of Partial Perspective," in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991): 183-201.

This study also recognizes that many of the texts of this period of the Black Power movement have not been studied and so it will refrain from making totalizing statements about all of the texts written or distributed from spaces of confinement.

¹⁶⁸ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (2nd ed.) (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), 66.

¹⁶⁹ But, as we examine the interplay between signifiers of classification, it is useful to remember that individuals often view their subjectivity differently than they might be viewed from someone else's subject position. To understand how groups and individuals see themselves and their oppression, we must attend to both their self-perception and their perception of others in terms of identity markers like race, gender and class.

¹⁷⁰ Sylvia Walby, "Woman and Nation," *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London, UK: New Left Review, 1996), 252.

¹⁷¹ Montserrat Guibernau, *Nationalisms: The Nation-State and Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 1996), 89. Joan Scott writes that, "An interest in class, race, and gender signaled, first, a scholar's commitment to a history that included stories of the oppressed and an analysis of the meaning and nature of their oppression and second, scholarly understanding that inequalities of power are organized along at least three axes" [in Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999), 30]. Scott continues by noting that in the case of "class," a scholar is either working from a rigidly defined Marxist paradigm of economic determination and historical change or is working against such definitions to understand "class" as something else. This project acknowledges the material economic realities of lived experience but also argues that people understand their own "class" and other "classes" in linguistic ways as well.

¹⁷² Bonnie Thornton Dill, "Race, Class and Gender: Prospects for an All-Inclusive Sisterhood," *Feminist Studies* 9 (Spring 1983): 131-150.

¹⁷³ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "Racial Formation," *Oppression, Privilege, & Resistance: Theoretical Perspectives on Racism, Sexism, and Heterosexism*, eds. Lisa Heldke and Peg O'Connor (New York, NY: McGraw Hill, 2004), 115.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas K. Nakayama and Robert L. Krizek, "Whiteness: A Strategic Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81 (1995), 291-309.

¹⁷⁵ What are the consequences of the language of "race" and these differences in the perception of "race"? Henry Louis Gates, Jr. observes, "The sense of difference defined in popular usages of the term 'race' has both described and inscribed differences of language, belief system, artistic tradition, and gene pool, as well as all sorts of supposedly natural attributes such as rhythm, athletic ability, celebration, usury, fidelity, and so forth. The relation between 'racial character' and these sorts of characteristics has been inscribed through tropes of race, lending the sanction of God, biology, or the natural order to even presumably unbiased descriptions of cultural tendencies and differences" [in Gates, "Writing 'Difference,'" 5]. The understanding of race as a fixed biological category demarcating superiority and inferiority led to the promulgation of anti-miscegenation laws in the United States and elsewhere, prohibiting the mixing of the "races." These laws illustrate the anxiety about racial mixing that biological understandings of "race" created and sustained.

So, race, then, is a complicated landscape that the critic must navigate if she is to understand the ways in which people understand this signifier and its socio-historical trajectory in separating groups of people based on difference. Dominant discourses of race take arbitrary categories of difference and make them appear natural and normal; in the case of "race," dominant discourses take minor biological differences and infuse them with deeper symbolic meanings that create schisms in social cultures.

¹⁷⁶ For a longer discussion of the politics of "difference" and the importance of intersectional analysis and an understanding of power to that analysis, see Joan W. Scott, "Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference: or, The Uses of Poststructuralist Theory For Feminism," *Theorizing Feminism*, eds. Anne C. Hermann & Abigail J. Stewart (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994): 358-371; Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill, "Theorizing Difference From Multiracial Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 22 (Summer 1996): 321-331.

¹⁷⁷ Joan W. Scott, "Gender," 32. Scott argues that the word "gender" has been used to denote a particular kind of intellectual work which elucidates the relationship between power and gender in understanding equality or inequality, oppression or liberation. Some writers think that there are

historical topics that are somehow non-gendered. Of this, Scott writes, “The subject of war, diplomacy and high politics frequently comes up when traditional political historians question the utility of gender in their work. But here, too, we need to look beyond the actors and the literal import of their words. Power relations among nations and the status of colonial subjects have been made comprehensible (and thus legitimate) in terms of relations between male and female. The legitimizing of war – of expending young lives to protect the state – has variously taken the forms of explicit appeals to manhood (to the need to defend otherwise vulnerable women and children), of implicit reliance on belief in the duty of sons to serve their leaders or their (father) the king, and of associations between masculinity and national strength” [in Scott, “Gender” 48]. This is to say that nationalism, nation identity, subaltern identity and resistance are all gendered.

¹⁷⁸ Scott, “Gender,” 32.

¹⁷⁹ Scott, “Gender,” 42.

¹⁸⁰ Rachel L. Einwohner, Jocelyn A. Hollander and Toska Olson, “Engendering Social Movements: Cultural Images and Movement Dynamics,” *Gender and Society* 14 (October 2000), 680.

¹⁸¹ Einwohner, et. al., “Engendering Social Movements,” 682. Joan Acker adds, “To say that an organization or any other analytics unit is gendered means that advantages and disadvantages, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine” [in Joan Acker, “Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations,” *Gender & Society* 4 (1990), 146]. Acker sees gendering as an integral part of organizational processes.

¹⁸² Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 14. Emphasis in original.

¹⁸³ Gates, “Writing ‘Difference,’” 5.

¹⁸⁴ James Curry Woods writes that Jamil el-Amin’s trial in 2001 forced the Muslim community to wonder whether a “Muslim could stand trial with the full force of his Sixth Amendment Guarantees.” James Curry Woods, “The Third Tower: The Effect of the September 11th Terrorist Attacks on the American Jury System,” *Alabama Law Review* 55 (Fall 2003), 209.

End Notes: Chapter 1

¹ The manifesto has enjoyed immense popularity in Europe as well, particularly in revolutionary France. And, as a form, it has been embraced by many different political groups with varying agendas. For an excellent cross-section of political manifestos in the U.S. experience, see Phillip S. Foner, *We, the Other People: Alternative Declarations of Independence by Labor Groups, Farmers, Woman's Rights Advocates, Socialists, and Blacks, 1829-1975* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1976). Most of the critical work surrounding the manifesto focuses on the aesthetic manifesto, particularly as the French Surrealists and the Italian Futurists embraced it, and the political manifesto, as embodied by the *Declaration of Independence*.

² The committee was comprised of: Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Roger Livingston and Roger Sherman.

³ The final version had only minor revisions made by Adams and Franklin [in Sidney Kaplan, "The 'Domestic Insurrections' of the Declaration of Independence," *The Journal of Negro History* 61 (July 1976), 244].

⁴ Twelve of the thirteen colonial delegations voted (New York abstained) to support a declaration of independence from Great Britain.

⁵ Stephen E. Lucas, "The Rhetorical Ancestry of the Declaration of Independence" *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 2 (1998), 152. Lucas also traces the form of the declaration to historical European documents.

⁶ Condit and Lucaites, "Rhetoric of Equality," 2.

⁷ Staughton Lynd, *Intellectual Origins of American Radicalism* (London, UK: Faber, 1969), 4.

⁸ The issue of constituting the American states was addressed by the Second Continental Congress on July 12, 1776, which debated the options for solidifying relations among the American states. On November 15, 1777, after much debate, the states finally established a "firm league of friendship" that became known as the *Articles of Confederation*. As the colonies began to ratify the Articles in 1778, they were admitted to the Union and became states. The Articles, however, did not go into effect until March 1, 1781, and it became widely acknowledged that they did not create a strong central government or deal with many of the issues created by the differences among the

original thirteen colonies. The *Constitution* was finally finished on September 12, 1787, and the original ten Amendments to the *Constitution*, known as the *Bill of Rights*, were added December 15, 1791 [in Foner, *We, the Other People*, 33]. Foner notes that many alternative declarations copied these founding documents event to the point of iterating them on July 4.

⁹ Many critics of the manifesto understand its form as provocation, including Lyon's text. See also Emily Braun, "Futurist Fashion: Three Manifestoes," *Art Journal* 54 (Spring 1995), 34. Lyon notes that "the manifesto marks the point of impact where the idea of radical egalitarianism runs up against the entrenchment of an ancien régime" [Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 1999, 1].

¹⁰ Claude Abastado, "Á L'Analyse Des Manifestes," *Littérature* 39 (October 1980), 3. Abastado argues that, "Les distinctions entre manifeste, proclamation, appel, adresse, preface, déclaration sont fragiles; les ciconstances historiques et la reception des texts, la manière don't ils son entendus, lus, interprétés, entraînent des glissements de qualifications." [in Abastado, "Á L'Analyse Des Manifestes," 4]. So, although the differences between these genres are often slight and blended, we can make substantial claims about their differences based on their historical circumstances, their reception, and the ways in which they are written, read, heard and interpreted.

¹¹ Lyon, *Manifestoes*, 2. Ted Windt adds that much ideological rhetoric can be traced to the *Communist Manifesto* and that the ideological rhetoric of manifestos are produced through structural considerations: first, the central issue is a dispute of power between two forces; second, one party is the oppressor and one is the oppressed and the grievance is expressed in this binary; third, the oppressor is corrupted and the oppressed has suffered long at the hands of this corruption; fourth, the oppressor is only motivated by self-interest, therefore, the oppressed should begin to act in their own self-interest; fifth, the oppressor is irrational and does not understand reason; sixth only the organization of the ideologue can be trusted because all other organizations are compromised and are reformist; seventh, ideologues understand that the oppressor will be crushed and that the oppressed with receive justice "because history is on the side of the exploited, not the exploiters" [See Theodore Otto Windt, *Presidents and Protesters: Political Rhetoric in the 1960s* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 194-6].

¹² Celeste Michelle Condit and John Louis Lucaites, “The Rhetoric of Equality and the Expatriation of African-Americans, 1776-1826,” *Communication Studies* 42 (Spring 1991), 12.

¹³ Informed by Wayne Booth and James Boyd White, James Jasinski writes that “texts exhibit constitutive force through the cultural circulation and discursive articulation of their textual forms in ways that enable and constrain subsequent practice. Texts invite their audience to experience the world in certain ways via concrete textual forms; audiences, in turn, appropriate, articulate, circulate, and/or subvert these textual forms in ways that release and transform their constitutive energy” [in James Jasinski, “A Constitutive Framework for Rhetorical Historiography: Toward an Understanding of the Discursive (Re)constitution of ‘Constitution’ in *The Federalist Papers*,” in *Doing Rhetorical History*, ed. Kathleen J. Turner (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1998), 74-5]. Although rhetors construct appeals that they hope will prompt audiences to act in particular ways, the ideologies, strategies and tactics of these speakers and writers are not always universally adopted. The constitutive process is an active one, where audiences may or may not respond to discourse to influence social change [For a discussion of the kinds of constitutive rhetoric that are used to create solidarity among a people, see Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Pueblo Québécois*” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 133-150].

¹⁴ Lyon, *Manifestoes*, 9; See also Abastado, “Á L’Analyse Des Manifestes,” 5.

¹⁵ Mary Ann Caws, *Manifesto: A Century of isms* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), xxii-xviii.

¹⁶ Binaries become the mode by which contrast is established as manifesto drafters and signers repudiate a past and craft a future. In his treatment of feminist poststructuralist Donna Haraway’s manifestos, Jonathan Crewe notes her use of binarism in more contemporary manifesto work and the tables that she creates to transcode and replace historical concepts that need to be critiqued [In Jonathan Crewe, “Transcoding the World: Haraway’s Postmodernism,” *Signs* 22 (Summer 1997), 895]. Haraway’s work, in particular, exemplifies the translation work that goes informs manifesto writing and interpretation.

¹⁷ Caws, *Manifesto*, xviii.

¹⁸ Anne Bowler, "Politics as Art: Italian Futurism and Fascism," *Theory and Society* 20 (December 1991): 767.

¹⁹ Caws adds, "The manifesto builds into its surroundings its own conditions for reception, instructs the audience how to respond to what is heard or read or seen. So its form and function often profit from some strong central image, like the volcano, holding the rest together" [in Caws, *Manifesto*, xxiii]. Although rhetors construct appeals that they hope will prompt audiences to act in particular ways, the ideologies, strategies and tactics of these speakers and writers are not always universally adopted. The constitutive process is an active one, where audiences can and do respond to discourse to influence social change.

²⁰ Caws, *Manifesto*, xxv-xxix.

²¹ Abastado, "Á L'Analyse Des Manifestes," 4.

²² Paul Gilroy has written, "The problem of weighing the claims of national identity against other contrasting varieties of subjectivity and identification has a special place in the intellectual history of blacks in the east" [Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 31]. Gilroy continues, "The idea of nationality occupies a central, if shifting place in the work of intellectuals such as Alexander Crummell, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Martin Delany, and Frederick Douglass. This important group of post-Enlightenment men, whose lives and political sensibilities can ironically be defined through the persistent crisscrossing of national boundaries, often seem to share the decidedly Hegelian belief that the combination of Christianity and a nation state represents the overcoming of all antinomies" [in Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 35].

²³ Black leaders have used the manifesto to challenge white representations of blackness and to interrogate their subject positioning in the emerging nation. In his *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912), James Weldon Johnson described this work of black intellectuals "The battle was first waged over the right of the Negro to be classed as a human being with a soul; later, as to whether he had sufficient intellect to master even the rudiments of learning; and today it is being fought out over his social recognition" [in James Weldon Johnson, *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1990), 55].

²⁴ Black nationalism is a set of ideas ranging from simple racial solidarity to more complex notions of emigrationism, territorial separatism, religious nationalism, economic nationalism, cultural nationalism, revolutionary nationalism, and Pan-Africanism.

²⁵ These categories are adapted from John H. Bracey, Jr., August Meier, and Elliot Rudwick, *Black Nationalism in America* (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1970). However, these historians do not detail the history and utility of the manifesto in the evolution of black nationalism.

²⁶ Sociologist Lois E. Horton writes, “The American Revolution created an immediate break from England’s political and economic control. It also marked the beginning of internal evolutionary changes in America. The Revolution began the abolition of slavery in the North, transforming the operation and meaning of class and race” [in Lois E. Horton, “From Class to Race in Early America: Northern Post-Emancipation Racial Reconstruction,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 19 (Winter 1999), 629].

²⁷ Condit and Lucaites, “Rhetoric of Equality,” 3. Ella Forbes adds that “The American Revolution engendered African resistance to slavery because Blacks saw the inherent contradictions in the American quest to free the United States from the yoke of British oppression while keeping Blacks in bondage” [in Ella Forbes, “African-American Resistance to Colonization,” *Journal of Black Studies* 21 (December 1990), 216]. Freedom became a battle cry for U.S. blacks as it had been for the revolutionary colonials. Lois Horton writes, “African Americans believed that service in the Revolution had earned them the right to freedom in the new nation. They also felt entitled to equal citizenship under the principles of liberty and natural rights that formed the nation’s philosophical foundation” [in Horton, “Racial Reconstruction,” 636].

²⁸ Horton, “Racial Reconstruction,” 636. The term “free” blacks refers to those born free or who escaped from slavery and “freed blacks” refers to those manumitted or who bought their freedom.

²⁹ Condit and Lucaites, “Rhetoric of Equality,” 8. Ironically, it was Southern support that helped to end the importation of slaves to the United States because “they could see the economic logic by which artificially increasing the population of slavery from abroad would undermine the inherent value of their property.” Consequently, “[t]he constitutional value of Anglo-Americans put the country on a course to abolish only those practices that did not violate property rights. Once that was

accomplished, the antislavery sentiment had gone as far as it could under the minimalist notions of equality and the natural rights of freemen that then existed” [Condit and Lucaites, “Rhetoric of Equality,” 9].

³⁰ Nowhere would this be more evident than in Justice Roger B. Taney’s majority opinion in the 1857 *Dred Scott* decision. Taney’s decision was a response to the divisions in the Court over states’ rights, property, and the subordinate status of black Americans that had been gradually becoming more significant as the U.S. moved further into Reconstruction [in Austin Allen, “The Political Economy of Blackness: Citizenship, Corporations, and Race in *Dred Scott*,” *Civil War History* 50 (2004): 229-60].

³¹ Several significant events at the beginning of the nineteenth century shaped the nature of the slave system in the United States and the responses to it by abolitionists. The development of the cotton gin in 1793 gave slaveholders a clear reason to keep slaves on cotton plantations, the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 added slave territories to the United States, the importation of slaves ended in 1808 and justified the rape of female slaves to continue the stock of slaves on plantations, and finally, the Missouri Compromise of 1818 allowed residents of the Missouri territory to hold slaves and abrogate their rights [in Forbes, “Colonization,” 216].

³² For survey of slave revolts see Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1978); Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts In The Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1979); Cyril Lionel Robert James, *A History of Negro Revolt* (New York, NY: Haskell House Publishers, 1969).

³³ Horton, “Racial Reconstruction,” 645.

³⁴ Horton writes that, “In this regard, they were classes with women and children whose dependence disqualified them from citizenship and who were represented by husbands and fathers” [in Horton, “Racial Reconstruction,” 646].

³⁵ Horton, “Racial Reconstruction,” 648.

³⁶ Forbes, “Colonization,” 212.

³⁷ Charles H. Wesley, "The Negro's Struggle for Freedom in Its Birthplace," *The Journal of Negro History* 30 (January 1945), 62-81; Arthur O. White, "The Black Leadership Class and Education in Antebellum Boston," *The Journal of Negro Education* 42 (Autumn 1973): 504-1; Gayle T. Tate, "Free Black Resistance in the Antebellum Era, 1830-1860," *Journal of Black Studies* 28 (July 1998): 764-82.

³⁸ Organizing blacks to build institutions was easier for Prince Hall in Boston because *de facto* segregation in the city forced everyone to live quite close on "Negro Hill" and because economic discrimination forced them to trade and manage their communities together [George A. Levesque, "Inherent Reformers – Inherited Orthodoxy: Black Baptists in Boston, 1800-1873," *The Journal of Negro History* 60 (October 1975), 493].

³⁹ Arthur O. White, "The Black Leadership Class and Education in Antebellum Boston," *The Journal of Negro Education* 42 (Autumn 1973), 504.

⁴⁰ Hall procured an English charter in 1787 to begin the first African Masonic Lodge, and in 1796 he established the Boston African Benevolent Society which flourished and inspired many of the city's blacks to hear the sermons and lectures concerning their fate in the United States. Hall also opposed the exclusion of blacks in the U.S. Continental Army [in Maurice O. Wallace, *Constructing the Black Masculine: Identity and Ideality in African American Men's Literature and Culture, 1775-1995* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 55].

⁴¹ Wallace, *Constructing the Black Masculine*, 56.

⁴² Wallace, *Constructing the Black Masculine*, 56.

⁴³ Campbell notes, "By her own account, Maria Miller was born in 1803, orphaned and 'bound out' to a clergyman's family five years later, married to James W. Stewart in 1826, and widowed three years later" [Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her, Vol. II* (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1989), 1].

⁴⁴ Carla L. Peterson, "*Doers of the Word*": *African American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830-1880)* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 13; Campbell, *Man Cannot Speak For Her*, 1.

⁴⁵ Marilyn Richardson, *Maria W. Stewart: America's First Black Woman Political Writer* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 9.

⁴⁶ Wilson Jeremiah Moses, *Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms: Social and Literary Manipulations of a Religious Myth* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982), 4. Ethiopianism survived the millennium and “remained alive well into the twentieth century. At the popular level Drusilla Dunjee Houston’s *Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire* (1926) and Rev. Sterling M. Means’ *Ethiopia and the Missing Link in African History* (1945) asserted the importance of Ethiopia as the ancient civilization from which all others sprang. Means made an explicit call for the establishment of an independent African state whose existence would solve the problems of racism and colonialism. These ideas, of course, have also been articulated as part of the world view of Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association. At the scholarly level, W.E.B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, and William Leo Hansberry labored to substantiate the seminal role played by ancient Ethiopia in the history of world civilizations” [John H. Bracey, Jr. and August Meier, “Black Ideologies, Black Utopias: Afrocentricity in Historical Perspective,” *Contributions in Black Studies* 12 (1993-4), 113].

⁴⁷ Moses, *Black Messiahs*, 6. Ethiopianism, as a form of black messianism, is popular among groups that are oppressed because the experience of oppression is based on membership to that particular group. Moses writes, “Messianic traditions persist because the heritage of oppression persists. Ancient African roots are less important to black messianism than is the experience of white domination in the modern world” [Moses, *Black Messiahs*, 8].

⁴⁸ Maria W. Stewart, “An Address Delivered at the African Masonic Hall,” *Maria W. Stewart: America's First Black Woman Political Writer*, ed. Marilyn Richardson (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 58.

⁴⁹ Moses, *Black Messiahs*, 6. Of Ethiopianism and other black messianic forms, Moses writes, “Ironically, it represents both a rejection of white America and a participation in one of its most sacred traditions. This provides a partial explanation for the obvious sympathy with which white liberals have sometimes greeted black moral crusades” [in Moses, *Black Messiahs*, 14]. Because the messianic tradition is a cornerstone of Christian mythology and is also part of the fabric of American

nationalism, black messianism, in all of its forms, was recognizable to those living in America as an expression of both national fidelity and piety. It is easy, then, to see why Northern churches and abolitionists would encourage the use of the black messianism as an expression of critique against slavery.

⁵⁰ The jeremiad as a rhetorical form is an intrinsic part of Christian performance, named after the prophet Jeremiah (650-570 B.C.), who predicted the destruction of Judah by the Babylonians and also the demolition of the temple in Jerusalem. He is also thought to be the author of the book of Lamentations, which portrays the prostration of Israel at the mercy of Babylon. In the context of the rhetoric of black America, Moses uses the term jeremiad to “describe the constant warnings issued by blacks to whites concerning the judgment that was to come for the sin of slavery. Blacks ingeniously adapted their rhetoric to the jeremiadic tradition, which was one of the dominant forces of cultural expression in revivalist ante-bellum America. Their use of jeremiad revealed a conception of themselves as a chosen people, but it also showed a clever ability to play on the belief that America as a whole was a chosen nation with a covenantal duty to deal justly with blacks” [Moses, *Black Messiahs*, 30-1]. By using the dominant form of expression in antebellum America, activists like Maria Stewart were able to translate their complaints against slavery into the common mode of expression and critique the institution of slavery through the standards and forms of whites, which ultimately transferred to black activists a moral authority to condemn slavery as sin.

⁵¹ The ACS began in 1816 and was founded “by 50 leading White, primarily Southern, slaveholders and sympathizers. Included among them were prominent clergymen and politicians: John Randolph, a descendant of Pocahontas and John Rolfe; Judge Bushrod Washington, nephew of George Washington; Francis Scott Key, author of the *Star Spangled Banner*; Henry Clay, Speaker of the House of Representatives; and General Andrew Jackson, who later became President of the United States. Such well-known people as Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Stephen A. Douglass, President Millard Fillmore, and Daniel Webster were sympathizers and supporters of the society.” The ACS established the colony of Liberia on the West Coast of Africa to “repatriate emancipated slaves and freedmen” [in Forbes, “Colonization,” 217]. Anti-colonization sentiment was initially voiced in 1817 by black leaders James Forten, Richard Allen, Absalom Jones, Robert Douglas, and Frederick

Douglass [in Forbes, “Colonization,” 219]. Anti-colonization sentiment swept England as well and Nathaniel Pail, Robert Purvis, Charles Lenox Remond and other black nationalists there helped to defeat the society in that country as well as poison public opinion against colonization [in Forbes, “Colonization,” 220].

⁵² The intellectual themes of the conventions changed as the political and racial landscape in America changed. The conventions of 1830s were marked by assimilation into white society; those of the 1840s were characterized by political action “shifting the emphasis thereby from interracial action for assimilation to self-conscious pressure on the white power structure”; and finally, the conventions of the 1850s focused on black nationalism and emigration [in Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, “Negro Conventions and the Problem of Black Leadership,” *Journal of Black Studies* 2 (September 1971), 30].

⁵³ The importance of churches to black identity in Boston and elsewhere at this time should not be underestimated since, by 1848, a population of barely 2,000 blacks supported “no less than four black churches,” two that were affiliated with the Baptists and two that were African Methodist [in Levesque, “Black Baptists,” 492-4]. The first was actually the African Church which was established in 1805 and led by Reverend Thomas Paul. The churches became a link between the Christian mythology of antebellum America and critiques of slavery. Churches housed speakers who used the Bible to condemn the South’s peculiar institution and though they were spaces almost exclusively for male thought and speech, some institutions in this period obviously deviated and let women like Stewart speak. The emphasis on Ethiopia and Africa also helped to deconstruct the New Testament Christianity that slaveholders used to displace African religious beliefs and promote biblical interpretations that moved U.S. blacks toward active re-interpretation of white norms. As West Africans came to the United States, slaveholders recognized the power of native spiritual beliefs and began indoctrinating slaves with a “carefully constructed version of Christianity. New Testament Christianity, with its central theme of redemptive suffering, merged neatly with white material interests. In introducing Christianity to slaves, masters hoped to render them submissive and obedient to temporal powers. By carefully selecting or cultivating black religious leaders, slaveholders erected yet another cultural mechanism to control the minds of slaves” [William N. Banks, *Black Intellectuals:*

Race and Responsibility in American Life (New York, NY: Norton, 1996), 5]. By elevating black preachers in the North to interpret the Bible, U.S. blacks began to replace white narratives with their own myths, heroes and parables.

⁵⁴ Levesque, “Black Baptists,” 502. Walker was born in Wilmington, North Carolina, where he was born free, following the status of his mother, though he was surrounded by plantations holding slaves. At some point before December 1828, he emigrated to Boston and opened a shop on Brattle Street. The first edition of Walker’s *Appeal* was published in September 1829 and despite the protests of several Southern states, the city of Boston allowed him to publish at least two other editions in 1830 (those later editions were even “more dangerous and revolutionary than the first one”) [in Clement Eaton, “A Dangerous Pamphlet in the Old South,” *The Journal of Southern History* 2 (August 1936), 324].

⁵⁵ Peterson, “*Doers of the Word*,” 64. Walker’s pamphlet was sewn into the linings of coats bound for the South and also sold to a Southern agent in Wilmington, North Carolina, named Jacob Cowan who then distributed it [in Marshall Rachleff, “David Walker’s Southern Agent,” *The Journal of Negro History* 62 (January 1977), 100-3].

⁵⁶ Eaton, “Dangerous Pamphlet,” 323. Henry Highland Garnet in his republication of Walker’s *Appeal* noted that Walker had many enemies who though he was making more trouble for them than he was in helping their cause [Henry Highland Garnet, *Walker’s Appeal With a Brief Sketch of His Life* orig. print 1848, (New York, NY: J. H. Tobitt, 1969), vi]. Certainly there was speculation among Boston’s abolitionists that Walker was poisoned when he mysteriously died in 1830.

⁵⁷ Eaton, “Dangerous Pamphlet,” 324.

⁵⁸ Eaton, “Dangerous Pamphlet,” 325.

⁵⁹ Eaton, “Dangerous Pamphlet,” 325.

⁶⁰ David Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in particular, and very expressly, to those of the United States of America* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1995), 40.

⁶¹ Sean Wilentz, “Introduction,” *David Walker’s Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in particular, and very expressly, to those of the United States of America* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1995), xviii. This is especially true since Walker advocated slave insurrections so

soon after Nat Turner's bloody insurrection. Walker's *Appeal* also inspired a similar letter to the slaves of the South by an anonymous Boston author named Nero, who echoed many of the militant sentiments that Walker expressed in his *Appeal*. Nero wrote, "...so long as man shall task, abuse, and act the tyrant over his fellow man, may revenge ever be fondly cherished, and spiritedly encouraged by the injured; nor let the dastard scruples of conscience unnerve the muscular arm of the oppressed, till *Revenge* be fully glutted" [Nero, "After Nat Turner: A Letter from the North," *The Journal of Negro History* 55 (April 1970), 145].

⁶² In New York, on February 18, 1829, Robert Alexander Young self-published his own messianic jeremiad on the tyranny of slavery entitled, "The Ethiopian Manifesto." Although not much biographical information is known about him, Young predicted the coming of a black messiah that will constitute black Americans as an African "people." He spoke to the "Ethiopian people" in bondage on the shores of America and tells them to be vigilant "because the time is at hand, when, with but the power of words and the divine will of our God, the vile shackles of slavery shall be broken asunder from you, and no man known...shall dare to own or proclaim you as his bondsman" [in Robert Alexander Young, "Ethiopian Manifesto," *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism*, ed. Sterling Stuckey (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1972), 38]. Black historian Sterling Stuckey credits Walker and Young with imagining a black nationalist ideology [in Stuckey, *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism*, 7]. Their work, along with that of Maria M. W. Stewart, laid the foundation for the ideological debates in the North, particularly about the relationship between slaves and Africa and the nature of emigrationism. It also became the framework through which black America negotiated the pitfalls and problems of emergent U.S. nationalism and white national culture as the black bourgeoisie dealt with the increasingly hostile white public sphere advocating racial separation.

⁶³ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 26. This rhetorical position wed its advocates to the notion of American citizenship and to defend it by upholding the *Constitution*. For an extended discussion of this tradition and moral suasion in the context of Douglass' advocacy and that of his contemporary Martin R. Delany, see Tunde Adeleke, "Martin R. Delany's Philosophy of Education: A Neglected Aspect of African American Liberation Thought," *The Journal of Negro Education* 63 (Spring 1994), 224.

⁶⁴ Frederick Douglass, "The Destiny of Colored Americans," *North Star*, November 16, 1849, in *Frederick Douglass : Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill, 1999), 148.

⁶⁵ Douglass, *North Star*, 149. Emphasis in original.

⁶⁶ Rogers, "Prophetic Tradition," 9.

⁶⁷ Kevin K. Gaines writes, "African Americans have described themselves since the post-Reconstruction era as middle class thought through their ideals of racial uplift, espousing a vision of racial solidarity uniting black elites with the masses. For many black elites, uplift came to mean an emphasis on self-help, racial solidarity, temperance, thrift, chastity, social purity, patriarchal authority, and accumulation of wealth. Its unifying claims aside, this emphasis on class differentiation as race progress often involved struggling with the culturally dominant construction of the 'Negro problem'" [in Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 2].

⁶⁸ Frederick Cooper, "Elevating the Race: The Social Thought of Black Leaders, 1827-50," *American Quarterly* 24 (December 1972), 604.

⁶⁹ Cooper, "Elevating the Race," 608. This racial uplift program had been prefigured by the black leaders of the 1830s like David Walker in his *Appeal*, and later found its expression in places like *Freedom's Journal* (started in 1827 and edited in New York by two abolitionists, Samuel Cornish and John Russwurm). Although the hopes of U.S. blacks were raised by the idealism of the organizations like the Free Soil Party in 1848, the optimism was to be short-lived. The Free Soil Party was born in 1847 in response to the possibility of extending slavery into any of the territories newly acquired from Mexico in the west. The main slogan of the party was "free soil, free speech, free labour, and free men." In the 1848 presidential election, Martin Van Buren, the party's candidate, polled 10 percent of the vote, split the traditional Democratic support, and enabled the Whig candidate, Zachary Taylor, to win the election [see Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995)].

⁷⁰ Douglass and other followers of William Lloyd Garrison's ideology of assimilation, including Thomas Van Rensselaer, William Wells Brown and Charles Remond, were very active in the

conventions of the time period and mustered up incredible resistance to the idea that free blacks should abandon their chained brethren for other countries [in Pease and Pease, "Black Leadership," 32-3].

⁷¹ He continues, "Anti-emigration laws, denial of franchise to free blacks, discrimination in hiring, housing, education, religion, public facilities, transportation and a generally accepted Jim Crow policy north of the Mason-Dixon line, were all manifestations of racism and Anglo-American unwillingness to tolerate black assimilation" [in Roger W. Hite, "Voice of a Fugitive: Henry Bibb and Ante-bellum Black Separatism," *Journal of Black Studies* 4 (March 1974), 269].

⁷² Foner, *Reconstruction*, 26; Howard H. Bell, "Negro Nationalism: A Factor in Emigration Projects, 1858-1861," *The Journal of Negro History* 47 (January 1962), 44. This pessimism and discontent was fueled by the anxiety over the passage of Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 (which repealed the Missouri Compromise and opened the Northern territories to slavery), and the *Dred Scott* decision (where the Supreme Court formally denied citizenship to U.S. blacks). These actions helped to demonize blackness even further by restricting social and spatial mobility for U.S. blacks and the consequence was a rising hostility to associating with the nation-state.

⁷³ John Sekora notes that "Before the Emancipation Proclamation at least two major types appeared. The earlier includes the nearly 100 narratives published separately – as broadside, pamphlet, or book – between about 1760 and 1863. Later, brief accounts of slave lives were published in abolitionist periodicals from about 1830 to 1863. These latter number well over 400, range in length from a paragraph or two to several pages, appeared in black periodicals and white alike, and were sometimes reprinted in book-length collections of slave experiences" [in John Sekora, "Black Message/White Envelope: Genre, Authenticity, and Authority in the Antebellum Slave Narrative," *Callaloo* 32 (Summer 1987), 483].

⁷⁴ Easton argues that autobiographical slave narratives have been warily considered as legitimate accounts of black life in early America because they were hardly representative accounts (lifestyles varied from region and between slaves and fugitives), because early slave narratives were often written specifically for white audiences for political purposes (abolition, etc.), and because the events depicted in slave narratives were often so horrific [Alison Easton, "Subjects-in-Time: Slavery and African-American Women's Autobiographies," *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories,*

Methods, eds. Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury, and Penny Summerfield (London: Routledge, 2000), 172].

Easton notes that “these narratives had from the outset deliberately combined an individual life-story with a more generalised communal account of shared conditions and socially significant events” [In Easton, “Subjects-in-Time,” 175].

⁷⁵ William L. Andrews, “Nineteenth-Century Narrative Condemn a Dehumanizing System,” *Slave Narratives*, ed. James Tackach (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, 2001), 46.

⁷⁶ Beth Maclay Doriani, “Black Womanhood in Nineteenth-Century America: Subversion and Self- Construction in Two Women’s Autobiographies,” *American Quarterly* 43 (June 1991), 206. Doriani adds, “In the case of the slave narrative, experiences abolitionists realized that the first-person narrative, with its promise of intimate glimpses into the mind and hear, would be more compelling to the uncommitted mass of readers than the oratory and polemics of the antislavery press” [in Doriani, “Black Womanhood,” 206].

⁷⁷ The fact that these narratives were often facilitated by zealous abolitionists made their credibility tenuous at best, which complicated the perspectives by which they could “tell” or write their stories and which constrained the details that they could share. Because the audience of slave narratives was so overwhelmingly white, slaves also had to make choices about what to tell and what to hide, including their route of escape. In fact, Frederick Douglass was so outraged that Henry Box Brown revealed his means of escape from slave life that he published several opinion pieces castigating Brown for not hiding the circumstances and strategy of his escape.

⁷⁸ Freedom was found in the North, Canada, or, occasionally Great Britain. Narrators portrayed slavery “as a condition of extreme physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual deprivation, a kind of hell on earth.” [in Andrews, “Nineteenth-Century Narratives,” 47].

⁷⁹ Andrews, “Nineteenth-Century Narratives,” 47. To ensure the authenticity of this struggle, “the antislavery movement in the mid 1840s made a priority of publishing narratives by slaves who could write their own stories. Although Douglass was by no means the first fugitive slave to write his own narrative, his was among the first to feature the subtitle, *Written by Himself* on the title page of the *Narrative*” [in Andrews, “Nineteenth-Century Narratives,” 48].

⁸⁰ Carla L. Peterson, “Capitalism, Black (Under)Development, and the Production of the African-American Novel in the 1850s,” *American Literary History* 4 (Winter 1992), 560; Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy and Society* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1983), 7.

⁸¹ Peterson, “Black (Under)Development,” 560. She continues by noting that between 1853 and 1862, “black writers published at least seven texts – two novelized autobiographies, Harriet E. Wilson’s *Our Nig; Or Sketches from the Life of A Free Black* (1859) and Harriet A. Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), two short stories, Frederick Douglass’ “The Heroic Slave” (1853) and Watkins Harper’s “The Two Offers” (1859), and three novels, William Wells Brown’s *Clotel; Or The President’s Daughter* (1853), Frank J. Webb’s *the Garies and the Friends* (1857), and Martin R. Delany’s *Blake, Or the Huts of America* (1859-62)” [in Peterson, “*Doers of the Word*” 146].

⁸² Doriani, “Black Womanhood,” 207. Although slave narratives were particularly good at hiding details or obscuring facts that might endanger the escaped slave, narratives dealt with violence, rape, and torture, even if the language used to describe these aspects of slave life were coded. Douglass, for instance, deals with the rape of his Aunt Hester and the potential sodomy of himself at the hands of Covey. And, Harriet Jacobs comments at length upon the nature of being a female slave under such a brutal, violent system. In this way, white readers could glean some of the raced and gendered dimensions of slavery through a form with which they were familiar.

⁸³ The dates of Wilson’s birth and death are unknown.

⁸⁴ Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 27. The importance of Delany’s preoccupation with the Diaspora is crucial in understanding the path that black nationalism has taken to unfold. Gilroy notes, “Delany’s work has provided some powerful evidence to show that the intellectual heritage of Euro-American modernity determined and possibly still determines the manner in which nationality is understood within black political discourse” [Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 30].

⁸⁵ John Zeugner, “A Note on Martin Delany’s *Blake*, and Black Militancy,” *Phylon* 32 (1971), 99. Delany’s *Blake* “represents the birth of the black militant position, at least in fictional presentation. For example, Delany asserts that slavery is but one variant of colonial oppression against various minority groups and races and that, further, slavery very probably shares with colonial

oppression a simple economic rather than a psychological, prejudicial base” [in Zeugner, “Blake,” 102].

⁸⁶ Zeugner, “Blake,” 103. Crane argues that “*Blake* constitutes Delany’s rejoinder to the official version of citizenship expressed in Chief Justice Roger B. Taney’s *Dred Scott* opinion, which upheld the constitutionality of slavery and concluded that black Americans did not possess the rights of citizens and were not part of the American community.” He concludes that *Blake* “powerfully exemplifies a type of literary intervention in American jurisprudence strikingly common in nineteenth-century fiction addressing race.” This includes works by “Delany, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Frederick Douglass” [in Greg D. Crane, “The Lexicon of Rights, Power, and Community in Blake: Martin R. Delany’s Dissent from *Dred Scott*,” *American Literature* 68 (September 1996): 527-553].

⁸⁷ John Ernest, “Economies of Identity: Harriet E. Wilson’s *Our Nig*,” *PMLA* 109 (May 1994), 425.

⁸⁸ Harriet Wilson, *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2002), lv.

⁸⁹ Ernest, “Economies of Identity,” 429. Doriani concurs and writes, “Wilson’s choice of ‘our nig’ for title and pseudonym shows her at her most parodic. Her placing quotation marks around the name that her white family gave her questions the validity of the label – a sarcastic, comic retaliation at the culture which would deprive her of her true identity. To include ‘our’ challenged the idea that her identity is defined only by her skin color and labels used by whites” [In Doriani, “Black Womanhood,” 212].

⁹⁰ Doriani, “Black Womanhood,” 213.

⁹¹ Ernest notes, “Ultimately, *Our Nig* argues that communal self-purchase begins with this book; the story of the life produced by this culture serves as the catalyst for new productions in the ongoing quest to convert disparate cultural property into a common humanity” [in Ernest, “Economies of Identity,” 436].

⁹² The paper was founded by Garrison in 1830 at it became the mouthpiece for the manifestos of his newly formed abolitionist organization, The New England Anti-Slavery Society. Garrison also published his manifesto against colonization, titled, *Thoughts on Colonization* (1832), which provided

a scathing criticism of the ACS, its ideology and its practices.

⁹³ William B. Rogers, *“We Are All Together Now”: Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and the Prophetic Tradition* (New York, NY: Garland, 1995), 8. He also eventually supported immediate emancipation, rather than the gradualism that he initially advocated. The shift in position was due, in part, to his fears about slave revolts and the widespread violence that would follow against all black Americans. Robert H. Abzug argues that Garrison’s nonviolence was a manifestation of the application of evangelical principles to the problem of slavery. He writes, “The evangelical faith as preached by Charles Grandison Finney, Nathaniel Taylor, and Lyman Beecher held that man was free to effect his own salvation by turning from sin and by living a life marked by benevolence rather than selfishness...Most of those who embraced the evangelical faith took the recognition and cleansing of sin on a very personal level. But a few individuals, including William Lloyd Garrison...applied these doctrines to the “‘sins’ of society” including slavery” [Robert H. Abzug, “The Influence of Garrisonian Abolitionists’ Fears of Slave Violence on the Anti-Slavery Argument,” *The Journal of Negro History* 55 (January 1970), 16; Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850* (New York, NY: Pantheon, 1967), 218-9].

⁹⁴ Bibb’s paper appeared bimonthly after it first appeared on January 1, 1851.

⁹⁵ Hite, “Voice of a Fugitive,” 274. Bibb is a central character in the emigration debate because his contacts included several prominent black emigrationist leaders who would use his paper to postulate about a mass black exodus from the United States including Pittsburgh correspondent Martin Delany, Vermont correspondent James T. Holly, and London correspondent Henry Highland Garnet [Hite, “Voice of a Fugitive,” 174]. Bibb’s political philosophy was ahead of its time. In addition to his insistence upon emigration to Canada to build a large, free black agricultural community, Bibb also wanted to develop a chain of free labor stores to compete with (and undercut the price of) slave labor good in the South. He also wanted to encourage emigration of blacks to the West Indies, where trade routes would be established to help build this agricultural connection that would topple the economic structure of the plantation economy in the South [in Hite, “Voice of a Fugitive,” 277-281].

⁹⁶ Robert Ernst, "Negro Concepts of Americanism," *The Journal of Negro History* 39 (July 1954), 206-219.

⁹⁷ The convention circuit began in Philadelphia on September 15, 1830, in response to the growing prestige of the ACS. Although the black convention circuit was prominent between 1830-1864 on both the state and national level, it was especially salient just prior to the Civil War, as black leaders (mostly men) gathered to debate and implement strategies to challenge slavery and racism in the United States [in Howard H. Bell, "Negro Nationalism in the 1850s," *The Journal of Negro Education* 35 (Winter 1966), 100-4]. The convention circuit gave black leaders a space to develop and debate their plans for dealing with discrimination and the slave system. The conventions "became battlegrounds upon which the prestige and power of race leadership might be won. Moreover, the intensity of their struggles was sharpened by the prejudice which excluded able and ambitious blacks from exercising their talents in the larger white community and which, consequently, funneled their energies into race action" [Pease and Pease, "Black Leadership," 30].

⁹⁸ Howard H. Bell, "The Negro Emigration Movement, 1849-1854: A Phase of Negro Nationalism," *The Phylon Quarterly* 20 (1959), 132. On the convention circuit, colonization was a prominent theme for discussion through the 1850s and was considered a legitimate solution to the problem of absorbing free blacks into the white nation state by men as prominent as Abraham Lincoln. Condit and Lucaites write that the presence of colonization in public discussion "dominated the magazines or *weeklies* of the period, second only in frequency to the slave trade. Further, the majority of states passed resolutions in support of the Colonization Society's efforts, and some even funded it" [Condit and Lucaites, "The Rhetoric of Equality," 13].

⁹⁹ James W. L. Pennington presided over the Rochester Convention.

¹⁰⁰ Frederick Douglass, "Address of the Colored National Convention, to the People of the United States," in the Report of the Proceedings of the Colored National Convention, Held in Rochester, July 6th, 7th, and 8th, 1853, in *Proceedings of the National Negro Conventions, 1830-1864*, ed. Howard H. Bell, (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1969), 8.

¹⁰¹ Douglass, "Address," 10. The demands of the Rochester convention "were simply based on the claim that, by birth, by the principles of the Declaration of Independence, and by the facts of

history, Blacks are American citizens” [in Charles A. Gliozzo, “John Jones and the Black Convention Movement, 1848-1856,” *Journal of Black Studies* 3 (December 1972), 232-3].

¹⁰² Bell, “Negro Nationalism,” 48.

¹⁰³ As Robert S. Levine points out, Martin Robinson Delany was “a social activist and reformer, black nationalist, abolitionist, physician, reporter and editor, explorer, jurist, realtor, politician, publisher, educator, army officer, ethnographer, novelist, and political and legal theorist.” In 1843, Delany founded *The Mystery*, which was one of the first black newspapers and which he ran until 1847, when he worked with Frederick Douglass on the *North Star*. In 1854, Delany “organized and chaired a national black emigrationist convention, where he delivered ‘The Political Destiny of the Colored Race on the American Continent,’” which Levine sees as the “most important statement on black emigration published before the Civil War” [in Robert S. Levine, *Martin R. Delany: A Documentary Reade*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 1].

¹⁰⁴ See Robert M. Kahn, “The Political Ideology of Martin Delany,” *Journal of Black Studies* 14 (June 1984), 415-50.

¹⁰⁵ A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, “America in the Niger Valley: A Colonization Centenary,” *Phylon* 23 (1962), 228.

¹⁰⁶ Garnet presented his address at the 1843 Buffalo convention and the 1847 Troy convention [Pease and Pease, “Black Leadership,” 34].

¹⁰⁷ For an examination into the rivalry between Garnet and Frederick Douglass, see Joel Schor, “The Rivalry Between Frederick Douglass and Henry Highland Garnet,” *The Journal of Negro History* 64 (Winter 1979): 30-38. Although the motion to print Garnet’s sentiments came for a vote, Douglass prevailed and it was defeated by just one vote. However, just four years later, the participants rehashed the debate as Garnet delivered his “Address to the Slaves” as a speech. Douglass’ report of Garnet’s speech at the Troy convention was an absolute condemnation and marred Garnet’s message, at least in the United States [Pease and Pease, “Black Leadership,” 34]. Garnet also founded the African Civilization Society in 1858 to establish a center for black nationalism; it was under constant scrutiny and regular attack from Frederick Douglass. For this organization’s founding

manifesto, see “African Civilization Society Constitution,” *African-American Social and Political Thought, 1850-1920*, ed. Howard Brotz (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1992), 191-96.

¹⁰⁸ Bell notes that “[h]ad the Civil War not intervened there is good reason to believe that the emigrationists would have been far more successful than they were. As it was, they developed no new countries and they build not empires; their pride in the African heritage, with its concomitant self-respect and self-assurance, stands as their legacy to posterity” [Bell, “Negro Nationalism,” 53].

¹⁰⁹ Quarles notes that, “Before the Revolutionary War had come to a close, it had become clear that to most whites the blacks in their midst did not fall within the abstractions of the Declaration of Independence....The central paradox of white American society was to think equality but to practice inequality – a succession of English monarchs had been replaced by an equally divine-right aristocracy of skin color” [in Benjamin Quarles, “Antebellum Free Blacks and the Spirit of ‘76” *Journal of Negro History* 61 (July 1976), 229].

¹¹⁰ Peterson, “*Doers of the Word*,” 11.

¹¹¹ With the Reconstruction Act of 1867, all of the former Confederate states were required to hold constitutional conventions (with the exception of Tennessee) and for the conventions, black men could vote for delegates and ratification ballots [see Elsa Barkley Brown, “To Catch the Vision of Freedom: Reconstructing Southern Black Women’s Political History, 1865-1880,” *African American Women and the Vote, 1837-1965*, ed. Ann D. Gordon and Bettye Collier-Thomas (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 73-4]. During these conventions, black men and women networked to build their own organizations where they would participate in the political processes germane to their communities, even when they were excluded from the larger public sphere in the U.S. Black women, in particular, refused to be silenced by the exclusion that the national political arena had sanctioned and they would even carry weapons to protect their voice and the voices of their kin [Brown, “To Catch the Vision,” 79-81].

¹¹² Foner, *Reconstruction*, 114. Foner writes, “Like Northern blacks steeped in the Great Tradition of prewar protest, the freedmen and Southern free blacks saw emancipation as enabling the nation to live up to the full implications of its republican creed – a goal that could be achieved only by

abandoning racial proscription and absorbing blacks fully into the civil and political order” [Foner, *Reconstruction*, 114.].

¹¹³ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 115. Manifesto writing was prominent in abolition circles leading up to the Civil War, but it was also brandished as a weapon among the men who made the nation’s public policy. For example, in July 1864, the Radical Republicans in Congress opposed Lincoln’s ten percent plan with the Wade-Davis manifesto. Lincoln had proposed a plan in December 1863 that would have allowed Confederate states to establish new state governments after ten percent of their male population took loyalty oaths and the states recognized the permanent freedom of slaves. The radical Republicans responded with a manifesto that would delay Reconstruction until the majority of a state’s white males pledged fidelity to the *Constitution* [Foner, *Reconstruction*, 61-2]. The result of the Wade-Davis manifesto was a delay of Reconstruction that helped to propel the most ideologically-driven of the Confederates to engineer the new South. The question of Reconstruction was how to resolve the citizenship and labor questions of former slaves.

¹¹⁴ Eric Foner, “Rights and the Constitution in Black Life during the Civil War and Reconstruction,” *Journal of American History* 74 (December 1987), 864.

¹¹⁵ Foner, “Rights,” 864.

¹¹⁶ As Reconstruction historian Eric Foner asserts, the enlistment of black soldiers in the Union army “transformed a war of armies into a conflict of societies, ensuring that Union victory would produce a social revolution within the South” [Foner, *Reconstruction*, 7].

¹¹⁷ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 7-9. Foner notes that, “In their unprecedented expansion of federal power and their effort to impose organization upon a decentralized economy and fragmented polity, these measures reflected what might be called the birth of the modern American state.... Emancipation...made all Americans equally subject to the authority of the national state” [Foner, *Reconstruction*, 23].

¹¹⁸ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 4. The Emancipation Proclamation did, however, present a “turning point in national policy as well as in the character of the war” as emancipation became the overarching concern of black activists [in Foner, *Reconstruction*, 7]. Because emancipation centralized the state’s power over its subjects, it also granted blacks in the United States the kind of protection (however

brief) under the law that many had been seeking. Foner writes that “Emancipation further transformed the black response to American nationality, dealing the death blow, at least for this generation, to ideas of emigration. Symbolic, perhaps, was the fact that Martin Delany, the ‘father of black nationalism’ and an advocate during the 1850s of emigration, recruited blacks for the Union Army and then joined himself” [in Foner, *Reconstruction*, 27].

¹¹⁹ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 78.

¹²⁰ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 79. See also Foner, “Rights,” 870. Foner writes that “in the polity freedom implied inclusion rather than separation. Indeed, the attempt to win recognition of their equal rights as citizens quickly emerged as the animating impulse of black politics during Reconstruction. Achieving a measure of political power seemed indispensable to attaining the other goals of the black community, including access to the South’s economic resources, equal treatment in the courts, and protection against violence” [Foner, “Rights,” 872].

¹²¹ “Negro Declaration of Independence,” in Foner, *We, the Other People: Alternative Declarations of Independence by Labor Groups, Farmers, Woman’s Rights Activists, Socialists and Blacks, 1829-1975* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1976) 90-91.

¹²² “Negro Declaration of Independence,” 93.

¹²³ Foner, *We, the Other People*, 89.

¹²⁴ Throughout this project, the black public sphere is understood as “a transnational space whose violent birth and diasporic conditions of life provide a counternarrative to the exclusionary national narratives of Europe, the United States, the Caribbean and Africa. This, the black public sphere is one critical space where new democratic forms and emergent diasporic movements can enrich and questions one another” [in “Preface,” *The Black Public Sphere: A Public Culture Books*, ed. Black Public Sphere Collective (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1.]

¹²⁵ See Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class*, (New York, NY: Vintage, 1983); bell hooks, *A’int I A Woman* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981); Deborah Gray White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York, NY: Norton & Co., 1999).

¹²⁶ See Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *On Lynchings: Southern Horrors, A Red Record, Mob Rule in New Orleans*, (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1969). For her own account of the anti-lynching crusade,

see Ida B. Wells, *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

¹²⁷ Catherine Clinton, “Bloody Terrain: Freedwomen, Sexuality and Violence During Reconstruction,” *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 76 (Summer 1992), 321.

¹²⁸ Clinton, “Bloody Terrain,” 321.

¹²⁹ Clinton, “Bloody Terrain,” 321.

¹³⁰ Kenneth Mostern, *Autobiography and Black Identity Politics: Racialization in Twentieth Century America* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 84. See also Sandra Gunning, *Race, Rape, and Lynching: The Red Record of American Literature, 1890 – 1912* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996).

¹³¹ Foner writes, “The pervasiveness of violence reflected whites’ determination to define in their own way the meaning of freedom and their determined resistance to blacks’ efforts to establish their autonomy, whether in matters of family, church, labor, or personal demeanor” [Foner, *Reconstruction*, 120]. Foner notes that the majority of violence probably resulted from “black efforts to assert their freedom from control by their former masters. Freedmen were assaulted and murdered for attempting to leave plantations, disputing contract settlements, not laboring in a manner desired by their employers, attempting to buy or rent land, and resisting whippings.” He also notes that “[c]onsidering the extent of white violence against blacks, it is remarkable in how few instances blacks attacked whites” [in Foner, *Reconstruction*, 121].

¹³² Elsa Barkley Brown, “To Catch the Vision of Freedom: Reconstructing Southern Black Women’s Political History, 1865-1880,” *African American Women and the Vote, 1837-1965*, ed. Ann D. Gordon and Bettye Collier-Thomas (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 69.

¹³³ Hazel V. Carby, “Policing the Black Woman’s Body in an Urban Context” *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Summer 1992), 738-753; Victoria W. Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). Wolcott notes that the importance of women’s racial uplift work or “respectability” was “a foundation of African American women’s survival strategies and self-definition irrespective of class,” though she

acknowledges that the upper-class women often tried to influence the respectability of working-class migrants [in Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability*, 3-4].

¹³⁴ Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability*, 4. See also Stephanie J. Shaw, "Black Club Women and the Creation of the National Association of Colored Women" *Journal of Women's History* 3 (Winter 1991): 10-25; Stephanie J. Shaw, *What a Woman Ought to Be and to Do: Black Professional Women Workers during the Jim Crow Era* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

¹³⁵ Following the Civil War, three Reconstruction Amendments were passed: the Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery, the Fourteenth Amendment gave citizenship to slaves and other black Americans, and the Fifteenth Amendment gave them the right to vote.

¹³⁶ Although black Americans were appalled by the government's retraction of its pledge to protect their rights, many preferred to build alliances with white Southern leaders than deal with the associations forged with Northern carpetbaggers [Foner, *We, the Other People*, 89].

¹³⁷ Following emancipation, Northern and Southern blacks began to identify themselves with the "nation's history, destiny, and political system," in part because they believed that the outcome of the war would guarantee the liberties that so many former slaves and Northern abolitionists had fought and died to secure [in Foner, "Rights," 873].

¹³⁸¹³⁸ Gaines, *Racial Uplift*, 5.

¹³⁹ Kenneth Mostern, *Autobiography and Black Identity Politics: Racialization in Twentieth Century America* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 97-8. This is evidenced by the fact that Wells-Barnett was systematically excluded from the early NAACP, despite her circulation as the most influential anti-lynching activist in the U.S. and her club work and activism in Chicago.

¹⁴⁰ Alexander Crummell, "The Attitude Towards the Negro Intellect," *Race and Destiny: Selected Writings, 1840-1898*, ed. Jeremiah Wilson Moses (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 291-2. See also Gregory U. Rigsby, *Alexander Crummell: Pioneer in Nineteenth-Century Pan-African Thought* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987).

¹⁴¹ Crummell, "Negro Intellect," 292.

¹⁴² Crummell, "Negro Intellect," 297.

¹⁴³ Double consciousness is introduced in DuBois' essay, "Of Our Spiritual Strivings,"

published in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903).

¹⁴⁴ W.E.B. DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1990), 8-9.

¹⁴⁵ Darlene Clark Hine has called this “the culture of dissemblance” [in Darlene Clark Hine, "Rape and the Inner Lives of Black Women in the Middle West: Preliminary Thoughts on the Culture of Dissemblance," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 14 (1988): 912-20].

¹⁴⁶ DuBois, *Souls*, 9. It is interesting that in the first DuBois passage he uses the gender neutral pronoun “one” when describing the double-consciousness that black people experience in United States. In the second excerpt he clearly uses the masculine pronoun to assess who will raise the black race and how they will deal with the material conditions of opportunity and education. This cannot be an oversight since the two paragraphs appear in the same order in *The Souls of Black Folk* but it does appear to evidence claims about chauvinism and visions of nation-ness.

¹⁴⁷ DuBois, *Souls*, 11. Following this exhortation, DuBois provides a synopsis of the ways that black peoples sought to overcome terrorization by the Ku Klux Klan, carpetbaggers, and share-croppers to seek the freedom promised by the Emancipation Proclamation and the Fifteenth Amendment. DuBois speaks of both citizenship and literacy as the actual meat of Emancipation as black peoples made claims about their humanity and their American-ness.

¹⁴⁸ It was because of his insistence that black Americans educate themselves and refuse a white-washed version of America that in 1905, W.E.B. DuBois along with twenty-nine sympathizers met secretly in the home of Mary B. Talbert, a prominent member of Buffalo's Michigan Street Baptist Church to adopt the resolutions which lead to the founding of the Niagara Movement. The Niagara Movement renounced Booker T. Washington's accommodationist policies set forth in his famed "Atlanta Compromise" in 1895 in favor of a more radical policy for solidarity in black communities. When they met in 1905, the Niagara Movement drafted its “Declaration of Principles” which set the oppositional tone for the polarization of the spectrum of black nationalism to be collapsed into two camps: DuBois and his followers and those sympathetic with accommodationist politicians like Booker T. Washington. For a longer discussion of the Niagara movement and of W.E.B. DuBois as a “first militant” of the twentieth century, see Robert H. Brisbane, *The Black Vanguard: Origins of the Negro Social Revolution 1900-1960*, (Valley Forge, TN: Judson Press, 1970), 35-69. The downfall of the

group was attributed to public accusations of fraud alleged and engineered presumably by Washington advocates, and DuBois' inexperience with organizations and the internal strain from a personality clash with Trotter.

¹⁴⁹ Rod Bush, *We Are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle in the American Century* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1999), 77-80.

¹⁵⁰ Black men and women (including Mary Church Terrell and Ida B. Wells-Barnett) were able to find leadership positions in the NAACP, though black leaders were the minority in the organization for decades.

¹⁵¹ Mostern, *Autobiography and Black Identity Politics*, 73.

¹⁵² Born a slave in a Virginia log cabin in 1856, Washington was educated at Hampton Institute in Virginia under the tutelage of General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, the principal of Hampton. Hampton Institute had established a program of agricultural and industrial training that combined Protestant work ethics with Christian piety for Negroes in the South. Whites in surrounding communities approved of the industrial teachings of Hampton and it was here that Washington learned the doctrine of economic advancement combined with acceptance of disfranchisement and conciliation with the white South from General Samuel T. Armstrong. Washington taught at Hampton until 1881, when he was chosen to head a new school at Tuskegee that emphasized a military-industrial paradigm of education and embraced the masculine uplift program that had been gaining ground in the North.

¹⁵³ Washington seizes on the theme of friendship and notes, "I but convey to you...the sentiment of the masses of my race when I say that in no way have the value and manhood of the American Negro been more fittingly and generously recognized than by the managers of this magnificent Exposition at every stage of its progress. It is a recognition that will do more to cement the friendship of the two races than any occurrence since the dawn of our freedom" [Washington, "Atlanta Compromise," 185].

¹⁵⁴ Instead of chastising his audience for their racist white supremacy, he calls to them as fellow Christians and he asks them to "[c]ast down your bucket among my people, helping and encouraging them as you are doing on these grounds, and to education of head, hand, and heart, you

will find that they will buy your surplus land, make blossom the waste places in your fields, and run your factories” [in Washington, *Atlanta Compromise*,” 186].

¹⁵⁵ Washington, “*Atlanta Compromise*,” 186. Washington rhetorically constructs black-ness as meekness but he goes one step further to provide empirical evidence of black goodwill. He says, “As we have proved our loyalty to you in the past, in nursing your children, watching by the sick-bed of your mothers and fathers, and often following them with tear-dimmed eyes to their graves, so in the future, in our humble way, we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if need be, in defense of yours, interlacing our industrial, commercial, civil, and religious life with yours in a way that shall make the interests of both races one” [in Washington, *Atlanta Compromise*,” 186].

¹⁵⁶ Danny Champion and Waldo W. Braden argue that Washington’s depiction of race relations had profound consequences for race policy in America. He writes, “The ‘separate but equal’ idea, implied in the Atlanta speech, became the yardstick of American race relations for the next half century. A year after the speech, the Supreme Court cemented this doctrine into the law of the land. In a sense, that phrase, ‘separate but equal,’ was Washington’s answer to understand why he opposed integration. With that in mind it is easier to understand why he opposed segregation but never fought for the common use of facilities by both races. He opposed only the inequality in character and condition of the accommodations provided for the Negro” [Danny E. Champion and Waldo W. Braden, “Booker T. Washington and W.E. B. DuBois: A Study in Rhetorical Contrasts,” *Oratory in the New South*, ed. Waldo W. Braden (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 189]. See also Samuel R. Spencer, Jr., *Booker T. Washington and the Negro’s Place in American Life* (Boston, MA: Little and Brown, 1955), 104-5].

¹⁵⁷ Although he had originally supported Washington’s racial policies, his ideology changed between 1901 and 1903 to one less-accepting of accusations of degradation among non-educated newly freed blacks. In *Souls of Black Folk*, DuBois preempts his arguments about Washington’s ideological inadequacies with measured praise for the works that privileged black issues. In his essay, “Of Booker T. Washington and Others,” DuBois notes, “It would be unjust to Mr. Washington not to acknowledge that in several instances he has opposed movements in the south which were unjust to the

Negro; he sent memorials to the Louisiana and Alabama constitutional conventions, he has spoken against lynching, and in other ways has openly or silently set his influence against sinister schemes and unfortunate happenings” [in DuBois, *Souls*, 47]. DuBois is conscious of his readership and is careful to provide the positive feedback necessitated by his standing as a revered black intellectual of the early twentieth century and by his commitment to support outspoken black activists.

¹⁵⁸ DuBois is self-consciously reflective about the degree to which his interactions with Washington are mediated for the public. But, DuBois continues, “Notwithstanding this, it is equally true to assert that on the whole the distinct impression left by Mr. Washington’s propaganda is, first, that the South is justified in its present attitude toward the Negro because of the Negro’s degradation; secondly, that the prime cause of the Negro’s failure to rise more quickly is his wrong education in the past; and, thirdly, that his future rise depends primarily on his own efforts. Each of these propositions is a dangerous half-truth” [in DuBois, *Souls*, 47].

¹⁵⁹ DuBois, *Souls*, 47.

¹⁶⁰ Lewis Killian notes that even at the time, DuBois was perceived as the more radical of the two men: “At the time of its formation in 1909 the NAACP was regarded in many quarters as a radical, extremist organization. It encompasses the earlier Niagara Movement whose manifesto was described by Kelly Miller, a prominent black intellectual, as ‘scarcely distinguishable from a wild frantic shriek’” [Lewis Killian, “The Significance of Extremism in the Black Revolution,” *Social Problems* 20 (Summer 1972), 45]. The radicalism of the NAACP was also enhanced by the inclusion of W.E.B. DuBois, whose mere position on the staff “branded the organization as radical from the beginning” mostly due to his scathing critique of Booker T. Washington’s accommodationist program and insistence on technical training [John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 447]. Killian notes that Marcus Garvey’s Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was also seen as radical, because white authorities in New York kept him under constant surveillance along with the FBI. The NAACP applauded Garvey’s eventual deportation because they saw his emigrationist philosophy as damaging to their racial uplift programs” [Killian, “Black Extremism,” 45; C. Eric Lincoln, “Black Nationalism: The Minor Leagues,” *The Afro-American*, ed. Ross K. Baker (New York, NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1970), 288-91].

¹⁶¹ McAdam, *Political Process*, 94-7.

¹⁶² *Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World*,

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/garvey/filmmore/ps_rights.html (accessed: 28 September 2005)

¹⁶³ Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 98-100.

¹⁶⁴ Jeffery O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2004), 192.

¹⁶⁵ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 39-40.

¹⁶⁶ On result of this advocacy was the rise of historically black colleges and universities which began their influential rise in the South [see McAdam, *Political Processes*, 101-3].

¹⁶⁷ This was due to the fact that black Americans realized the power of numbers in social protest and the impact that mass mobilization had on recruitment when mediated by the press.

¹⁶⁸ For many, their active nonviolence in the boycotts and sit-ins tried to “awaken a sense of moral shame in the opponent to achieve redemption and reconciliation” and often “involve[d] the willingness to love others, to attach forces of evil rather than individuals, and to forgive – merging Christian and Gandhian precepts” [in Blumberg, *Civil Rights*, 47].

¹⁶⁹ Sit-ins continued in some areas of the South until and even after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 declared segregation at lunch counters unlawful. In addition, the technique of the sit-ins was used to integrate other public facilities and became the impetus for the formation of SNCC [in Blumberg, *Civil Rights*, 76-80].

¹⁷⁰ Houston A. Baker, “Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere,” *The Black Public Sphere; A Public Culture Book* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 18.

¹⁷¹ Baker, “Critical Memory,” 18-19.

¹⁷² Sean Dennis Cashman writes that in 1966, “The African-American protest movement had once been a mainly Southern and integrated, Christian and optimistic movement working for civil rights. Now it was a largely Northern, urban, secular, and militant movement favoring black power. The movement was now far more radical in purpose and militant tactics than anything envisioned only

ten years earlier” [in Sean Dennis Cashman, *African-Americans and the Quest for Civil Rights, 1900-1990* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1991), 199].

¹⁷³ The rebellions in America’s cities were spurred by white-on-black violence or perceived harassment. In the case of Harlem, a white janitor turned a fire hose on a group of black youths. Watts was a much more sustained rebellion that was sparked by a white police officer pulling over a black motorist and administering a drunk driving test. The rebellion lasted six days during which thirty-four people were killed and 856 were injured. Estimates of the damage in Watts range from \$45 million to \$200 million [in Cashman, *Quest for Civil Rights*, 196-7]. Rebellion in America’s cities was a result of the isolation of blacks because of liberal calls for integration, among other factors, including violence and poverty [in Jack M. Bloom, *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), 209-10].

¹⁷⁴ See also Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 86.

¹⁷⁵ Wiegman, *American Anatomies*, 86.

¹⁷⁶ William L. Andrews, *African American Autobiography: A Collection of Critical Essays*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), 2. The interest in black intellectual production was fueled, in part, by the proliferation of black activist narratives produced between 1960 and 1975. Black Panther Eldridge Cleaver’s autobiography *Soul on Ice* (1968) was written in prison and includes the author’s thoughts on race and violence; the *New York Times* placed it among the year’s top 10 books. Cleaver’s book was hardly the only one to garner media attention. Former SNCC chairman H. Rap Brown’s autobiography *Die Nigger, Die!* (1969) went into seven printings in its first year alone due to the popularity of Brown’s testimony of life for a black man on the streets of America. Likewise, Black Panther George Jackson’s *Soledad Brother* (1970) provided a collection of his letters home from prison after serving over 10 years in prison for stealing seventy dollars. Widely read in prisons and by the black community, Jackson’s book showed the politicization of a black prison dealing with the racism of the penal system. Jackson’s friend and confidante, Angela Davis, was arrested as then-Governor Ronald Reagan tried to have her fired by the University of California (where she was a professor) for being a communist. *An Autobiography* by Angela Davis was published in

1974 and helped to explain the relationship between communism, black power and state-sanctioned violence. Although this is an abbreviated list of the memoirs, many autobiographies and other life writings that were published at the height of the modern civil rights movement, illustrate the extent to which activists were contemplating ideology, strategy, organization and identity as they demanded social change. These manifestos denounced American public policy, expressed collective rage at the violence directed at black and brown America, dealt with issues of gendered and raced identity and self-concept, told life stories and collective histories and provided a rationale for the radicalization of the civil rights movement beyond nonviolent integration.

¹⁷⁷ bell hooks writes, “Living in a society that is fundamentally anti-intellectual, it is difficult for committed intellectuals concerned with radical social change to affirm in an ongoing way that the work we do has meaningful impact” and “the work of intellectuals is rarely acknowledged as a form of activism, indeed more visible expressions of concrete activism...are considered more important to revolutionary struggle than the work of the mind” [bell hooks with Cornel West, *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1991), 148].

¹⁷⁸ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 2-3.

¹⁷⁹ Ogbar, *Black Power*, 3.

¹⁸⁰ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (2nd ed.), (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), 97-121.

¹⁸¹ Many of the successes of the civil rights movements were the result of international accusations of American hypocrisy during the Cold War.

¹⁸² Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers: Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002), 106.

End Notes: Chapter 2

¹ Pamela Irving Jackson and Leo Carroll, “Race and the War on Crime: The Sociopolitical Determinants of Municipal Police Expenditures in 90 non-Southern U.S. Cities,” *American Sociological Review* 46 (June 1981), 292. See also Paul M. Whisenand, “Equipping Men for Professional Development in the Police Service: The Federal Law Enforcement Assistance Act of

1965,” *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Political Science* 57 (June 1966): 223-7;

Robert F. Diegelman, “Federal financial Assistance for Crime Control: Lessons of the LEAA

Experience,” *The Journal of Law and Criminology*, 73 (Autumn 1982): 994-1011.

² Jackson and Carroll, “Race and the War on Crime,” 299. In Newark, New Jersey, police spent \$331,000 in 1967 alone to acquire “AR-15 rifles, barbed wire, armored cars, and high-intensity lights to blind snipers” for their riot control program [in A. C. Germann, “Community Policing: An Assessment,” *the Journal of Law, Criminology, and Police Science* 60 (March 1969), 89].

³ Robert M. Fogelson, “From Resentment to Confrontation: The Police, the Negroes, and the Outbreak of the Nineteen-Sixties Riots,” *Political Science Quarterly* 83 (June 1968), 217. See also Harlan Hahn and Joe R. Feagin, “Riot-Precipitating Police Practices: Attitudes in Urban Ghettos,” *Phylon* 31 (1970): 183-93; Harlan Hahn, “Ghetto Assessments of Police Protection and Authority,” *Law & Society Review* 6 (November 1971): 183-94; James W. Button, *Black Violence: Political Impact of the 1960s Riots* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).

⁴ Joseph C. Goulden, “Tooling Up For Repression: The Cops Hit the Jackpot,” *The Nation* (November 23, 1970): 520-33. One of the stipulations of the LEAA was that to qualify for federal funding, the state and local governments were required to provide matching funds. However, as the federal government matched 75 percent for programs designed for riot control and organized crime, and only 60 percent for action grants such as police-community relations programs, states matched funds for riot control [in Jackson and Carroll, “Race and the War on Crime,” 292]. The Kerner Commission provides its recommendations for the police to prepare for continuing urban rebellion between these pages [see also the *Report of The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), 267-91].

⁵ Fogelson, “From Resentment to Confrontation,” 221.

⁶ Fogelson, “From Resentment to Confrontation,” 222. In their review of the “law and order” policies of the Nixon regime, the Civil Rights Commission found that police brutality in the 1960s was both common and racialized and that black Americans consistently complained about the effects of police brutality in their communities [in Fogelson, “From Resentment to Confrontation,” 223].

⁷ Fogelson, “From Resentment to Confrontation,” 224-5.

⁸ Fogelson, "From Resentment to Confrontation," 226. In 1971, the *Duke Law Journal* reported that "Most individuals considering law enforcement as a career perceive this vocation as a prestigious step from their working class background toward middle class respectability and economic security. However, police candidates characteristically exhibit strong racial prejudice and early studies indicated that police recruits were often of below average intelligence. Most large city police departments now matriculate persons with a mean I.Q. of 100 to 105 although ninety-five percent of all police candidates have received no college training" [in "Socio-Legal Aspects of Racially Motivated Police Misconduct," *Duke Law Journal* (1971), 752]. Additionally, because neighbors and community members often shun police officers for fear that even casual references to entralegal behavior might endanger them, the police occupation is not just a job, but also "a lifestyle" [in "Socio-Legal Aspects of Racially Motivated Police Misconduct," *Duke Law Journal* (1971), 755]. Finally, because the police are a "semi-military organization" they harbor a "self-image of authoritarianism and forcibly rebuke any act challenging the integrity of such an image. This authoritarianism further alienates the police from society, thus accentuating police solidarity and the self-feeding process of authoritarianism" [in "Socio-Legal Aspects of Racially Motivated Police Misconduct," *Duke Law Journal* (1971), 756]. Germann adds that because police organizations are paramilitary, they created sycophantic relationship of superior-subordinate rather than profession-professional relationships "which are unified by mutual commitment to professional values" [in Germann, "Community Policing," 92].

⁹ Fogelson, "From Resentment to Confrontation," 226.

¹⁰ Headley writes, "For many years black and other Third World groups have been killed by the police at a rate much higher than for whites. Beginning with the post-bellum period (when the police in the Southern and border states readily replaced the slave patrols) up through the present, what we find is a systematic pattern of violent repression of the black working class" [in Bernard D. Headley, "Black Political Empowerment and Urban Crime," *Phylon* 46 (1985), 196]. The situation has not changed much in the modern era. Headley notes that "in 1971, 412 citizens were killed by the police; in 1972, 300; and by 1974 the figure increased to 375. Of these figures, Third World persons [including black Americans] were far more likely (about 10 times as likely) as whites to be victims"

[Headley, "Black Political Empowerment," 196-7].

¹¹ Black police were an anomaly in the United States during the 1960s. "In 1940 there were *no* black policemen in the five southern states containing the largest Negro populations, and as late as 1960 only 3.5 percent of all law enforcement personnel in the entire nation were non-Caucasian. By 1962, there were only 36 black state policemen throughout the entire United States, and 24 were located in Illinois" [in "Socio-Legal Aspects of Racially Motivated Police Misconduct," *Duke Law Journal* (1971), 759]. For a history of the creation of the New Jersey state police (est. 1922), see Milton Conover, "Police Developments: 1921-1924," *The American Political Science Review* 18 (1924), 773-781.

¹² Since Newark's black residents lived in neighborhoods that had been white only two decades earlier, nearly all of their apartments and stores were white-owned as well, which added to the racial tension in the city. The racial tensions in Newark were felt around the state as well and not only in the local police but in the state highway patrol and other branches of local law enforcement [in Headley, "Black Political Empowerment," 196-197].

¹³ William C. Kronholm, "Blue Power: The Threat of the Militant Policeman," *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Political Science* 63 (June 1972), 294. Kronholm cites organizations like the Law Enforcement Group (LEG) and the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association organized to intimidate judges they deemed "soft" on Black Power in cities like New York and Cleveland. See also Jerome H. Skolnick, *The Politics of Protest: A Staff Report to the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence*, (Washington D.C., 1969), 212.

¹⁴ Ruben G. Rumbaut and Egon Bittner, "Changing Conceptions of the Police Role: A Sociological Review," *Crime and Justice* 1 (1979), 247-8.

¹⁵ Jalil Muntaqim, *We Are Our Own Liberators: Selected Prison Writings*, (Montreal, Quebec: Abraham Guillen Press, Arm the Spirit, and the Anarchist Black Cross Federation, 2002), 29. Former BLA member Muntaqim notes that the underground BLA began organizing in late 1968 and early 1969, while the BPP was under attack by the FBI's COINTELPRO programs which caused the leadership split between Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver. He writes, "From Los Angeles, California, to Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, armed units were formed and trained in

rural areas, and caches were established in Oakland, San Francisco, Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia, Ohio and New York. Black Panther offices were established to formulate a political relationship with the Black masses in these and other communities across the country” [in Muntaqim, *We Are Our Own Liberators*, 29-30]. For the Justice Department-LEAA Task Force report on BLA activity see Muntaqim, *We Are Our Own Liberators*, 31-6.

¹⁶ For Shakur’s poem to Sundiata Acoli, see Assata Shakur, “Assata’s Poem for Sundiata,” *The Black Scholar* 29 (Summer 1999), 67.

¹⁷ At the scene, Sundiata Acoli was arrested and he was later convicted of the same crimes as Shakur. He is still a political prisoner.

¹⁸ Shakur’s aunt and lawyer, Evelyn Williams writes this about her poetry: “[She] wrote her poetry in blank verse, discounting rhyme as too artificial, and at fourteen was reading my Hart Crane and T. S. Eliot collections” [in Evelyn Williams, *Inadmissible Evidence: The Story of the African-American Trial Lawyer Who Defended the Black Liberation Army* (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books 1993, 10].

¹⁹ Stephen Butterfield, *Black Autobiography in America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1974), 218.

²⁰ Assata Shakur, “In Her Own Words: An Interview From Havana 1987,” Transcription by author, Freedom Archives Number C78.

²¹ This practice can be traced to the slave narratives penned, edited or published by abolitionists and are reminiscent of the preface of Amy Post in Harriet Jacobs’ *Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl* and other texts. It differs in one important way, however, in that those testifying for Shakur are black and revolutionary rather than the white liberals who controlled the production of slave narratives for their own goals.

²² Angela Davis, “Foreword,” *Assata: An Autobiography* (New York, NY: Lawrence Hill Books, 2001), xi.

²³ Helene Christol, “Militant Autobiography and the Case of Assata Shakur,” *Black Liberation in the Americas*, ed. Fritz Gysin and Christopher Mulvey (Munich, Germany: Lit Verlag, 2001), 134.

²⁴ Davis, "Foreword," x.

²⁵ Davis, "Foreword," xvi.

²⁶ Davis, "Foreword," xvi.

²⁷ Davis, "Foreword," xvi.

²⁸ Davis worked to free the Soledad Brothers, black prisoners held in California's Soledad Prison during the late 1960s. She befriended George Jackson, one of the prisoners who published his prison letters *Soledad Brother* and also an autobiographical text, *Blood in My Eye*. On August 7, 1970, during an abortive escape and kidnap attempt from Marin County's Hall of Justice, the trial judge and three people were killed, including Jackson's brother Jonathan in a shootout at the scene. Although not at the crime scene, Davis was implicated when police claimed that the guns used had been registered in her name. Davis went underground and was consequently listed on the FBI's Top 10 Most Wanted Criminals list (much like Shakur), sparking one of the most intensive manhunts in American history. Governor Ronald Reagan publicly vowed that Davis would never teach in California ever again due her membership in the Communist Party U.S.A. and her affiliation with Black Power organizations. She was captured in New York City in August 1970 but was released eighteen months later and cleared of all charges in 1972 by an all-white jury. During her incarceration, an international movement to Free Angela Davis gained incredible support and provided a model for activism surrounding political prisoners.

²⁹ Hinds, "Foreword," xi.

³⁰ Hinds, "Foreword," xvii.

³¹ Hinds, "Foreword," xvii.

³² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1977), 189-92.

³³ Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York, NY: Methuen, Inc., 1987), 125.

³⁴ Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, "The Autobiographical Manifesto," *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiographies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 194.

³⁵ Brodzki and Schenck, "The Autobiographical Manifesto," 194.

³⁶ Brodzki and Schenck, "The Autobiographical Manifesto," 195.

³⁷ Brodzki and Schenck, "The Autobiographical Manifesto," 195.

³⁸ Shakur, *Assata*, 83.

³⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 103.

⁴⁰ Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 151.

⁴¹ Celeste Schenck, "All of a Piece: Women's Poetry and Autobiography," in *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography*, ed. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 287.

⁴² Sidonie Smith, "The Autobiographical Manifesto: Identities, Temporalities, Politics," *Autobiography and Questions of Gender*, ed. Shirley Neuman (London, UK: Frank Cass & Co., 1991), 187.

⁴³ Schenck, "All of a Piece," 304-6.

⁴⁴ Caren Kaplan, "Resisting Autobiography: Out-law Genres and Transnational Feminist Subjects," *Women, Autobiography, Theory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 125. She adds, "The destabilizing effect of testimony comes through reading as well as through writing; that is, our responsibility as critics lies in opening the categories so that the process of collaboration extends to the strategies envisioned by the text for reception" [Kaplan, "Resisting Autobiography," 125].

⁴⁵ This poem was reprinted in *CovertAction Quarterly* 65 (Fall 1998), 37.

⁴⁶ Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography* (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), 1.

⁴⁷ Nancy L. Arnez, "Black Poetry: A Necessary Ingredient for Survival and Liberation," *Journal of Black Studies* 11 (September 1980), 17.

⁴⁸ Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1995), 24.

⁴⁹ Eldridge Cleaver, *Post-Prison Writings and Speeches* (New York, NY: Random House, 1969), 21-2.

⁵⁰ Shakur, *Assata*, 1.

⁵¹ As Barbara Harlow notes, "it remains the case that the writers and critics writing within the context of organized resistance movements comprehend the role of culture and cultural resistance as

part of the larger struggle for liberation” [Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 10].

⁵² Négritude is a Pan-African literary movement on the part of French-speaking African and Caribbean writers who lived in Paris during the 1930s, 40s, and 50s including Césaire, Damas, Senghor and others. As a movement, it decried colonialism of the European power in Africa and elsewhere and sought to raise consciousness through the production of revolutionary writings. The concepts of Négritude were embraced throughout the twentieth century by Afrikan Liberation movements, which utilized the form and style to mobilize the masses against neo-colonial and imperialist projects in the Third World. Eugene Perkins writes that the poetry of the Afrikan Liberation Movements, what Fanon has called a “literature of combat,” is “instilled with a national political consciousness that is directed at the masses to give them inspiration and courage to carry on their struggle against oppression. In fact, one might say that this political poetry portrays the struggles of the Afrikan Liberation struggles for it vividly embraces the ideological forces behind them and describes the commitments the people must make to win their freedom” [in Eugene Perkins, “Literature of Combat: Poetry of Afrikan Liberation Movements,” *Journal of Black Studies* 7 (December 1976), 226-6].

For Césaire, Négritude was never a philosophy, as he has said that he never intended to write a treatise on it. He says, “So if Senghor and I spoke of Négritude, it was because we were in a century of exacerbated Eurocentrism, a fantastic ethnocentrism, that enjoyed a guiltless conscience. No one questioned all that – the superiority of European civilization, its universal vocation – no one was ashamed of being a colony. Europe really had nothing on its conscience and the colonized readily accepted this vision of the world; they had interiorized the colonizer’s vision of themselves. In other words, we were in a century dominated by the theory of assimilation.... So, Négritude was for us a way of asserting ourselves” [Aimé Césaire, in Charles H. Rowell, “It is Through Poetry That One Copes with Solitude: An Interview with Aimé Césaire,” *Callaloo* 38 (Winter 1989), 55].

⁵³ Perkins notes, “Sekou Toure, Amilcar Cabral, Eduardo Mondlane, Marcelino Dos Santos, Agostinho Neto, and even Patrice Lumumba are but a few examples of Afrikan Liberation leaders who have also gained recognition as poets” and as a fellow Third World writer, Shakur’s work falls squarely into the canon of writings produced by these liberation intellectuals [in Perkins, “Combat

Poetry,” 228]. Harlow adds that many liberation poets “like the Nicaraguan Tomas Borge, Dennis Brutus of South Africa, or Mahmud Darwish from Palestine, have suffered long periods of detention and torture in the prisons of the colonizer. They have also, as in the case of Blah Khan, carried guns on the battlefield as active partisans in the national liberation fronts” [Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 39].

⁵⁴ Shakur, *Assata*, 18.

⁵⁵ Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1.

⁵⁶ Shakur, *Assata*, 19.

⁵⁷ Shakur, *Assata*, 20.

⁵⁸ Shakur, *Assata*, 21.

⁵⁹ Shakur, *Assata*, 23.

⁶⁰ Shakur, *Assata*, 30.

⁶¹ Shakur, *Assata*, 32.

⁶² Additionally, Shakur did quite a bit of work with the children’s programs in the BPP, which were designed to teach children about black pride.

⁶³ For more reading on the diffusion of militancy and cultural identification, see Doug McAdam, “‘Initiator’ and ‘Spin-off’ Movements: Diffusion Processes in Protest Cycles,” *Repertoires and Cycles of Collective Action*, ed. Mark Traugott (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 217-39; David Strang and John W. Meyer, “Institutional Conditions for Diffusion” *Theory and Society* 22 (August 1993): 487-511.

⁶⁴ Shakur, *Assata*, 159.

⁶⁵ Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 33.

⁶⁶ Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 33.

⁶⁷ Sigmund Ro, “Desecrators’ and ‘Necromancers’: Black American Writers and Critics in the Nineteen-Sixties and the Third World Perspective,” *Callaloo* 25 (Autumn 1985), 573.

⁶⁸ Shakur, *Assata*, 240.

⁶⁹ Shakur, *Assata*, 240.

⁷⁰ She writes at length about white liberals and says, “I have never really understood what a

‘liberal is, though since i have heard ‘liberals’ express every conceivable opinion on every conceivable subject. As far as i can tell, you have the extreme right, who are fascist, racist capitalist dogs like Ronald Reagan, who come right out and let you know where they’re coming from. And on the opposite end, you have the left, who are supposed to be committed to justice, equality and human rights. And somewhere between those two points is the liberal. As far as i’m concerned, ‘liberal’ is the most meaningless word in the dictionary. History has shown me that as long as some white middle-class people can live high on the hog, take vacations in Europe, send their children to private schools, and reap the benefits of their white skin privileges, then they are ‘liberals.’ But when times get hard and money gets tight, they pull off that liberal mask and you think you’re talking to Adolf Hitler. They feel sorry for the so-called underprivileged just as long as they can maintain their own privileges” [in Shakur, *Assata*, 132-3].

⁷¹ Shakur, *Assata*, 320.

⁷² Sagri Dhariyam, “Artifacts for Survival”: Remapping the Contours of Poetry with Audre Lorde,” *Feminist Studies* 18 (Summer 1992), 247.

⁷³ John Hope Franklin, *The Victim as Criminal and Artist: Literature from the American Prison* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press), 251. He adds, “The poetry now being written by Black prisoners recapitulates the history of Afro-American music and song, tightly integrates it with a poetic analysis of the development of the United States as a society, and extrapolates toward a liberation both in poetic form and social life” [in Franklin, *The Victim*, 251].

⁷⁴ Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 45.

⁷⁵ Shakur, *Assata*, 192.

⁷⁶ Dhairyam, “Remapping the Contours,” 240.

⁷⁷ Dhairyam, “Remapping the Contours,” 232.

⁷⁸ Shakur’s associations with black nationalist organizations included the Golden Drums, Black Panther Party, and Black Liberation Army.

⁷⁹ Shakur, *Assata*, 33.

⁸⁰ Shakur, *Assata*, 33.

⁸¹ Shakur, *Assata*, 175.

⁸² Earl Conrad, "I Bring You the Sesquicentennial of Harriet Tubman's Birth," *The Black Scholar* 1 (January/February 1970), 4. Conrad calls Tubman "a life long militant" and "the godmother of all women who would be fighters for their rights and for human rights" [in Conrad, "Harriet Tubman," 7].

⁸³ Shakur's choice to highlight Harriet Tubman serves to align her with this revolutionary heroine in a way which feminizes black resistance history and the move appears to have worked because in books like Stephanie Stokes Oliver's *Daily Cornbread: 365 Ingredients for a Healthy Mind, Body and Soul*, Shakur is compared to both Angela Davis and Harriet Tubman [in Oliver, *Daily Cornbread: 365 Ingredients for a Healthy Mind, Body and Soul* (New York, NY: Broadway, 2002), 17].

⁸⁴ Shakur, *Assata*, 175.

⁸⁵ Shakur, *Assata*, 181.

⁸⁶ She alternately expresses her dissatisfaction by spelling "amerikkka" highlight the role of white supremacy and the Ku Klux Klan in the nation. For a short discussion on New African grammar, see Chokwe Lumumba, "Repression and Black Liberation," *The Black Scholar* 5 (October 1973), 36].

⁸⁷ Arnez, "Black Poetry," 18.

⁸⁸ Arnez, "Black Poetry," 19.

⁸⁹ Kenneth McNeil and James D. Thompson, "The Regeneration of Social Organizations," *American Sociological Review* 36 (August 1971), 629.

⁹⁰ Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1986), 75.

⁹¹ Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1992), 190-2.

⁹² Susan Stanford Friedman, "Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse," *Feminist Studies* 13 (Spring 1987), 49.

⁹³ This particular aspect of the metaphor is quite important for *Assata* since the book was printed in the midst of large-scale discussion of birth control, natalism, and the black family structure

in the United States.

⁹⁴ Friedman, "Childbirth," 76.

⁹⁵ Christol, "Militant Autobiography," 140-1.

⁹⁶ Shakur, *Assata*, 17. Her poem for Sundiata appeared in the Summer 1999 issue of *Black Scholar*.

⁹⁷ Shakur, *Assata*, 16.

⁹⁸ Shakur, *Assata*, 17.

⁹⁹ Shakur, *Assata*, 130.

¹⁰⁰ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 138.

¹⁰¹ Einwohner et al. note that two frequent images of femininity are often featured in social movements that are attempting to recover women's voices, either in the organization or outside of it: "mother and (hetero)sexual partner. In these interpretations, women can be represented as asexual or sexual beings, and as affiliated with children or with men" [in Rachel L. Einwohner, Jocelyn A. Hollander and Toska Olson, "Engendering Social Movements: Cultural Images and Movement Dynamics," *Gender and Society* 14 (October 2000), 683].

¹⁰² Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African American Women in the Civil Rights Movement* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997), 42.

¹⁰³ Shakur writes, "I thought about what Zayd had always told me. 'While you're alive, girl, you betta live.' 'I am about life,' i said to myself. 'I'm gonna live as hard as i can and as full as i can until i die. And i'm not letting these parasites, these oppressors, these greedy racist swine make me kill my children in my mind, before they are even born. I'm going to live and i'm going to live and i'm going to love Kamau, and, if a child comes from that union, i'm going to rejoice. Because our children are our futures and i believe in the future and in the strength and righteousness of our struggle'" [in Shakur, *Assata*, 93].

¹⁰⁴ Shakur, *Assata*, 123.

¹⁰⁵ Shakur, *Assata*, 124.

¹⁰⁶ Shakur, *Assata*, 126.

¹⁰⁷ Shakur, *Assata*, 126-7.

¹⁰⁸ Christol, "Militant Autobiography," 141.

¹⁰⁹ Assata Shakur, "Partial Interview with Assata Shakur at Riker's Island Women's House of Detention," *Assata Speaks... and the People Speak on Assata*, ed. Bibi Angola (Bibi Angola: 1980), 7.

¹¹⁰ Elizabeth Alexander, "Can You Be BLACK and Look at This: Reading the Rodney King Video(s)," *The Black Public Sphere: A Public Culture Book*, ed. Black Public Sphere Collective (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 87. This essay first appeared in *Public Culture* 7 (Fall 1994).

¹¹¹ Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck, "Introduction," *Life/Lines: Theorizing Women's Autobiography*, ed. Bella Brodzki and Celeste Schenck (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 11.

¹¹² This strategic silence is actually quite pragmatic. Jalil Muntaqim writes this of the BLA, "It is our policy not to reveal the names of comrades who have acted within our organizational underground formations" [Muntaqim, *We Are Our Own Liberators*, 37].

¹¹³ Shakur, *Assata* 257-8.

¹¹⁴ Shakur, *Assata*, 259.

¹¹⁵ Shakur, *Assata*, 259.

¹¹⁶ Shakur, *Assata*, 259.

¹¹⁷ Christol, "Militant Autobiography," 141.

¹¹⁸ Christol, "Militant Autobiography," 141.

¹¹⁹ Bernice Johnson Reagon, "My Black Mother and Sisters, or, On Beginning a Cultural Autobiography," *Feminist Studies* 8 (Spring 1982), 81.

¹²⁰ Reagon, "My Black Mother and Sisters," 82.

¹²¹ Marla F. Frederick, *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 95.

¹²² Frederick, *Between Sundays*, 95.

¹²³ Shakur, *Assata*, 84.

¹²⁴ Friedman, "Childbirth," 66.

¹²⁵ Alice Walker, *In Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, (San Diego: Harcourt Brace

Jovanovich, 1983), 307.

¹²⁶ *Assata Speaks... and the People Speak on Assata*, ed. Bibi Angola (Bibi Angola: 1980).

¹²⁷ Sonia Sanchez, "Foreword," *Assata Speaks... and the People Speak on Assata*, ed. Bibi Angola (Bibi Angola: 1980), i.

¹²⁸ In an interview from Cuba, Shakur also discusses the mistakes of the BLA. She says, "One of the mistakes we made was thinking that we might not live until the next day. We didn't take into account that we had to build families that we had to build strong relationships with each other. We had to make a way to educate our children, and have them not be isolated and not grow up alone feeling different from other children, but to have community, a safe place where they could express themselves, where they could have children their age who were politically conscious. I think many of our children grew up feeling very isolated, not having a sense of community [in Shakur, "Assata Shakur in Cuba," 32-3]. Even Shakur's conception of the mistakes made by black liberation activists are feminized and she includes a lengthy rumination on the children of black liberation activists.

¹²⁹ Elizabeth Alexander makes a similar claim about the Rodney King video [see Alexander, "Rodney King," 81-98].

¹³⁰ Paul Gready, "Autobiography and the 'Power of Writing': Political Prison Writing in the Apartheid Era," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19 (September 1993), 495.

¹³¹ Shakur, *Assata*, 220-7.

¹³² The Newton-Cleaver split (1970) was borne out of the extensive political repression of the BPP by COINTELPRO and the increasingly paranoid expulsions of Party members by Newton. The official split happened while Newton was doing a television interview about the Panthers with Eldridge, who was on the phone from Algiers, where he was in exile. Cleaver expressed his disdain for Newton's leadership since his exile and he demanded the resignation of Chief of Staff, David Hilliard. Cleaver also criticized the children's breakfast program, which he saw as reformist, and demanded a more confrontational strategy. Newton expelled Cleaver from the Central Committee and Cleaver began the Black Liberation Army (which had already been created by Alprentice "Bunchy" Carter and was underground).

¹³³ She details her exposure to early black protests (Rosa Parks, Little Rock, etc.) and her

early thoughts on police brutality. She writes, “And each year i would sit in front of that box, watching my people being attacked by white mobs, being bitten by dogs, beaten and water-hosed by police, arrested, and murdered” [in Shakur, *Assata*, 73].

¹³⁴ Shakur, *Assata*, 139.

¹³⁵ Shakur, *Assata*, 139.

¹³⁶ Shakur writes that the BLA “was not a centralized, organized group with a common leadership and chain of command. Instead, there were various organizations and collectives working out of different cities, and in some of the larger cities there were often several groups working independently of each other” [in Shakur, *Assata*, 241].

¹³⁷ Shakur, *Assata*, 241. She notes, “While i was underground i made it a habit never to remember addresses. I used landmarks to remember a place, and i never had trouble locating any place i had been to once, but even if i visited it a hundred times, i never looked at the address” [in Shakur, *Assata*, 82]. This really serves as the only time Shakur discusses her life underground and at no point in *Assata* does she detail or explain her black liberation activities.

¹³⁸ Akinyele Omowale Umoja, “Repression Breeds Resistance: The Black Liberation Army and the Radical Legacy of the Black Panther Party,” *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party*, ed. Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001), 13.

¹³⁹ Gready, “Political Prison Writing,” 498.

¹⁴⁰ Shakur, *Assata*, 10. Her aunt and lawyer, Evelyn Williams describes the scene at the hospital after the shootout. She writes, “The several days of unconcealed hatred shown by the state troopers had not prepared me for their army force at the hospital. [Assata’s] room was located at the end of a long corridor, which was lined on each side with uniformed troopers, hats tilted forward over their eyes, in full riot gear, with shotguns pointed at me, their fingers poised on the triggers...I told her we would try to get permission for a private doctor to examine her. But her primary concern was the removal of the state troopers from her room – she told me they were threatening to kill her” [Williams, *Inadmissible Evidence*, 80-1].

¹⁴¹ Shakur, *Assata*, 10.

¹⁴² The trooper continued, the white race had invented everything because they were smart

and worked hard, that other races wanted to riot and use terrorism to take everything the white race had worked so hard to get” [in Shakur, *Assata*, 10]. For a longer historical discussion of the political affiliations of police forces in the KKK and other neo-Nazi, white supremacist groups, see Robin D. Barnes, “Blue by Day and White by Knight: Regulating the Political Affiliations of Law Enforcement and Military Personnel,” *Iowa Law Review* 81 (1996): 1079-1172.

¹⁴³ Shakur, *Assata*, 65.

¹⁴⁴ Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 122.

¹⁴⁵ Shakur, *Assata*, 64-5.

¹⁴⁶ See also Angela Y. Davis and Gina Dent, “A Conversation on Gender, Globalization, and Punishment,” *Signs* (Summer 2001): 1235-1241.

¹⁴⁷ Gready, “Political Prisoner Writing,” 490.

¹⁴⁸ Assata Shakur, Transcription by author, Untitled Interview, Freedom Archives No. 84 (Havana, Cuba: 1987). She also adds, “I think that the way that my case was presented, for example, in the press in the U.S. made me clearly aware that, you know, that the portrait that was given to the press was basically taken from the files and the imagination of the police department, the FBI, and I mean, that person that they were talking about in the newspapers and on television didn’t have any relationship to me” [in Shakur, “Untitled Interview”].

¹⁴⁹ Shakur, *Assata* 181.

¹⁵⁰ This letter was reprinted in the October 1973 edition of *The Black Scholar*, pages 16-18 as well as in Shakur’s manifesto.

¹⁵¹ Shakur, *Assata*, 50.

¹⁵² Shakur, *Assata*, 50

¹⁵³ Shakur, *Assata*, 51.

¹⁵⁴ Shakur, *Assata*, 51.

¹⁵⁵ Shakur indicts the white supremacist violence of the nation but she also indicts the imperialism inherent in Western culture and history, premised upon slavery and theft, built on the backs of stolen peoples. She says, “They call us thieves and bandits. They say we steal. But it was not we who stole millions of Black people from the continent of Africa. We were robbed of our

language, of our Gods, of our culture, of our human dignity, of our labor, and of our lives” [Shakur, *Assata*, 51].

¹⁵⁶ Shakur, *Assata*, 52.

¹⁵⁷ Christol, “Militant Autobiography,” 135.

¹⁵⁸ Christol, “Militant Autobiography,” 135.

¹⁵⁹ Gready, “Political Prison Writing,” 499.

¹⁶⁰ Margo V. Perkins, *Autobiography as Activism: Three Black Women of the Sixties* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 10-11.

¹⁶¹ Assata Shakur, “Assata Shakur: A Revolutionary Life,” *CovertAction Quarterly* 65 (Fall 1998), 42.

¹⁶² Shakur, “A Revolutionary Life,” 42.

End Notes: Chapter 3

¹ Daniel R. Williams, *Executing Justice: An Inside Account of the Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), 10.

² Williams, *Executing Justice*, 6-7.

³ George W. Corner, “The Black Coalition: An Experiment in Racial Cooperation, Philadelphia, 1968,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 120 (June 15, 1976), 178.

⁴ Dave Lindorff, *Killing Time: An Investigation into the Death Row Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2003), 33. Lindorff writes, “Alfonzo Girdano, Gary Wakshul, Edward Quinn, Thomas Ryan, Louis Maier, Joseph C. Gioffre, Richard Herron, Bernard Small, James Carlini, Jon DeBenedetto, Joseph DePerri, James Martin, Andrew Kelly. Joseph Alvaro, Abe Schwartz, John Smith and Leo Ryan have three things in common: all were Philadelphia policemen with careers ranging from a lifetime to as few as five years. All played roles in the arrest or investigation of Mumia Abu-Jamal following the shooting death of Police Officer Daniel Faulkner. All were disciplined, indicted for crimes, found guilty of committing acts of corruption or brutality, or resigned from the department under a cloud of suspicion after being named by corrupt officers” [in Lindorff, *Killing Time*, 33].

⁵ Lindorff, *Killing Rage*, 34. The *Philadelphia Inquirer* referred to the city as a “petri dish of

corruption” and described the police corruption that was, for many years, cloaked in a “conspiracy of silence” among officers [in John Dombrink, “The Touchables: Vice and Police Corruption in the 1980s,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 51 (Winter 1988), 201]. The corruption in Philadelphia was hardly isolated and the cases of police corruption in the city “revealed sophisticated networks of corruption grafted on to the police command structure itself” that can be traced to the “very beginning of the police department” [in Dombrink, “The Touchables,” 209, 211].

By 1981, the focus on misconduct in the Philadelphia police force intensified. Lindorff adds, “The U.S. Attorney’s Office in Philadelphia, with the blessing of the U.S. Justice Department in Washington (then part of the ardently law-and-order Regan Administration), was again focusing on the Philadelphia police. This time with a probe of corruption in the Sixth Precinct and the entire Central Division...the very jurisdiction where Faulkner’s shooting took place” [in Lindorff, *Killing Time*, 35]. By 1982 the indictments emerged and over the next couple of years, over thirty officers in the division were convicted of misconduct, including high-ranking officers [in Lindorff, *Killing Time*, 35]. A full third of those prosecuted by the Department of Justice were involved in Mumia Abu-Jamal’s prosecution and helped to cast him as an unrepentant Black Panther, as a cop killer and as a menace to society.

⁶ The case against the Philadelphia police was dropped in December 1979, though not for lack of evidence. Instead, the case was dropped because it was seen as outside of the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice.

⁷ Terry Bisson, *On A Move: The Story of Mumia Abu-Jamal* (Sussex, UK: Plough Publishing House, 2000), 20.

⁸ Bisson, *On A Move*, 20.

⁹ Rizzo lost his appeal for a charter amendment that would have enabled him to run in 1980 but was defeated by “a coalition of fed-up Philadelphia businessmen, bankers, lawyers, church groups, black organizations and newspapers – including the American Jewish Committee, the Chamber of Commerce, the Americans for Democratic Action, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom and the Gay Alliance” and 20,000 more votes were cast on the issue of the charter question than in the vote for governor” [in “A Philadelphia Success Story,” *The Washington Post*, Sunday, Final

Ed. (November 12, 1978), B6].

¹⁰ Daniel L. Skoler, "There is More To Crime Control Than the 'Get Tough' Approach," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* 739 (September 1971), 30.

¹¹ Bisson, *On a Move*, 21.

¹² Lindorff writes, "He ordered a brutal charge with a shout recorded by television news cameras: 'Get their black asses!' The ensuing police riot led to dozens of injuries, as both high school and junior high school students were clubbed, kicked, stomped and beaten by Rizzo's finest" [in Lindorff, *Killing Time*, 38].

¹³ Frank Donner adds, "The evidence is quite clear that as early as the summer of 1967, the CD had access to a supply of informers, sponsored and paid by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. More important, collaboration between the FBI and the Philadelphia police in destructive counterintelligence initiatives against the Philadelphia black activists was used as a model for the bureau's aggressive intelligence program (COINTELPRO) in this sector, begun in August 1967 and expanded in February the next year" [in Frank Donner, *Protectors of Privilege: Red Squads and Police Repression in Urban America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 205].

¹⁴ Van Gosse and Kavita Philip, "Mumia Abu-Jamal and the Social Wage of Whiteness," *Radical History Review* (Fall 2001), 7.

¹⁵ Kathleen Cleaver, "The Black Power Movement: Self-Determination, Transformation, and Sabotage," *Keynote Address at the Race, Roots, and Resistance: Revisiting the Legacies of Black Power Conference* (Urbana-Champaign, IL: March 31, 2006).

¹⁶ K. L. Broad, "Social Movement Selves," *Sociological Perspectives* 45 (Autumn 2002), 318.

¹⁷ Broad, "Social Movement Selves," 319.

¹⁸ Broad, "Social Movement Selves," 319. See also Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, "The Self in a World of Going Concerns," *Symbolic Interaction* 23 (2000): 95-115; William A. Gamson, "Commitment and Agency in Social Movements," *Sociological Forum* 6 (1996): 390-407; Scott Hunt, "Social Psychology and Narrative Identity in a Postmodern World," *Perspectives on Social Problems* 12 (2000), 255-90; David A. Snow and Doug McAdam, "Identity Work Processes in the Contest of Social Movements: Clarifying the Identity/Movement Nexus," *Self, Identity and Social*

Movements, ed. S. Stryker et. al (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000): 41-67.

¹⁹ Richard A. Couto, "Narrative, Free Space, and Political Leadership in Social Movements," *The Journal of Politics* 55 (February 1993), 58.

²⁰ Couto, "Narrative," 59.

²¹ Couto, "Narrative," 60.

²² Arthur P. Dudden, "Nostalgia and the American," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 22 (Spring 1998), 516.

²³ Verta Taylor, "Mobilizing for Change in a Social Movement Society," *Contemporary Sociology* 29 (January 2000), 220.

²⁴ Walter Fisher, "Narration as Human Communication Paradigm: The Case of Public Moral Argument," *Communication Monographs* 51 (1984), 2.

²⁵ James Boyd White, "Law as Rhetoric, Rhetoric as Law: The Arts of Cultural and Communal Life," *University of Chicago Law Review* 52 (1985), 689.

²⁶ White, "Law as Rhetoric," 692. White continues, "Law always operates through speakers located in particular times and places speaking to actual audiences about real people; its language is continuous with ordinary language; it always operates by narrative; it is not conceptual in its structure; it is perpetually reaffirmed or rejected in a social process; and it contains a system of internal translation by which it can reach a range of hearers. All these things mark it as a rhetorical system" [in White, "Law as Rhetoric," 692].

²⁷ Anthony V. Alfieri, "Race Prosecutors, Race Defenders," *Georgetown Law Journal* 89 (2001): 2229.

²⁸ Austin Sarat, "Narrative Strategy and Death Penalty Advocacy," *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review* 31 (1996): 356.

²⁹ Sarat, "Narrative Strategy," 356.

³⁰ Sarat, "Narrative Strategy," 362.

³¹ Sarat, "Narrative Strategy," 364.

³² The pervasiveness of what Alfieri and others have labeled "race-talk" codifies the

narratives for the landscape of the courts and also normalizes racial, classed and gendered stereotypes, which makes challenging these stories incredibly difficult. Alfieri writes, “Within the narrow constraints of the criminal justice system, defense lawyers find scarce opportunity to contest the dominant narratives embedded in laws, institutional practices, and legal relations, even when those narratives inscribe negative racial stereotypes, such as the image of the black male as a social deviant.” Often, “lawyers believe there is no permanent spillover of racial identity or imagery from the private domain of law to the public domain of society. The apparent absence of spillover frees criminal lawyers to use narratives of racial deviance in telling private defense stories without consideration of the potential public injury to group or community racial identity” [Anthony Alfieri, “Defending Racial Violence,” *Columbia Law Review* 95 (June 1996), 1305-6].

³³ Alfieri, “Defending Racial Violence,” 1305-6.

³⁴ Alfieri, “Defending,” 1309. Alfieri explains the mobilization of these tropes: “The presence of deviant racial imagery in criminal defense narratives is not simply a function of overzealous advocacy; it is a basic, essentializing tendency of racialized storytelling. Because that tendency is naturalized by the content of legal discourse and the conduct of legal relations, lawyers overlook the spillover effects of deviant imagery.... Lawyers’ neglect of the destructive spillover effects of race-talk discloses unreflective deliberative judgment. Criminal defense lawyers display unreflective judgment when they participate in rigid modes of formalist and instrumentalist deliberation. Formalist deliberation treats racial deviance as a neutral and objective category of description. To a formalist, young black males are deviant. Instrumentalist deliberation asserts racial deviance for strategic reasons: to win an acquittal or to gain a favorable plea bargain. To an instrumentalist, young black males are made to appear deviant, whether or not they are in fact deviant. Lawyers often engage in formalist and instrumentalist deliberation simultaneously. Consideration of the integrity of a person or community of color, and the harm posed by race-talk, falls outside both modes of deliberation” [in Alfieri, “Defending,” 1310-11].

³⁵ Alfieri, “Defending,” 1308. It is, of course, also true that the media, in particular, is also crucial in reversing sentences by exposing wrongful convictions. See Rob Warden, “The Revolutionary Role of Journalism in Identifying and Rectifying Wrongful Convictions,” *University of*

Missouri – Kansas City Law Review 70 (2002): 803-46.

Television programs like *COPS*, movies like *Training Day*, and shows like *Law and Order* or *CSI* help to preserve the static nature of narratives about police officers, indigent criminals of color, and courtroom procedure. The public can participate in this spectacle at will, thereby removing them from the participation in real legal drama. In the case of an actual “crime,” public participation in this competition for narrative primacy is encouraged in the trial phase, which is often carefully orchestrated by the state and the mass media.

³⁶ The valorization of police officers is most evident in the success of the FOX show *COPS*, which has had one of the longest runs of any show in the history of television, currently in its eighteenth season. In the show, police officers chase, capture and arrest mostly indigent Americans for petty crimes, drug use, domestic violence and theft. In each episode, the police officers are clearly the figures that the audience is asked to sympathize with and root for and with the show airing on FOX, FX, Court TV and local stations in syndication, there are ample opportunities for the police officers to be reified. On the *COPS* website, producers note that the only “cops” who work on the show are “the brave men and women in front of the cameras that risk their lives every day to protect us” [*COPS* website, <http://www.cops.com/cpfaq.asp>, (accessed 27 May 2006)]. See also Naomi Mezey and Mark C. Niles, “Screening the Law: Ideology and Law in American Popular Culture,” *The Columbia Journal of Law & the Arts* 28 (2005): 91-185; David R. Dow, “Fictional Documentaries and Truthful Fictions: The Death Penalty in Recent American Film,” *Constitutional Commentary* 17 (2000): 511-53; Anthony Chase, “Civil Action Cinema,” *Michigan State University – Detroit College of Law Review* 1999 (1999): 945-57.

³⁷ Robin K. Magee, “The Myth of the Good Cop and the Inadequacy of Fourth Amendment Remedies for Black Men: Contrasting Presumptions of Innocence and Guilt,” *Capital University Law Review* 23 (1994), 157. Magee persuasively argues that the good cop paradigm “is an explicit premise of the exclusionary rule and is explicitly revealed through the Supreme Court’s deliberate and articulated blindness to bad cops in cases raising issues of pretext” [Magee, “Good Cop,” 161]. Likewise, the Court’s “increasing deference to police judgments and its expansive allowance of discretionary authority to police” also illustrate how pervasive the good cop bias is within

contemporary jurisprudence. She adds, “the good cop paradigm and its effects on factual and constitutional deliberations incorporates considerations that deny privileges to black males and promotes and anti-black male bias” that often contributes to “anti-defendant sentiment” in court [Magee, “Good Cop,” 216-17].

³⁸ Magee, “Good Cop,” 214-6. Ultimately, “the good cop paradigm gives rise to pro-police and anti-black male bias and serves to disadvantages black males in proceedings where claims of police brutality, corruption, and misconduct are raised” [in Magee, “Good Cop,” 217]. The problem of the myth of the good cop can “arise in both civil and criminal trials, and may relate to establishing either the credibility of police or the veracity of the black male defendant, victim, witness or attorney” and “[t]hese forces interact in a myriad of ways to undermine a black male’s ability to present an effective defense against criminal charges or a successful claim for damages sustained from police abuse” [Magee, “Good Cop,” 217].

³⁹ The local and national media has utilized outraged widow, Maureen Faulkner, to make claims about Mumia Abu-Jamal’s guilt. For more on the use of narratives and stories from the families of victims, see Samuel R. Gross and Daniel Matheson, “Victims and the Death Penalty: Inside and Outside the Courtroom: What They Say at the End: Capital Victims’ Families and the Press,” *Cornell Law Review* 88 (2003): 486-516.

⁴⁰ Churchill, “Third World,” 4.

⁴¹ See *Mumia Abu-Jamal: A Case for Reasonable Doubt?*, Dir. John Edington, HBO films, 1996.

⁴² See http://www.academia.org/store/cop_killer_description.html ; accessed May 30, 2006. Just a single Google™ search string of “Mumia Abu-Jamal cop killer” returned 41,600 hits.

⁴³ Susan Bandes, “Patterns of Injustice: Police Brutality in the Courts,” *Buffalo Law Review* 47 (1999), 1216.

⁴⁴ Bandes, “Patterns of Injustice,” 1311. In contrast to this definition of anecdote, Walter Fisher describes narration and narrative this way: “Thus, when I use the term ‘narration,’ I do not mean a fictive composition whose propositions may be true or false and have no necessary relationship to the message of that composition. By ‘narration,’ I refer to a theory of symbolic actions –words and/or

deeds – that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them. The narrative perspective, therefore, has relevance to real as well as fictive worlds, to stories of living and to stories of the imagination” [Fisher, “Narration,” 2]. Narratives, then, do not necessarily tackle the grand narratives of a culture to expose their immoral bases, injustices or inconsistencies; rather, narratives may very well be the grand stories of a culture.

⁴⁵ Couto, “Narrative,” 61.

⁴⁶ John Edgar Wideman is Mumia’s first character witness who pens the introduction to *Live on Death Row* (1996). Wideman, a Pittsburgh native, has written extensively about the racial politics of Pennsylvania and the politics of prison; his own son is also incarcerated. His *Homewood Trilogy* deals with many of the themes prevalent in Abu-Jamal’s discourse and as the first black man to graduate from the University of Pennsylvania, he has also struggled with issues of representation and authenticity as he returned to Pittsburgh as an intellectual writing about his folk community.

⁴⁷ John Edgar Wideman, “Introduction,” *Live From Death Row* (New York, NY: Addison-Wesley, 1995), 23.

⁴⁸ Wideman, *Live From Death Row*, 25.

⁴⁹ Wideman, *Live From Death Row*, 30-2.

⁵⁰ Wideman, *Live From Death Row*, 34.

⁵¹ Wideman, *Live From Death Row*, 35.

⁵² Wideman, *Live From Death Row*, 26-7.

⁵³ Cornel West, “Foreword,” *Death Blossoms* (Farmington, PA: Plough Publishing, 1996), xi.

⁵⁴ West, “Foreword,” xi.

⁵⁵ West, “Foreword,” xii.

⁵⁶ West, “Foreword,” xii.

⁵⁷ West is understood as a “professor-prophet” because of his work in tracing the lineage of black (male) leadership. See, for example, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Cornel West, *The African American Century: How Black Americans Have Shaped Our Country* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2000); Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Cornel West, *The Future of the Race* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1997); Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1994); Cornel West, *Keeping Faith:*

Philosophy and Race in America (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993).

⁵⁸ Writer Jonathan Kozol writes that *Death Blossoms* is “A brilliant, powerful book written by a prophetic writer” [Jonathan Kozol, “Back Matter,” *Death Blossoms* (Farmington, PA: Plough Publishing, 1996)].

⁵⁹ Julia Wright, “Preface,” *Death Blossoms* (Farmington, PA: Plough Publishing, 1996), xiii-xiv.

⁶⁰ Wright, “Preface,” xvi. Emphasis in original.

⁶¹ Mumia Abu-Jamal, *All Things Censored*, ed. Noelle Hanrahan (New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2000), 5.

⁶² Alice Walker, “Foreword,” *All Things Censored*, ed. Noelle Hanrahan (New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2000), 15.

⁶³ Walker, “Foreword,” 15-16.

⁶⁴ Walker, “Foreword,” 16.

⁶⁵ Walker, “Foreword,” 16.

⁶⁶ Tom Hayden, “Introduction,” *The Zapatista Reader* (New York, NY: Thunder Mouth Press, 2002), 2.

⁶⁷ Noelle Hanrahan, “Introduction,” *All Things Censored*, ed. Noelle Hanrahan (New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2000), 21.

⁶⁸ She continues, “Imagine your possessions: your books, your notes, your intellectual life, having to fit into a five-inch-deep, fourteen-inch wide box, because that is all you are allowed” [in Hanrahan, “Introduction,” 21].

⁶⁹ Hanrahan, “Introduction,” 21-22.

⁷⁰ Hanrahan, “Introduction,” 29.

⁷¹ Hanrahan, “Introduction,” 28.

⁷² Hanrahan, “Introduction,” 22.

⁷³ Hanrahan, “Introduction,” 22.

⁷⁴ Hanrahan, “Introduction,” 30.

⁷⁵ Mumia Abu-Jamal and Heike Kleffner, “The Black Panthers: interviews with Geronimo ji-

jaga Pratt and Mumia Abu-Jamal,” *Race & Class* 35 (1993), 18.

⁷⁶ Abu-Jamal, “The Black Panthers,” 19.

⁷⁷ Gottlieb, “State Repression,” 185.

⁷⁸ The *Revolutionary Worker* has reported that there were as many as 400 arrests of MOVE members between 1974 and 1976, totally bail and fines of more than half a million dollars [“Philly Cops: A history of Brutality in Blue,” *Revolutionary Worker* 21 (July 4, 1999), <http://rwor.org/a/v21/1010-019/1013/philly.htm> (accessed July 14, 2006)].

⁷⁹ Bisson, *On a Move*, 162.

⁸⁰ Bisson, *On a Move*, 164-70.

⁸¹ Kathleen Neal Cleaver, “Philadelphia Fire,” *Transition* 51 (1991), 150.

⁸² Abu-Jamal, *All Things Censored*, 146-7.

⁸³ Abu-Jamal, *All Things Censored*, 147. Abu-Jamal comments at length about the MOVE organization in *All Things Considered* in additional essays titled: “And They Call MOVE ‘Terrorists’!” and “Justice Denied.”

⁸⁴ Cleaver, “Philadelphia Fire,” 151. The MOVE collective first named themselves the Christian Movement for Life, which was shortened to the Movement, and later, MOVE. MOVE was composed of men and women from working- and middle-class backgrounds, from the defunct Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party, from local law schools and from the civil service. Their teachings were based upon the philosophy of a man they named John Africa (previously Vincent Leaphart), a handyman who had earned the nickname “Dog Man” for the feral dogs that followed him around town. MOVE members believed in exercise, eating raw foods, refusing electricity and running water, kept their children out of schools and refused to kill any living creatures. They also protested vigorously against any perceived injustices in their city and community [in Cleaver, “Philadelphia Fire,” 150]. See also Sonia Sanchez’s moving poem about the MOVE bombing, “Philadelphia: Spring 1985,” which appears in *Callaloo* 26 (Winter 1986), 120-1.

⁸⁵ Abu-Jamal, “The Black Panthers,” 20.

⁸⁶ Abu-Jamal, “The Black Panthers,” 20.

⁸⁷ The narratives of deviance and defiance are prevalent in black literature beginning with

slave narratives (particularly Frederick Douglass's writings) but continuing to characters like Richard Wright's Bigger Thomas in *Native Son*.

⁸⁸ Bisson, *On a Move*, 186.

⁸⁹ "Mumia Abu-Jamal would probably be America's foremost opponent of the death penalty even if he were *not* on death row. The intersections of race, class, crime and corruption were always his beat and the capital punishment industry is national news," writes Bisson [in Bisson, *On a Move*, 206].

⁹⁰ Abu-Jamal, *Death Blossoms*, 6.

⁹¹ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, xvii.

⁹² Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 17.

⁹³ Abu-Jamal, *All Things Censored*, 39.

⁹⁴ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 17.

⁹⁵ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 19.

⁹⁶ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 20.

⁹⁷ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 20-1.

⁹⁸ Kimberle Crenshaw and Gary Peller, "Reel Time/Real Justice," *Reading Rodney King: Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. Robert Gooding-Williams (London, UK: Routledge, 1993), 57.

⁹⁹ Sarat, "Narrative Strategy," 378-9.

¹⁰⁰ Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 131.

¹⁰¹ Paul Gready, "Autobiography and the 'Power of Writing': Political Prison Writing in the Apartheid Era," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 19 (September 1993), 499.

¹⁰² The most spectacular example of this is probably the Attica uprising at Attica State Prison in New York, which took place from September 9-13, 1971, included 1,300 prisoners who revolted because of inhuman treatment, brutality and torture. Inmates were led by prison activists and demanded better living conditions, more vocational training, and less censorship of their mail. In the end, dozens of inmates were killed in the standoff by government-issued weapons as two hundred and eleven police officers assaulted Attica. The writings and uprising at Attica directed attention at the conditions of prisons in the 1970s as prisoners began to mobilize once again, from their confinement.

¹⁰³ Angela Y. Davis, “Political Prisoners, Prisons, and Black Liberation,” *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance* (New York, NY: The Third Press, 1971), 22. She adds, “The offense of the political prisoner is his political boldness, his persistent challenging – legally or extra-legally – of fundamental social wrongs fostered and reinforced by the state. He has opposed unjust laws and exploitative, racist social conditions in general, with the ultimate aim of transforming these laws and this society into an order harmonious with the material and spiritual needs and interests of the vast majority of its members” [Davis, “Political Prisoners, 23].

¹⁰⁴ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 6.

¹⁰⁵ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 7.

¹⁰⁶ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 7-8.

¹⁰⁷ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 9-10.

¹⁰⁸ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 12.

¹⁰⁹ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 22-3.

¹¹⁰ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 23-4.

¹¹¹ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 29.

¹¹² Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 47.

¹¹³ Gready, “Political Prison Writing,” 490.

¹¹⁴ Gready, “Political Prison Writing,” 490.

¹¹⁵ Gready, “Political Prison Writing,” 490.

¹¹⁶ Dudden, “Nostalgia,” 517.

¹¹⁷ Charles P. Henry, “The Political Role of the Bad Nigger,” *Journal of Black Studies* 11 (June 1981), 473. Henry notes, “Stackolee as well as the folklore of black outlaws based on the exploits of real men are cited as illustrations of the first type. John Henry, Jack Johnson, and Joe Louis are prominent illustrations of the second type.” Though as Henry notes, these two distinctions may be artificial [Henry, “Bad Nigger,” 473].

¹¹⁸ Henry, “Bad Nigger,” 478.

¹¹⁹ Richard Wright originally coined the term, as noted in the *Introduction* to this study.

¹²⁰ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 132.

¹²¹ Although he traces his ideology to the BPP and Malcolm, Abu-Jamal is careful to discuss the importance that Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., had in Southern churches but notes that his appeals for nonviolence were met with resistance in the North; consequently, the more militant message of the Nation of Islam was embraced by black youth who saw his struggle to crush white racism as noble.

¹²² Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 136.

¹²³ Abu-Jamal, *All Things Considered*, 144-5. Emphasis in original.

¹²⁴ Michael Eric Dyson, *Making Malcolm: The Myth and Meaning of Malcolm X* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1995), xiii.

¹²⁵ Dyson, *Making Malcolm*, xiii.

¹²⁶ Dyson, *Making Malcolm*, xiv.

¹²⁷ Abu-Jamal, *All Things Censored*, 243.

¹²⁸ Newton, of course, was chairman and Minister of Defense for the Black Panther Party. He was murdered on the streets of Oakland, California, in 1989 in an apparent drug deal gone bad. Abu-Jamal provides an essay hailing Huey Newton's brilliance and the tragedy of his martyrdom in "Memories of Huey," which appears in *All Things Considered*, pages 137-9.

¹²⁹ Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 167.

¹³⁰ bell hooks, *Killing Rage: Ending Racism* (New York, NY: H. Holt & Co., 1995), 63.

¹³¹ hooks, *Killing Rage*, 63-4.

¹³² Abu-Jamal, *Live From Death Row*, 167-8. Emphasis in original.

¹³³ Lowenthal, "Past Time," 6-7.

¹³⁴ Lowenthal, "Past Time," 9-10.

¹³⁵ Dudden, "Nostalgia," 517.

¹³⁶ Dudden, "Nostalgia," 517. Emphasis in original.

¹³⁷ Assata Shakur, "Message to Mumia," *Schooling the Generations in the Politics of Prisons*, ed. Chinosole (Berkeley, CA: New Earth Publications, 1996), 4. Shakur writes, "The first time I heard a tape of one of Mumia's radio broadcasts, it was the first time I fully understood why the United States government was so intent on putting him to death. Mumia, the only Afrikan political prisoner

on death row, didn't use any inflammatory rhetoric. What he said was so clear, so true, that I had to stop everything and concentrate on his message, Mumia Abu-Jamal, journalist, husband, father; he is brilliant. He has the ability to say what needs to be said in the clearest, most vivid way" [in Shakur, "Message," 4].

¹³⁸ Shakur, "Message," 4.

¹³⁹ Shakur, "Message," 4.

¹⁴⁰ Shakur, "Message," 4-5.

¹⁴¹ Shakur, "Message," 5.

¹⁴² Abu-Jamal, *Death Blossoms*, 87.

¹⁴³ Abu-Jamal, *Death Blossoms*, 87.

¹⁴⁴ Abu-Jamal, *Death Blossoms*, 87.

¹⁴⁵ Abu-Jamal, *Death Blossoms*, 88.

¹⁴⁶ Abu-Jamal, *Death Blossoms*, 88.

¹⁴⁷ Abu-Jamal, *Death Blossoms*, 121.

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¹ In 1966, James Forman was still a popular force in SNCC and Lewis had been the face of SNCC since 1963, however, "criticism had been growing among staff members... directed especially at Lewis for his involvement with the White House Conference on Civil Rights" [in Herbert H. Haines, *Black Radicals and the Civil Rights Mainstream, 1954-1970* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 59].

² This segment of SNCC was lead by Forman and Lewis.

³ Haines, *Black Radicals*, 59-60.

⁴ Haines, *Black Radicals*, 61. Because of their tenuous and adversarial relationship with the federal government, both SNCC and the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) "had little to lose by associating themselves with often working-class advocates of armed self-defense. National leaders in SNCC and CORE recognized that in dangerous battlefields like Cambridge, Maryland, Danville, Virginia, and rural Louisiana and Mississippi, their nonviolence organizers' survival depended on

indigenous armed militants” [Akinyele O. Umoja, “The Ballot and the Bullet: A Comparative Analysis of Armed Resistance in the Civil Rights Movement,” *Journal of Black Studies* 29 (March 1999), 569]. Those committed to Black Power embraced Monroe County, North Carolina’s militant hero Robert F. Williams, who penned *Negroes with Guns* and who was an influence on Malcolm X. They also supported other armed groups throughout the South who patrolled black communities in the face of lynch mobs and white supremacist groups.

⁵ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 231-4.

⁶ Carson, *In Struggle*, 220.

⁷ Carson, *In Struggle*, 221.

⁸ Haines, *Black Radicals*, 61.

⁹ James Forman, *The Making of Revolutionaries* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1972), 504.

¹⁰ Clayborne Carson has argued that Brown was not as polished as Carmichael and not as media savvy. He writes that “Brown was less calculating, self-controlled and purposefully ambiguous in his public speeches than Carmichael had been and therefore less able than his predecessor to manipulate the press. Carmichael was probably more aware than Brown of the dangers that awaited the next national symbol of black militancy” [in Carson, *In Struggle*, 253].

¹¹ The first real flashpoint was in Newark, New Jersey, “home of the worst inner city housing and crime rates in the nation ” [in Hugh Pearson, *The Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and the Price of Black Power in America* (New York, NY: Addison-Wesley, 1994), 138]. Police officers arrested a black cab driver on July 11 on traffic charges and began to harass and beat him as a growing number of residents from the housing project across the street looked on. A rumor spread that the cabbie had been killed and a mob began to advance on the police officers at the precinct house where they had been scuffling with the cabbie. Police officers responded to the group with tear gas and billy clubs and chaos ensued [in Pearson, *Panther*, 138-9].

¹² Pearson, *Panther*, 139. After the Detroit rebellion, three Detroit policemen and one black private security guard were tried for the murder of three black teenagers in the Algiers Motel. Although the defense conceded that the defendants shot two of the victims, the jury voted to acquit [in

Cynthia Deitle Deonardatos, “California’s Attempt to Disarm the Black Panthers,” *San Diego Law Review* 36 (Fall 1999), 952]. Deonardatos adds, “In Boston, in the spring of 1970, a policeman fired five shots, killing an unarmed black man who was a patient in the Boston City Hospital, after the man napped a towel at the policeman. After a bench trial, the judge acquitted the perpetrator. At the same time that the killing occurred, a federal jury in Boston found that a policeman had uses excessive force against two black soldiers. Despite the fact that one of the victims required twelve stitches in his scalp, the judge awarded the serviceman only three dollars in damages” [Deonardatos, “Black Panthers,” 952-3].

Similarly, the police brutality was felt across the South not just in the actions of Ku Klux Klan members who were also judges, attorneys, police officers and other agents of the state like Eugene “Bull” Connor in Birmingham or those officers brutalizing the sit-in protestors. At “Jackson State College, a black college in Mississippi, several policeman fired shotguns, rifles, and a submachine gun for approximately thirty second in the direction of a girls’ dormitory. Over four hundred rounds hit the dormitory and two black students were killed. After a state grad jury failed to return an indictment against the officers, finding that the attack was ‘justified,’ United States District Court Judge Harold Cox stated that students who engage in civil disobedience ‘must expect to be injured or killed’ [Deonardatos, “Black Panthers,” 952-3].

¹³ Carson, *In Struggle*, 255.

¹⁴ Pearson, *Panther*, 139. For an in-depth account of the importance of Cambridge, Maryland, to the movement for black liberation and the role that Rap Brown played in the civil rights struggle in that city, see Peter B. Levy, *Civil War on Race Street: The Rights Movement in Cambridge, Maryland* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2003).

¹⁵ Qtd. in Carson, *In Struggle*, 255.

¹⁶ Qtd. in Carson, *In Struggle*, 255. Hugh Pearson adds, “A few hours after Brown’s speech, a disturbance broke out. During the melee, the Pine Street school was set ablaze and a police officer was wounded. Brown, who was at the scene, was grazed on the forehead by an officer’s bullet. Angered because of Brown’s inflammatory rhetoric, Cambridge’s white volunteer firefighters refused to respond to the blaze. And, the town’s white police chief refused to order the fire fighters into the

neighborhood, telling black citizens, ‘You people and stood by and let a bunch of goddam [sic] hoodlums come in and let my police get shot. Don’t come to me with this.’ Not only the school but the entire section of town was destroyed, leaving black businesses burned out and dozens of people homeless” [Pearson, *Shadow of the Panther*, 140].

¹⁷ Carson, *In Struggle*, 255.

¹⁸ Louis C. Goldberg, “Ghetto Riots and Others: The Faces of Civil Disorder in 1967,” *Journal of Peace Research* 5 (1968), 120. Brown’s speech produced hysteria among black police officers and they “reported that a riot was underway – thus confirming the worst fears of local white officials. At one point, after an injury to an officer, the local police chief wanted to go shooting into the area, and only restraints by state authorities prevented bloodshed. Later on, the white volunteer fire department refused to go into the Negro area to put out a small fire that finally spread into a blaze consuming a block of Negro businesses. This non-action stemmed in part from a fear of a pre-planned plot to “trap” fire department equipment in the Negro area, thus leaving the downtown area to be burned and plundered [in Goldberg, “Ghetto Riots,” 120].

¹⁹ As Michael Lipsky and David J. Olson note, the police chief of Cambridge identified Brown as the “sole reason” for the Cambridge rebellion [in Michael Lipsky and David J. Olson, *Commission Politics: The Processing of Racial Crisis in America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1977), 108]. However, Brown denied being downtown for the rebellion and left Cambridge the following morning just before Maryland Governor Spiro T. Agnew toured the town and sent in the National Guard. Brown was arrested at the Washington airport where federal charges were dropped so that he could be rearrested for extradition to Maryland to await trial for arson. Scholars conclude that the rebellion in Cambridge was precipitated entirely by the police who overreacted to Brown’s rhetoric [in Lipsky and Olson, *Commission Politics*, 183].

²⁰ Carson, *In Struggle*, 256.

²¹ *Supplemental Studies for The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), 48. The Commission concluded that “The use of violence as a form of protest has a special meaning for Negroes at this point in history. The sudden outbreak of mass violence in the inner cities of the nation probably astonished the black population

almost as much as it did the white. But their reaction to it has been very different” because whites saw the rebellions as completely unjustifiable where the black public saw the protests as either “partly or wholly justified, and they are more likely to think them helpful to the Negro cause than hurtful” [*Commission on Civil Disorders*, 62]. The Commission also noted that the cause of the rebellions was “white racism” [*Commission on Civil Disorders*, 62-3].

²² *Report of The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1968), 201.

²³ In response to the urban rebellions in American cities, the U.S. government also passed the Anti-Riot Act in 1968, authored by Strom Thurmond, who explained that the Act would “deal firmly with those harbingers of anarchy who undoubtedly contributed to the tragedies of our cities” [Bruce D’Arcus, “Protest, Scale and Publicity: The FBI and the H. Rap Brown Act,” *Antipode* 35 (September 2002), 726]. The first time that the Justice Department used the H Rap Brown Act was actually to prosecute people involved in the protests outside the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968. D’Arcus writes, “By targeting high-profile New Left leaders – in this case, the group that became known as the Chicago Seven – the government hoped to deter future unrest” [in D’Arcus, “Protest,” 727]. The defense brief argued that the Act explicitly limited freedom of speech and expression and was completely unconcerned with constitutional questions. The Anti-Riot Act was understood as a partial remedy for the civil unrest in America’s cities by black Americans and became even more explicitly raced when it became known as the H. Rap Brown Act. D’Arcus adds, “The H Rap Brown Act was thus a legal and spatial tool to control the public spaces of urban America...the law, both in design and practice, was used to control dissent by New Left groups precisely by regulating the spatial field in which they moved.... The hope of such a policy was that protest itself would wither away” [in D’Arcus, “Protest,” 727]. Hoover recommended the passage of the Act because it gave the FBI expanded jurisdiction over political protests in the cities, which helped the FBI to land major appropriations for new weapons, recruitment and training for urban repression.

²⁴ Carson, *In Struggle*, 257.

²⁵ The Rabble Rouser Index was renamed Agitator Index in 1968 but it indicated an activist’s propensity for violence. Those at the top of the index were Martin Luther King, Stokely Carmichael,

Rap Brown, Maxwell Stanford (of the Revolutionary Action Movement) and Elijah Muhammad (of the Nation of Islam) and these men were singled out for special surveillance and harassment [Kenneth O'Reilly, *Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1989), 277].

²⁶ Bruce D'Arcus writes that "Hoover placed the problem of the nation's cities at the foot of a new kind of individual: mobile and unattached to particular locales, these outsiders freely moved across the state boundaries, stirring up trouble where it had not been. Hoover resurrected the mobile criminal – like the public bandits of the Depression years – as requiring state intervention in the interest of protecting the public" [in D'Arcus, "Protest," 726].

²⁷ In addition to Brown and the militants of SNCC, the FBI massively targeted the Black Panther Party. Charles E. Jones has provided an excellent critical analysis of the harassment laws passed to cripple the Black Panther Party, much like the federal Anti-Riot Act was passed to target brown. He also lists all of the kinds of political repression that the Oakland Panther faced, which is quite indicative of the repressive climate spurred by the federal government's disdain for Rap Brown and his Black Power contemporaries [see Charles E. Jones, "The Political Repression of the Black Panther Party 1966-1971: The Case of the Oakland Bay Area," *Journal of Black Studies* 18 (June 1988), 415-34].

²⁸ Sundiata Acoli, "The New Afrikan Prison Struggle," *Imprisoned Intellectuals: America's Political Prisoners Write on Life, Liberation, and Rebellion*, ed. Joy James (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 145.

²⁹ Peter Levy writes that "[w]hile insisting that he remained a radical and a separatist, he drifted from the public limelight, focusing much of his time on the religious teaching of Allah and fostering a private revolution among those who attended his mosque" [Levy, *Civil War on Race Street*, 158]. He was arrested again in 1996 for drug charges, though he was eventually absolved.

³⁰ Don L. Lee, now known as Haki Madubuti, founded Third World Press and is still its chairman and publisher.

³¹ Nancy Whittier, "Political Generations, Micro-Cohorts, and the Transformation of Social Movements," *American Sociological Review* 62 (October 1997), 762.

³² Whittier, "Micro-Cohorts," 762. Consequently, "as a movement shifts into abeyance on one set of issues, its personnel and organization may switch the grounds of the challenge to another set of issues" [in David S. Meyer and Nancy Whittier, "Social Movement Spillover," *Social Problems* 41 (May 1994), 279].

³³ Carson, *In Struggle*, 257.

³⁴ Carson, *In Struggle*, 66-82.

³⁵ Nancy J. Weiss, "Creative Tensions in the Leadership," *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, ed. Charles W. Eagles (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 52-3.

³⁶ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 1.

³⁷ Hazel Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 127.

³⁸ This differs from the future of his predecessor, Carmichael, who invoked Black Power ambiguously, insisted that he was not anti-white and held out for the possibility that all oppressed people would be able to band together against oppression [see Carson, *In Struggle*, 215-28].

³⁹ Don L. Lee, "Introduction," *Die Nigger Die!* (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill, 1969), xxxix.

⁴⁰ Lee, "Introduction," xxxix.

⁴¹ Lee, "Introduction," xxxx. Emphasis added.

⁴² Lee, "Introduction," xxxx-xxxxi.

⁴³ Lee, "Introduction," xxxxi.

⁴⁴ Robert G. O'Meally, "Game to the Heart': Sterling Brown and the Badman," *Callaloo* 14/15 (February – May 1982), 43-4.

⁴⁵ O'Meally, "Badman," 44. Charles P. Henry adds that Frederick Douglass, Jack Johnson and Marcus Garvey were all bad badmen who "were either labeled 'bad niggers' or consciously sought such a label" [Henry, "Bad Nigger," 474]. Henry notes that's Douglass happily accepts his label as a "bad sheep," he was supportive of John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry and Brown's interest in guerilla warfare, and he recounts his physical confrontation with Covey in his autobiography [Henry, "Bad Nigger," 474].

Although Jack Johnson lived inside of the law, he flaunted his "white female friends, his utter

disregard for death and danger, his extravagant lifestyle, and his refusal to knuckle under white pressure,” which clearly demarcate him as a “bad nigger” [Henry, “Bad Nigger,” 475].

Finally Marcus Garvey was covertly monitored by the FBI, he worshipped a black God (which many argue was a significant contribution to both Elijah Muhammad and Noble Drew Ali), he wrote about the beauty of black women, black self-reliance, African history, and “end to black participation in white wars, and protests at the Italian invasion of Ethiopia” [Henry, “Bad Nigger,” 476].

None of these figures was “dysfunctional” or nihilistic in their leadership styles. They are all revered for their resistance and all sought recognition for their people.

⁴⁶ O’Meally, “Badman,” 44. In many ways, the badman tales replace trickster tales, particularly after slavery when black and white confrontations became much more common [see Henry, “Bad Nigger,” 473]. These tales have served to warn folks of the badman’s unpredictability and propensity for violence but they have also prepared people for an unpredictable world of cynicism and trouble. Black Americans have long “admired black badmen, real like and folkloric, for their brash unwillingness to accept any mistreatment, and to enforce their own codes, down to whether or not you can touch their hats, with quick fists or a big gauge gun” [O’Meally, “Badman,” 44]

⁴⁷ John W. Roberts, *From Trickster to Badman: The Black Folk Hero in Slavery and Freedom* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 174.

⁴⁸ O’Meally, “Badman,” 44.

⁴⁹ Railroad Bill would be an example of a bad badman from black folklore.

⁵⁰ O’Meally, “Badman,” 45. Many “moral badmen started out very quiet and even jocular, but they witness their people’s humiliation and oppression once too often, and something snaps: they come up fighting or they go get a gun. [O’Meally, “Badman,” 50]. John Henry and Joe Louis would be examples of moral badmen but for extensive examples of both kinds of badmen, see the poetry of Sterling Brown, which is full of badmen heroes. See also Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁵¹ O’Meally, “Badman,” 52. The modern examples of badmen (both bad badmen and moral badmen) can be found in America’s prisons, where they have been locked away from the public’s

view. Charles P. Henry urges scholars to see Nat Turner's "confessions, the protests of convict work songs, and the prison autobiographies of Malcolm X, George Jackson, Angela Davis and Eldridge Cleaver" as instances of badmen (and women); these revolutionaries stepped out of their predetermined roles by the state to critique, protest and counter American policy, be it domestic or foreign [Henry, "Bad Nigger," 478]. Prisoners and prison autobiographies, then, are common spaces for the badman persona to appear.

⁵² Pearson, *Panther*, 139.

⁵³ In the framework of this study, H. Rap Brown certainly asserts his role as bad badman because of his style and his interest in revolution. However, we must acknowledge that this conception of the bad badman does not account for bad badwomen. Although Henry encourages us to see someone like Angela Davis as a badman, that theoretical conception serves to elide gender. For example, being a bad badwoman seems to cause different anxieties for the state than the bad badman. BLA member Assata Shakur can be understood as a bad badwoman, because of her style and her militancy but she (along with Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Afeni Shakur, Erika Huggins, Elaine Brown, etc.) is excluded from the theories of badman behavior.

⁵⁴ Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1993), 40.

⁵⁵ Carby, *Race Men*, 129.

⁵⁶ Carby, *Race Men*, 129.

⁵⁷ Through the 1930s and 1940s, the punishment for black style was often lynching. It is no wonder that many scholars use the term "legal lynching" to refer both the death penalty and other forms of state-sanctioned violence that occur within the new plantation economy reproduced in American prisons. For example, see Jesse Jackson, *Legal Lynching: Racism, Injustice and the Death Penalty* (New York, NY: Marlowe and Co., 1996).

⁵⁸ Hazel Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 32.

⁵⁹ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 14.

⁶⁰ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 14.

⁶¹ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 18.

⁶² Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 15.

⁶³ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 15.

⁶⁴ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 15.

⁶⁵ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 15.

⁶⁶ But he also argues that “negroes” in authority further this system because they pretend that they are making the streets safer; as a result, black boys distinguish themselves through “fratricide (unknowingly in most cases) to gain the favor of the white ‘ally’” [in Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 16].

⁶⁷ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 17.

⁶⁸ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 18.

⁶⁹ To this end, Brown adds, “When a race of people is oppressed within a system that fosters the idea of competitive individualism, the political polarization around individual interests prevents group interests.... So individuals join tribes or groups to further their own personal ambitions. It’s one of the things that keeps us fighting ourselves instead of the enemy” [Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 16-17].

⁷⁰ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 26-7.

⁷¹ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 15.

⁷² Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 26.

⁷³ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 47.

⁷⁴ Brown entered Southern University in 1960 as civil rights agitation began to grip black communities in the South and he began to question the separate rules of conduct and decorum that policed the boundaries of white and black worlds, especially when they collided in the university setting.

⁷⁵ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 48.

⁷⁶ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 51.

⁷⁷ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 52.

⁷⁸ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 53.

⁷⁹ Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971).

⁸⁰ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 53.

⁸¹ Henry, “Bad Nigger,” 479.

⁸² Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 40. Brown also observes, “The white man is our best teacher, up to a point. It was from watching white people, what they had, and what we had, that I learned about this country. I lived near Louisiana State University and I could see this big fine school with modern buildings and it was for whites. Then there was Southern University, which was about to fall in and that was for the niggers. And when I compared the two, the message was obvious. Nigger, you ain’t shit. Die Nigger Die!” [Brown, *Die Nigger Die*, 39].

⁸³ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 68.

⁸⁴ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 2.

⁸⁵ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 3.

⁸⁶ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 4.

⁸⁷ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 4.

⁸⁸ For Brown, “[r]ace prejudice in america becomes color prejudice in negro america. That which is cultural prejudice by whites against Blacks becomes class prejudice in negro america. To distinguish themselves, negroes assign class distinctions” [Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 7].

⁸⁹ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 21.

⁹⁰ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 10.

⁹¹ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 10.

⁹² Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 10.

⁹³ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 13.

⁹⁴ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 11.

⁹⁵ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 55.

⁹⁶ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 55.

⁹⁷ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 55

⁹⁸ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 56.

⁹⁹ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 61.

¹⁰⁰ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 61.

¹⁰¹ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 79.

¹⁰² Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 62.

¹⁰³ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 85.

¹⁰⁴ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 81.

¹⁰⁵ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 81.

¹⁰⁶ Robert L. Scott and Donald K. Smith, "The Rhetoric of Confrontation,"

Quarterly Journal of Speech 54 (February 1969), 4.

¹⁰⁷ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 81.

¹⁰⁸ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 38. He adds, "Violence is accepted in america as long as it's white folks doing it. Turn on the t.v. and you go deaf from all the gunfire. Let two fighters in the ring and let neither of them hit each other and see what real savages out there are going to do. They're going to scream for blood. It's no different than the people in ancient Rome who put lions on people" [Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 38].

¹⁰⁹ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 38.

¹¹⁰ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 39.

¹¹¹ Brown, *Die Nigger Die!*, 63.

¹¹² Herman Gray, "Black Masculinity and Visual Culture," *Callaloo* 8 (1995), 402. This is even more salient as we examine *Die Nigger Die!* as an artifact, since the cover art is a photo of Rap Brown being handcuffed by four white police officers in riot gear holding batons. Brown is wincing as one of the officers is squeezing the back of his neck and another is helping to hustle him along. As one who has survived encounters with the police as well as prison, this photo of Brown stands to authenticate him as a leader and a hero, fighting the police officers. Here he stands as a bad badman and as a figure of black masculine resistance. In understanding the police as a domestic army that constituted a unremitting threat to black life in America, Brown positions them as the enemies of Black Power and the force that must be resisted in order for Black Power to regenerate. The police, then, become a reliable source of exigency in the creation and maintenance of Black Power organizations and ideologies.

¹¹³ Goldberg, "Ghetto Riots," 124.

¹¹⁴ Goldberg, "Ghetto Riots," 128. Emphasis in original.

¹¹⁵ Goldberg, "Ghetto Riots," 128.

¹¹⁶ Goldberg adds, “Confronting police and courts in efforts to construct self-definition in which one does have some kind of place in society – if only a criminal one – does have a functional basis. Those who have served time return to their old associations with a new status as someone who is really tough and knows the ropes” [in Goldberg, “Ghetto Riots,” 128].

¹¹⁷ Although Hoover, LBJ, and the white media, branded Brown one of America’s biggest internal enemies, Goldberg’s survey indicates that he was rarely present at the majority of rebellions across the nation. He notes that although Carmichael and Brown are “seen as having the extraordinary and dangerous power to spell-bind Negroes into rioting,” most of the urban rebellions started without their presence [Goldberg, “Ghetto Riots,” 124]. He adds, “Of the 23 disturbances in our sample, in only 6 were either Carmichael or Brown around the scene at the time. And in only three of these were their appearance and rhetoric immediately linked with the immediate precipitants of disorder. In the other cities they arrive at the scene after action was already underway [Goldberg, “Ghetto Riots,” 123]. Goldberg concludes, “*And considering the large number of communities where Brown and Carmichael appeared which did not have riots, their rioting ‘batting-average’, if indeed their purpose was to provoke a disorder on the spot, was extremely low*” [Goldberg, “Ghetto Riots,” 123; Emphasis in original].

¹¹⁸ Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, “Foreword,” *Die Nigger Die!* (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill, 1969), vii.

¹¹⁹ John Angus Campbell, “Between the Fragment and the Icon: Prospect for a Rhetorical House of the Middle Way,” *Western Journal of Communication* 54 (Summer 1990), 351.

¹²⁰ Campbell, “Fragment,” 351.

¹²¹ Campbell, “Fragment,” 352.

¹²² Thelwell, “Foreword,” xxi.

¹²³ Thelwell, “Foreword,” xxi-xxiii.

¹²⁴ Thelwell, “Foreword,” xxiv.

¹²⁵ Thelwell, “Foreword,” xxiv.

¹²⁶ Thelwell, “Foreword,” xxv.

¹²⁷ Thelwell, "Foreword," ix.

¹²⁸ Thelwell, "Foreword," ix.

¹²⁹ It is also important to note as well that Brown has penned one other text since the original publication of *Die Nigger Die!*. That text is one that engages the subject of Islam in America and the title is *Revolution by the Book: The Rap is Live*. In this book, al-Amin emphasizes the importance of a spiritual as well as political change in consciousness to accompany the revolution. He tackles such issues as ways to worship, dress, food, family life, etc. He concludes the text by arguing that, "Revolution comes when human beings set out to correct decadent institutions. We must understand how this society has fallen away from righteousness and begin to develop, Islamically, the alternative institutions to those that are in a state of decline around us" [in Jamil Al-Amin, *Revolution by the Book: The Rap is Live* (Beltsville, MD: Writer's Inc. International, 1994), 163]. In fact, throughout the text, Al-Amin applies Black Power ideologies to Islamic theology to promote a revolution in consciousness that replaces the capitalism of the nation-state. The publication of this treatise on Islam is also significant because its title, too, links Al-Amin to Rap Brown by referencing his former persona and by linking the two in a "Prologue" that highlights Brown's Black Power career. Although the space here does not permit an in-depth study of Al-Amin's 1994 text, suffice to say that despite the references to Brown, the majority of the text does deal with interpretations of passages of the *Quran*. Nonetheless, by referencing his persona as Rap Brown in *Revolution by the Book* and by re-issuing *Die Nigger Die!*, it seems that Al-Amin wants his former and current lives to coexist. He certainly has not distanced himself from the black revolutionary or in any way dampened his commitment to Islam. The continuity of his commitment to ideologies that do not conform to white standards helps Al-Amin to regenerate both Black Power and black Islam.

¹³⁰ Thelwell, "Foreword," xxvii.

¹³¹ Thelwell, "Foreword," xxviii-xxix.

¹³² Thelwell, "Foreword," xxxvii.

¹³³ They were trying to deliver an arrest warrant to Al-Amin for failure to appear in court in January 2000 on charged of theft by receiving stolen property and impersonating an officer. These charges date back to an incident in May 1999.

¹³⁴ He is indicted on one count of murder, four counts of felony murder, two counts of aggravated assault, and six other lesser charges.

¹³⁵ Because of the climate after September 11, the Judge Manis “issued a continuance until January, as the court acknowledged that growing sentiments against Islam could potentially prejudice jurors against a Muslim defendant” [Woods, “The Third Tower,” 211].

¹³⁶ Woods, “The Third Tower,” 212.

¹³⁷ The jury was composed of nine black people, two white people and one Hispanic-American.

¹³⁸ Thelwell, *Die Nigger Die!* xxxv.

¹³⁹ Thelwell, *Die Nigger Die!*, xxxv.

¹⁴⁰ Thelwell, *Die Nigger Die!*, xxxviii.

¹⁴¹ James Curry Woods, “The Third Tower: The Effect of the September 11th Terrorist Attacks on the American Jury System,” *Alabama Law Review* 55 (Fall 2003), 209.

¹⁴² Woods compiled the relevant data on the post-September 11 polls: “In the weeks following the attacks of September 11, 2001..., the prejudiced eye of suspicion turned against Muslim Americans. A *Los Angeles Times* survey conducted in the days following the attacks found that 43% of Americans were more suspicious of people who appeared to be of Arab descent. Eighty-seven percent of Americans were concerned about another major terrorist attack on the United States. In another survey conducted the week after the attacks, almost half of respondents (44%) believed the terrorist attacks represented the feelings of Muslim Americans toward the United States. More than half of Americans (58%) felt there should be tighter controls on Muslims traveling on U.S. planes and trains, while 83% thought that tighter restrictions should be imposed on immigrants from Muslim or Arab countries. A CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll showed that 35% of Americans had less trust in Arabs living in the United States as a result of the September 11th attacks. Also, one-third of Americans, and 55% of those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine, reported that they had heard negative comments about Arabs in America” [Woods, “The Third Tower,” 210].

¹⁴³ Quoted in Woods, “The Third Tower,” 211.

¹⁴⁴ Woods, “The Third Tower,” 213.

¹⁴⁵ Woods, "The Third Tower," 213.

¹⁴⁶ Woods, "The Third Tower," 214.

End Notes: Chapter 5

¹ Joy James, "Academia, Activism, and Imprisoned Intellectuals," *Social Justice* 30 (2003), 4.

² Houston A. Baker, "Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere," *The Black Public Sphere: A Public Culture Book*, ed. The Black Public Sphere Collective (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 19.

³ Evelyn Williams, *Inadmissible Evidence: The Story of the African-American Trial Lawyer Who Defended the Black Liberation Army* (New York, NY: Lawrence Hill, 1993), 84.

⁴ The "hip-hop generation" was born from rap music in the early 1990s, and became the shorthand reference for the generation of youth born between 1965 and 1984. Coined by the editor of *The Source: The Magazine of Hip-Hop, Music Culture and Politics*, Bakari Kitwana, "hip-hop generation" became the shorthand expression for this new group of consumers of popular culture" [see Bakari Kitwana, *The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks and the Crisis in African American Culture* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas, 2002)]. This term enabled corporations to market music, images, movies, sports drinks, alcohol, cars, clothes and other material goods to this group of young adults. And, although groups like the Nation of Islam attempted to reach out to the "hip-hop generation," the hip-hop generation was mostly a designation of consumer habits and profiles [Theresa A. Martinez, "Popular Culture as Oppositional Culture: Rap as Resistance," *Sociological Perspectives* 40 (1997), 272].

⁵ James, "Academia," 6.

⁶ James, "Academia," 6. They are a symbol of what Dylan Rodriguez has referred to as the new Middle Passage because of their subjugation to low-level physical and psychological torture, distance from their communities, and their political and social death [in Dylan Rodriguez, "Social Truth' and Imprisoned Intellectuals," *Social Justice* 30 (2003), 71].

⁷ Houston A. Baker, "Critical Memory and the Black Public Sphere," *The Black Public Sphere: A Public Culture Book*, ed. The Black Public Sphere Collective (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 7. Baker adds, "Critical memory...is the very faculty of revolution. Its

operation implies a continuous arrival at turning points. Decisive change, usually attended by considerable risk, peril or suspense, always seems imminent. To be critical is never to be safely housed or allegorically free of the illness, transgression and contamination of the past” [Baker, “Critical Memory,” 7].

⁸ Harry A. Reed, “Martin Luther King, Jr.: History and Memory, Reflections on Dreams and Silences,” *The Journal of Negro History* 84 (Spring 1999), 164.

⁹ Roxanne L. Eubin, “Killing (for) Politics: Jihad, Martyrdom and Political Action,” *Political Theory* 30 (February 2002), 6-7.

¹⁰ Jacob U. Gordon, “Black Males in the Civil Rights Movement,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 569 (May 2000), 49.

¹¹ Gordon, “Black Males,” 49.

¹² Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (New York, NY: Dover, 1995), 8.

¹³ Douglass, *Narrative*, 8. W.E.B. DuBois also writes about the importance of song in his essays on the “Sorrow Songs” in *Souls of Black Folks*, see W.E.B. DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1996), 204-26.

¹⁴ See also James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: CT: Yale University Press, 1990); Sterling Stuckey, *Slave Culture* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1987). Both texts highlight the importance of song to both slave culture and black resistance.

¹⁵ Baker, “Critical Memory,” 19.

¹⁶ Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 532.

¹⁷ See Monique Guillory and Richard C. Green, *Soul: Black Power, Politics and Pleasure* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1998); Patricia Hill Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 3.

¹⁸ See Elaine Brown, *Taste of Power: A Black Woman’s Story* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1992), 306-12; Elaine Brown, *Seize the Time* (Vault: 1969); Elaine Brown, *Elaine Brown* (Motown/Black Forum: 1973).

¹⁹ There is not enough space here to provide the history of hip-hop, which has been tackled elsewhere brilliantly. See Mark Costello and David Foster Wallace, *Signifying Rappers: Rap and Race in the Urban Present* (New York, NY: Ecco Press, 1990); Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1994); Tricia Rose, "Orality and Technology" Rap Music and Afro-American Cultural Resistance," *Popular Music and Society* 14 (1998); Nelson George, *Hip Hop America* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1999); Errol Henderson, "Black Nationalism and Rap Music," *Journal of Black Studies* 26 (January 1996): 308-39.

²⁰ Baker writes that instead of slave songs, black communities have a music that expresses the dissatisfaction with urban life, particularly after the L.A. riots in 1992, where the eyes of the nation "focused on young urban prophets of postmodernity who have been trying to push through for more than two decades of what Grandmaster Flash called "The Message" [Baker, "Scene...Not Heard," 45-6].

²¹ Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, "Rap, Black Rage, and Racial Difference," *Enculturation* 2 (Spring 1999) http://encultuarion.gmu.edu/2_2/best-kellner.html (accessed July 23, 2006)

²² Baker, "Scene," 46.

²³ Baker, "Scene," 46.

²⁴ However, as Baker maintains, "Rap has informed America for years that if – as Angela Davis stated it many years ago – they come now to 'get us' in the morning, they must expect the apocalypse" [Baker, "Scene," 47].

²⁵ Because many of the Black Power recruits were gang members or ex-convicts, the decimation of Black Power organizations like the Black Panther Party in California and the increasing levels of both police brutality and poverty, the formation of gangs began to rise dramatically in the 1980s, just as rap was taking off on the East Coast. When it was embraced on the West Coast in Oakland and L.A. gang members starting making gangsta rap about the problems that the Panthers had been trying to correct before they were decimated by COINTELPRO. The Rodney King beating and the L.A. rebellion in 1992 only heightened the tension in cities like L.A. and Oakland, which influenced the gangsta rap bring produced all the way to today [See Cindi Katz, Neil Smith, and Mike Davis, "L.A. Intifada: Interview with Mike Davis," *Social Text* 33 (1992): 19-33; Tim Brennan, "Of

the Gangsta Tip: A Rap Appreciation, or Forgetting Los Angeles,” *Critical Inquiry* 20 (Summer 1994): 663-93].

²⁶ Rap is the music but hip-hop is the culture that includes rap, breakdancing, graffiti culture, scratching, etc. In the most recent historiography of the Black Power movement, Peniel E. Joseph argues that the relationship between Black Power and hip hop culture are quite natural: “[f]or a generation of scholars who have come of age in an American social and political landscape marked by the rise of Hip Hop culture, the decline of the Civil Rights Movement, and conservative appropriation of that movement’s icons and ideals, Black Power offers radical activists whose lives and works resonate with intellectuals seeking to come to grips with a mean season of racial setbacks in American life” [in Peniel E. Joseph, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006),10].

The close relationship between Black Power in hip-hop explains why, in 2004, Draft Records/Counterflo Productions issued *Panthers*, a vinyl EP featuring seventies icons The Last Poets, modern black nationalist rappers Dead Prez, and indie rapper Common. Additionally, *Black Power: Music For Change* was released on the Shout! Factory Label in 2004, and features Huey Newton, Marvin Gaye, Kathleen Cleaver, Sons of Slum, The Soul Children, Malcolm X, The Temptations, The Watts Prophets, Rap Brown, The Last Poets, and Stokely Carmichael, among others. These albums demonstrate the fusion between hip-hop and protest as well as the renewed interest in Black Power politics.

²⁷ She also gets a shout-out in the roll call on Digital Underground’s song “Heartbeat Props,” on Sons of the P (1991), a Nation of Islam tribute album. The roll call is as follows: “Yeah, Spike Lee, Alex Haley, Brand Nubian, sister Whoopi Goldberg, Dick Gregory, X-Clan, sister Isis, BDP, Muhammad Ali, Stevie Wonder, Poor Righteous Teachers, Andrew Jackson, Denzel Washington, Sister Sarah Sahad Ali (?), Public Enemy, Stokley Carmichael, Sister Oprah Winfrey, yeah, Jesse Jackson, nuff respect, Paris, Gangstarr, Gil Scott Heron, George the fuck Clinton, Louis Farrakhan, Sister Queen Latifah, Bill Cosby, sister Angela Davis, The entire Nation of Islam, nucka, know what I’m saying? Afrika Bambaataa, Miles motherfucking Davis, sister Assata Shakur, once known as Joanne Chesimard, Robert Townsend, Nelson Mandela, Karreem Adul-Jabbar, the Black Panther

Party, James Earl Jones, The FOIs, nucka, Howard E. Rollins, sister Naomi, yeah, nuff respect!" [on Digital Underground, "Heartbeat Props," *Sons of the P* (Tommy Boy, 1991)].

²⁸ Common (Lonnie Rashied Lynn), "Love Song for Assata, *Like Water For Chocolate* (MCA, 2000).

²⁹ Common, "Love Song for Assata."

³⁰ Lennox Hinds, "Foreword," *Assata: An Autobiography* (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill, 1987), xvii.

³¹ Common, "Love Song for Assata."

³² Common, "Love Song for Assata."

³³ Common, "Love Song for Assata."

³⁴ Online magazines and self-published art/hip-hop/poetry chapbooks are called "zines."

³⁵ Qtd. in Matthew Sonzala, "Rapper Common Hasn't Lost his Sense," www.alphabeats.com/interviews/artists/common.htm (accessed July 22, 2006)

³⁶ Paris (Oscar Jackson, Jr.), "Assata's Song," *Sleeping with the Enemy* (Scarface: 1993). According to Paris' website, he was dropped from (now-defunct) Tommy Boy Records and its distributor Time Warner when they discovered that the album entertained fantasies of killing former President George Herbert Walker Bush and racist police officers, so he put the album out on the newly-formed Scarface label [see <http://www.guerrillafunk.com/paris/bio/index.html> (accessed July 22, 2006)].

³⁷ Paris, "Assata's Song."

³⁸ Paris, "Assata's Song."

³⁹ See <http://www.handoffassata.com> (accessed July 14, 2006) Hand Off Assata also lists resources, links to the other groups salient in the struggle for black liberation and the amnesty of political prisoners and ways to get involved in the campaign. The website also reminds us of the fate of political prisoners after September 11, 2001, because the organization is focused on the effects of the language of "terrorism" on political activists, particularly those committed to Black Power and black

liberation.

⁴⁰ Mos Def (Dante Smith), “Assata Shakur: The Government's Terrorist is Our Community's Heroine,” <http://www.handsoffassata.org> (accessed July 22, 2006)

⁴¹ Mos Def’s piece concludes with a denunciation of her trial and the verdict, and a description of her as a living martyr and says, “She was guilty of calling for a shift in power in America, and for racial and economic justice. Included on a short list of the many people who have made that call and were either criminalized, terrorized, killed or blacklisted are Paul Robeson, Martin Luther King, Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman, Medgar Evers and Ida B. Wells” [in Mos Def, “Assata Shakur.”]

⁴² Shakur, “Open Letter,” (April 1, 1998), www.handsoffassata.org (accessed July 22, 2006)

⁴³ She adds, “In January of 1998, during the pope's visit to Cuba, I agreed to do an interview with NBC journalist Ralph Penza around my letter to the Pope, about my experiences in New Jersey court system, and about the changes I saw in the United States and it's treatment of Black people in the last 25 years. I agreed to do this interview because I saw this secret letter to the Pope as a vicious, vulgar, publicity maneuver on the part of the New Jersey State Police, and as a cynical attempt to manipulate Pope John Paul II. I have lived in Cuba for many years, and was completely out of touch with the sensationalist, dishonest, nature of the establishment media today. It is worse today than it was 30 years ago. After years of being victimized by the "establishment" media it was naive of me to hope that I might finally get the opportunity to tell "my side of the story." Instead of an interview with me, what took place was a "staged media event" in three parts, full of distortions, inaccuracies and outright lies. NBC purposely misrepresented the facts. Not only did NBC spend thousands of dollars promoting this "exclusive interview series" on NBC, they also spent a great deal of money advertising this "exclusive interview" on black radio stations and also placed notices in local newspapers” [in Shakur, “Open Letter”].

⁴⁴ Shakur, “Open Letter.”

⁴⁵ She adds, “If Gov. Whitman thinks that my life has been so nice, that 50 years of dealing with racism, poverty, persecution, brutality, prison, underground, exile and blatant lies has been so

nice, then I'd be more than happy to let her walk in my shoes for a while so she can get a taste of how it feels.... I am a proud black woman, and I'm not about to get on the television and cry for Ralph Penza or any other journalist, but the way I have suffered in my lifetime, and the way my people have suffered, only god can bear witness to" [Shakur, "Open Letter,"].

⁴⁶ In addition to either being featured in the music or the subject of a song, Abu-Jamal is also a consistent presence in the liner notes of many CDs and even in the album art. For example, his picture appears inside of *Mos Def and Talib Kweli are Black Star* (Rawkus, 1999) and the song "Determination" is dedicated to him. Likewise, Assata Shakur and Mumia Abu-Jamal are given shout-outs in the liner notes of Dead Prez's album *We Want Freedom* (Loud Records, 2000) in a roll call of political prisoners and Black Power heroes.

⁴⁷ One major reason that Abu-Jamal's voice appears in these hip-hop songs and on these albums is because he has done so much spoken word for the CD compilations of his essays, that samples are readily available. Two albums of his essays and music are additions to the collection sold with *All Things Censored: Mumia Abu-Jamal, 175 Progress Drive* (Alternative Tentacle: 2001); Mumia Abu-Jamal with music by Man Is Bastard, *Spoken Word* (Alternative Tentacle: 1997).

⁴⁸ Chuck D (Carleton Douglas Ridenhour), the most visible black nationalist influence of modern hip-hop, provides the foreword to Terry Bisson's biography on Abu-Jamal after visiting him in Huntington Prison in 2000 and writes about hip-hop's transformative power. He says, "We talked about art as a tool of transformation, and about the way the World Wide Web can transcend the constraints of a one-sided voice, We talked about the musical protests that genres such as hip-hop and rap have made in this regard.... We also talked about how we, as a people, we have stilled loved America, though not Amerikkka – the latter being a reminder that we a'int been loved back" [in Chuck D, "Foreword," *On A Move: The Story of Mumia Abu-Jamal* (Sussex, UK: Plough Publishing House, 2000), xv]. Chuck D's commitment to political prisoners can be traced to his shout-out to Joanne Chesimard (Assata Shakur) on his track "Rebel Without a Pause," from the album *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back* (DefJam: 1988).

⁴⁹ Qtd in Corey Moss, "Judge Orders New Hearing for Mumia Abu-Jamal," December 18, 2001 <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1451546/20011218/story.jhtml> (accessed July 26, 2006)

⁵⁰ Chisun Lee, "Taking the Rap," September 6-12, 2000

<http://www.villagevoice.com/news/0036.lee.17912.1.html> (accessed July 26, 2006)

⁵¹ Zach de la Rocha, et. al, "Mumia 911," *Mumia 911* (Ground Control, 1999).

⁵² Zach de la Rocha, et. al. "Mumia 911."

⁵³ The excoriation of racist police officers appears in almost every song where Mumia Abu-Jamal is mentioned, which is not surprising since the rise of rap music in L.A. coincided with the Rodney King beatings and the L.A. riots. Songs like N.W.A.'s "Fuck Tha Police," Ice T's "Cop Killer," Anti-Flag's "Fuck Police Brutality," and KRS-One's "Sound of da Police" are just a small sample of the rap music that has dealt with police brutality and this seems to be a legacy of the strategies of regeneration that propelled Black Power through the 1990s.

⁵⁴ Zach de la Rocha, et. al. "Mumia 911."

⁵⁵ Zach de la Rocha, et. al. "Mumia 911."

⁵⁶ On September 11, 1999, Mumia 911 along with over 1,000 other artists staged Mumia 911: A National Day of Art to Stop the Execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal, where rappers and artists gathered to exhibit and perform their works in cities like Seattle, Boston, New York, Las Vegas, Berlin and Tasmania. [in Jon Caramanica, "Institution Building," *Village Voice* (September 7, 1999), 45]. The project was supported by the Artists Network of Refuse and Resist, a resistance group that champions the rights of political prisoners like Abu-Jamal, immigrants' rights, anti-war activism, and other leftist projects [See <http://refuseandresist.org> (accessed July 14, 2006) and <http://www.artistsnetwork.org> (accessed July 14, 2006)]; Producer Frank Sosa writes, "We recorded the Mumia 911 single the month after the Pennsylvania Supreme Court denied Mumia's appeal. So it seemed like the time to put this emergency call out to the community and this would be a great way to do it. It is also connected to Mumia 911, The National Day of Art to Stop the Execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal, on September 11. I'm involved with the Artists Network of Refuse & Resist! and I felt it would be great to help promote the National Day of Art. This is like a musical PSA for Mumia" [Qtd. in Michael Slate, "Rhyming in the Freedom Grove; Mumia 911 – the CD," *Revolutionary Worker Online* 1005 (May 9, 1999) <http://rwor.org/a/v21/1005-009/1005/mumiacd.htm> (accessed July 22, 2006)].

The consciousness-raising efforts of these musicians and artists is commonly referred to “raptivism” and is more and more visible at hip-hop shows, thanks to big names like Rage Against the Machine, the Beastie Boys, Chuck D and other groups, who, since in the 1990s, have championed political struggle and the plight of Assata Shakur, Mumia Abu-Jamal and now, Rap Brown. From this space under the mutual influence of hip-hop and incarceration, Project Raptivism emerged to include Dead Prez, Chubb Rock, Danny Hoch, the Last Poets, Last Emperor and others and their album *No More Prisons* is entirely dedicated to battling the constructions of new prisons [Caramanica, “Institution Building,” 45].

⁵⁷ M1 (Mutulu Olugabala), “M1 of Dead Prez: These are the Times,”

<http://www.nobodysmiling.com/hiphop/interview/85851.php> (accessed July 26, 2006)

⁵⁸ M1, “These are the Times.”

⁵⁹ Carrie Ching, “Mumia: King of Raptivism,” April 26, 2000

<http://www.alternet.org/story/657> (accessed July 26, 2006)

⁶⁰ Ching, “Mumia: King of Raptivism.” Ching continues. “But Americans aren't the only ones rallying. Rap groups from across Europe, and throughout South America and the Caribbean have produced songs written specifically for Mumia. Last October, a Hamburg-based artist performed a new bilingual rap he had written for a “Move for Mumia” benefit concert in Berlin. The song, appropriately titled “Move for Mumia,” opened with the German slogan: “USA -- Hande weg von Mumia!” (USA – Keep your hands away from Mumia!). It seems the “Free Mumia!” movement has been picked up in places where few know who he is, or the details of his case” [in Ching, “Mumia: King of Raptivism”].

⁶¹ Angela Davis, “Interview with Angela Davis: Attacking the ‘Prison-Industrial Complex,” September 22, 1998, (accessed July 24, 2006)

⁶³ Chuck D. writes and speaks frequently about his conversations and visits with both men.

⁶⁴ Chuck D, “EMpTy V; Blackfaces Reduced to Blackface...Silently Designing a Dumbed Generation in America,” September 10, 2002,

<http://publicenemy.com/index.php?page=page3&item=60> (accessed July 24, 2006)

⁶⁵ Chuck D, “Blackface.”

⁶⁶ The Coup (Raymond Riley), “Dig It!,” *Dig It!* (Capitol: 1991).

⁶⁷ In the manifesto, he writes, “I’ve been in a lot of police stations and I’ve never been beaten. I’ve never been hit it a police station, ‘cause I make it very clear that if you get me, I’m gonna get me somebody. And the cops don’t know which one of ‘em it’s gonna be [in Rap Brown, *Die Nigger Die* (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill, 2002), 81].

⁶⁸ The Coup, “Dig It!”

⁶⁹ The Coup, “Dig It!”

⁷⁰ Malik Zulu Shabazz, “One-on-one: An interview with Malik Zulu Shabazz,” *Final Call* March 10, 2005 http://www.finalcall.com/artman/publish/article_1858.shtml (accessed July 26, 2006); Shabazz notes that the foremost way that the new Panthers differ from the old is in their Divine Theology of the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. Shabazz, a Nation of Islam member since 1955, has merged the community activism of the Panthers with the theology of the Nation.

⁷¹ Shabazz, “Interview.” Parenthetical in original.

⁷² Shabazz, “Interview.”

⁷³ See <http://www.imamjamil.com> (accessed July 8, 2006)

⁷⁴ Mumia Abu-Jamal, “Free Jamil Al-Amin,” <http://imamjamil.com/articles/mumiaonjamil.asp> (accessed July 23, 2006)

⁷⁵ Abu-Jamal, “Free Jamil Al-Amin.”

⁷⁶ Elaine Brown, “Black Panther Party Long Victimized by Campaign of Lies,” <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/335.html> (accessed July 26, 2006); orig. printed in the *Atlantic-Journal Constitution*, March 25, 2000.

⁷⁷ Brown, “Black Panther Party.”

⁷⁸ Brown, “Black Panther Party.”

⁷⁹ In addition to the Jericho Movement, the Talking Drum also supports amnesty for both Al-Amin and Assata Shakur and includes a long list of “martyrs” for black liberation and Black Power that link both activists to armed struggle and black revolution. See <http://www.thejerichomovement.com> (accessed July 14, 2006) and <http://www.thetalkingdrum.com>

(accessed July 14, 2006)

⁸⁰ Herman Ferguson, "The Jericho Movement," November 18, 2004

<http://www.prisonactivist.org/pipermail/prisonact-list/2004-November/009514.html>

(accessed July 26, 2006)

⁸¹ Conrad Worrill, "Reparations, Political Prisoners, and the 10th Anniversary of the Million Man March," August 19, 2005

<http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/Announcements/pdf/REPARATIONS.pdf> (accessed July 26, 2006)

⁸² Christopher B. Strain, *Pure Fire: Self-Defense as Activism in the Civil Rights Era* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 175.

⁸³ Strain, *Pure Fire*, 176.

⁸⁴ Strain, *Pure Fire*, 176.

⁸⁵ Mumia Abu-Jamal, "The Black Panthers: Interviews with Geronimo ji-jaga Pratt and Mumia Abu-Jamal," *Race and Class* 35 (1993), 18-19.

⁸⁶ Strain, *Pure Fire*, 177.

⁸⁷ Assata Shakur, "Prisoner in the United States," *Still Black, Still Strong: Survivors of the War Against Black Revolutionaries*, ed. Jim Fletcher, Tanaquil Jones, and Sylvère Lotringer, (New York, NY: Semiotext(e), 1993), 216-17.

⁸⁸ Carson, "Leadership," 4.

⁸⁹ Carson, "Leadership," 5.

⁹⁰ Mumia Abu-Jamal, *All Things Censored* (New York: Seven Stories, 1997), 242.

⁹¹ As Hazel Carby has observed, "It is a conceptual and political failure of imagination that remains a characteristic of the work of contemporary African American male intellectuals," particularly because they refuse to acknowledge the constraints of patriarchy and their reproduction of it" [Hazel Carby, *Race Men* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1998), 10].

⁹² Charles P. Henry, "The Political Role of the 'Bad Nigger,'" *Journal of Black Studies* 11 (June 1981), 4737.

⁹³ Kalí Tal, "From Panther to Monster: Representations of Resistance from the Black Power Movement of the 1960s to the "Boyz in the Hood" and Beyond," *African American Rhetoric(s):*

Interdisciplinary Perspectives, ed. Elaine B. Richardson and Ronald L. Jackson II (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), 44. Michael Quinn adds that the notion of “style” is central to the production and consumption of rap, through clothes, guns, beer bottles, drugs, women, and the performance of both “muthafuckas” and “niggers” [in Michael Quinn, “Never Shoulda Been Let out of the Penitentiary”: Gangsta Rap and the Struggle over Racial Identity,” *Cultural Critique* 34 (Autumn 1996), 85-6].

⁹⁴ Regina Austin, “A Nation of Thieves’: Consumption, Commerce and the Black Public Sphere,” *The Black Public Sphere Collective*, ed. The Black Public Sphere Collective (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 243.

⁹⁵ Austin, “Consumption,” 243.

⁹⁶ Austin, “Consumption,” 250.

⁹⁷ Eric Mann argues that “commodity production and consumption is destroying any semblance of community. Such destruction creates social havoc and prevents oppressed communities from organizing even militant movements of resistance, let alone social transformation”[in Eric Mann, “Symposia: Radical Social Movements and the Responsibility of Progressive Intellectuals,” *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* (April 1999), 761].

⁹⁸ Austin, “Consumption,” 250.

⁹⁹ Strain, *Pure Fire*, 178-9.

¹⁰⁰ Strain, *Pure Fire*, 179.

¹⁰¹ Strain, *Pure Fire*, 179.

¹⁰² Strain, *Pure Fire*, 179.

¹⁰³ In their “Introduction” to *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers & torchbearers, 1941 – 1965*, Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Ann Rouse, and Barbara Woods write that in the civil rights movement, the major role of women has been documented in the few published accounts despite their involvement from the abolitionist movement onward. They see black women’s participation as a crucial element of black struggle that has been consistently ignored but that must be recovered [in Vicki L. Crawford, et al., “Introduction,” *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers & torchbearers, 1941 – 1965* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1993), xvii].

¹⁰⁴ Margo V. Perkins, *Autobiography as Activism: Three Black Women of the Sixties* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2000), 131.

¹⁰⁵ Collins, *From Black Power to Hip Hop*, 115.

¹⁰⁶ Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 127.

¹⁰⁷ Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 127-8.

¹⁰⁸ Gabriele Gottlieb, "Race, Resistance and State Repression: The Case of Mumia Abu-Jamal," *Civil Rights Movement Revisited: Critical Perspectives on the Struggle for Racial Equality in the United States* (Munich, Germany: Lit Verlag, 2001), 176.

¹⁰⁹ See Jeffrey L. Kirchemier, "Another Place Beyond Here: The Death Penalty Moratorium Movement in the United States," *University of Colorado Law Review* 73 (Winter 2003), 1-116.

¹¹⁰ Though now that his execution is no longer eminent, it seems that there is the possibility for a decline in his relevance to Black Power movement politics.

¹¹¹ Assata Shakur, "Partial Interview with Assata Shakur at Riker's Island Women's House of Detention," 1974, *Assata Speaks... and the People Speak on Assata*, ed. Bibi Angola (Bibi Angola: 1980), 9.

¹¹² Shakur, "Assata's Two Cents: An Edited Open Letter to Support Committees," 1976, *Assata Speaks... and the People Speak on Assata*, ed. Bibi Angola (Bibi Angola: 1980), 24.

¹¹³ Jamil Al-Amin, *Revolution by the Book: The Rap is Live* (Beltsville, MD: Writers' Inc. International, 1994), 150.

¹¹⁴ Tony Platt and Cecilia O'Leary, "Patriot Acts," *Social Justice* 30 (2003), 8-9. Tony Platt and Cecilia O'Leary remind us that, "By early November 2001, federal investigators had contacted more than 200 college campuses to collect information about students from Middle Eastern countries" and that local police departments have been recruited to "investigate the status of some 5,000 visitors and immigrants," [Platt and O'Leary, "Patriot Acts," 10].

¹¹⁵ Platt and O'Leary, "Patriot Acts," 11. Platt and O'Leary note that in August 2002, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld indicated that he would use the Special Forces in covert countries where the United States was not at war and the President confirmed this by authorizing "the CIA to hunt down and assassinate a 'high-value target list of leaders associated with terrorist groups, a reversal of a

policy that was put in place in the wake of [post-Watergate scandals] [Platt and O’Leary, “Patriot Acts,” 11].

¹¹⁶ Platt and O’Leary, “Patriot Acts,” 12-16.

¹¹⁷ Laura Whitehorn, “Fighting to Get Them Out,” *Social Justice* 30 (2003), 52.

¹¹⁸ Whitehorn writes, “Too easily forgotten in this are the political prisoners, those arrested in that earlier period, who remain in prison 20 and 30 years later. Those prisoners were warriors for justice in the 1970s. At that time, there was CopWatch; the average number of civilians killed by the cops each year in New York City was 63 not 11 or 12 as it is now. That was before there were national or local organizations to abolish the prisons and free all political prisoners, before the public knew about COINTELPRO, and a time in which those of us who were experienced the FBI’s illegal investigations were considered fanatics if we tried to tell our less radical friends about it” [in Whitehorn, “Fighting,” 52]. Whitehorn argues that political prisoners and prisons are at the heart of contemporary discourse about the War on Terror and that we must be vigilant because the current climate is a replication of the Cold War’s repression of communists. This connection also highlights the continuity of repression and resistance in the U.S.

¹¹⁹ Whitehorn, “Fighting,” 53.

¹²⁰ Whitehorn, “Fighting,” 55. Joy James concurs and adds, “The academy is not geared toward immediacy or urgency (or radical democracy), but seems dedicated to a construction of dispassionate objectivity, a discipline to detail, and painstaking rigor or sustained investigation and study. These obviously are not inherently negative traits” but “they are only part of intellectual development....” She adds, “activism as a complementary partner to academic productivity can mitigate against depictions of the incarcerated as ‘aliens,’ vulnerable to dissection or dismissal” [in Joy James, “Academia,” 5].

¹²¹ Shakur’s aunt discusses her conversion; see Williams, *Inadmissible Evidence*, 124.

¹²² John Rice, “Cuban Leader Defends Fugitive Sought by United States,” Associated Press State and Local Wire, May 11, 2005.

¹²³ Wayne Parry, “\$1M Reward for Chesimard gets Bounty Hunter’s Attention,” Associated Press State and Local Wire, May 2, 2005.

¹²⁴ It is worth noting that his conviction was upheld in the months following September 11 and that the Governor of Pennsylvania who so staunchly refused to pardon Abu-Jamal or order an investigation into the circumstances of his trial became the head of the Department of Homeland Security, shortly after it was created.

¹²⁵ Mumia Abu-Jamal, "Interview From Death Row," *Still Black, Still Strong: Survivors of the War Against Black Revolutionaries*, ed. Jim Fletcher, Tanaquil Jones, and Sylvère Lotringer (New York, NY: Semiotext(e), 1993), 130.

¹²⁶ Abu-Jamal, "Death Row," 130.

¹²⁷ Ward Churchill, "A Not So Friendly Fascism?: Political Prisons and Prisoners in the United States," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 6 (Spring 2006), 30-2.

¹²⁸ Churchill, "Friendly Fascism," 32.

¹²⁹ Churchill, "Friendly Fascism," 32.

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