

Black Lives Matter: Grace P. Campbell and Claudia Jones—An analysis of the Negro Question, Self-Determination, Black Belt Thesis

By

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Abstract

“We who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes.” Ella Baker¹

“The freedom struggles of black people that have shaped the very nature of this country’s history cannot be deleted with the sweep of a hand. We cannot be made to forget that black lives do matter.” Angela Davis²

Black women come “from an insurgent intellectual tradition.”³ Black women activists and theoreticians have carved out intellectual spaces to uncover, (re) define, contextualize, and validate leftist revolutionary theories, but Black women’s intellectual contributions to the Black radical tradition remains underdeveloped. A step toward remedying this lapse in the canon is to situate #Black Lives Matter (BLM), initiated by three black women: Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi, and Alicia Garza, within the Black radical tradition as articulated by the historical paradigms of Grace P. Campbell and Claudia Jones two leading black women communists. There is a traceable arch of organizing, thinking, and self-determination that runs from Campbell, Jones, and on into a subsequent generation of radical Black women such as embodied in BLM. Even though Campbell’s and Jones’s writings, speeches, and activism, provide a unique insight into the ways in which women pieced together fragmented histories of black people and their struggle for full equality and human dignity, their works have not been adequately analyzed within the canon of Black intellectual thought. Their writings illustrate the primary strength of the Black radical tradition’s ability to change and shift and merge, to disappear and then re-appear again in new places and in new forms as it reacts to the cycles of racialized capitalism, nationalism, and state-terrorism. To be sure, there are some strategic and tactical differences in their respective approaches, but there are several areas of convergence, namely, that Black people are oppressed on multiple interlocking levels. Hence a historical analysis of their paradigms helps to explain the emergence of the #Black Lives Matter.

Introduction

In a contemporary assessment, BLM movement is a shifting stance and a recommitment to the core tenets of Black self-determination. BLM's genesis as a hashtag is a signature historical moment of its creation in the digital era. At the same time, BLM has deep roots in the Black freedom struggle for self-determination that can be seen as an extension of the Negro Question, Black Belt Thesis, and Free by '63 as well as the Freedom Now and Black Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Tometi clearly writes that in envisioning BLM they "wanted to create a political space within and amongst our communities for activism that could stand firmly on the shoulders of movements that have come before us."⁴ For this reason, a generational approach is used in this article because as a scholar and activist Angela Davis points out, "Revolution is a process, not a destination." "Revolution is not a one-time act or not, a simple turning of the clock, but rather is a process." Revolutions possess "intergenerationality."⁵ #Black Lives Matter emerges from the "intergenerationality" of an intellectual insurgency radical tradition among Black women activism that has ignored the imagined boundaries of "nation" and has tapped into the global connections of Blackness and structural racism: that echoes a solidarity cry against racial oppression across the African Diaspora that reverberates the Marxists mantra that "we have nothing to lose but our chains," because the roots of oppression have not been dislodged in any fundamental way. The struggle for self-determination, freedom, and human dignity is a dialectical struggle.

Feminist Anna J. Cooper said the Negro Question stemmed from the black people being "transplanted to this continent in order to produce chattels and beasts of burden for a nation 'conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal';" -- yet, black people were denied justice and equality.⁶ So, the America dilemma was how could this be corrected. That was the question? The question and the answer must always be placed in terms of historical perspective and context of the struggle. Both the question and the answer must consider concretely the stage of the liberation movement and the present struggle for full black rights or self-determination. Struggle only begets more struggle. The struggle is the secret of liberation and in the words of Frederick Douglass "If there is no struggle, there is no progress."

This narrative will open with background information on Campbell and Jones that draws attention to their affiliation with Leftist movements, and the "intergenerationality" of black youth radical organizations such as the African Blood Brotherhood, the Southern Negro Youth Congress, and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Within this discussion of their lives and these organizations emphases will be placed on the core tenets of their analysis of the Negro Question, self-determination, the Black Belt thesis, and feminism as they presage and intertwined with the six core demands delineated in "A Vision for Black Lives: Policy Demands for Black Power, Freedom and Justice."

Then the essay will analyze, the "intergenerationality" of feminist black radical tradition by focusing on Angela Davis, the Black Panther Party, and the Combahee River Collective to show how they inform aspects of the present-day struggle in the BLM Movement, as well as touching on the relations and networks within black feminist circles. The article will conclude by comparing aspects of the structural differences between and the BLM Movement and the Leftist movements of Grace P. Campbell's and Claudia Jones' intergenerational struggles. BLM has put its vision of self-determination into practice through efforts to build a black united front.

After the BLM action groups were lambasted by critics for not having crafted any concrete demands or solutions, under the catch-all banner of the BLM movement the various grassroots cadres put together what has been described as a “clear vision of the world where black humanity and dignity is the reality” from the hue of its prison population to its investment choices. The platform is both a visionary agenda for black people and a resource for themselves. The platform seeks transformation and not reform, since the United States as a country “does not support, protect or preserve Black life.” The six platform demands are:

1. End the war on black people.
2. Reparations for past and continuing harms.
3. Divestment from the institutions that criminalize, cage and harm black people; and investment in the education, health and safety of black people.
4. Economic justice for all and a reconstruction of the economy to ensure our communities have collective ownership, not merely access.
5. Community control of the laws, institutions and policies that most impact us.
6. Independent black political power and black self-determination in all areas of society.⁷

As the BLM Movement six-point platform is discussed within the context of Campbells’ and Jones’ radicalism, it will be addressed more by analysis of implication than by mirroring examples, because the various obstacles to acquiring self-determination are unique in time and space within the dialectical struggle. For example, the BLM point that demands an “End the war on black people,” stresses the end to police brutality, the demilitarization of police and to systemic attacks on black youth; while Campbell and Jones both focus on the atrocities of police brutality, but they also engaged in anti-lynching campaigns.

This article builds on the growing body of work on black women’s radical activism that revises the historical and contemporary understandings of black women’s radical tradition. As a journalist, Jones has a plethora of writings that gives insight into her thinking, while Campbell’s voice, for the most part, has been muted because her writings have not been located. But the finding of her analysis of the Negro Question among the papers of the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), and articles in the *Negro Champion*, *Daily Worker*, *The Woman Today*, and *The New York Age* allows us to hear her voice and helps her to secure her place within the ranks of black leftist feminist intellectuals. In both women’s writings, an underlying dominant assumption was that societal structures and ideologies must be transformed to eradicate oppression. Both Campbell and Jones wrote about the Negro Question, self-determination, and the Black Belt thesis when the Communist Party was shifting its focus on black self-determination.

Grace P. Campbell

In 1927, Ruth Dennis of the *Pittsburg Courier* recognized Grace P. Campbell as one of fifty black women who had made racial progress possible in the nation. Some others in this group were Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, Nannie Burroughs, and Mary McLeod Bethune.⁸ In 1928, Grace P. Campbell wrote as a member of the America Negro Labor Congress (ANLC) “An analysis of the Negro Question in the U.S.A.” for the Negro Committee of the Workers Party of America (WP). She wrote in response to the Communist Sixth World Congress’ Black Belt Thesis. In her analysis, she concluded that “On the whole, the negro of America is among the most oppressed groups in the world.”⁹

Campbell was a “race woman” who stood with one foot in the Progressive Era and the other in the bosom of the black militant left. She was an important link between the reformist movement of the nineteenth century and the emergence of the radical black left within the “new Negro movement” in the twentieth century. She was active in racial uplift charity work and the only female founder of the African Black Brotherhood (ABB), an organization that holds the distinction of being the precursor to black national radical organizations in the twentieth century. Her activism went from uplifting to agitating, in an era when she and other “comrades” regularly debated about the impending “revolution” in the comfort of her parlor. In succeeding years, she and her “comrades” empowered, and at times constrained, the “new Negro movement” in its effort to build a more just society.

Grace P. Campbell Moving Left

With the rise of the women’s suffrage movement, the convening of the Pan-African Conference, and the turmoil of the Red Summer, her efforts became directed toward transforming the society through more political actions and less through uplifting work. Her main objective was to transform the political economy. Just like the BLM Platform would later articulate, Campbell believed that radical change could not be achieved through existing institutions, and it was necessary to build separate, alternative structures of power within society.¹⁰

Towards this end, Campbell energies went toward women's suffrage, organizing workers, creating co-operatives, and improving education as well as societal conditions within the context of a racial paradigm. She joined the Socialist Party (SP), helped to establish the ABB, embraced the Workers’ Party (WP), assisted in organizing the Friends of Negro Freedom (FNF) as well as the Trade Union Congress for Organizing Negro Workers. At the genesis of the ABB in 1918, she was probably the most prominent member because of her work as a social worker.¹¹ Like the BLM Movement would come to understand, Campbell recognized that the task of uplifting and alleviating menacing conditions was not possible without political agitation. The structure that wielded in the oppression of black people would have to be built in the name of black self-determination.

Over the years, Campbell favored the establishment of co-operative stores run by working class Harlemites as a solution to unemployment and community control over a commercial life. Similar to the BLM Movement in later years, she was looking for a strategy that would bring economic justice for all while reconstructing the economy to ensure black communities had collective ownership, not merely access. The ABB had plans to establish a cooperative store.¹² She was the Director of Consumer’s Co-operative. Campbell’s faith in co-operatives was shared by conservative journalist George Schulyer and activist, organizer Ella Baker with whom she worked with in the Pure Food Cooperative.¹³ The idea of a cooperative was also an idea that was prominent in the Friends of Negro Freedom’s platform of which Campbell was the vice president.¹⁴

Grace P. Campbell and Harlem Tenant League

Similar to what the BLM Movement would later advocate in its six-point platform, Campbell, too, sought to organize and gain community control over policies that most effected Black people such as through the Harlem Tenant League. It was a militant group which

attempted to organize residents against unfair treatment—exorbitant rates, increases, evictions, and so on. Campbell was the Vice President of the League, and Chairman of the Housing Committee. Black women such as Hermina Husiwoud and Elizabeth Henderickson emerged as important women leaders within the League.¹⁵ It was within this struggle for the basic rights of existence that they learn how to strategize, to build movements, and to organize. Campbell and the other women knew that this housing policy, while less transformational, was necessary to address the current material conditions of black people. They recognized the need to include policies that addressed the immediate suffering of black people so that they could improve their quality of life; while always connecting their the day-to-day struggles to a larger vision of self-determination. The BLM Platform would later adopt this same approach in order that black people and would be better equipped to win the world they “demand and deserve,” because struggles against all of the ways in which oppression and exploitation express themselves black people’s is critical to their basic survival.¹⁶

Grace P. Campbell: African Blood Brotherhood

At the genesis of the ABB in 1918, she was probably the most prominent member because of her work as a social worker, and the oldest member. The other founders of the ABB were male and young. Its founding predates the establishment of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA). In the main, the ABB was a nationalistic organization that was started as an entity to push for “a Free Africa” and elsewhere. The ABB espousal of both nationalist and socialist. The ABB wanted to bring social equality by advocating universal suffrage, equal rights for blacks, and the immediate end to segregation. At the heart of their agenda was armed self-defense against race riots and lynchings. Racial terrorism masked the full extent of inequality.¹⁷

The ABB was the embodiment of the Black Lives Matter vision for an independent black political power entity that could fight for black self-determination in all areas of society.¹⁸ The CPUSA surmised that many of the best black revolutionaries of the era were members of the ABB, and it came closest to developing a political line that was appropriate for building a revolutionary black working-class movement during this period. The CPUSA saw the ABB as a future competitor as a Negro political party, and as such would be another cadre, they would have to work within a united front. Upon the basis of this assessment, the CPUSA decided to liquidate the organization.¹⁹

The CPUSA’s idea of self-determination did not mirror the concept of self-determination that had been advocated by the ABB.²⁰ The white Left’s inability to understand and answer the Negro Question turned out to be its Achilles’ heel since it was at the forefront of the class struggle.²¹ The best answers to the Negro Questions came from black people themselves, such as illustrated in Grace Campbell’s analysis of the Negro Question, and Claudia Jones’s discussion articles and writings. Both of their answers “offered profound insight into the political economy and cultures of the United States.”²²

Grace P. Campbell Party Affiliation

In order to gain community control of the laws, institutions, and policies that most impact Black people, in 1919 and 1920 Campbell ran on the SP ticket for the State Assembly and in 1922 she was a candidate for Congress on the Workers’ Party ticket.²³ Campbell was the first

black woman to join the WP. She left the SP because of its approach to abolishing racism to plodding. The SP saw racism as merely a feature of capitalism, and if the latter was killed, the former would wither away. Also, the SP limited its approach to the Negro Question largely to the black male proletariat, leaving the struggles of black women out of the discourse altogether. Despite her critique of the WP on various issues, she thought that the Party would lead the working-class struggle.²⁴ Campbell was adamant that the WP served the interests of black women as a worker, in their struggle for posterity and equal opportunity for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness was better than any other party. It was the one party that favored racial equality.²⁵

Campbell was a prime mover in establishing the Harlem Branch of the Communist Party, which became the operating base of Williana Burroughs, Louise Thompson Patterson, Shirley Graham DuBois, Audley “Queen Mother” Moore, Bonita Williams, Claudia Jones, and other black radical women.²⁶ In 1938, there were several black women who were active in the Communist Party who had risen to a degree of prominence within the Party, and they gathered at Campbell’s home to discuss matters that specifically target gender and racial chauvinism that had been expressed by Maude White, who was on the editorial staff of the *Liberator* the organ of the League of Struggle for Negro Rights (LSNR), in a meeting of the Central Committee on Negro Work and Louise Patterson in *The Party Organizer*. They recognized that the formulation of black feminism and womanhood was problematic within the existing ideas about gender within the Party.²⁷ Later in the 1960s and 1970s, Angela Davis and Elaine Brown would be confronted with a similar dilemma within the ranks of the Black Panther Party. Unlike the BLM Movement that was started by radicalized black women, white male Communist Party leaders never came up with any systematic plan to organize or recruit black women in the Party.²⁸

Grace P. Campbell: Negro Question

In 1928, Campbell wrote her analysis of the Negro Question in the same year that the Comintern Sixth World Congress revamped the Communist policy on the colonial struggles. The Comintern adopted the “Resolution on the Negro Question” that defined Southern blacks as a nation within a nation that constituted the Black Belt Nation Thesis.²⁹ The Communist International issued a proclamation for blacks in the United States. It declared that black people were a distinct nation, with the right to self-determination. This became the predicate of “Black Belt Theory,” which demanded that an area in the southern part of the United States where a highly concentrated black population resided be given a right to secede.

The theory placed black Americans in the vanguard among colonized nations; which meant that when black people got free, everyone gets free, but black people could not ‘get free’ alone; so, in that sense, black liberation and self-determination is bound up with the struggle of human liberation and structural transformation. Nonetheless, black people were in the eye of the hurricane of class struggle, and the idiomatic expression for self-determination or slogan Black Belt Thesis was adopted to encapsulate this strategy. But was it this the correct strategy and slogan? This was the conundrum that plagued the Black Belt slogan as an idiomatic expression of self-determination for Campbell and Jones, but not the BLM Movement that generated their own slogan.³⁰ History has taught the BLM Movement that they must generate their slogan, create their agenda, and implement it themselves.³¹

In Campbell's analysis, of the Negro Question, she concluded that "On the whole, the negro of America is among the most oppressed groups in the world."³² Campbell argued that the solution to the Negro Question lay not in establishing "a separate, independent republic," but in winning equality and economic opportunity; hence, the struggle for black rights was an inherently revolutionary strategy in its self. She described the circumstances that had spawned the web that deprived black people of full social and political equality.³³ Campbell's analysis of the Negro Question identified the fundamental contradiction in American history. The contradiction had subverted America's founding ideology, distorted its institutions, traumatized its social relations, and class formations, and, in the twentieth century, confused its rebels and revolutionaries of the semi-feudal/slave societies. At the core of her analysis was that the 13th Amendment had ended chattel slavery but had failed to usher in an era of genuine black freedom. Campbell characterized Reconstruction as a failure that undercut independent political black power.³⁴

Campbell wrote that if the north would have disposed the Southern landlords of their feudal estate and turned it over to black people who had been working the land as the Russians had dispossessed their hereditary lords and turn the land over to the peasants, the history of Black people since the Civil War would have been a different story.³⁵ Campbell's analysis implicitly suggests that freedmen should have received land as a form of reparations and if this had happened in the various constitutional amendments would have had a backbone, and in 1928 they would have been operating in a way that would have advanced black freedom.

Campbell pointed out, Jones would later agree, and the BLM Movement would reaffirm that decades of capitalist development had failed to obliterate the remnants of the semi-feudal/slave society; thus, the task of destroying the slave survivals and transforming the South from a semi-feudal/slave society into a popular democracy was left to another force. The transformation of the semi-feudal/slave economy was integral to the liberation of black people. The political, economic, social, racial, and ideological system all serve as the foundation for which black people were excluded from the body politic.³⁶ BLM Platform addressed the legacy of the political and economic disparity semi-feudal/slave society by demanding that "government repair the harms that have been done to black communities in the form of reparations," and enacting legislation at the federal and state level "that requires the United States to acknowledge the lasting impacts of slavery, establish and execute a plan to address those impacts."³⁷

Grace P. Campbell the Woman Question

Even though Campbell mentions black women in her analysis, it was not a gender analysis; whereas the BLM Platform included women as well as it propels the new interests of newer iterations of identity such Black cis, queer, and trans people. Campbell's analysis uses masculine language. As historian Robin Kelly has pointed out the language of the Black Belt thesis was masculine as was the language within the dialectical struggle. Masculine language prioritized black liberation over the women's struggle and ignored a serious framework that might combine the "Negro" and "Woman" questions. Yet, the Black Belt resolution acknowledged that "Negro women in industry and on farms constitute a powerful potential force in the struggle for Negro emancipation," and because they were "unorganized to an even greater extent than male Negro workers, they. . . [were] the most exploited section." It was therefore "an

important task of the Party to bring the Negro women into the economic and political struggle.”³⁸ Thus the resolution was imaging the political identity of Black women as political identity as proletariats in industry rather than “Militant Negro Domestics.”³⁹

In some of Campbell’s other writings and activism, she more aggressively discussed black women’s radical feminism.⁴⁰ Campbell took up this task of raising the class consciousness among black women workers and by organizing them. She was particularly focused on bringing black women workers to a consciousness of their position in the working class and drawing them into the class struggle.⁴¹ The BLM platform continues to advocate for the right for workers to organize in public and private sectors, especially in “On Demand Economy” jobs.⁴²

Campbell’s recognized the exogenesis of tripartite oppression that stems from the intersectionality of race, gender, and class that was written about by Louis Patterson and Claudia Jones and became the theoretical approach of black radical feminist groups such as the Combahee River Collective. Campbell’s writings provided a contextualization for a framework of black feminist activism and epistemology when she wrote, “Negro women workers are the most abused, exploited and discriminated against of all Americans workers, not only by the capitalist system and the employers, but by unenlightened race prejudice which is found even in the working class, and is used by the employers to drive a wedge between the black and white workers and thus destroy their unity and fighting power.”⁴³ Campbell’s intent, like that of the BLM’s “A Vision for Black Lives,” was to create a new world order without racism, sexism, hunger, and poverty. Her dedication to “the cause” was unrelenting. Her thinking and activism addressed race, class, and gender interests.⁴⁴

Claudia Jones

From 1945 to 1948, Jones was a member of the National Committee of the CPUSA. In 1947 she was made the secretary of the National Women’s Commission of the Communist Party. In 1950, she was elected an alternate member of the National Committee of the Communist Party.⁴⁵ In the United States through the 1930s and 1950s, Jones was a leading spokesperson and writer for the CPUSA. She was a living symbol of left-wing political activism among black women. She wrote for and edited several CPUSA publications: *The Weekly Review*, *Daily Worker*, *Spotlight*, and *Political Affairs*. At about the same time that Claudia Jones was entering the Young Communist League (YCL), black women such as Louise T. Patterson, Bonita Williams, and Helen Holman, who was now the director of women’s work in the Harlem Division of the Communist Party, recognized “the necessity of stimulating girl leadership and promoting varied and interesting activities for them.” They urged young women to take leadership positions.”⁴⁶

In 1936, Jones moved from a fellow traveler into the ranks of the Harlem Party, as the Party was becoming a highly visible organization because of its Scottsboro protest.⁴⁷ Indeed, Jones recalled that the organization and the fizzy around the Scottsboro Case was the deciding factor that made her split with the nationalist and brought her into the Party. She wrote, “I made up my mind that this [the Party] was it- - that this was for me.”⁴⁸ Jones considered the case a “frame-up” that was a link in the chain of terror against black workers.⁴⁹

Campbell’s activism overlapped with Claudia Jones’s during the 1930s anti-lynching and

Scottsboro Boys protests in Harlem.⁵⁰ Campbell and Jones were deeply involved in anti-

lynching campaigns just as the BLM would be in divesting from the institutions that criminalize, cage and harm black people.⁵¹ Jones wrote that the Scottsboro case became a “powerful symbol of the growing struggle for Negro rights.” Whenever the battle cry of the Scottsboro boys was heard, people not only thought of the nine boys, but they also learned of the plight of the 13,000,000 Americans who were victims of Jim Crow. Just as when the slogan Black Lives Matter is shouted, it conjures up images of police brutality, various forms of state violence committed against black bodies in the present and past, failing schools that criminalize black children, dwindling earning opportunities, wars on trans and queer family, and the denial of black humanity. These images challenge the popular image of America as the land of prosperity and optimism; instead, it underscored the national roots of backwardness and hypocrisy. Jones saw the Scottsboro campaign as a model which could be applied on an infinitely broader scale, such as was done in the Free Angela Davis campaign. Throughout her activist and journalistic career, she would routinely invoke the Scottsboro campaign, because it embodied both black icons and black agency.⁵²

Like Campbell had done, and the BLM movement would later do, Jones decided to embrace a political philosophy and course of behavior which would enable her to combat oppressive circumstances. Her desire was to see working-class people join together to bring peace to the world and transform global economic inequities while connecting seemingly day-to-day struggles such as crowded schoolrooms, unsanitary conditions, lack of child care facilities, reactionary content of teaching racism, the demand for lunch to a hungry child, quality living conditions, and economic security to the wider struggle of self-determination. was a theme that dominated her w.⁵³

Claudia Jones Youth Work

In 1937, Jones spent six months at the National Training School of the CPUSA. She became immersed in Leftist rhetoric and ideology.⁵⁴ When Jones returned to Harlem from the Worker’s School in upstate New York, she began working with youth organizations. She was elected to the National Council of the YCL. As an officer for the YCL, “she was considered one of the ablest young Communists in America and was elected to the National Council of the Youth Communist League.” She was active in “the work of the great American Youth Congress, the organization of the National Council of Negro Youth, and the Southern Youth Negro Congress (SNYC).” Her picture appeared on the first recruiting brochure of the SYNC, and she attended SNYC’s conferences in Alabama where she met Angela Davis’ mother, Sallye Belle Davis.⁵⁵

Consequently, Jones’ path crisscrosses that of Dorothy Height and Ella Baker, who were involved in organizing youth groups. Height knew Claudia Jones from the 1936 Vassar America Youth Congress. “The main purpose of the conference was to evolve a program for cooperation and coordination of the youth activities for the creation of a better more wholesome community.”⁵⁶ Since the 1920s, Baker was known in journalist circles and then in 1931, Baker became the National Director of Young Negroes Cooperative League (YNCL), and in the 1960s, she, became the spirit and founder behind the Southern Non-Violent Coordination Committee (SNCC).⁵⁷

Just like the BLM Movement would later do, all the organizations embraced the concept of leadership at the grassroots as opposed to a top-down model. And they all were “focused on youth as a cutting-edge force for social change.” The YNCL groups certainly had a different goal and emerged from a distinctly different historical context, but the parallels are clear between SNCC, Federated Youth Clubs, SYNC, Youth Congress of the National Negro Congress (NNC) in that they were “distinguished from the other contemporary organization by their focus on grassroots education, democratic decision-making, and a step-by-step, transformative process of working toward long-term goals” that mirror the visions of BLM Movement. Grassroots struggles and social movements are the driving force behind change, because “ideologies do not work when they are only imposed from above.” They understood that the key to change was to have widespread acceptance and participation.⁵⁸

Jones also had come to know Baker through her friendship with YCL organizer, James Ashford, when in 1935, he and Baker were on the sponsoring committee for the first meeting of the National Negro Congress.⁵⁹ The linkages between the YNCL, SNCC, Federated Youth Clubs, SYNC, and the Youth Congress NNC as well as Baker’s narrative points to “the carryover of strategies for resistance and change, which were passed on through conduits” like Jones from generation to the next generation, and then passed on to current movements such as the BLM movement.⁶⁰ Baker urged students to structure SNCC in such a way as to promote autonomy and self-determination. Her concept of organizing was “group centered leadership, rather than a leadership-centered group,” a strategy that was used by Jones as a functionary within the CPUSA, and today by the BLM movement.⁶¹

Some of the campaigns and aims of the BLM Movement are indistinguishable from those that emerged from the SNYC headquarters in Birmingham. There was a focus on fighting police brutality and registering voters. Just like the participants in the BLM Movement, members of SNYC were often victims themselves of state violence, subjected to discrimination in educational opportunities, employment, recreational facilities, and the court system. But they were unyielding when it came to solving their problems.⁶²

In the same spirit as the BLM Movement six-point visionary platform, SNYC had adopted a four-point program which guided it throughout its history: citizenship, education, jobs, and health, but it involved itself in a variety of issues and campaigns. The SYNC fought racial discrimination in the armed forces, expanded its voter registration drive, continued to investigate police brutality cases and civil liberties violations, collected a mountain of data on discrimination for the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) hearings in 1943, and even waged a campaign in Birmingham to end segregation on buses spearheaded by Mildred McAdory. They also targeted the rights of black workers, lynching and abolishment of the poll tax. SNYC was a race-based, militant Southern movement that sought to transform the political economy. SYNC, like SNCC and the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, as well as militant youth organizations that followed in the 1960s, and later the BLM Movement, didn't only say something, but also, actually did something.⁶³

Claudia Jones: Self-Determination and Black Belt Thesis

Earl Browder, the leader of the CPUSA, believed that the war would inevitably alter Jim Crow in the South, but SNYC members like Claudia Jones, Esther and James Jackson, Dorothy

and Edward Burnham, and Sallye Belle Davis, understood—better than national Party leadership—that change would not simply happen by itself.⁶⁴ Following the war, the CPUSA opted to operate in accordance with the New Deal line. The Party was appreciably influenced by changing forces in the world situation. It saw itself transforming from a revolutionary party with the intent of overthrowing the government through peaceful means. Browder asserted that black people had, in fact, exercised their right of self-determination by opting for integration and that the abolition of discrimination and the achievement of equal rights were possible as part of the antifascist and democratic struggle. Browder wanted to minimize the separatist approach associated with the self-determination concept. He hoped to offset the hostility of many black leaders and argued that the Negro Question could be solved under capitalism.⁶⁵ His interpretations were considered Revisionist.⁶⁶

Then, after twenty-five years of existence the CPUSA dissolved itself and organized into a non-partisan Communist Political Association (CPA) in order to better strive “for the goal of lasting peace,” to integrate communist movement into American life, and to support the program of the 1943 Teheran Conference of the “Big Three”—United States President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin. Jones was critical of the CPA. Jones thought that the association was not revolutionary enough to advance the cause of black people. Unlike the BLM movement, she thought there was a need for a party apparatus to aid in the struggle for black self-determination. She argued against this revisionism and for re-instating the CPUSA.⁶⁷ In 1946, when the party called for a change in its position on race by dropping the call for self-determination in the Black Belt. Jones was one of the leaders who firmly believed in keeping CPUSA’s racial theory and slogan, because of the new periods of layoffs and mounting racial violence.⁶⁸ She published two articles in *Political Affairs* that argued for the continuation of CPUSA as a needed apparatus and the Black Belt thesis as a slogan guide for achieving self-determination that answered the Negro Question as analyzed by Campbell.⁶⁹

Claudia Jones “believed that socialism held the only promise of liberation for Black women, for black people as a whole and indeed for the multi-racial working class.”⁷⁰ Jones and many who participate in the BLM Movement are not opposed to integration. She, similar to the later versions of the BLM Movement, saw it as a part of the partial demands that are linked to the daily needs and problems of the wide masses of the black community and white workers. She said it was “important in the struggle for democracy,” but that did “not divert nor overshadow the working-class struggle against exploitation; it is an aid to it.” “Integration cannot be considered a substitute for the right of self-determination. National liberation is not synonymous with integration; neither are the two concepts mutually exclusive.” Integration, in a democracy, “is breaking down the fetters which prohibit full economic, political, and social participation.” If Browder had been correct integration would have actualized the six core demands delineated in and there would not have been any need for a BLM movement in the twenty-first century; the dialectical struggle would cease.⁷¹

Jones made a special case for a combined movement to defeat the barriers of racial segregation and for “self-determination” which she did not link exclusively to national territory. She argued that “to identify self-determination with separation, or to substitute one for the other was tantamount to forcing” black people to make a choice, that they are not clearly in an

objective position to make. Even though it is a right, and once black people have acquired that right, but they do not necessarily have to exercise the right of separation. In other words, though black people would have a right to separate, it is not necessarily a function of self-determination. The right to separate is inherent in the right of self-determination, whether the right is eventually exercised or not.⁷² Jones' article "On the Right to Self-Determination for the Negro People in the Black Belt," served to strengthen the Party's "line" on right of self-determination for blacks in the United States and influenced its conceptualization as constructed within the six core demands delineated in BLM Platform.⁷³

Jones never took socialism off the table. She was instrumental in determining the new Communist Party "line" on the Negro Question after World War II as well as how it is constituted within the BLM's policy demands for Black Power, freedom and justice that underscores end the war on black people, economic justice for all and a reconstruction of the economy to ensure black communities have collective ownership, not merely access, and divestment from the institutions that criminalize, cage and harm black people; while investing in the education, health, and safety of black people.⁷⁴ Jones contended that Browder's line on self-determination was "based on a pious hope that the struggle for full economic, social and politically equality for Negro people would be 'legislated' and somehow brought into being through reform from the top;" rather than, by transformation of society.⁷⁵

Jones believed that black people should exercise their historical right to self-determination, but she was against self-determination for black people under the existing American system. She argued that under the present system blacks would still be "less than equal and would remain so for generations to come." She pointed out that black people under the existing political economy could merely obtain "approximating equality," but not full equality. The present system embodied discriminatory practices, including social exclusion which would beset black people for generations.⁷⁶ Jones' prognostications were correct as seen in the present-day BLM movement demands to achieve self-determination outside of the existing capitalist system which is a signifier of the "intergenerationality" of the dialectical revolutionary process.⁷⁷

Jones saw "the Negro Question in the United States as a *special question*, as an issue whose solution required *special* demands," such as those policy demands for black power, freedom and justice that have been articulated by the BLM Movement.⁷⁸ Although Campbell disagreed with Claudia Jones's *On the Right to Self-Determination for the Negro People in the Black Belt* that characterization of the Negro question as a national question, she agreed with her that the "survivals of slavery, both in their economic and social form, remain the basic peculiarity of the South and determine in the main the character of the Negro question." Jones's article took up the issue "of determining the correct Communist approach to the Negro Question since the economic, political, and social survivals of slavery had not been wiped away, and civil rights had not been enforced.

Campbell, Jones and the BLM Movement see the genesis of the Negro Question in the United States beginning with the origins in slavery and the racial-economic situation that involved into virtual serfdom existing in the heart of the most industrialized country in the world.⁷⁹ Jones wrote that the semi-feudal/slave economy of Southern sharecroppers, the inferior status

of blacks in Northern and Southern industry, and Jim Crow practices, as well as “trigger-happy cops all, can be traced back step-by-step to the continued existence of vestiges” of the semi-feudal/slave experienced by black people living in an oppressed nation within the United States.⁸⁰

Claudia Jones: Feminist Theory

In 1949, Jones wrote her well-known feminist essay “An End to the Neglect of the Problems of Negro Women” that centered black women in the revolutionary struggle. She presented the syllogism that “the Negro question in the United States is prior to, and not equal to, the woman question.”⁸¹ Which meant that when black women become free, everyone becomes free, but black women cannot become free alone; so, in that sense, black women’s liberation and self-determination is bound up with the struggle of human liberation and structural transformation. Jones highlighted the inextricable link that united the struggles of women, black Americans, and working people. She took this idea further than everyone else and refused to accept a narrow single-identity politics and used her position within the Party to defend her “proto-feminist” politics that prefigured later black feminist positions in the Combahee River Collective as well as other Black Power feminist organizations and is on full display in the Black Lives Matter Movement.⁸²

Jones’ approach provided the space for the development of a concept referred to as an intersectionality analysis. The concept has been popularized by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a feminist sociological theorist and is the approach that undergirds the policy demands of the BLM Movement. The concept postulates that various physical, social, cultural variables such as race, gender, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, caste, ethnicity, age, and other axes of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, form mutually constructing features which shape black women’s experiences and, in turn, create a systemic injustice and social inequality that inhibit self-determination.⁸³

In that same year, Jones’ article “We Seek Full Equality for Women” captured the ongoing discourses about lingering inequality for several subordinated groups in the United States, then and now, that resonate in the chants of BLM Movement and in the activism of LGBTQ groups who are “still seeking full equality” in all fields and spheres of life.⁸⁴ In this essay, Jones identified black women’s place in the Marxist-Leninist theory of the mode of production. The essay explained the causes of the inequality of women under capitalism and indicated that winning equality was determined by the extent to which the particular “problems, needs and aspirations of women – as women” were addressed. Jones asserted that a movement for equality could not adequately deal with women questions or win women’s “progressive participation unless one takes up the special problems; needs and aspirations of women as women.” She wrote, “The position of women in society is not always and everywhere the same, but derives from women’s relation to the mode of production.” She explained, “Under capitalism, the inequality of women stems from the exploitation of the working class by the capitalist class. But the exploitation of women cuts across class lines and affects all women.”⁸⁵ She concluded that female oppression does not just stem from men. She rejected “The battle of the sexes” as an irrational approach to addressing the women’s question.⁸⁶

Perhaps the most famous line in the article “We Seek Full Equality for Women”, one

often cited by Angela Davis, is when Jones argues that the “triply-oppressed status of [Black] women is a barometer of the status of all women, and that the fight for the full, economic, political and social equality of the [Black] woman is in the vital self-interest of white workers, in the vital interest of the fight to realize equality for all women.”⁸⁷ Angela Davis signifies the emergence of a new generation of black radical intellectual activists.

The concept of tripartite oppression is intergenerational. Jones is credited with popularizing the triple oppression of black women based on their race, class, and gender and for the triple rights call on behalf of workers, women, and black people in the United States throughout the 1940s and up to the mid-1950s. But Louise Patterson, a representative of the International Workers Order (IWO), was the first to use the phrase “triple exploitation” to describe the conditions of Negro women under capitalism as “workers, as women, and as Negroes” in a 1936 essay for *Working Woman*, “Toward a Brighter Dawn.” The essay was a pioneering moment in the analysis of black domestic work within capitalism. Patterson’s essay was written in the form of a report produced from coverage of a special “Woman’s Sub-Session” of the Women’s Committee of the NNC of the Second National Conference that was held in Philadelphia. The topics for the women’s session were “The Economic Crisis and Negro Women” and “Other Problems of Negro Women.” Patterson and Jones were both on the panel. Among some of the other participants were Helen Holman, who was now the Director of Women's Work in the Harlem Division of the Communist Party, and Audley Moore, who had been a domestic worker in New Orleans and Harlem, was a former Garveyite, and would later jumpstart reparations activism in the latter half of the twentieth century.⁸⁸

Even though Jones, was a card-carrying member of the CPUSA, she, too, like the BLM movement saw the value in having independent political black power in the struggle for self-determination. When Jones came under criticism for the formation of the Sojourners for Truth and Justice by and for black women, she responded to these charges by writing “Since when is it the prerogative of white progressive to determine the direction of the liberation movement of an oppressed people?” She pointed out that black women are triply-oppressed, and this is something of a new understanding. Hence, white progressives cannot elevate this oppression for them; instead, black women themselves must meet and overcome these problems. She added that the best contribution white progressive could do is to have full confidence in black women’s leadership and lend support to their activities. Jones felt that white progressive’s criticism was missed directed and unwanted. The BLM movement shared a belief with Jones that progressives should be heartened by the sign that young black people and working-class black women reach a point where their effective organization could struggle for peace and freedom without their leadership.⁸⁹

Jones political positioning and determination, similar to that experienced by the BLM Movement in later years, brought her into conflict with a number of white women communists and progressives who thought her politics heavy-handed and at times as being guilty of the most awful reverse discrimination.⁹⁰ Jones wrote that women were exploited doubly, “Both as workers and women.” She understood that women faced special oppression in every field in society as workers, wives, as homebuilders, and as citizens. Whichever way women turned they were “confronted with subtle and often crudely brutal manifestations of male supremacy’ chauvinism.” These circumstances crippled women in every respect.⁹¹ Both Jones and the BLM

Movement argue that although they were not the cause of their oppression, they must become a part of a mass movement to liberate themselves. She contended that the organization of the masses of American women was indispensable to the building and strengthening of an anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, and anti-war coalition, and to heighten the struggle for peace and to meet the special needs of oppressed women.⁹²

When Jones was put on trial, she had been living with her father for many years. He nor she were citizens. She had begun the process to acquire citizenship, and he planned to apply for citizenship in the near future.⁹³ But on 9 December 1955, Claudia Jones was deported to England, where she lived until her death in 1964. Jones' deportation was intended to squash her influence in the struggle for self-determination, but her influence on socialist movements and radical black feminist thought is seen in the life of Angela Davis, and such organizations as SNCC, the Black Panther Party, the Combahee River Collective, and the BLM Movement.

The “intergenerationality” of the feminist back radical tradition

Campbell's and Jones' struggle to transform the political economy and radical feminist theories influenced later social movements in their endeavors to achieve self-determination, such as the “Free Angela Davis” campaign and the BLM Movement. Davis was a popular figure among radical blacks and whites because of her forthright stand on the issue of her membership in the CPUSA and her subsequent confrontation with Governor Ronald Reagan's administration. Her leftist leaning can be traced back to her mother, Sallye Bell Davis, who was a national officer and a leading organizer of the SNYC. Davis was surrounded by communist organizers and thinkers such as Claudia Jones, who significantly influenced her intellectual development. SNYC influenced a generation of African Americans.⁹⁴

In 1967, Davis joined SNCC, and soon after, the Black Panther Party (BPP). The Black Panther's concept of self-determination was understood to mean community control within the urban environment; its 10-point program echoed the Bolshevik of 1917 cry for “Land, Bread, Peace,” and shared some of the six-point visions of the BLM movement. The Panther's platform demanded land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace.⁹⁵ Similar to the approach of Campbell and Jones, and the future BLM Platform, it, too, addressed the local black community's racially specific economic and social concerns, including their need for decent housing and protection from police brutality so that they would be better equipped to engage in the struggle for self-determination.⁹⁶ Animated by Malcolm X's teachings, their original Ten Point Platform borrowed its structure and rhetoric from the weekly statement of demands published in the newspaper, *Muhammad Speaks*; likewise, the language of the BLM Platform echoes a similar rhetorical tone.⁹⁷

The origins of the Black Panther Party's revolutionary symbolism lay in the SNCC.⁹⁸ In Alabama, its activists made significant inroads in challenging segregation and increasing black enfranchisement but translating this voting bloc into political power proved more difficult. Women such as Fannie Lou Hamer, Victoria Gray, and Annie Devine, who had created the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) took the lead and challenged white power. In response, SNCC vowed to expand black power. SNCC workers, unlike the BLM, thought that the residents of Lowndes County needed a political party to secure local political power. They envision that this party would not be affiliated with any existing political entities. Out of this

thinking, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) was created. It was an independent, third political party designed to grow the black electorate and “control the county” by electing local black residents to county positions. SNCC volunteers helped brand and promote the organization, with local field secretary Ruth Howard developing the black panther image that became the symbol and the name of the group, and that would be coopted by Newton and Seal.⁹⁹

The 1966 LCFO Panther Party campaign provided the space for intense discussions about the importance of self-defense, all-black organizing, and black separatism which had been acute topics in black organizing since the founding of the ABB. Against this backdrop of growing disillusionment with the promise of integration, in June 1966 Stokely Carmichael gave his “Black Power” speech which had the net effect of spurring SNCC members toward adopting Black Power as its new political ideology and organizing slogan. The political climate demanded radical, black-led activism. SNCC member and LCFO volunteer, Gwendolyn Patton explained that “Black Power,” was a “strategy in which black people would transform the powerless black community into one that could exert its human potential to be an equal partner in the larger society.”¹⁰⁰ This transformation of the black community continues to be an objective of the BLM.¹⁰¹ To a large degree, Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton in their book *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*, as well as members of SNCC and BPP framed their Black Power theory in the context of Claudia Jones’ argument that the black community was a nation within a nation, penned into urban ghettos and fighting for self-determination.¹⁰²

Angela Davis was only a member of the Black Panther Party for a short while because she grew tired of the sexist practices among members. Just like CPUSA, Black Panther leaders promoted a form of militant manhood. Male BPP organizers discouraged Davis from seeking leadership roles. They insisted that “a woman was supposed to ‘inspire’ her man and educate his children.” She rejected these ideas as “absurd.” She left in 1968 to join the Che-Lumumba Club, which was an all-black faction of the Communist Party in Los Angeles. There, she had the autonomy to carry out her social activism and political organizing without the heavy weight of misogyny.¹⁰³

Although Davis left the BPP, other black women stayed such as Judy Hart, who pushed back on the sexism within the party by writing on “the importance of redefining black womanhood within black liberation struggles.” Hart asserted that the BPP contained a space in which “black women could advance new, gender-specific definitions of their rights, roles, and revolutionary identities.”¹⁰⁴ Eventually, this led to party members developing an intersectional analysis of black women’s oppression that echoed Claudia Jones’ theory that in a proletarian revolution, the emancipation of women is primary.¹⁰⁵

This opened the door to envisioning self-determination in the context of a world free from sexism, racism and capitalism and the need to organize around this freedom dream under the leadership of black women, which spawned the seeds for such groups as the Combahee River Collective, which was one of the most important organizations to develop out of the anti-racist women’s liberation movements of the 1960s and 70s.¹⁰⁶ Black Panther member Kathleen Neal Cleaver explained that the problems of black women and the problems of white women were so completely diverse that they could not possibly be solved in the same type of organization nor

met with the same type of activities.¹⁰⁷ Black women's organizations have provided distinct spaces for black women to reckon with systems of oppression. This tradition of reckoning informs how black women continue to mobilize and organize in the twenty-first century in the BLM Movement.

Similar to the Sojourners for Truth and Justice, the Collective was instrumental in highlighting that white-leftist feminist organizations were not addressing their particular needs as a black feminist who needed to organize and lead black people. The Combahee River Collective Statement explains their mission. It stated they were "actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression," and saw their particular task as developing an "integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking." As black women, they saw "Black feminism as the logical political movement to combat the manifold and simultaneous oppressions that all women of color face" that stem from race, class and gender oppression.¹⁰⁸

They identified as socialists because they believe "that the liberation of all oppressed peoples necessitates the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy." In the same mindset, as Grace Campbell and Claudia Jones, they, too, were in "agreement with Marx's theory as it applied to the very specific economic relationships he analyzed," but like Campbell and Jones, they, too, knew that his analysis must be extended further in order for it to address the "specific economic situations" of black women. As black feminists, they had difficulty organizing because there were accusations, especially from black nationalist men that black feminism divided the black struggle. These accusations were powerful deterrents to the growth of autonomous black women's movements. But the women persisted because they were in "a continuous life-and-death struggle for survival and liberation," and today, within the BLM Movement, women comprise a significant portion of those organizing for self-determination.¹⁰⁹

As SNCC evolved, in 1968, Frances Beal, and other women members created an ad hoc group—the Black Women's Liberation Committee (BWLC)—to address the importance of gender equality. In 1969, Beal wrote one of the defining texts on black feminism, "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female." Her essay sparked new ideological debates within the group and foregrounded the need for a distinct political identity and agenda for black women within the organization.¹¹⁰ In 1970, the BWLC decided to expand their membership beyond SNCC and renamed their group the Black Women's Alliance (BWA). Eventually, the BWA evolved into the Third World Women's Alliance (TWWA), a Black Power feminist group. Unlike the BLM Movement platform that includes black cis, queer, trans, LGBQ people as well as has them within their ranks and leadership positions, the TWWA struggled internally with homophobia. Nonetheless, it was among one of the earliest black women's groups to apply intersectional language to women's oppression. Its goal was to achieve black liberation, self-determination, and self-sufficiency through an antisexist, antiracist, and anti-imperialist agenda. These black feminists maintained that feminist organizations that did not incorporate a race and class critique into their political ideology were misguided, as black women could only truly achieve self-determination through the simultaneous destruction of racism, sexism, and capitalism. They defined black womanhood in ways that were similar to those of Grace Campbell and Claudia Jones, who consistently imagined black women as militant, working-class, and feminist actors¹¹¹

By default, from 1974 to 1977, Elaine Brown was the head of the BPP. When Newton fled to Cuba under the shadow of attempted murder charges, he left Brown in charge. Between 1968-1973 she had risen through the ranks. Under her leadership, the BPP became involved in

conventional politics and continued its community service. Brown's political image gave "a new

vision of black revolution and freedom—one in which black women lead the party, the community, and the nation.”¹¹² But the male members of the BPP still often-casually mistreatment of women. Eventually, the patriarchal, misogynistic side of the BPP caused Brown to step down from its helm—shortly after Newton returned from Cuba.¹¹³ She, like Angela Davis, had done years ago, left in disgust. Davis was a very good friend of Brown’s and remain close to the BPP.¹¹⁴

Comparing aspects of structural differences between and the BLM and the Leftist movements of Grace P. Campbell’s and Claudia Jones’ Intergenerational struggles

BLM’s genesis as a hashtag by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi marked the historical moment of its creation in the digital era. At the same time, BLM has deep roots in the Black freedom struggle for self-determination that can especially be seen as an extension of the Negro Question, Black Belt Thesis, and Free by ’63 as well as the Freedom Now and Black Power movements of the 1960s and 1970s. BLM, like its predecessor movements, embodies flesh and blood through local organizing, national and global protests, hunger strikes, and numerous acts of civil disobedience. Slogans like “All night! All day! We’re gonna fight for Freddie Gray!” and “No justice, no fear! Sandra Bland is marching here!” give voice simultaneously to the rage, truth, and hope that sustains and moves the BLM forward to address the struggles of the day and self-determination. On the one hand, the BLM calls immediate attention to police brutality and insists on justice for state actors who perpetuate, fund, and support anti-black violence. While on the other hand, the BLM takes a longer view as delineated in its six-point demands to seek the recognition of the dignity of black life while it mobilizes political actions of protest and policy change, including the reorganization of resources for a more just and equitable world.

The BLM Movement is the twenty-first century response to the Negro Question such as the ABB was in the aftermath of World War I that brought on the Red Summer in 1919. The BLM movement places black people at the core of the liberation struggle that has been constrained because black lives have been continually de-value within the white supremacist structural system and the continuation of the economic, political, and social vestiges of the feudal/slave political economy. In part, the BLM movement mirrors the 1928 Comintern’s Black Belt thesis that placed black Americans on the frontline of a renewal liberation struggle and the vanguard of class, race and gender struggle. Jones would have applauded the BLM Movement because it shows continuity in the movement toward self-determination.

The BLM Movement is the embodiment of the dialectical struggle; it has put socialism back on the table. So, it must address different questions that are applicable to the twenty-first century struggle. Since there is dynamism within the struggle for self-determination, as it moves along the dialectic, circumstances and conditions have changed throughout the twentieth-century, there were successes and failures, the landscape is different, which means the questions within the struggle have to change. So, when the questions change; so, do the answers to the questions. But the answers must always be placed in terms of historical perspective and the context of the struggle. Both the question and the answer must consider concretely the stage of the liberation movement and the present stage of the struggle for self-determination. Hence, the BLM

Movement will not mirror the twentieth-century struggle for self-determination; instead, it will show continuity.

Furthermore, the broad outline, scope, and intergenerationality of Campbells' and Jones' feminists thought, situates the BLM Movement squarely in a black feminist radical tradition that was anticapitalistic as well as places it on the arch of the struggle for self-determination in all aspects of black life. Just like the Combahee River Collective Statement, it is unapologetically for conjoining itself to generations of black women freedom fighters.¹¹⁵ It is carrying on the tradition of intellectual insurgency and activism that has been, and is, featured within the genealogy of black women's radical tradition. The depth and resiliency of black women's commitment to intersectionality paradigms that have been propagated in black Leftist feminist thought have been, and is, a propelling force in the struggle for self-determination within the BLM Movement. Unlike earlier Leftist movements, black women's insurgent activism and organizing are at the heart of the BLM Movement because they constitute a significant portion of those organizing.

Unlike Campbell and Jones, who used the CPUSA, these young black radical women are part of a collective in which they have cultivated their own radical politics through epistemological formations that is facilitated by an array of liberation currents and spawned an empowering slogan that serves as an apparatus or a means of creating solidarity between individuals within the movement; while simultaneously feeding the consciousness of nationhood and belonging. BLM has eschewed the traditional hierarchical leadership models. Despite the role Cullors, Tometi, and Garza have played in giving the movement a hashtag, the movement cannot be identified with any single leader or small group of leaders. Black Lives Matter is a collective of more than 50 organizations representing thousands of black people from black communities in the United States and throughout the world who "have come together with renewed energy and purpose to articulate a common vision and agenda." They are a collective that centers and are rooted in Black communities, but they recognize that they have a shared struggle with all oppressed people; collective liberation will be a product of all of their work.¹¹⁶

Campbell, Jones, and the BLM all agree that after the Civil War that black people could not overcome centuries of enslavement and immeasurable poverty because of the structural sources of black poverty and the historical legacies of slavery, semi-feudal/slave society, and Jim Crow. Campbell and the BLM platform make a case for reparations for past expropriation and exploitation of black labor that would help remedy the wealth and educational gap that has its roots in slavery. It would also help repair the harm done to black communities and institutions and would acknowledge the lasting impact of slavery on the lives of black people.

Today, #BlackLivesMatter has become a force demanding change in America. BLM Movement is attempting to put its vision of self-determination into practice through efforts to build a black united front. Its organized coalitions against police brutality, mobilized support to raise the minimal wage to 15 dollar an hour for workers, creating committees on education to challenge budget cuts and shape educational policy. So just like militant youth movements that have come before them such as SNYC, SNCC, and the Black Panther Party, the BLM Movement will not only rhetorically protest, they will actually do something. They will actively resist and take concerted action.

Conclusion

As historian Barbara Ransby reminds us in *Making all black lives matter: remaining freedom in the twenty-first* that “No movement emerges out of thin air. There is always a prologue, and a prologue to the prologue.”¹¹⁷ Black women intellectuals like Grace P. Campbell and Claudia Jones provided the prologue that helped shape the discourse on black self-determination. Campbell’s and Jones’ historical materialism analysis that explains the current circumstances and treatment of oppressed black and working-class men and women resonates with successive generations. Campbell’s and Jones’ activism and writings contributed to the current trends in the black radical tradition that helped to nurture Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, Opal Tometi and provided the epistemology for the six core demands delineated in “A Vision for Black Lives: Policy Demands for Black Power, Freedom and Justice.” Their narratives and relationships with other black women in the struggle such as Ella Baker affirms that black women have an insurgent intellectual tradition, and there is an intergenerational arch in black feminist radical thought that flows from Campbell and Jones, to the Combahee River Collective, to Cullors, Garza, and Tometi that centers on the Negro Question, self-determination, and the Black Belt thesis that open spaces for Angela Davis to engage in her work and in important ways informed the present narrative on black self-determination and the revolutionary process in transforming the political economy. The conditions and circumstances of the Negro Question, the Woman Question, and historical materialism set the stage for the BLM Movement to emerge. Historical conditions, both create and limit possibilities for change, but the arch flows on a dialectal paradigm that will not rest until freedom comes.

¹ Ella's Song is an a cappella piece written by Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon and performed by the famous heritage group called Sweet Honey in the Rock. `Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. <http://ellabakercenter.org/blog/2013/12/ellas-song-we-who-believe-in-freedom-cannot-rest-until-it-comes> (accessed 20 Jan 2018).

² “Full Story Behind Words of Angela Davis’s Speech at the Women’s March.” Words of Women, 26 Jan 2017 <http://wordsofwomen.com/the-full-story-behind-angela-davis-speech-at-womens-march/> (accessed 20 Jan 2018).

³ Barbara Ransby, “Imagining a Different Future,” National Women's Studies Association (NWSA), Baltimore, MD. Nov 2017,

⁴ Opal Tometi, “Celebrating MLK Day: Reclaiming Our Movement Legacy,” 20 March 2015 *Huffington Post* https://www.huffingtonpost.com/opal-tometi/reclaiming-our-movement-1_b_6498400.html (accessed 10 April 2016).

⁵ Alicia Garza to Angela Davis Keynote Address, 40 Years After Combahee: Feminist Scholars and Activists Engage the Movement For Black Lives, The National Women's Studies Association, 16 November 2017, Baltimore, Maryland.

⁶ Anna J. Cooper, "The Ethics of the Negro Question," General Conference of the Society of Friends, Asbury Park, New Jersey, September 1902: <http://ajccenter.wfu.edu/2014/09/05/ajc-address-september-1902/> (Accessed 19 February 2017).

⁷ Trymaine Lee, Black Lives Matter Releases Policy Agenda, NBC news, 1 Aug 2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/black-lives-matter-releases-policy-agenda-n620966> (Accessed 10 January 2017); The Movement for Black Lives "A Vision for Black Lives: Policy Demands for Black Power, Freedom and Justice," <https://policy.m4bl.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/20160726-m4bl-Vision-Booklet-V3.pdf> (Accessed 10 Jan 1917).

⁸ Some of the other fifty women included G. Elise Johnson Mcdougald, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Gwendolyn Bennett, Jesse Redmon Fauset, Lucy Slowe, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, Augusta Savage, Addie W. Hutton, Emma Ranson, Eva D. Bowles, Sadie T. Alexander, Marie C. Lawton, Florence Mills, Ethel Waters, and A'Lelia Walker. See Ruth R. Dennis, "New York Radio Speech Praises 50 Race Women," *The Pittsburg Courier*, 17 Sept 1927, 3.

⁹ Russian State Archive of Social and Political History (RGASPI) 515/1/1130/1687, Grace Lamb [P. Campbell], "An analysis of the Negro Question in the U.S.A."

¹⁰ Surveillance of Radicals in the United States 1917 ,” 20 March 1929, US Military Intelligence (USMI) Reports, Reel 16 frame 365; Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black liberation* (Haymarket Books: Chicago, Illinois, 2016), 17.

¹¹“Surveillance of Radicals in the United States 1917 ,” 20 March 1929, US Military Intelligence (USMI) Reports, Reel 16 frame 365.

¹² FBI Marcus Garvey and the African Black Brotherhood, 27 Aug 1923, Reel 1; Casefile #61 -50: African Blood Brotherhood, Department of Justice-Bureau of Investigation Surveillance of Black Americans, Freedom of Information Act Retrievals, 1923, 16 August 1923-10 August 1923.

¹³FBI Marcus Garvey and the African Black Brotherhood, 24 Aug 1923, Reel 1; MacKay, *Harlem*, 223-224; Joanne Grant, *Ella Bake : Freedom Bound* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998), 36; Memo from the Pure Food Co-operative Grocery Stores, Inc., New York City, n.d., Ella Baker Papers, Schromburg Center for Research and Black Culture (SCRBC), Box 2 Folder 3; "New Food Store to Open on Lenox Avenue," *New York Age*, 23 February 1935; "Issues Appeal for Co-Operative Store," *Amsterdam News*, 1 June 1935, 3.

¹⁴Negro Actives, USMI Reports, 20 Nov 1920, Reel 17 frame 565; RGASPI 534/3/2: 37 "Resolutions of the Convention of the Friends of Freedom," 25-30 May 1920.

¹⁵ Elizabeth A. Hendrickson, "The Man in the Street: Tenants' League Secretary of One of Them Tells Why There Are Two in Harlem," *Amsterdam News* 8 Jan 1930, 20; "Protest meet held by Tenants League," *Chicago Defender*, 1 June 1929, 11; "Harlem Tenant League for Rent Protection," *New York Age* 5 May 1928, 3. RGASPI 515/1/1535 Letter from Elizabeth A. Hendrickson, Secretary and Richard B. Moore, President to Friends, Harlem Tenants League, New York City, 24 Feb 1928.

¹⁶The Movement for Black Lives "A Vision for Black Lives: Policy Demands for Black Power, Freedom and Justice," <https://policy.m4bl.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/20160726-m4bl-Vision-Booklet-V3.pdf> (Accessed 10 January 1917); Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black liberation* (Haymarket Books: Chicago, Illinois, 2016), 206.

¹⁷ Negro Activities, 2 September 1921, USMI Report, 21-27 February 1920, Reel 16 frame 224; "Program of the African Blood Brotherhood," *Communist Review* [London] 2, 6

(April 1922): 449-454.

¹⁸ RGASPI 534/3/167: 2222 K. Karatov, "Work Among the Negro Toiler: the Northern Part of the United States," Negro Bureau, n.d."

¹⁹ RGASPI 534/3/167: 2222 K. Karatov, "Work Among the Negro Toilers: the Northern Part of the United States," Negro Bureau, n.d.

²⁰ Mark D. Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (New York : ACLS History E-Book Project, 2005), 13-14.

²¹ Robin Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston, Mass. : Beacon : Enfield : Airlift, 200), 39.

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