

Caveat of an Obnoxious Slave: Blueprint for Decolonizing Black Power Studies From the Intellectual Governors of White Supremacy

by

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Abstract

Amos Wilson's magnum opus, *Blueprint for Black Power: A Moral, Political and Economic Imperative for the Twentieth-First Century*, helps to serve as a road map for decolonizing the study of Black Power. According to Wilson, African people needed to study power. While the general arguments of *Blueprint* addressed the Black world, it specifically engaged the realities and demographics of African people in the U.S. As such, this article explores how *Blueprint* can specifically engage and enhance the struggles of the wider African Diaspora, and, by the same token, asks how those struggles inform the analysis and strategies suggested by *Blueprint*.

Keywords: Black Power Studies, Amos Wilson, Africana Intellectual History, African Diasporic Thought

“New Black Power Studies” continues to offer new critical interpretations, definitions, themes and nuances of the Black Power Movement. Nevertheless, this paper argues that the field is intellectually colonized by various overlapping trends within the academic industrial complex. For example, discourses on Black Power are often confined within the physical/conceptual boundaries of the United States. Furthermore, calls for a global, transnational understanding of Black Power typically refer to the international activities of African-American activists, which often dismiss the experiences and “indigenous” Movements of Black Power in the wider African Diaspora. Black Power was inherently pan-African, and, when unpacked in a global context, poses fundamental questions to definitions of Black Power that reflect only a U.S. context. For example, limiting discussions of the Movement’s repression to the F.B.I.’s COINTELPRO calamitously neglects the international suppression of Black Power by state powers.

A second concern is that Black Power is frequently studied from a purely academic approach, which runs the danger of divorcing the analysis of the Movement from necessary discourses on contemporary racism, oppression and activism (Troy Davis, September 21, 11:08 PM, Trayvon Martin and Kathryn Johnston). This is unsurprising, as several contemporary Black Power writers are not activist scholars and express little commitment to the Movement’s revolutionary tenets. In fact, a select few of these writers seem to also function as *intellectual governors* who monitor the gateways of academic publishing and to determine what an acceptable Black Power narrative is and what one is not. From atop the editorial boards of the academia industrial complex’s slave dungeon printing presses, these governors instruct their *lookout fetishes* to scour the fields of primary sources in Black grassroots communities, incessantly hunting for more narratives (natives?) to usher into the dungeons, thirsting for fresh streams of Black voices to place onto intellectual slave ships. These narratives are then colonized, branded, repackaged, relabeled and transformed into commodities (next “hot-topic” books and DVDs) acceptable for academic and mainstream consumers to be sold and auctioned through catalogues, websites, kindles and exhibits at the governor’s ball—the academic conference.

This commercialization often “sanitizes” Black Power’s more revolutionary, anti-capitalist elements while alternatively linking the Movement to “master narratives” of Black progress. This includes the use of lax and ambiguous definitions of Black Power that allow almost “anything” or “anyone” to become a Black Power moment, event, activist, pioneer, legacy or representation. For example, Peniel Joseph asserts that Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael and Black Power attempted to *transform* (as opposed to destroy) American democracy, and casts Barack Obama’s presidency as an “example of black power once thought inconceivable.” This is problematic, for several of Obama’s domestic and foreign policies are far removed from the historic aims of Black Power. From this perspective, Black Power can also become more about integrating into capitalism rather than removing it, and less about colonized African masses seeking sovereignty, but more about Africans becoming African-Americans.

Such dysfunctional, plantation narratives must not be allowed to enslave the global indigenous experiences of Black Power. *Aydelem*—our narratives must be freed, the governors overthrown, the slave dungeons burned down and the lookout fetishes dispersed with. As such, this work calls for the *decolonization* of Black Power Studies, which would possibly mean to: define Black Power from a global perspective; illuminate key Black Power advocates, organizations and events of the wider Diaspora (including the non-Anglophone Black world); examine the international criminalization of Black Power (internationalize COINTELPRO); address the plight of Black political prisoners and the prison industrial complex; provide socio-economic critiques of capitalism and socialism and suggest alternative modes of economic self-determination; normalize the experiences and perspectives of Black women within the Black Power narrative; utilize a framework of analysis that can dialogue with Black protest cultural movements such as Reggae (Rasta), Hip-Hop, Samba and global “Black Arts” movements; apply the history of the Black Power Movement to address current concerns of the Diaspora; utilize and innovate upon the activist-scholar methodologies of the Black radical tradition; and avoid an “Olympics of consciousness and oppression” when analyzing Black Power.

Amos Wilson’s magnum opus, *Blueprint for Black Power: A Moral, Political and Economic Imperative for the Twentieth-First Century*, helps to serve as a road map for decolonizing the study of Black Power. Wilson aimed not to be “purely academic,” but sought to solve practical problems which revolve around the development of Afrikan power and to contribute to the empowerment and liberation of Afrikan peoples.” According to Wilson, African people needed to “study power—it sources, its acquisition, its increase, its preservation—and its application to the successful achievement of...liberation from White oppression and to enhance” our “autonomous quality of life.” While the general arguments of *Blueprint* addressed the Black world, it specifically engaged the realities and demographics of African people in the U.S. As such, this article explores how *Blueprint* can specifically engage and enhance the struggles of the wider African Diaspora, and, by the same token, asks how can those struggles inform the analysis and strategies suggested by *Blueprint*.

Black Power’s Global Scope

All too often the historical African experience within the US (in terms of slavery, race, identity, and protest) is viewed as *the* quintessential context for Black struggle as opposed to being part of a *global* Black radical tradition. This is partly due to the fact that generations of African American scholars, organizations and communities have collectively shed blood, sweat and tears to ensure that this history is remembered. But on the other hand, this American-centric perspective is also encouraged by a socialization process which occurs in a wealthy, industrialized, corporate media dominated capitalist society that projects itself as being front, live and center of all that is important in the world.

This partly leads to both the invisibility cascade over the wider African Diaspora, and the relative visibility given to the African-American community due to its proximity to whiteness in the proverbial “belly of the beast.” Mainstream society tends to only see other Blacks in the world through the eyes of White travelers—White tourists, television broadcasters, and NGO employees. Only then do the other Blacks appear in the backdrop of their global portraits of exotic travel, work and crises.

The documentation of Black Power has been no different. While several works critically address the inherent transnational dynamics of Black Power, a growing body of literature collectively demonstrates that Black Power globally was more than just a sidebar of Black activism in the US. What did Black Power mean in majority Black (or multi-ethnic), politically independent or (neo) colonized societies—as in Africa and the Caribbean, and for Black populations in Canada, Europe, Australia and the wider Americas? Is it possible to fully understand the pan-African lessons of Black Power without a global contextualization?

In the West Indies and wider Americas, Black Power represented youth discontent with an array of political, socio-cultural and economic contradictions that bound the region to former and new colonial masters. Largely a response to the unfulfilled socio-economic promises of political independence amidst neo (colonial) Black political leadership, the Movement was inspired by Black Power in the US, African liberation struggles, and local and regional political movements (such as Rasta). In the late 1960s, the youth outstretched Black Power fists (albeit in some places tighter and higher than others) across Bermuda, Haiti, Curaçao, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Puerto Rico, Guyana, Grenada, the Bahamas, Montserrat, Antigua, British Virgin Islands, Cuba, St. Kitts, Barbados, Belize, Aruba, St. Lucia and St. Vincent.

In his prolific *Groundings With My Brothers*, Walter Rodney saw Black Power in the West Indies as representing three things: a “break from imperialism,” which was “historically White racist”; the “assumptions of power by the Black masses”; and “the cultural reconstruction of the islands in the image of the Blacks.” Black Power questioned the class and racial structures of the islands’ “pigmentocracies” and wrestled with the legacy of Eurocentric cultural boundaries. Rasta, Islam, *Babalawos*, Vodun, African Hebrew Israelites, Spiritual Baptists, Mao’s *Red Book*, Fanon’s *Wretched*, Debray’s *Revolution*, Malcolm’s *Autobiography*, Reggae, Afros, head wraps, *ilekes*, locks and dashikis were as visible as the constraints of (neo) colonialism, private beaches littered with wide eyed White tourists and the occasional “rent-a-dreads”, European jackets, powdered wigs and bleaching creams.

William Lux's *Black Power in the Caribbean* (1972) offered a foundational synthesis on Black Power in the region. Lux saw Black Power as a cultural movement that challenged the control of the Caribbean by "Afro-Saxon" elites. However, he offered little critique of leaders such as Guyana's Forbes Burnham or Haiti's Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier who, despite their professed identifications with Black Power, repressed Black Power's challenge to the neocolonial state. Burnham essentially denied Rodney his teaching post in Guyana, endorsed his harassment by the Guyanese police and has been implicated in his 1980 assassination.

While budding Black Power advocates in the US often cut their political teeth during the Civil Rights Movement, in the West Indies such activists often emerged out of the interlocking labor and independence struggles for decolonization and West Indian Federation. Black Power did not represent a development from Black "non-violent" to "violent" protest; violent strikes against the system were historically common. For example, in 1953, Rasta Cladius Henry led a guerilla rebellion in an effort to reportedly take over Jamaica, turn the island over to Fidel Castro, and repatriate to Africa. In Bermuda, major clashes between Black strikers and the predominantly British Police Force occurred in 1959 and 1965.

Brian Meeks scores the ascendancy of Black Power in the West Indies between 1968-1974 as a result of "complex interplay of local and international histories." He marks the 1983 assassination of Grenada's Maurice Bishop as its eclipse. Bert Thomas notes how transnational individuals such as CLR James, Garvey, Paul Bogle, Toussaint L'Ouverture and George Padmore ideologically influenced the Movement; to this list we could add the likes of Claudia Jones, Amy Jacques Garvey, Frantz Fanon, Claude McKay, Aime Cesaire, Amy Ashwood Garvey, Léon Damas, Richard B. Moore, Paulette and Jane Nardal, Robert Bradshaw, Hubert Crichtlow, E.F. Gordon, Hubert Harrison and other unnamed soldiers. Bogues stresses that Black Power was not a "sudden political cry," but was visible in Garveyism, the UNIA, pan-Africanism, Rasta and Black Nationalism. Rodney located the roots of Black Power in African struggles against slavery. For Lux, Black Power was also born from the Haitian and Cuban Revolutions and was a rebellion against the "economic underdevelopment of the still unchanged plantation system and society shaped by slavery." The US Central Intelligence Agency reported similar:

Neither political independence in Guyana, Trinidad-Tobago, Jamaica and Barbados nor progressively increasing internal autonomy in most of the other territories has significantly altered their socioeconomic structures. In many ways, the social patterns that developed in the plantation economies during the days of colonialism persist today. Blacks still make up the bulk of the lower classes...The relatively small middle classes are composed largely of "coloured" (i.e. mulatto) people with an admixture of East Indians (especially in Guyana and Trinidad), Chinese and whites. The apex of the social and economic pyramid is occupied by a small white or near-white elite, accounting for less than one percent to about four percent of the populations. A highly disproportionate share of the agricultural estates, businesses, commerce, banking and industry is controlled by the white minorities – and by foreign-based companies.

In Jamaica, Black Power was wrapped within the red, green and gold of Rasta, the rhythms of Ska and Reggae and screw faces of urban Rude Bwoy culture. It was buttressed within the activism, visions, leadership, struggles against *Babylon*, music, publications, chants, positive concepts of Blackness, and the political, spiritual and cultural identification with Africa that had been firmly established for decades by the Rastafari community. The newspaper *Abeng* reflected the aspirations of Jamaica's politicized youth, as did groups such as the African National Union, Jama-Youth and Henry's New Creation International Peacemakers Association. Rodney played a critical role in this process. While teaching History at Jamaica's the University of the West Indies, Rodney *grounded* with university students, community activists, Rastas and others about Black Power and African history. In doing so, he was defined as a danger to Jamaica's national security. In 1968, Jamaica's Prime Minister Hugh Shearer declared Rodney as *persona non grata* and prevented him from re-entering the island after he attended a Congress of Black Writers conference in Montreal; uprisings occurred across Kingston in response to this.

The 1968 Montreal "Congress of Black Writers: Towards the Second Emancipation, the Dynamics of Black Liberation" was primarily organized by West Indian students at McGill and Sir George Williams universities. Held at McGill, one of its leaders was Dominica's Roosie Douglas, who, along with Antigua's Tim Hector, Barbados's Anne Cools, Jamaica's Robert Hill, St. Vincent and the Grenadines's Alfie Roberts and Grenada's Franklyn Harvey, had also been a member of the Caribbean Conference Committee (CCC). For years the CCC had organized a series of conferences that addressed the interests of Montreal's Black community and hosted guest presentations from political figures such as Jan Carew, George Lamming, Norman Girvan, Austin Clarke, Lloyd Best and Richard B. Moore. CLR James was a central figure of the CCC, and led the group in study sessions centered on his *Black Jacobins*. In 1967, the CCC organized an extensive US tour for James, his first since his US expulsion in 1953. The Congress reflected a critical moment for Black Power's spread across in the Americas. Those who gave lectures included James, Rodney, Carmichael, Harry Edwards and James Forman. Miriam Makeba, Moore, Richard Small, Michael Thelwell and Jimmy Garrett were also present.

Months later, in early 1969, students protested racism at Sir George Williams University and Montreal by taking over the school's computer center. Led by West Indian students, over ninety-seven people were arrested, forty-two of whom were Black. They were arrested, some badly beaten, charged and fined; among the leaders arrested were Douglas, Cools and Cheddi Jagan, Jr. One officer beat the Bahamas's Coralee Hutchison on her head with his baton; she died from a brain tumor a year later. These incidents reverberated across the Caribbean. In Trinidad, Geddes Granger (Makandal Dagga) and the New Joint Action Committee (NJAC) supported these students by protests of their own. Dagga traveled to Montreal and met with them while they were facing trial. While in route he stopped in New York and met with its branch of the Black Panther Party. Reportedly, the Party turned down a request of his for financial assistance to "help bring about a revolution in Trinidad."

In 1970 large-scale Black Power demonstrations erupted in Trinidad in response to the socio-economic realities of neocolonialism and the Montreal incident. Black Power sought—with difficulties—to embrace the island’s sizable working-class East Indian population. Prime Minister Eric Williams expressed tacit encouragement for Black Power, but nevertheless sought to arrest the Movement. When soldiers in Trinidad’s army mutinied in support of Black Power, he requested military support from the US to put it down. Two of the mutiny’s leaders, Raffique Shah and Kumar Mahabir, had apparently received three weeks of guerilla training in Cuba in 1968. Trinidad also witnessed the emergence of a Black Panther Party and the guerrilla group, National Union of Freedom Fighters, which lost members, such as Beverly Jones, while engaging in armed struggle against the state. Black Power’s impact was also visible in the cultural messages produced by Calypso artists and themes during carnival.

In Bermuda, Black Power was an anti-colonial, revolutionary youth movement that aimed to dismantle British colonialism and its support of the island’s White oligarchy. In 1969, Pauulu Roosevelt Browne Kamarakafego organized the 1st International Black Power Conference in Bermuda, attracting activists such as Acklyn Lynch, CLR James, Queen Mother Moore, Flo Kennedy and Yosef Ben-Jochannan. A second Conference was to take place in Barbados in 1970; this did not occur due to international pressure put on Barbados’s Prime Minister Errol Barrow, and led to the 1970 meeting of the Congress of African Peoples in Atlanta.

Kamarakafego’s life reads like a pan-African epic. Born in Bermuda in 1932, he grew up amidst the island’s staunch segregation and colonialism. Informed by labor struggles of black Bermudians and its whispers of Garveyism, Kamarakafego’s sojourn throughout the African Diaspora included: participating in an anti-Batista and United Fruit Company demonstration in Cuba’s Oriente (where he also learned to fly a plane); being a student athlete at New York University; fighting the Ku Klux Klan while studying at South Carolina State College; obtaining a Ph.D in Ecological Engineering from California Tech, Pasadena; teaching at Tanzania’s University of Dar es Salaam; participating in Bermuda’s suffrage movement; working with Pacific islander indigenous communities as an engineering consultant; pioneering the sustainable development movement; assisting in the decolonization of countries such as Vanuatu (New Hebrides); and leadership in the Pan-African Movement. Pauulu formed relationships with a number of scholars, activists and revolutionaries such as Sylvia Hill, Acklyn Lynch, Sonny Carson, James Turner, Joseph Harris, Kwame Nkrumah and Joseph Jordan.

In 1969, the revolutionary Black Beret Cadre emerged as the vanguard of Bermuda’s Movement. Led by John Hilton Bassett Jr., it formed relationships with the US Black Panther Party. Through political education, liberation schools, survival programs, publications, rallies and low-scale urban guerilla warfare, Berets clashed with the island’s security forces. In 1977, Beret associate Erskine “Buck” Burrows was hung for the 1972-73 assassinations of Bermuda’s British Police Commissioner and Governor.

Black Power in Guyana was mainly driven by two organizations, the state-endorsed African Society for Cultural Relations with Independent Africa (ASCRIA) and the Ratoon Group. ASCRIA, led by Eusi Kwayana, consisted of several hundred members. The Ratoon Group was much smaller and comprised mostly of revolutionary minded college students and faculty. Ratoon invited Carmichael to the island in 1970, but his speeches on racial Pan-Africanism were much better received by ASCRIA.

In 1970, Grenada's Maurice Bishop and Unison Whitman, St. Lucia's George Odlum, Jamaica's Trevor Munroe and others held a covert Black Power Conference at Rat Island, St. Lucia. While here they formed an organization called the Forum, which launched groups in St. Vincent, Antigua and Guyana. In 1972, Bishop coordinated a secret meeting in Martinique to discuss the creation of a new Caribbean society based on socialist principles. Bishop's New Jewel Movement seized state power in 1979, but he would be assassinated four years later in 1983, shortly followed by the US invasion of the island.

In the UK, a historic locale for pan-African activity, Black Power manifested itself within urban communities such as London's Brixton and Notting Hill. Spearheaded by young West Indians, Black Power was a response to: racism; police brutality and harassment; White xenophobic hostility to Black migration and culture; issues surrounding immigration; racial housing and social discrimination; economic exploitation; the criminalization of Black youth; an education system that denied West Indian and African heritage; and Britain's support of apartheid and neo-colonialism in Africa. A number of Black Power organizations emerged, such as: the Black Panther Party (1968), whose membership included its founder, Nigerian playwright Obi Egbuna, Trinidad's Althea Jones-Lecointe, Darcus Howe and George Joseph, Dominica's Eddie Lecointe, India's Farouk Dhondi, Jamaica's Olive Morris, Keith Spencer and Linton Kwesi Johnson, and David UDAH; the United Coloured People's Association (1967)—also led by Egbuna; the Black Liberation Front (BLF, in North and West London), led by Tony Soares; and Michael X's Racial Adjustment Action Society (RAAS).

Egbuna was deeply moved by Black activism in the US. His *Destroy This Temple: Black Power in Britain* provides an essential look into Black Power in London. In 1965, he was part of a group that invited Malcolm X to London. The following year, he toured the US during a visit to the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. In 1967, Egbuna, Carmichael and CLR James were all keynote speakers at a Dialectics Liberation conference. A few days later, Carmichael received a visit from the UK's Special Branch, and was encouraged to leave London. He was put on the persona non grata list shortly afterwards.

By 1970 Althea Jones-Leconte had become the leader of London's Black Panthers. At the time she was a doctoral biochemistry student at the University of London. The Panthers studied the works of George Jackson, Angela Davis, Cleaver's *Soul on Ice* and material such as the *Black Panthers Speak*. CLR James also served as an advisor for the Panthers; his great-nephew and childhood friend of Carmichael, Darcus Howe, was also a member. The Panthers used culture to spread Black awareness, and sponsored Reggae dances as community outreach. According to Ann-Marie Angelo, they pushed for "black consciousness" through meetings that showcased poetry, music, and film from the West Indies and West Africa. Their interest in the arts mirrored the US Black Arts Movement, highlighted an emerging black British identity, and matched with the founding of the Notting Hill Carnival in 1966 (cofounded by Claudia Jones).

In March 1970, sixteen Panthers were arrested during a demonstration at the US embassy in support of Bobby Seale. In August 1970, they led a protest against racism and the "aggressive policing" of the West Indian Mangrove restaurant. When a clash with the Police broke out, the "Mangrove Nine" were charged with assault, possession of an offensive weapon and incitement to riot. Also in August, Panthers fought off Police during a raid of one of its social events at the Oval House, leading to the arrest of Spencer, Jones-Leconte and Leonard Anderson.

Unsatisfied with Britain's education system and its denial of the cultural heritage of Black students, Black parents (predominantly West Indian) formed the South East London Black People's Organization (SELPO). They formed independent African-centered schools, as did the Black Union and Freedom Party, which, in 1971, formed an independent summer school in South London. The SELPO youth wing, the Fasimbas, were taught African history, philosophy, martial arts, and trade and community organizing skills. They were heavily influenced by the political consciousness of Ska, Soul and Reggae music and groups such as the Last Poets. The Fasimbas encouraged an African centered cultural change among Blacks in Britain (in terms of hair style, clothing and general aesthetic). The group connected itself with African liberation leaders, solidified by a visit to Tanzania. In 1972, after attending a BLF meeting, Winston Trew and other Fasimbas were attacked and arrested by undercover Police and incarcerated for two years for allegedly "nicking handbags."

In Australia, in 1969, Koori members of Melbourne's Aborigine's Advancement League sought to establish a Black Power Movement. Led by activists such as Pat Kruger, Bruce McGuinness and Bob Maza, they invited Kamarakafego to Australia to assist them. Through Kamarakafego, Koori activists attended the 1970 CAP Conference. Australia's Black Panther Party emerged in Redfern. Among leaders such as Denis Walker and Roberta Sykes, it fought against police brutality and for the reclamation of ancestral lands. The Party created a number of survival programs, light police patrols and free legal consultations.

In the non-Anglophone Diaspora, Black Power's influence was particularly visible in the cultural arena. In the early 1970s, Afro-Brazilians heavily embraced Soul Music and Reggae. In 1974, influenced by the US based Black Power Movement and African liberation struggles, Antônio Carlos dos Santos Vovo and Apolônio de Jesus formed the African-centered Carnival group, Ilê Aiyê, in Liberdade (Salvador) Bahia. In 1979, an offshoot of Ilê Aiyê, OLODUM emerged and produced Samba Reggae. In 1980, the Unified Black Movement was formed, which was a network of Afro-Brazilian organizations and activists such as Abdias do Nascimento.

While the impact of African liberation struggles on Black Power continues to be documented, the dynamics of Black Power in Africa beg for further research. It was often claimed that majority African countries ruled by neo-colonial governors (such as Mobutu's Zaire) *was* Black Power. Stephen Biko led the formation of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa; South African police murdered him in 1977. South African activists studied Fanon perhaps just as much as they studied Bambata, Malcolm X and the African National Congress. Amilcar Cabral once debated with Cleaver about the colonial status of African-Americans as opposed to the situation in Guinea-Bissau. One of the most respected guerrilla leaders on the African continent, Cabral directed Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde's war against the Portuguese from Guinea. While there, he accepted an offer from Carmichael to train and allow thirty African-Americans to join the PAIGC's armed struggle. This did not come to fruition although Julius Nyerere had accepted a request that the African-American guerrillas be trained in Tanzania. The Second World African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC), held in Nigeria, was a major moment for Black Power, as was the controversial 1974 Sixth Pan-African Congress (PAC) in Tanzania. Initial plans for the Sixth PAC had begun with talks between Kamarakafego and CLR James in Bermuda after the 1969 Conference. Tanzania was a hotbed for Western based Black political activists and became home to Panthers such as Pete and Charlotte O'Neal and Geronimo Pratt (as was Algeria for the International Wing of the Black Panthers). Kwame Nkrumah saw Black Power as the daughter of Pan-Africanism:

By Black Power we mean the power of the four-fifths of the world population which has been systematically damned into a state of underdevelopment by colonialism and neo-colonialism...Black Power is the sum total of the economic, cultural and political power which the black man must have in order to achieve his survival in a highly developed technical society...Black Power is part of the vanguard of world revolution against capitalism, imperialism and neo-colonialism which have enslaved, exploited and oppressed peoples everywhere, and against which the masses of the world are now revolting. Black Power is part of the world rebellion of the oppressed against the oppressor, of the exploited against the exploiter. It operates throughout the African continent, in North and South America, the Caribbean, wherever Africans and people of African descent live. It is linked with the Pan-African struggle for unity on the African continent, and with all those who strive to establish a socialist society.

Black Power was globally repressed by a collaboration of European states, their Black neo-colonial governors, agents and police officers. Across the world, immigration restrictions prevented advocates from entering numerous countries. State agencies such as the FBI, Special Branch, Scotland Yard and the Canadian Royal Military Police kept tabs on Black Power leaders and shared that information with other Governments. Warren Hart, an African-American *agent provocateur* had worked for the US National Security Agency (NSA), and was ‘borrowed’ by the Canadian authorities to infiltrate Rosie Douglas’s circles; Hart had also helped *found* the Baltimore Branch of the Black Panthers, and had been a bodyguard of Stokely Carmichael. It is alleged that Hart had been later sent to Antigua to “neutralize” Tim Hector.

British, US, and Canadian security forces saw Black Power in Bermuda as a threat to their geo-political interests in the West Indies and beleaguered the Movement via collaborative, international networks of intelligence and repression. Black Power was attacked via legal persecution, police brutality, infiltration, surveillance and an extensive propaganda campaign. In 1968, British troops were flown into Bermuda to suppress a major youth uprising against police brutality, colonialism, racism and segregation; this marked the first in at least four different occasions that British troops would be flown in to suppress Black Power related incidents.

A number of lessons that can be gathered from this brief survey of the Black Power’s global scope: Black Power rejected colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism; Black women were central to the Movement; Black Power is intrinsically connected to the Pan-African Movement; the repression of Black Power was international; Black Power also impacted the non-Anglophone world; and Black visibility does not simply mean Black Power. The Black world remains in dire need of the acquisition of Black, African, *Afrodescendiente* power. The roll call of Black suffering flows like a blood stained river, running through the lingering effects of the social and natural earthquakes in Haiti, forced displacement and genocide of Afro-Colombians, drought-inflicted Somalia, skin-bleaching, violence across the Caribbean, global police brutality and the prison industrial complex, and the exploitation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s coltan, Nigeria’s oil and resulting violence. What Rodney said in 1968 still rings true today: “There is nothing with which poverty coincides so absolutely as with the color Black.” Across the Diaspora, Blacks are engaged in warfare against this supposed “birthright of suffering.” Operating at variant levels of political consciousness, activism, mobilization and aims, young people, Black women and culture workers are often leading such initiatives. Culture is important in this process; just as much as Rap and Dancehall mirror the issues, Hip-Hop and Reggae are major forces in these “challenges to global apartheid.”

The US is a major hub from which activists across the Diaspora collaborate, dialogue and organize from. Partly due to its position as a major world power, this process is also fueled by a number of Black establishments—such as Washington DC’s *Sankofa Bookstore*—that serve as maroon spaces (Cumbes and quilombos) for organizers, students, artists and activists. Arguably, the central issue that African communities in the US need to organize against is the prison industrial complex, as it runs the gamut of concerns affecting Black people—labor, discrimination, race, police brutality, capitalism, media, youth, colonialism, gentrification, media, gender, white supremacy, economics, racism, political prisoners, gender, class, education, etc. While too numerous to mention all here, a number of community and media organizations and activists work within the metropolitan DC landscape, such as Howard University’s *Cimarrones*, P.E.A.C.E. and Students Against Mass Incarceration (S.A.M.I., which has also spread to other Universities, Columbia and Morgan State Universities), National Black United Front, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, All African People’s Socialist Party, the All African People’s Revolutionary Party, Nationhouse, UNIA, TransAfrica, Jared Ball’s *Super Funky Soul Power Hour* and Voxunion.com, Treble Army, Netfa Freeman and Naji Mujahid’s “Voices with Vision.” There is also a growing African-centered home school movement.

It could also be argued that *Afrodescendiente* movements in South and Central America represent the vanguard of regional Black struggle in the Americas. Venezuela, Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Uruguay, Panama, Costa Rica and Argentina are witnessing upsurges of interconnected Black movements. A critical moment in this process was during the 2001 World Conference against Racism and Xenophobia in Durban, South Africa, when such groups collectively decided to use the term *Afrodescendiente* to define persons of African descent.

Black political activism in Europe should not be ignored. In August 2011, a youth uprising against police brutality and racism emerged in London after British police officers in Tottenham shot and killed Mark Duggan, a twenty-nine year old Black man. Interestingly, one of the more ardent supporters of the rebellion’s Black youth was Darcus Howe. Facing rampant discrimination, invisibility, hostility and racism, there is also a core of Black activists operating out of spaces such as Germany (such as Senfo Tonkam), Austria (such as Araba Johnston-Arthur and Pamoja, the Movement of the Young African Diaspora in Austria) and Spain. In 2005, an uprising lasting for weeks broke out in the suburbs of Paris after two African youths were killed while being chased by French police. According to one protester, “People are joining together to say we’ve had enough. We live in ghettos. Everyone lives in fear.”

In 2009, Black workers in the French colonies of Guadeloupe and Martinique led an approximately month long strike against economic exploitation and colonialism. In Guadeloupe, the Collective Against Exploitation (LKP), a coalition of approximately fifty trade unions and community activists, directed the action. Elie Domota, leader of the LKP, remarked, “Every time there have been demonstrations in Guadeloupe to demand pay rises, the response of the state has been repression, notably in May 1967 in Pointe-a-Pitre where there were 100 deaths—building workers massacred by the gendarmes.”

However, he stated, “If anyone injures a member of the LKP or a striker on Guadeloupe, there will be deaths.” In Martinique, the French flew in one hundred gendarmes (riot police) to suppress the strikes, which highlighted serious ethnic and class divisions in the region. A European minority elite (less than 1% of the population) known as the “Bekes,” currently controls the country. According to Christiane Taubira, an African French member of parliament for the overseas department of French Guiana, the “Bekes” hold “economic power and abuses it” in a situation not far from “social apartheid.”

As the strikes temporarily crippled the tourist industries in both islands, France was forced to accept a number of the workers’ demands. The also encouraged a further strike in sister colony of Reunion. Speaking of the Indian Ocean, the Chagossians, an indigenous African people who populated the islands of Diego Garcia and Peros Banhos, were forcibly removed to Mauritius by the British Government in the 1970s. This was done after the British and US Governments covertly agreed that the US could build a critical base on Diego Garcia. The Chagossians have been waging a struggle to regain their homeland for decades. Meanwhile, the Siddis—African descendants—of India are organizing around history and culture.

In this context where waves of Black activism are being systematically demobilized within their respective states, the production of the histories of Black Power remains politically charged. The acquisition of power for African people, is not an option, but a necessary imperative for Black survival. This therefore means that Black Power histories should be constructed in ways that inform our contemporary drives for power. This is exactly what Wilson attempts to do with *Blueprint For Black Power*, which is an impeccably researched, solution-oriented, timely and necessary text. Wilson begins with a prolific discussion of *power* and its varying levels of force, coercion, influence, legitimate authority and manipulation. His explanation of the organization of power, its relationship to culture, ethnicity, consciousness, class and race essentially unpacks the various mechanisms in which mass populations of African people are being controlled psychologically and by force. According to Wilson:

The oppressed and downtrodden, having been traumatized by the abuse of power by their powerful oppressors, often come to perceive power itself as inherently evil, as by nature corrupting and therefore as something to be eschewed, denied and renounced. The pursuit of power is viewed as unworthy of virtuous persons, and the desire to possess it as sinful...As the result of their ideological manipulation by the powerful and their own reactionary misperception of reality, the poor and powerless have been made to perceive the pursuit, possession and application of power in their own behalf as unbecoming to themselves.

He continues:

There are many Blacks who have been convinced by racist propaganda that supreme power is divinely deeded to dominant Whites. They therefore suffer anxiety attacks and feel as if they are blasphemously rebelling against God, Himself, if they—even for a moment—seriously dare consider conspiring to wrest power from the hands of their oppressors. More unfortunate...is the self-abnegating perception by many Blacks that they are inherently incapable of mounting a successful campaign against oppressive White power and therefore must sulkingly seek the least onerous accommodation to it. This perception...of... power...is but a prescription for their unending subordination, exploitation, and ultimately, when it is convenient to the purposes of their oppressors, their genocidal demise. Therefore, if they are to survive and prosper in freedom then, like it or not, Afrikan peoples must come to terms with power.

Blueprint teaches us that the source of the major issues affecting Africa and its Diaspora is powerlessness. This is not due to an absence of resources, but due to misguided and misjudged leadership of the lieutenants of White supremacy that operates against the “most basic needs of the African community.” Reminiscent of Kwame Toure, the major solution that Wilson offers is for Black communities to *organize*. He calls for an independent Black political party that would operate *beyond* electoral politics. Integrated within an organized pan-African African-American/Caribbean bloc, this could be a potent, Black Power force that could challenge both White and Asian power networks; the lingering question of *how* to create such a bloc remains.

Blueprint specifically targeted African people in the US. How could we make such a work relative to the varying socio-economic levels, cultures, political situations, demographics and degrees of race consciousness of African-descended communities dispersed across the world? For example, while some Black communities have little access to any form of capital, others have access to land and other material resources. A blueprint in 2012 would beg to be published in various languages—African and European (Brazil holds at least 90 million African speakers of Portuguese). It would have to address the US prison industrial complex, police brutality and its international dynamics. Furthermore, it would need to draw on the traditions, cultures, and spiritual systems (beyond the Black church) of the wider Diaspora. This blueprint would also have to engage dynamics such as food security, energy, applied technology and sustainable development as they pertain to Black communities. And how would such a work deal with today’s social media—the Facebooks, Youtubes and Twitters—as well as modern day, international state surveillance and the mainstream legacies of COINTELPRO?

While Wilson appropriately defines the “modern American capitalist system” as racist, what is noticeably absent from *Blueprint* is a sustained critique of capitalism. Wilson, always the pragmatist, takes capitalism’s existence in America as a given:

In capitalist America, since with property comes power, it stands to reason that if Afrikan Americans are to obtain substantial and sustainable power, they must obtain control of substantial property and with it substantial economic power. The rapid accumulation and applied organization of property and wealth by any means necessary must become top priority goals of the African American community if it is to...ensure its own... survival.

As such, *Blueprint* offered a liberatory project of nation building for colonized Blacks within the US capitalistic landscape. Hence, it might be read better as a blueprint for Black Power *under capitalism*, for Wilson does not focus on solutions in terms of how to directly destroy capitalism (America?). Therefore, the “elephant in the room” is dancing on the dining room table: “Is it possible for Blacks to obtain true Black Power and self-determination within this system, and while it exists?” Of course, the retort to this could be the response that the creation of a transitional state could be a stage in the destruction of White supremacy.

The larger economic considerations of America essentially functioning as an empire are not conceptualized in *Blueprint*; for example, much of the \$500 billion take home salary of this domestic colony of Africa America that was cited by Wilson is extracted from external colonies of America—and often times, ones populated by other African people. US capitalism has, at least for the time being, destined Africa America to be a colony of consumption. Put another way, Blacks in the US primarily serve the capitalist engine as consumers, as opposed to simply producers of raw materials. Abstract discussions of how “Black oppression and White supremacy is the same across in the world” aside, there are concrete material differences in terms of the access to the capital and pacifiers (processed material goods) that Africans in the US have as opposed to Africans in the wider Diaspora. Wilson highlights the problematic psychology of consumerism and ideology of individualism that many Blacks have been infused with; are African people prepared to destroy capitalism, even if this meant relinquishing this access to this capital—and the I-tablets, Smart phones, Kindles? In fact, several global Black freedom fighters see capitalism as the anti-thesis to African liberation and are not intent on finding ways to succeed within it, but to demolish it. As such, expressions of Black Power that do not critique capitalism often will be met with some suspicion. However, a critique of Marxism or socialism is also necessary. What would Black or African Power or look like in a socialist state? Groups such as Venezuela’s Afro-Venezuelan Network (ROA) are raising such questions.

Who is prepared to undertake the colossus and arduous task of building a Blueprint for Black Power for the Afrikan world? Indeed, several of these questions raised are not for Wilson, but for current organizers, writers, intellectuals, activists, cultural workers, educators and revolutionaries who intend to use his work for political action. Perhaps what is needed is not simply *another* Blueprint, but for *several* manuals of Black Power to emerge out of various Diaspora communities that can practically address the multiple layered issues affecting the Black world and be interweaved into a global project of unapologetic, protracted Black rebellion. To be sure, African writers in the Caribbean/Americas, Africa and the wider world are not producing enough work about Black Power in their localities, partly because they are emerging from neo-colonial educational systems which remain, on a whole, ultra-conservative, not to mention the fact that they are often engaged in situations in which writing is secondary to direct action. If we are to successfully achieve Black Power, what we desperately need is the emergence of courageous activist scholars from the afore-mentioned regions committed to telling our narratives as opposed to impressing upon the White state & mainstream academic industrial complex that we are no longer angry, and have personally removed ourselves from Black suffering to the extent that the proverbial chip no longer lies on our shoulders.

Otherwise, we, the children, the intellectual and political offspring of Black Power will perhaps not find our missions, but betray it, as Fanon warned. And it will probably not be because our homes were raided at 4 a.m. by the FBI, or that our passports were taken (at least, not in the U.S.). No, it will be because we sold our Black struggle narratives to the academic industrial complex for jobs, mortgage payments, academic positions, seats on educational boards, 30 second spots on CNN and FOX, post and pre-docs, tenure, book contracts, visas, speaking engagements and all the other perks. Some of us will only tell our narratives if they tell us it is okay to do so. And as such, some stories will remain untold.

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