



Freedom Manifesto: A Draft Manifesto to Rebuild the Black Liberation Movement

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Preface

The Black Liberation Movement has reawakened. Militant activists are fighting against police terror, for jobs and a livable wage, for housing for the homeless, against environmental racism, for quality education, for human rights for our LGBT brothers and sisters, and more. This manifesto is a contribution toward uniting our diverse forces into one mighty movement for Black liberation and the transformation of the entire society.

This manifesto is for workers in trade union locals and worker centers, students on campus and in high school, brothers and sisters locked up in the prison camps, activists on all battlefronts in every community. Capitalism stinks and is not the system that we need to lead decent and meaningful lives.

Please send suggestions for this document. Rewrite it. Create your own. The point is to have a revolutionary festival of ideas to advance our consciousness and take our struggle to a much higher level. When we can meet in a national assembly for Black Liberation, every document can be part of creating one declaration for us all.

This manifesto is the work of veterans of five decades of struggle and young activists in the current struggles. First came a 2014 version. The Black Left Unity Network revised it in 2015. Now in 2016 a national Black Left Study Group, brothers and sisters in 10 cities, studied both versions for ten months and offers this revision.

Our movement has been powerful and it is becoming powerful again. We just have to sum up our practice in struggle—past, present and future—and think together about the problems we have and how we can solve them. This manifesto, read and talked about by people and groups all over, can contribute to a national consensus to be ratified at a National Assembly for Black Liberation.



1. Introduction

The deep crisis facing Black people requires bold radical action. We can accept this challenge as individuals and in groups, but the strategic goal must be the rebuilding of a national movement for Black liberation. There are many groups. Even those organized nationally are small and scattered. But hundreds of thousands of people see the need for militant fight back. It is time for a great coming together to rebuild our Black liberation movement nationwide.

Our fight has always been for freedom. The history of Black people involves every aspect of life but there has always been a central theme: How can we get free? This means an end to exploitation and oppression. This is a critical starting point for all education and self-consciousness in the Black community. It demonstrates the basic humanity of Black people, the will to live and find ways to improve our lives as a collective, a community, a nation.

We build on our Black Radical Tradition. In order to be a revolutionary you have to know your history. Our tradition of militant fightback has been anchored in five ideological tendencies that are most often woven together in the thought and practice of any person, group, or movement. These five are Black liberation theology, Pan-Africanism, Nationalism, Feminism, and Socialism. The most recent concentration of ideological debate was in

the 1960s and represented in the life, work, and thought of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X.

We are rebuilding the Black Liberation Movement.

How can we tell when a national Black liberation movement is underway? When Black liberation activists in every generation have organized national assemblies to unite around a common program. The earliest was the National Negro Convention Movement of the 1830s. This unity goes beyond single issues. It grasps the overall character of fighting on all fronts. When a national Black Liberation movement is underway, national bodies set policy and coordinate national campaigns of struggle. Major conferences facilitate debate. This leads to consensus and more intense resistance. So we had the 1967 and 1968 Black Power Conferences, the 1970 Congress of African People, the 1970 revolutionary peoples convention of the Black Panther Party, the 1972 Gary National Black Assembly, the 1974 conference of the African Liberation Support Committee, the 1981 National Black Independent Political Party, and the 1998 Chicago launching of the Black Radical Congress. To be revolutionary, we must learn from these advanced gatherings of our national Black liberation movement as milestones of our Black Radical Tradition.

2. Black history is the fight for freedom

The lessons of history are summations of a process. They can be about individuals or social groups. They can be local or global. This process includes social forces that represent different classes and nations. It includes gender, sexuality, religion, generations, and so on. The main dynamic of the African American experience, the theme that embraces all Black people, is the fight not only to survive but to resist and end capitalist exploitation and all forms of oppression. In a word, Freedom! We have overcome the slave trade and colonialism in Africa and throughout the African Diaspora. We have overcome sharecropping. We will overcome industrial wage slavery and today's inhuman forms of racism, poverty, and patriarchy. The system has been against us but we have always fought back.

Africa. Africa was invaded by Europeans. There was evil cooperation from some of the ruling classes and elites among the Africans themselves. So Africa took a double blow: Black people were stolen from their land and forced into the labor systems of slavery in the West, and colonized on African land. The people who remained in Africa were virtually enslaved. Both attacks forced European culture on African people: language, religion, legal systems, what little education that was provided, and cultural aesthetics. The infamous colonization frenzy was legalized in the Berlin Conference of 1884-85.

After World War II African resistance movements expelled the invaders and created independent African countries. First came Ghana in 1957 under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah. Most of the newly independent countries were guided by a rising African capitalist class. This class compromised the liberation struggles by falling in line with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Many African revolutionaries who represented the working class and struggles against capitalist neo-colonialism were murdered: Patrice Lumumba, Chris Hani, Amilcar Cabral, Edwardo Mondlane, Pierre Mulele, General China, Kimathi, Stephen Biko, Maurice Bishop, Walter Rodney, and others. Today Africa and the African Diaspora face the need for a 21st century revolution led by the working class and its impoverished masses.

The European slave trade. Stripping Africa of people served the labor needs of Europe, especially in the fields and mines of the Americas. As Eric Williams explains, a triangular trade linked Europe (manufactured goods) to Africa (labor) to the Americas (extraction of raw materials and products of agricultural development). This barbarism took Africans to every island in the Caribbean and every region of North, Central, and South America, expanding the African Diaspora.

Our freedom struggle has raged against these crimes against humanity. We remember Queen Nzinga Mbande of Angola and Joseph Cinque of the Amistad Revolt.

The slave system. Slavery was a system that bred, sold and worked Africans to death for 400 years. Millions of Black people were moved across the southern US to produce tobacco, rice, and much more, most of all cotton. Black field hands were worked to death from “can’t see to can’t see,” from before sunrise to after sunset. Black women faced the double exploitation of working in the fields or the “big house” and breeding children to be slaves as well. Through inheritance and the long-lived corporations, the wealth we created still exists today. It keeps us in persistent poverty.

Slave production of cotton pulled Black people into the Deep South, creating what became known as the Black Belt. But slavery’s true role in the rise of capitalism has been kept hidden. It started in the 1700s with the buying and selling of African people and their production of cotton for the world market. It emerged as textile production in England and North America. By the 1800s cotton was the number one commodity in the world. The slave South and the industrial North each reaped the profits and benefits of slavery. Factories in the North produced cloth for clothing and other commodities. Ships leaving Northern and Southern ports moved slaves and goods around the world. Northern banks lent money for slave plantations and the industries that depended on slave-grown crops. Even the wages of white workers in Northern factories depended on slave labor and profit from the world cotton trade. The market value of the

nation's population of enslaved Africans was higher than all other sources of wealth at the time. These are the historical facts that continue to make reparations such an important question for the Black Liberation movement.

Emancipation. The US evolved with two labor systems: slavery in the South and wage labor in the North. Representatives from each struggled for control of the federal government. This led to the Civil War. Slave labor threatened the wages of white workers. The abolitionist movement opposed the vicious system of slavery. All this motivated people in the North to support the war.

But Black people were not given freedom by anybody. We rose up and fought in many ways to be our own liberators. Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, Gabriel Prosser and others led mighty revolts. The Underground Railroad led by Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth freed countless slaves. W. E. B. DuBois in his master work *Black Reconstruction* describes a general strike: slaves withholding their labor and undercutting the slave regime in many ways. Black people fought the Confederacy at a far higher rate than white people. After the Civil War during Reconstruction, Black voters and elected officials democratized the South, introducing free public education for all.

The African American nation. Especially within the Black Belt (a territory that stretches from the eastern shores of Maryland to east Texas), Black

people created an African American national culture. Before and after the overthrow of slavery, Black people from different African origins were welded into an oppressed nation. We improvised on our original African cultures. We created new social institutions, a common economic life, new speech and language and collective community life. We did this in church, in musical and other social and political venues, and in developing social classes. African Americans were concentrated in counties that were majority African American, dominated by the plantation economy, repressive government and an apartheid system. We suffered concentrated exploitation and oppression. More people were lynched there than anywhere else in the US. The lack of political authority over the territory and social and economic institutions of the Black Belt has prevented the Black majority in the South from expressing its full right of self-determination.

And there too the modern Civil Rights Movement developed, in opposition to the barbaric oppression imposed on Black people in the Black Belt, from peonage to lynching.

The Great Migrations from the rural South to the industrial North. During the 20th century Black people were pushed out of the South and pulled into the North—meaning the West, the Midwest and the Northeast. This dispersed Black people into the major industrial cities. Racist terror pushed people North. Migration was also an act of resistance. People rejected old forms of oppression

in search of a better life. People in the rural South faced persistent poverty. The mechanical cotton picker eliminated their livelihood and more often than not the planter's tractor leveled their houses. Meanwhile the Northern factories beckoned.

Urban ghettoization. Real estate red-lining forced Black people into the cities' worst housing. Our communities concentrated all of the worst social problems. Police control held it all in place. But Black people became the core of the working class. On that basis, building from our Southern roots, the urban ghetto became a major base of Black political power.

Oppression breeds resistance. Mass organizations and movements brought together workers, students, community organizations, women, religious organizations, and many others into the 20th century fight for Black Liberation.

Crisis of permanent poverty. Capitalist globalization took new forms in the 1970s. Industries moved to former colonies and the US South. High unemployment became a permanent feature of the Black working class.

Meanwhile a technological revolution began to reorganize all of society. This reduces the demand for the labor of the old industrial system. Struggles of the 1930s and 1960s forced President Roosevelt's New Deal and Kennedy and Johnson's Great Society. But that social safety net has been fraying for some time now. Permanent poverty is

the lot of a growing section of the Black community. We are under assault by drugs both legal and illegal. We face a new slavery in the prison system. This is all part of a general crisis of the capitalist system.

The Strategic Role of the South. The majority of Black people have always lived in the Southern region of the US. This has also been the region of the most oppression against Black people. It continues to be the region most hostile to organizing workers with right-to-work anti-union laws. Increasingly capital from all over the world joins US capital in patterns of extreme economic exploitation in the South. But more than that there is the structural patterns of racism, and the lowest quality of life in all areas of human existence. The southern region is a strategic location for the Black liberation movement, the workers movement, and the general revolutionary forces because it is so crucial for the existence of the capitalist system. The social, economic and political extremes of the region make the fight for reform an essential component to building a movement for fundamental social change. On the one hand it is essential for the Black liberation movement's fight for African American self-determination, while at the same time advancing the role of Black workers in leading the movement. This class perspective strengthens the anti-capitalist character of the national Black liberation movement and is an essential part of fighting for the unity of the multi-national working class.

3. Our fight is against capitalism

The Black left is fighting on all fronts against all forms of oppression. A central point of unity is that all of our struggles can advance only to the extent that we mount a full assault on the capitalist system as a racist system of class exploitation, national oppression, patriarchy, and imperialism. Capitalism is how the 1% control society and the world economy. It is the source of our misery.

What is capitalism? Capitalism is an economic, social, and political system that exploits the labor of working people and feeds the greed of the corporations and the rich who own the factories and the machines. People work and create value by turning raw materials into usable products. We are paid far less than the value we create—just the minimum. Most of the rest is surplus taken by the corporations as their profit. Workers and owners struggle over who gets this surplus. They live fat while we starve. In its monopoly stage of development, capitalism became imperialism, a global system of exploiting countries all over the world.

How is the origin of US capitalism based on slavery? The wealth needed for the origin of the industrial system in the US was created out of the super profits taken from the sale and labor of the slaves, especially in the cotton fields. This slave-based wealth has funded many corporations and banks. This wealth has propped up wealthy families

that inherit and maintain control over social and cultural institutions such as private universities, especially in the Ivy League.

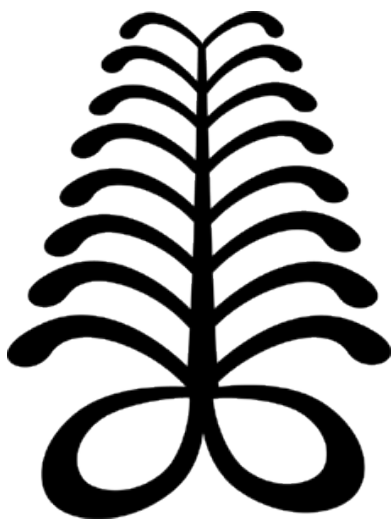
How does capitalism exploit us? Today capitalism is transforming and replacing human labor with “smart” machines. If people are not working for a wage, the market system for circulating goods and service breaks down. Without a job, you can’t buy what you need, and they can’t sell it.

So capitalism has turned to making money on death. That includes bad food. Bad health care. All varieties of drugs and alcohol. TV culture that kills the mind. The military-industrial complex produces weapons for imperialist wars and all forms of military aggression including the violence in our cities. All too often our churches become appendages to this, preaching money over morality.

How does capitalism exploit the world? The 1% uses military interventions supported by global organizations such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization. Everywhere they capture cheap labor and important raw materials. They use the United Nations and NATO to justify imperialist military aggression. This way they keep moving wealth from poor countries to rich ones.

Can we defeat the capitalist system? Nothing lasts forever. Slavery ended. Feudalism ended. Capitalism will end as well. More and more, humanity has no stake in the capitalist system and

is rapidly growing to hate it and struggle against it. Outside of the US, resistance is explicit in rejecting capitalism. But here we face the soft terror of media and government. They are obsessed with putting a gag rule on any alternative discourse. A good indication of the rejection of capitalism was the Occupy Movement. Occupy exposed the evil exploits of the ruling 1%. The end of capitalism will only come with our militant unity of action among and between movements of resistance by the working class and oppressed nations and people, including the movements of Afro-American people.



4. Strategic working class unity includes the leadership of the black working class

Why the working class? The majority of people in the US are working people. We are all exploited by the capitalist system. People know this and spontaneously oppose it in so many ways.

Of course there is a racist national chauvinism that turns some white workers into enemies of Black people and other people of color, especially working and poor people. Mainstream media broadcasts the lie that we black workers are the cause of their misery. As people fight in their own interest against the bosses, conditions are created to expose the role of white supremacy to divide the working class, defend white privilege, and justify the exploitation and oppression of Black people. We have the chance to win significant numbers of white workers to an anti-racist working-class unity. This is worker's solidarity.

Thinking globally, more allies of the Black Liberation Movement are the militants in the international working class movement, especially from the oppressed nationalities and peoples. The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Black labor organizations. The first Black worker organization was the 1866 Colored National Labor Union. Frederick Douglass was one of its early leaders. Working class activists have engaged in

every stage of organizing the Black liberation movement. We have witnessed the struggle for inclusion of Black workers in the CIO unions of the 1930s, the largest, most significant organizing of U.S. workers. We have seen the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (1969), the Black Workers Congress (1971), the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (1972), Black Workers for Justice (1981), and the Black Workers Unity Movement (1985). Today we have many rank-and-file Black caucus groups, workers centers, and the Southern Workers Assembly.

Anti-imperialist unity with Latinos. National oppression and extreme capitalist exploitation of Latinos makes them close allies of Black people. This is especially true for people with roots in Mexico, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere in the Caribbean and the Americas.

The capitalist strategy is to divide workers and play them against each other. The most desperate among us take the lowest wages. Our class unity must take a strong position against this capitalist ploy and unite Black and Brown workers in a common cause. To defeat imperialism we must unite struggles against class exploitation and national oppression at home and abroad.

Class struggle and Black liberation. Initially, the fight of workers is first and foremost a fight to make wages and working conditions better. This includes benefits and pensions. People fight as individuals,

work teams, workplaces, and entire industries. All of this is necessary. And we can go further and link these reform struggles with the vision and coordination to end the capitalist system once and for all. We are in an all-out war: capitalists against the masses of workers and poor people. They will always cheat us. Capitalism means exploitation. That's how their game is played.



5. We fight on all fronts

The Black Liberation Movement and the workers movement under revolutionary leadership does not unite in the abstract. It's all about concrete conditions. But ideas do keep us clear. Each struggle needs its own clarity and vision.

Fogging up our vision are the many in-between opportunist types we meet in the day-to-day struggle. They are in between us and the ruling 1% and they put forward in-between solutions. The in-between types are the social basis for opportunity and misleadership. But the history of the liberation struggle has taught us that the struggle against imperialism requires ruthless struggle against opportunism.

We also face the state and its police forces. Slogans are powerful ideas that keep our eyes on the real enemy.

Police repression and prisons. Every 24 hours US police forces and vigilantes shoot and kill a Black person. Routinely, Black youth are rounded up and placed into police databases. Prisons are overcrowded with Black men. Black women are increasingly being processed through the prison camps. Many of our militant fighters have been incarcerated as political prisoners, some held in solitary confinement for decades.

Our communities are under constant surveillance. When outside our segregated neighborhoods, we

are harassed, arrested, and shot for driving while Black, for wearing a hoodie, just for being ourselves. We are still not free. Mass incarceration is the new Jim Crow and is a principal means of national oppression.

Release all political prisoners! Stop the surveillance and monitoring of all communication of the Black community by government agencies and private corporations! Stop police murder! Community control of police!

Women. Patriarchy arose before capitalism. But capitalism and its imperialist expansion for control of labor markets, raw materials, and land systematized male supremacy in new ways. It did the same with racism. This meant European white male dominance over women, other peoples and cultures.

The Black Liberation movement must overcome and correct the internalized male chauvinism in our history and advance the leadership of women at all levels of the Black Freedom struggle, in our communities, churches, unions, and promote equality in our homes.

The struggle against patriarchy, male supremacy, and sexism is key to rebuilding the black freedom struggle and the unity of our people as a whole. Although women lead this struggle, everyone must take it up and support it.

Gender equality! Mobilize women, and facilitate the leadership of women on all battle fronts!

Environment. The capitalist system is destroying the natural environment of the world. Profit seeking ravages ecosystems. It pollutes air and water. It creates mountains of nuclear waste. It fuels global warming. It axes biodiversity that has taken millions of years to develop. Environmental racism represents a disproportionate concentration of dangers in Black communities.

The earth's resources must be a commons for all humanity to share! End fossil fuel use! Our future must be green!

Seniors. Our society is growing older. But we lack sufficient support and respect for older members of our communities. They end up removed from trans-generational households. They face the crisis of declining incomes. Welfare support is reduced or gone. Health care is poor. Old people end up isolated from family and friends. We must become a sharing and loving society from the cradle to the grave.

Full pension for all retired workers! Recognize senior as lifelong contributors to society! Respect and care for all older people!

Health. The capitalist system has spoiled our food. It uses advertising to make us lust for sugar, salt, fat, and other painkillers. It turns health care into a factory system that keeps most of us running for the latest pharmaceutical. Of course there are people with no health insurance or with the limited coverage of Obamacare. We have to choose

between food, rent, and health care. Look around and see the obesity, bad teeth and poor vision and hearing. The capitalists have turned our neighborhoods into food deserts. This has to stop.

African American people are among the greatest victims of the lack of universal healthcare. We suffer with lower rates of insurance coverage. We have less access to quality care. So we have the highest rates of stroke, heart attack, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease (with limited access to life saving kidney replacement), HIV/AIDS, and other life threatening diseases.

Fight for universal health care! Stop fast foods in our community! Ban liquor sales in our community! Forward to community gardens!

Education. The education gains of the 1960s have been wiped out. Our children are not learning to read and write and work with numbers. Meanwhile the system takes money out of public schools to fund privatized education and the imperialist war machine. In many urban areas, school boards are closing schools in the Black and Latino communities at an alarming rate. High-stakes testing places our youth on a path of failure with limited possibilities for good employment. College attendance and graduation is falling. With attacks on affirmative action and minority scholarships, we see ethnic cleansing of our campuses.

We demand from the government the material resources to save our youth from the pipeline of

failing-schools-to-prison or the pipeline to the imperialist war machine. We demand community control of K-12 schools and the removal of police from schools. We need quality well-rounded education from pre-school to university, and federal sponsored, youth-targeted employment programs. Free universal quality public education for all, from day care through university!

Housing. The last few economic crises have ruined people's lives in this country. They have targeted Black people most of all and much of this is via housing. Mortgage schemes and loan programs cheat us. Public housing resembles a reservation. When we find a place to live, it is usually the lowest quality and highest cost. Increasing numbers of adults and children are homeless.

House everyone and eliminate homelessness! End loan practices that cheat the people! Housing is a right!

LGBTQ. Democracy is undermined by defining certain people as bad and devaluing and punishing them. All too often this means people of different genders and sexual orientations. So we experience the abuse of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people in prison, in poverty, in the medical system, and throughout society. Same-sex relationships and all genders must be respected. LGBTQ oppression is part of the cultural crisis of the capitalist system.

End homophobia now! Let marriage and gender be a personal choice!

Culture and Black Liberation. The capitalist system turns everything into a commodity to be bought and sold. This includes the cultural production or contributions of our community. We all used to sing; and now we buy music and pay to hear others sing. What is more, the 1% pays performers who play and sing what they want them to. We invented hip hop to serve our community. From the start it expressed political critique and youth aspirations. Corporate music empires have twisted it into the degenerate, self-hating and often misogynist gangster rap. Perhaps the greatest danger comes from TV. We see there a renaissance of old stereotypical images of Black people as clowns or gladiators.

On the other hand, we have an unbroken history of cultural production that inspires people to resist. Poets and musicians can reflect, support, and inspire the struggle of the masses. Our cultural revolution reconnects with our African origins. It embraces the best of our cultural developments as African Americans. Jazz is Black classical music. Cultural rituals can continuously reinforce positive values and beliefs to unify our community and sustain our struggle.

Cultural production for Black liberation! Recruit cultural workers to every front of struggle!

Reparations. European and US capitalism relied from the start on our enslavement, exploitation and oppression. Underdevelopment, lack of opportunity, inequality, and shorter life expectancy for African people everywhere, are all built into the capitalist system. The demand for reparations connects Africa and the African diaspora to a common demand of redress against the governments and corporations of colonialism and imperialism and the institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. We recognize their crimes against humanity, as outlined in the UN Declaration on Human Rights.

Reparations must be one of the major demands for self-determination including land/territory and political power!

Imperialist war. The imperialist stage of capitalism is when large scale corporations and financial institutions cover the globe in search of profits, and no country is safe. Imperialism always leads to war and the constant threat of war. One kind of war is when the imperialist country seeks to dominate another country for economic, social and political reasons. This drives the wars in the Middle East as the US and its European allies seek to control oil and the strategic zone linking Europe, Africa, and Asia. Another kind of war is when two or more imperialist countries fight to expand or limit their spheres of influence and domination. Examples of this are World War I and II. This is also on the

horizon as the military buildup of Europe and Japan rival the US, and as the US moves in opposition to Russia and China. All of these imperialist wars place the world in danger as we are getting closer to the use of nuclear weapons. The war budget drains funding from vital and necessary social programs. Stop the US military machine! End all imperialist war!



6. We are part of a global struggle

We all live on Planet Earth. Our struggles impact people all over the globe. We need to be internationalists and focus on freedom and quality of life for everyone. We are linked especially to the struggles in the African Diaspora.

The struggle in Africa. The United Nations named 1960 Africa Year when so many countries gained their independence from European colonization. But this led to neocolonialism governed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Bureaucratic tyrants took control of the state apparatus in most African countries. They looted the wealth and suppressed the people.

African people world-wide and all anti-imperialist forces must struggle for unity, peace, and freedom!

The struggle of Black people in the Caribbean. All of the Caribbean is part of the African Diaspora. The only difference for African people was where the slave ship stopped and which European colonial language they made us speak. The fight continues in the Caribbean, from the trade union based Movement for Social Justice in Trinidad-Tobago, to the fight for sustaining socialism in Cuba.

Long live Caribbean unity! Oppose the domination of US and global capital!

The struggle of Black people in Latin America. Spanish colonialism brought African labor and historic Black populations to Mexico, Central

America and South America. Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Columbians are the most numerous. US imperialism has forced many to migrate to the US creating Latin American diasporas. We share the African Diaspora, the experience of racism and class exploitation, and the struggle against imperialism and all its manifestations.

Long live African American and Latino unity! Build our movements of movements throughout the Americas!

The struggle of Black people in Europe. There are Black communities all over Europe. They embrace our militant struggles in the US and we must embrace their history of struggle as well. They face racism and class exploitation too. This goes for people born in Europe as well as recent migrants from Africa and the Caribbean.

Long live the unity of African Americans and Black Europe!



7. Our fight for reform is linked to a revolutionary strategy

The day-to-day struggle. The idea of a revolution is abstract, but the fight for one is not. People fight back in daily life, at workplaces, the unemployment office, the grocery store, school, church and more. Big political ideas take shape in on-the-ground practice. When the fight intensifies everybody can get educated, get political, and begin to think about the link between the reform struggle and the revolutionary leap that is necessary. In this context a Black left can be grounded in our people, in the very fight they wage themselves. We join them. We embrace their leadership. We link their fight with the fight of others. We help sum up and learn lessons from victories and defeats. We train militants to increase their ability to sustain the struggle.

Fight back every day! Link the fight for reform to revolutionary goals!

The response to racist attacks. Every racist attack must be opposed and mass resistance built to end it, just as we raised the slogans No More Trayvons! and Black Lives Matter! We do this as part of massive nationwide mobilization. So must we continue on higher and more coordinated levels. This is a key task of rebuilding a national Black liberation movement.

The electoral struggle. The capitalist state is a rigged game controlled by the ruling class. They don't play fair and we can't win by getting in it and trying to reform things. All too often we have been lured into local politics as mayors and city council officials, only to try and fix a broken system that can't be fixed with minimal reforms.

But electoral politics is a terrain of struggle where debate and discussion can raise the consciousness of people. This can present people with an alternative to the hypocrisy and illusions of mainstream politicians. The movement must remain autonomous from state and NGO control. On the other hand, Black power at the local level can be used by the movement, especially if we build the independent power of the forces in struggle for unionization, livable wages, eminent domain to house the homeless, money for public schools not charter schools, and so on.

Hold elected officials accountable to serve the community!



8. Our struggle will last for generations

Struggle is a generational handoff. Each generation has a mission, a contribution to make, and then it is up to the next generation. We fight for freedom, going forward one step, one stage, one historic leap at a time.

The 1960s generation. The 1960s was the last great upsurge. 1960s activists are today's movement elders. They are walking, living, libraries. They were part of victories and mass mobilizations. They were also part of factional battles and splits. This is valuable: what to emulate and what to avoid.

The 21st century. The 21st century is not the 1960s. We are caught in a technological revolution being used to change all aspects of life. We have to adapt to that and learn how to use digital tools in our struggle. We don't have the revolution of rising expectations of the 1960s, fueled by revolutions in China, Cuba, Vietnam as well as national liberation battles all over Africa. Today we fight many forms of Afro-pessimism as well as the diseases of addiction and the breakdown of many traditional institutions. We rebuild on a new basis, to take our fight to the next level. The imperialist system is in crisis, presenting to the people and the revolutionaries many challenges. We must see this as an opportunity for struggle to build anti-imperialist organizations and alliances at home and abroad.

Building revolutionary institutions to sustain our movement. Our task is to build organization and consciousness to struggle in every context: workers, students, church members, residents, health care patients, seniors, and so on. People are reborn in the struggle. Our people need a rebirth so we must engage. Every organization must be built by relying on our own people and not on handouts from friendly foundations or NGOs.

Dual power: A strategic revolutionary objective of self-determination and workers power. Altering the balance of power between the Black and multinational working class and the U.S. ruling class and its imperialist state is a constant goal of revolutionary strategy. This will position the oppressed and exploited masses for social revolution.

A strategic program focuses on the relationship between politics and economics. It must not only put forward demands for democracy. It must fight for transformative power to organize alternative social, economic and political models. This can engage people in organizing and administering in a different way in our workplaces, communities, social institutions and positions in local government. This is defined as dual and contending power.

9. We march into the future

This Freedom Manifesto is offered as a living document for rebuilding the Black Liberation Movement and linking it to the overall revolutionary process in the US and worldwide. Now that you have read it, we want you to join in as an individual, into a group process, into helping organize your community, and into helping developing national unity. We call it study and struggle.

We practice the 80-20 approach to unity. We are not trying to be perfect and in total and absolute agreement. That would be foolish and prevent the unity we need. If we concentrate on what we can all agree with, maybe we can get to 80%. And we can learn from our differences of 20%.

Individual study and struggle. Of course you have taken the first step of reading the Freedom Manifesto. Now we propose that you do so again to study it carefully. Reading with a pencil. Mark your agreements and disagreements. Note where you need more study. Note where you have some practical experience. Note passages you want to talk about with people. This might take three readings.

Group study and struggle. We are interested in every kind of organized group taking up the Manifesto for study, leading to a formal resolution of agreement based on the 80-20 principle. This includes groups fighting against all forms of

exploitation and oppression: labor groups, churches, student and campus groups, community organizations, and human rights groups. But we are also interested in PTA's, sports groups, youth groups, cultural groups—any and all who decide it is time to unite to fight for fundamental change.

Second, we encourage all individuals to organize friends and colleagues into a study group to read and deeply discuss the Manifesto and how it can help them develop action plans.

Community study and struggle. We propose that all of the individuals and groups in a local community pull together and organize a public forum to discuss the Manifesto. The question is this: How can the Manifesto build unity for the local Black liberation movement?

While all forms of publicity can help, we strongly advocate door-to-door canvassing in areas most under attack or most associated with local Black Liberation Movement activities. Copies of the Manifesto should go to everyone you contact and everyone attending a local forum. Let's go deep into the community to rebuild a popular base for Black liberation.

Local base-building leads to a national assembly.

In the next year or so we need to pull all local groups together into a national assembly for Black liberation. Each local area is unique but we are all subject to national patterns of exploitation and oppression. So we need to fight at the local and the

national level. A national movement is needed to make sure that every local community, city and county spaces in every region of the country, is activated and called into action in response to attacks and before such attacks even occur. Our goals are big. But the crisis we face demands that we act with vision that can lead us to victory.



Contact for study groups and organizing

(organizations for identification only)

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