THE BLACK THEATRE MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN SOUTH AFRICA

Olga Barrios

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*The Black Theatre Movement in the United States
and in South Africa*

To all African people and African descendants
and their cultures
for having brought enlightenment and inspiration into my life

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Theatre can't be some random exercise in finger popping. It has to represent the striving of men to try to raise themselves to a new level of thought, and it's not—I mean, we don't talk about theatre down here, or theatre up there as an idle jest but because it is necessary to pump life, blood back into our community—that's what we're talking about.

Amiri Baraka[1]

I am here between the voices of our ancestors
 and the noise of the planet.
 between the surprise of death and life;
I am here because I shall not give the
 earth up to non-dreamers and earth molesters;
I am here to say to you:
 my body is full of veins
 like the bombs waiting to burst
 with blood.
. . .
I am here, and my breath/our breaths
 must thunder across this land
 arousing new breaths. new life.

Sonia Sanchez[2]

The 1960s throughout the 1980s have been, with no doubt, the most vibrant and prolific decades in Black Theatre both in the United States and in South Africa. A great number of plays burst out like a forceful waterfall of red blood—expression of a long time-held rage and expression of life. Houston A. Baker, Jr., has observed the significance of the sixties and seventies for African Americans:

> At no time in the history of black America have so many spokesmen dedicated themselves in serious and informed ways, to a particular set of meanings and values. These men and women altered the existing face of society in a way that makes it impossible to begin the journey back as though blacks have always rushed eagerly into harbors of the white world. The texts of the sixties and seventies constitute a level of discourse where functional oppositions are readily observable.[3]

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[1] Amiri Baraka, First Pan-African Cultural Festival, 1969, in Algiers, in *Black Theatre* 5 (1969): 30.
[2] Sonia Sanchez, "Reflections After the June 12th March for Disarmament," in *homegirls & handgrenades*, Sanchez (New York and Chicago: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1984) 68.
[3] Houston A. Baker, Jr., *The Journey Back: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago, 1983) 131.

The Black Theatre Movement emerged after being gestated for almost three centuries and activated by the Black Power Movements in North America and by the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa. The plays of the Movement were breathing and pulsating so vigorously because its authors had something important to utter as the Black community's representatives. The Black community became the protagonist of the new theatre. Audience recovered its traditional and pivotal role as part of the theatrical event—a stylistic element almost non-existent in modern Western theatre.

About two decades earlier, Western theatre artists, such as Antonin Artaud and Bertolt Brecht, had already commenced to question the validity of Western theatre and proposed the need to include new elements, which would eventually give birth to a new aesthetics. Artaud and Brecht observed the need to create a new theatrical language and asserted the importance to engage the theatre audience in a dialectical process with the action taking place on the stage. In the same line, the artists of the Black Theatre Movement realized not only the passivity played by the audience in the past but also the passive role imposed on the Black community in a society governed by White rule. These artists initiated a double task: the restoration of theatre audience and Black culture from the death imposed on them by Western imperialism—both political and intellectual. The Black Theatre Movement exploded as a spring of life freed by a new aesthetics created by artists who were committed to and voiced their community's needs.

Geneviève Fabre accurately points out that the emergence of African American theatre is "above all a sociocultural phenomenon and must be examined as such."[4] Fabre's assertion can be equally extended to the emergence of Black theatre in South Africa, and this is the approach that is ensued in this study. If, as already observed, audience/Black community and culture were enhanced by Black artists, consciousness became the main didactic goal that needed to be taken to the Black community, so that they could abandon their passive role and take action. In Fabre's opinion, African American theatre in the Harlem Renaissance did not give much attention to the African American community and "to the development of a cultural politics on its behalf," asserting that the question of "links between theatre and community seems to have been largely ignored."[5] Fabre remarks that in the sixties it was the Black community at large, the people of the streets, upon whom main attention was focused; whereas in the Harlem Renaissance, at an aesthetic level, the middle-class rejected the popular forms of expression and there was a "near absence of black audience." Moreover, the Black elite did not offer support to the African American artist.[6]

Fabre believes that the Black Theatre Movement of the sixties in the United States that brought African American intellectuals back to their community is best understood

> in light of the experiences of the postwar generation, the "uprooted" generation. The international climate of war left blacks without the solid, though restricted, influence of the community. They were drawn further away from ethnic concerns, cut off from the past and a knowledge of their history, and set adrift in a nationwide no-man's land where their place was poorly defined or in a minority identity that continued to elude them.
>
> In 1965 the younger generation was caught up in an outburst of violence that hit the black community harder than any of the wars in which people had fought. Not since the Harlem riots of 1935 had such a

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[4] Geneviève Fabre, *Drumbeats, Masks and Metaphor: Contemporary Afro-American Theatre* (Cambridge (Massachusetts) and London (England): Harvard University Press, 1983) 1.
[5] *Ibid.*, 7.
[6] *Ibid.*, 8.

crisis swept through northern urban ghettos. Faced with explosive discontent and the repression that followed, the young artist and intellectual was forced to reexamine the relation of his art to the community.[7]

It was in the sixties that the dialectical relationship of theatre with its audience was restored. The Black Theatre Movement in the United States was geared towards a specific audience, which did include neither Whites nor the African American bourgeoisie—which had assimilated the values of the dominant society. The theatre of the sixties envelops both the condemnation of bourgeois complicity with White America and the celebration of its ultimate redemption.[8]

African American theatre has had a long history that could be traced from the times of slavery; and the church, as a formalizing agent, has played an indelible part that has strengthened its development.[9] Fabre believes that the theatrical character of religious services has not been adequately analyzed, stating that "all elements of the future dramaturgy are there."[10] In the past, the church had offered the shelter where African Americans were able to perform, combining improvisation and ritual. The religious services evoked audience participation and forms of theatricality that theatre could utilize.[11] The theatre that was performed in the plantations, the minstrels, the short-lived African Grove Theatre of the turn of the century, the musicals of the 1920s—and more concretely *Shuffle Along* in 1921, the Black theatres that were opened in Harlem during the Renaissance, the Lafayette Theatre Players and the Federal Theatre Project in the 1930s, Langston Hughes' the Harlem Suitcase Theatre (1937) and finally Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, awarded the Critics Circle Award in 1959, offer an idea of the long tradition and development of African American theatre. Continuing with this legacy, the sixties enhanced the background necessary to witness another renaissance, this time with a more clearly political and community-oriented commitment as the goal undertaken by its artists.

Unfortunately, the history and tradition of Black South African theatre still needs wider research. It has been only recently that Tim Couzens has brought to light the contribution of H.I.E. Dhlomo, born in 1910, and his work—including his plays[12]—asserting its significance in South African literature written in English. Other than Dhlomo's plays, Black theatre in South Africa commenced to occupy a prominent place in the sixties with the musicals that followed the example of *King Kong: An African Jazz Opera* in 1957. Athol Fugard's plays took a turn from the musicals and presented a new theatre which greatly influenced the subsequent birth of the Black theatre that paralleled the Black Consciousness Movement. The political situation under which Black and Colored people are forced to live in South Africa under apartheid has definitely hindered the work to be carried out by scholars and writers to restore the history and tradition of Black South African theatre. The reconstruction of a past, of an African culture, was precisely the endeavor undertaken by the playwrights of the Black Theatre Movement, closely following

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[7] *Ibid.*, 19.

[8] *Ibid.*, 27.

[9] See Beverly Robinson, "Historical Arenas of African American Storytelling," in *Talk That Talk: An Anthology of African American Storytelling*, Goss and Barnes, eds. (New York: Simon and Schuster/Touchstone, 1989) 211-216.

[10] *Ibid.*, 5.

[11] *Ibid.*, 17.

[12] Tim Couzens, *The New African: A Study of the Life and Work of H.I.E. Dhlomo* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985), and *H.I.E. Dhlomo Collected Works*, Visser and Couzens, eds. (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985).

the goals and ideology divulged by the Black Consciousness Movement, under Stephen Biko's leadership. Although the Black Consciousness Movement reached its peak in the seventies, it had begun to be gestated by the end of the 1960s.

The 1960s was an internationally significant decade. Carl G. Jung asserts that in the late part of this decade, the anima (or feminine side of male's personality) in the males and the animus (or masculine side of female's personality) in the female "began to accelerate with greater acceleration. At the same time the persona started to undergo a deflation, and the expansion of consciousness became an aim of the generation born during the postwar years."[13] Jung claims that a system of personality proceeds to individuate only when it becomes conscious.[14] This need to achieve an individual and collective consciousness in order to initiate a self-reflection and self-determination journey was observed in the writers of these decades. Only through personal self-reflection—closely following Frantz Fanon's theories applied to Third World cultures—could the artist reach her/his audience and help concientize them about the situation and active role they should learn to play within the Black community.

Consequently, the artists regarded their art as a committed endeavor that needed be taken to and help their community to stand up and abandon their submissiveness, asserting their cultural and historical values. Furthermore, in the process of the Black community's concientization, the artists found indispensable to examine and restore their history and cultural values, which had been belittled, denied and/or suppressed by the imposition of Western cultural and artistic values. The artist, then, took a political stand that was inextricably connected to the commitment to and creation of her/his art.

Black theatre artists were determined to abandon their silenced position and voice with energy and power the beauty of Blackness. They were determined to destroy the falseness and simplicity of stereotypes created by White society and to show the complexity of their real selves. And they were determined as well to lead their community out of darkness, reassuring the history of their past; a past that needed to be examined under the light of their present historical moment in order to formulate their future. Hope and celebration of Blackness, then, together with the activation of the audience's consciousness, became pivotal elements of a new theatre aesthetics that totally rejected the demarcations dictated by Western artistic parameters. African Americans artists spoke of the creation of Black Aesthetics; Black South Africans spoke of Black consciousness and the Theatre of the Dispossessed (analyzed in Chapters four and six of this study respectively).

In contrast to the Black Theatre Movement that emerged in North America, whose targets and artistic goals were registered in a written manifesto, the targets and artistic goals of the Black Theatre Movement in South African were not transferred into a written pronouncement. The continuous censorship and imprisonment of theatre artists—actors, directors and playwrights, has restricted any official written declaration that belonged to the Movement as such. Every single attempt to establish a theatre group or movement was continuously hampered by the South African government. This study, however, will prove that, in spite of the absence of a written declaration formulating a theatre movement, the playwrights and their works displayed an aesthetic, commitment and goals that were shared by most of the plays that appeared in the seventies and eighties.

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[13] Calvin S. Hall and Vernon J. Nordby, *A Primer of Jungian Psychology* (New York and Scarborough (Ontario): New American Library, 1973) 88.
[14] *Ibid.*, 83.

Only a short article by Cedric Callaghan written in 1983, entitled "Black Theatre in South Africa: Links with the United States,"[15] has lightly questioned the possibility of a comparative analysis between the theatre of these two countries. When examining the socio-political background closely, it can be easily noticed that a very similar historical background had sowed the seed out of which the Black Theatre Movement grew and flourished in both countries. In addition, although much discussion has arisen about whether the use the term Black theatre is appropriate, Black artists have clearly demonstrated the existence of differentiated cultural attributes that characterize their community, both in the United States and in South Africa. The historical parallelisms—i.e., racism and White rule—between both countries are briefly displayed and examined in Chapter one.

This study will analyze the different elements comprised in Black plays both in North American and in South Africa. From Black theatre emerged a new aesthetics that is examined here as the Aesthetics of Self-Affirmation. The Aesthetics of Self-Affirmation—examined in Chapter two—embraces a heterogeneity that expresses the unique and particular components which have shaped Black theatre in the United States and in South Africa. By self-affirmation, it is understood that a writer, as representative of her/his community, is asserting the specific characteristics that distinguish her/his culture and her/his gender. Moreover, theatre, as a public genre became precisely the appropriate catapult to make public and voice the existence of a culture that had been continuously undermined by White rule and models. Furthermore, theatre was simply the continuation of a long African oral tradition which the writers were familiar with as part of their African background. This study, however, will demonstrate not only the relationship but also the differences existing between the Black theatre works that emerged out of two different countries. Black theatre in both countries have comprised the combination of African and/or African American and Occidental components in a dialectical relationship with their historical time period—i.e., their socio-political and cultural milieu.

This study also illustrates the necessity to continue with further research to provide more theatrical theories that incorporate new formulas with which Black theatre can be analyzed. It is the genuine combination of elements expressed in the plays of the Black Theatre Movement that needs to be approached from a different critical perspective, other than the Western models created to be applied to Western works. The playwrights of the Movement proposed a new aesthetics that they tried to apply into their own works. Most theorists who examined those plays, however, did not really define the lines of their critical approach. Most of the plays were simply considered agit-prop or protest plays, without scholars having conducted a more profound investigation of the theatrical elements plunged into them. Although much more expansive critical trends were developed in the eighties to approach African American literature, especially fiction, there is still an eminent need of devising new methods that help us explore the validity of African American theatre from a more theoretical stand. With regard to Black South African theatre, scholars were encouragingly challenged to find more theoretical approaches that seem to have been lightly activated by the end of the eighties.

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[15] Cedric Callaghan, "Black Theatre in South Africa: Links with the United States?," in *Black American Literature Forum* 17, 2 (Summer 1983).

A significant difference in the development of the Movement in both countries is acknowledged in this study. On the one hand, African American theatre included plays by men and women playwrights, even if the women were not aligned with the Black Theatre Movement. This significant factor takes us to think also of a different aesthetics developed by male and female playwrights. On the other hand, Black South African theatre contains a majority of men playwrights as well as actors and directors. Only Fatima Dike's work received considerable attention in the seventies, and Gina Mhlophe's plays began to be produced at the end of the eighties.

This study establishes the differences existing in the aesthetics developed either by male or female playwrights. Female playwrights, using their personal experiences, widened and completed a simplistic view and broke with the old stereotypes observed in the male playwrights' works of the Movement. These women playwrights offered a more complex picture of their society by voicing the female experience, absent in plays by male playwrights. It is necessary to consider this difference when approaching plays written by males that include a woman's voice. This study asserts that a feminist consciousness grew out of the parameters activated by the Black Power and Consciousness Movements. Black female playwrights manifested a double consciousness that embraced their cultural background as well as their gender. Plays written by African American and Black South African women playwrights are examined in Chapters four and six respectively under the light of a female aesthetics.

CHAPTER I

From the 1950s through the 1980s: A Socio-Political and Historical Account of the United States/South Africa and the Black Theatre Movement

> I used to imagine South Africa somewhere hidden as deep as the most unspeakable fears that I knew as a child . . . South Africa used to seem so far away. Then it came home to me. It began to signify the meaning of white hatred here. That was what the streets and the suits and the ties covered up, not very well . . . South Africa was how I came to understand that I am not against war; I am against losing the war.
>
> June Jordan[1]

For June Jordan the fundamental issue when contrasting South Africa and United States history is the war against racism. An African American writer and scholar, Jordan expresses her feelings regarding the 1980s, twenty years after the Civil Rights Movement. There are significant parallelisms and differences in the historical background of both countries. The first colonial settlement in the United States occurred in 1607 and Africans were transported to work in the southern plantations as early as 1619. In South Africa, after the first European settlement in 1652, Africans, together with a substantial importation of slaves as early as 1658, became the primary labor force to work the land and the mines. However, the system of apartheid was not firmly implemented by the South African government until 1948; and by 1961 an official Afrikaner[2] dominated Republic was established and maintained until 1994. The oppression of Black South Africans has been likened to the pre-Civil Rights segregation of African Americans, as examined by some historians. In fact, there are several comparative analyses on the development of North American and South African history and political thought. Among these surveys is that of George M. Fredrickson's who, like Jordan, identifies racism as a major force in the two countries' historical experiences.

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[1] June Jordan, *On Call: Political Essays* (Boston: South End Press, 1985) 17.
[2] Afrikaners are descendants from the Dutch. The Afrikaner government was the official one during the years of apartheid, although both Afrikaans and English were the official languages at the time. During 1990 and 1991 President (Afrikaner) De Klerk and Nelson Mandela were negotiating the end of apartheid till democratic elections took place in 1994 with Nelson Mandela as South African President.

In *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History*, Fredrickson suggests there are several major issues contributing to racism. Among them is White supremacy, which "refers to the attitudes, ideologies and policies associated with the rise of blatant forms of Whites or European dominance over 'nonwhite' populations." He adds that White supremacy implies "systematic and self-conscious efforts to make race or color a qualification for membership in the civil community."[3] Fredrickson asserts that the affinity between both countries lie upon large similarities that include White ideologies, policies and attitudes; and these elements have contributed to the enforcement of more rigorous and self-conscious forms of racial domination.[4] Fredrickson further affirms that what precipitated the slave trade in the Southern United States and the South African Cape was the "crucial assumption that nonwhites were enslavable while Europeans were not." There are differences, however, when considering South and Central America, what Fredrickson calls "the New World." On the one hand, "the New World" pattern of race relations developed in terms of color. On the other hand, in the United States and South Africa, a more elaborated hierarchy developed based on color and class—each subdivided into status.[5]

After slavery was abolished in North America and South Africa, other differences can be established between the North American and South African governments in their definition and/or legalization of the color bar. South African Whites class with any person that "can conceivably pass as White," whereas in the United States black people class with anyone who "conceivably passes as a [Black]." On the other hand, in the United States there has not been a legalized color bar as it developed in South Africa, where anyone was explicitly forbidden from practicing an occupation or a trade because of race.[6] The North American color bar existed not because of a requirement from the government, but rather because of its passive role in prohibiting the discriminatory practices exercised by trade unions and private employers. In South Africa, on the other hand, the enforceability of the color bar emerged because "both employers and white workers had involved the government more actively than their [North American] counterparts." In the United States, it was not until the significant and militant rise of the 1950s and 1960s Civil Rights Movement that legally racial separation and disfranchisement began to collapse.[7]

When examining the political and social situation of Blacks in both countries the "areal aspect of segregation," too, is important. In South Africa, the areal aspect of apartheid segregation determined where people had a right to live. The nature of segregation in the United States was part of an effort to preserve social hierarchy between racial groups that were intermingling, and to separate them by distinctly designed economical, cultural and territorial boundaries.[8]

Black resistance against racism and struggle to obtain equal rights has impregnated the history of both North America and South Africa. Black struggle, though, achieved its culmination with the rise of numerous marches for freedom to obtain civil rights which took place during the 1950s in both countries. The black church and the preacher's voice

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[3] George Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) xi.
[4] *Ibid.*, xvii, xix.
[5] *Ibid.*, 70, 87.
[6] *Ibid.*, 134, 234.
[7] *Ibid.*, 235-39.
[8] *Ibid.*, 254.

have played a noteworthy role in this struggle. In the United States, the names of two preachers need to be mentioned: the 1963 Nobel Prize winner, Rev. Martin Luther King (supporting a non-violent fight) and Malcolm X (defending Black Nationalism). The work of Martin Luther King can be paralleled with that of Bishop Desmond Tutu (supporting a non-violent struggle) and Albert Luthuli (President of the African National Congress), the 1960 Nobel Prize winner, who, in 1952, organized a Civil Rights Crusade in which thousands of Blacks demonstrated against apartheid in South Africa.

Malcolm X's work, on the other hand, can be compared to that of two other South African political activists: Nelson Mandela and Stephen Bantu Biko. Mandela was released in February 1990 after twenty-five years of imprisonment and has been best known as the leader of the African National Congress. Biko, who became one of the leaders of the South African Student Organization (SASO), was at the front of the Black Consciousness Movement since 1968. Malcolm X and Martin Luther King were assassinated in 1965 and 1968 respectively in the United States. Albert Luthuli died in 1967 and Stephen Biko died in 1977 from the wounds caused by torture under arrest. In both countries, Blacks have sustained a ceaseless struggle to obtain human rights which oppressive political systems denied them.

THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM
AND THE BLACK THEATRE MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

The Freedom Struggle and Black Power

Names such as Nat Turner, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Mary McLeod Bethune, Maria Sojourner Truth, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, Marcus Garvey, Amy-Jacques Garvey and Josephine Baker, just to cite a few, were among the men and women who had led the struggle for freedom at different moments in history, prior to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. All of them voiced their continuous opposition to a system that deprived them of their human rights. Marcus Garvey and his wife Amy-Jacques Garvey and Maria Sojourner Truth are highly respected examples who asserted Black pride and uttered the importance of their African heritage.

Marcus Garvey was a pivotal figure in the development of Black Nationalism during the Harlem Renaissance. He advocated that Blacks needed power and economic independence from Whites. He promoted an economic investment encouraging African Americans to invest in them and immigrate to Africa. His program (the Universal Negro Improvement Association—UNIA) was designed to raise pride and confidence in Blackness, away from North America.[9] Another key figure in the struggle for freedom was W. E. B. DuBois, well-known philosopher, writer and scholar. He was the founder of the Pan-African Congress in 1917. DuBois advocated the establishment of a planned, communal social system in Black America. According to Robert L. Allen, "implicit in DuBois' program was a vision of a separate and largely self-sufficient black economy"; and, in addition, DuBois maintained

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[9] Theodore G. Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (New York: Rampart Press, n.d.) 18-27.

that such a program should be born by the black community itself in North America.[10] The Civil Rights Movement was, then, the outcome of more than three centuries of black resistance, that had been nourished by black political leaders and thinkers such as the ones mentioned above. From 1919 to 1960, there had been a great rash of race riots across the United States. And, in the early 1960s a new black generation found another way to attract national attention: they invented the sit-ins to protest segregation in the schools, being, in Arthur I. Waskow's own words, "more vigorous and far less violent that the generation of 1919."[11]

A major move that helped the rise of the Civil Rights struggle occurred in December 1, 1955 when Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to leave her seat. The seat on a public bus was reserved for Whites only and, after her refusal to cede, she was arrested. From that moment onward, a series of marches for freedom emerged, many of which were led by one of the most charismatic and influential figures of this century: Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King. King's non-violent struggle has always been contrasted to that of another charismatic leader, Malcolm X. Although Dr. King and Malcolm X differed in their strategies of how to carry out the struggle for black liberation, by the end of their lives they approached each other's views. King believed the struggle for freedom had to be done non-violently based on human integrity. Malcolm X, under the auspices of Black Nationalism, believed humanity and humility were different issues and defended an armed struggle as integral to a successful black revolution. A black South African minister and spokesperson against apartheid, Alan Boesak has argued that King was responsible for the "radicalization of black Christianity" and Malcolm X, for the "dechristianization of black radicalism."[12] Whereas the African American novelist, playwright and philosopher James Baldwin asserts that King gave a new life to the Black church and made a revolutionary gospel to the lives of oppressed people in North America.[13]

The role of the church was essential in the Montgomery bus boycott. Emphasizing the important role that the church has played in the Black community throughout African American history, James A. Colaiaco alleges that the church provided "both a refuge from a hostile white society and a place for political social activities." Colaiaco unveils the main reasons for it: "Leaders also came from the church for educated black men were often drawn to the ministry. Financially supported by a loyal congregation, the black preacher could afford to remain independent of white society. The black church spawned many leaders of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, from Martin L. King, Jr., and Ralph Abernathy to Andrew Young and Jesse Jackson."[14] The church would equally play a similar role in South Africa by this time, as will be examined later. Both Dr. King and Malcolm X were rooted out of church experiences, and towards the end of their lives, "not much was left of King's bourgeois life: he was too true to his calling to remain that; and

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[10] Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America: An Analytic History* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1970) 276-277.
[11] Arthur I. Waskow, *From Race Riot to Sit-In, 1919 and the 1960s: A Study in the Connections between Conflict and Violence* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday and Co., 1967) 225.
[12] Alan Boesak, *Coming in out of the Wilderness: A Comparative Interpretation of the Ethics of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X* (Kampen, Holland: Kamper Cahiers, no. 28, Uitgegeven Door Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H.Kok, n.d.] 28, 13.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] James A. Colaiaco, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Apostle of Militant Nonviolence* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988) 7.

Malcolm did change; he was too honest a man not to admit that."[15] Both leaders had sown a seed in the minds of African Americans and the struggle was going to be continued.

On the other hand, the 1960s witnessed the birth of a slogan that characterized this decade: Black Power, or the affirmation of a philosophy with strong bases on the theories of earlier African American leaders, writers and scholars. According to James A. Geschwender, Black Power was a development "intermediate between the old civil rights movement and ghetto uprisings . . . The lack of black power meant slavery." He adds that for many "'Black Power' was a slogan and tactic deliberately used to increase morale and *esprit de corps*. It [aided] in the development of a sense of worth and value and [contributed] strongly to the emergence of faith." Finally, the "Black Power Movement" was anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist.[16] Raymond S. Franklin alleges that Black Power was "neither a separatist nor an integrationist doctrine, and therefore it [was] not directly related to either narrow nationalist formulations of the past nor civil rights ones of the present. It [was] an answer to the Negro dilemma of neither being able to separate nor integrate." Moreover, he adds "[in] the realm of tactics and goals . . . Black Power [was] becoming increasingly revolutionary, employing both legal and extra-legal tactics. Ultimately it [sought] to resolve the Negro problem in co-racial terms, a proposition which [warranted] serious attention and collaboration."[17]

Black Power wanted to engage other non-White groups in the same struggle since they considered it a struggle for social progress. As Geschwender points out, Black Power ideology was inevitably socialist for it considered capitalism to be exploitative and any battle against oppression needed to be against capitalism.[18] In this line, Dr. King and Malcolm X shared with Black Power two main fundamentals. First, they saw the need to oppose and change the oppressive system of capitalism. And, second, both leaders coincided with the ideology of black pride and/or black consciousness. In this regard, it is necessary to underscore that black consciousness does not mean inverted racism, as many critics have constantly misunderstood, but a *necessary step towards self-determination*.

The Black Panthers emerged as a branch extending from Black Power. The Panthers adopted the idea of black consciousness and defended not a black nationalism, but a national consciousness. Like the French-Martinican psychoanalyst and social philosopher Frantz Fanon, Panthers also saw a "close connection between a people's struggle and their culture."[19] Fanon's theories (highly regarded among African, African American and Third World[20] nationalists) expanded the concept of national consciousness, professing that international consciousness lives and grows at the heart of national consciousness and "this two-fold emerging is ultimately only the source of all culture."[21] He believed that the Third World should unite in the same consciousness struggle, and African Americans were part of it. However, this struggle had to create something that was not an imitation of Europe like

[15] Boesak, *op. cit.*, 4.
[16] James A. Geschwender, "Black Power," in *The Black Revolt: The Civil Rights Movement, Ghetto Uprising and Separation*. Geschwender, ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1971) 200-201.
[17] Raymond S. Franklin, "The Political Economy of Black Power." Geschwender, 222.
[18] Geschwender, 467.
[19] Bernard Romaric Boxill, "A Philosophical Examination of Black Protest Thought," Ph. D. Dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1971, 77.
[20] Understanding Third World countries as those which are economically underdeveloped and/or under colonial rule.
[21] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973) 248.

the one which had extended itself into the United States: "Two centuries ago, a former European colony decided to catch up with Europe. It succeeded so well that the United States of America became a monster, in which the taints, the sickness, and the inhumanity of Europe have grown to appalling dimensions . . ." Instead, he proposed to try "to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing triumphant birth . . . If we want humanity to advance a step further, if we want to bring it up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries . . . We must work out new concepts."[22] Fanon actually considered the national revolution needed to be socialist.[23]

The Black Panthers (organized in 1966 by Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton) followed Fanon's idea of a socialist and international struggle led by the people who were oppressed by imperialism and capitalism. They created educational programs that would help raise consciousness among African Americans.[24] Huey P. Newton, who was Minister of Defense of the Party, pointed out that their party was Marxist-Leninist because they followed "the dialectical method and [they] also [integrated] theory with practice." Moreover, because they used the method of dialectical materialism, they did not expect things to stay the same but to change, for history is change (a concept that would also be defended in the Black Theatre Movement).[25] Newton asserted that his party was about *intercommunalism* "because nations have been transformed into communities of the world."[26] He perceived that there was no difference between what was happening to the black community in Harlem and the black community in South Africa, or the black communities in Angola or in Mozambique.[27] Newton appraised the need of an international union against imperialism, as Che Guevara had proclaimed in Latin America, defending the Marxist-Leninist philosophy as well. He defended an international consciousness and fight against international imperialism. Moreover, Guevara perceived the need to transform the individual's mental structures in order to create *the New Man*, an idea that was also spread by the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa.[28] Guevara, like Fanon, was also highly respected by the Panthers.

The Black Panthers considered that the church needed some reforms, too. Among them, the church needed particular attention for it should be a community and not an institution. Newton had also the concept that most Pan-Africanist movements aligned with the United States' imperialism, because, in his opinion, they were cooperating to accept the philosophy

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[22] *Ibid.*, 313-316.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] It is important to remember the significance of the Brazilian philosopher and educator, Paulo Freire and his revolutionary theory of education as a practice of freedom addressed towards reality which a person should not fear. Wo/man should seek to transform that reality through fraternity, a brotherhood of spirit. Freire was mainly interested in the process of alphabetization among adults in the poorest areas of Brazil. He began to practice his method on the pedagogy of the oppressed around 1947 in the Northeast of Brazil. To Freire alphabetization was a synonym for consciousness. He considered that education was a reciprocal learning/teaching process between the teacher and the student. He realized the dangers of massification" and brain washing, which was the main result of Western civilization. Wo/man needed to have an active role IN and WITH reality by always questioning it. Freire's method was applied in South Africa by Biko and other Black Consciousness leaders in the 1970s. See Paulo Freire, La educación como práctica de la libertad (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1989).

[25] Huey P. Newton, *To Die for the People: The Writings of Huey P. Newton* (New York: Random House, 1977) 16, 25-26.

[26] *Ibid.*, 32.

[27] *Ibid.*, 32-33.

[28] Michael Lowy, *El pensamiento del Che Guevara* (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1989).

of *Black oppressing Black*. He supported the people of Africa, though, but in their fight against imperialism.[29] The Black Panthers followed Malcolm X's idea an armed struggle to defend the rights of Blacks as it was justified by Newton: "We are hooked up with the people who are rising up all over the world with arms because we feel that only with the power of the gun will the bourgeoisie be destroyed and the world transformed."[30] Robert Allen also finds a connection between the Third World and some of the people living in the United States, asserting that the Third World "exists just as surely within America as it does across the seas."[31] Moreover, he refers to the African American scholar Harold Cruse who in 1962 declared that from the beginning Blacks had existed as *colonial beings* and that their enslavement coincided with "the colonial expansion of European powers and was nothing more or less than a condition of domestic colonialism. . . Instead of the United States establishing a colonial empire in Africa, it brought the colonial system home and installed it in the Southern States. . ." However, Allen finds a slight difference with people living in Third World countries: "The only factor which differentiates the Negro's status from that of a pure colonial status is that his position is maintained in the 'home' country in close proximity to the dominant racial group."[32] By the end of the 1960s there seemed to be a consensus among back revolutionaries scholars and writers on the relationship between the situation of the African Americans and the peoples of the Third World. Liberation from colonization through self-determination was a common goal pursued by the two.

Among the leaders and liberation groups quoted above, the Black Panthers were probably the only ones who really appraised the need of women's and gay's liberation as part of the same struggle, something that was not included in the manifestoes of the other movements of the 1960s: "We recognize the women's right to be free . . . We know that homosexuality is a fact that exists, and we must understand it in its purest form: that is, a person should have the freedom to use his body in whatever way [s/]he wants."[33] Newton insisted that people should not use racist attitudes against people who behave or have ideas other than the established norm. In contrast to the Panthers' philosophy on gender and sexual identity, the philosophy of cultural nationalism that was developed in the 1960s and advocated by most of its very well known writers was extremely chauvinistic and conservative in their views about women. The names of women who participated in the struggle for freedom seemed to have been erased from their records. Even when the Black Theatre Movement arose, a great number of plays originated out of it that did not depict the complexity sheltered in by women. There were theories about Black Theatre and the New Black Man, but nothing was written appraising the black woman's double oppression: her color and her sex. The Black Panthers had been the only ones to identify with and support women and gay liberation movements—the fact that many White women were involved with the Panthers might have contributed to their support.

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[29] Newton, *op. cit.*, 153.
[30] *Ibid.*, 198.
[31] Allen, *op. cit.*, 284.
[32] Harold Cruse, *Rebellion or Revolution?* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1968) 76-77.
[33] Newton, *op. cit.*, 153.