

Dear Jo,

8/2/12

I've fallen into the habit of looking at the a.m. TV news, seager as it is, partly because it still provides bits and pieces not in the papers. There is about enough time before it begins for a depressing comment or what's left of the Black Left. Thompson himself has dubious thoughts, like "...since white militants aren't being moved up by the police and courts", no doubt because more of them suffer than by far than blacks; and that Bill Patterson "has tormented politicization of the Scottsborough" case. (He was part of it, largely figurehead, and whites did almost all, from a Canadian I knew then with the International Labor Defense to Liebovitz, who was the lawyer.)

Of all this yapping, the scumblin' talk, as I see it, is from the widow Patterson, whose son out it scumblin'. The rest merely say that having been unsuccessful the militant blacks have for the moment determined to perpetuate it, in part by duplicating the errors of their white brothers and in part by rigidity and their own kinds of racism.

I've had some limited experience with blacks, across the spectrum, through Frame-Up. When where it was slightly productive it was depressing. The bouncing to extremes depends on the energy in the bounce, so nothing comes of it, even very fine people.

If it is white it is bad, and despite the lip-service of a few in these interviews it remains that way. If it means a black brother is to die or suffer because help comes from the white it means other than money or a lawyer, let him die. White courts. I've been through it. It was disagreeable to realize, more painful to have continued.

From the wealthy, like Maria Cole and the Johnson Publishing company and their haughty-slink correspondents; the SOLO crowd; King's closer personal friends; the Black Caucus in Congress-tee many. And I'm not talking about King only, either.

At the time of Attica I tried to be of help. There were things that could be done. Among those with whom I was in touch was a bright and experienced, middle-aged black lawyer who was interested personally but impotent. Attica, properly handled, could have been an enormous thing, not just a tiny prick of the thought white conscience. They blew it. Interestingly from the press end, as soon as I could see what was up, I called Pete Kinss on the lines. He has been depressed for years and I fear he has made his adjustment. Anyway, he gave me sage counsel: stay away from National. Metro is up there. Let me switch you to that desk". He did. I spoke for two hours to one of the men on that desk, and as long as they could keep National out the work was pretty good. They initially demanded at least some of what I asked them to press for, but you know "news", so it dropped and wasn't followed through.

The tragic reality, to me, is that there has been black advance in any area only as a direct consequence of abuse by the white and the little discomfort of the white. The major single advance was the result of the King assassination. And the inchoate spontaneous violence it trigger, which taught whitey he had to shift a bit.

What could have been benefit from the Chicagoland other murders became largely rhetoric, which made the young bucks feel brave, as the tribal rituals also did. And that became the end in itself.

None of these things can work. They are uttered by people who subconsciously know they can't. But they sound good and they look manly, and that for the moment suffices as it stipples and cripples. The slight encouragement is the lip-service end in some cases of the end of what is not the counterpart of Black is Beautiful, White is ugly/bad.

In all of recent history I know of but a single major black plus that was all black, that atavistic revolt of the Black ghetto in New Orleans. And what happened with me on that? I gave "the whole thing", including concept he accepted, to a black writer in April and I've had not a word from him since. This, I take it, is the kind of thing that makes white bad.

Until there is more than a mild white shame only that really causes move for change that change will be gradualism at its worst and slow. I have a dim view, and it is that until more of the black young are better educated and until they, then, can escape the cliches and stereotypes of the current "leaders", all will be too slow and will continue essentially counte-productive.

They can't do a damned thing except self-destruct without whites, and it is not because they are black or have been so long denied but because the overwhelming majority is white and in power. When they are willing to and learn how to exploit this for more than Leonard Bernstein parties they will move ahead. As I said, depressed,

# What's Left of the Black Left?

When you ask "What's left of the Black Left?" you can mean two different things: What remains of it in these hard times three decades after the political ground was broken by the old Communist-sponsored International Labor Defense? Or, what black political possibilities lie leftward of those already expressed?

It depends on how you mean "Left."

This word-game also works when you ask "What's left of the White Left?" except that, since white militants aren't being mopped up by police and courts, it loses its cutting edge. The double entendre is not so glaring.

Such scrabbling set us on our search. We wanted to know: What remains of that entire, coalescing entity we, with great crossing of fingers, thought in the mid-'60s to be a black-leftist political thrust?

Talking to five black leftists reflecting varying perspectives whose individual activities span the generations from the Scottsborough Boys in the '30s to a Huey Newton, who announced a "colossal" Panther Happening that "will sweep across America like a hurricane" within the next several weeks, we got answers to this and something more.

Huey Newton, busily revising Panther tactics he feels alienated the party from black people during his imprisonment, heads the Black Panther party and, with prominent humility, calls himself "Supreme Servant of the People." His uniqueness in the history of black American political leadership comes from his naming an oppressive capitalist system as the tyrant, confronting its law enforcers with guns and, in a dramatic 1967 ghetto confrontation with white Oakland policemen, emerging with a folk-hero image.

He is now a free man who spends his time planning party strategy from the top floor of an Oakland Lakeside apart-

ment building; playing chess; completing a book; and rapping with highly-select visitors about "Intercommunalism" and what he thinks is the inevitable Communist, stateless society to come.

Louise Patterson, wife of 80-year-old William Patterson, a lawyer who masterminded politicization of the Scottsborough and Martinsville Seven cases, was in the Bay Area in her role as National Secretary of the National Committee to Free Angela Davis.

University of California Professor Harry Edwards and Publisher Nathan Hare were both leaders in the nationwide drive for Ethnic Studies. Both former athletes, Edwards is now a U. C. Sociology teacher and Hare, ousted from his Ethnic Studies post during the 1969 San Francisco State College strike crisis, now publishes the Black Scholar.

Ethero Hashin Akin Shegun (slave name Jim Nabors, not to be confused with the star of TV's Gomer Pyle) is Western Regional Vice President of the Republic of New Africa (RNA), a group that has begun to settle in what they see as a Southeastern U. S. "Republic" to be occupied by American black people and run on the style of Julius Nyerere's Socialism.

[ETHERO HASHIN AKIN SHEGUN (JIM NABORS)]

**H**E HAS BEEN IN THE unpaid and dangerous craft of revolution since he got his B. A. in political science at Berkeley two years ago. Since the bust last fall at Los Padres National Forest, where Republic of New Africa members were said by the press to be using University vehicles to transport guerrilla trainees to the mountains for practice and since two RNA members

by Walt Thompson

were accused of killing an Albuquerque cop and hijacking a TWA plane to Cuba last November, the RNA phone has been disconnected.

When a white lady's recorded voice said, "I'm sorry, that number has been disconnected," you began to feel the movement was, too: disconnected just as Stokely Carmichael disconnected from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; as SNCC disconnected from Stokely and the Panthers; and later, as the Panther alliance disconnected from SNCC.

Such severances and disalliances extended into last December when Reverend Jesse Jackson broke with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and organized People Unified to Save Humanity (PUSH).

The Oakland Panthers have disconnected from the Algerian International, and Huey Newton from Eldridge Cleaver. The New Year found what had appeared to be the most viable black leftist group not only decimated by cops, courts and prisons, but torn by rancor and ideological discord. I told Hashin Akin Shegun I'd had trouble getting him, and he said since the November murder-hijack charges, there had been many harassing phone calls.

RNA headquarters at Alcatraz and Sacramento Streets in the Berkeley black ghetto is a damp, heatless lower apartment which serves as an office. Above three candles, which Hashin ceremoniously lit, was a note scribbled on brown paper and signed Antara Ra, which read: "This office is bugged. The phone is bugged. Don't say anything you don't want the boy to know." Antara Ra is the Republic's name for one of the men accused of the Albuquerque cop-killing.

A decade ago when plans for the Rose Bowl Parade were being made, Hashin, then a Pasadena Junior College student, led a movement demanding that the Rose Bowl Queen be black. Hashin had earlier smashed into the office of a Pasadena Junior College counselor, a white man, and overturned his desk when he learned the man had "counseled" him into bonehead English and Math. He left Pasadena after being arrested there three times. At 27 he was a leader in the spring 1969 Ethnic Studies strike at Berkeley led by the Third World Liberation Front. When not uniformed in RNA colors, he wears a denim suit and sneakers. He is now 31 years old.

**Q.** What is the RNA policy on self-defense?

**A.** We feel that black men under arms are on the enemy's side, and that to *base* a movement on weaponry is stupid. But to let the cops know we are prepared to defend our women and our dignity has a mind-blowing effect on people conditioned by the master-slave relationship to black people. You see, police and white authority generally relate to black men as does a father who can beat up on his son at will to correct him. The turning point comes when the father sees his son grow as tall and as strong as he is. The simple knowledge that a black man will defend himself and his women strains the white cop's psyche. Just like that father, the cop becomes more inclined to say: "Let's reason this out." I foresee a time in America when no white policeman will stop a black person — male or female — unless he is prepared to risk his life. I see it every day in the eyes of nine- and ten-year-old black children.

**Q.** You want to settle black people in five southeastern states. Why did you pick that area?

"The Republic is all about *land*— not an illusory black nation where unessential palliatives are offered: *bubas* and *dashikis* made from cotton from Bakersfield and dyed in Los Angeles. We feel that to be free you should have a nation and a right to defend it."



[ETHERO HASHIN AKIN SHEGUN (JIM NABORS)]

A. No. Area-by-area or bit-by-bit reform is ludicrous because the black victim is smacked by the total, all-pervasive impact of a society in which race is the primary basis of social stratification, the primary condition of attaining value and where, in fact, everything pivots on it. That's why the experiences of Jews, Irishmen, Poles, and Italians are unequatable with the black experience. Example: Black migration North since 1915 is some 30 percent of Southern white migration. The whites have been quietly accommodated. The blacks migrated into hell.

Q. Some political analysts, among them Chuck Stone, think that black people can achieve equality through the political process when, like Irishmen, Jews and Poles, they represent their own people. He says they never have. . . .

A. And they're not going to! Dellums, for example, is a beautiful cat, but that's it — just one single cat. As far as his making an impact in a legislative system based on seniority and stupidity, he might as well be taking coals to Newcastle or farting in the wind.

Q. So, is the alternative "political power from the mouth of a gun?"

A. This is feasible only after a thoroughgoing operational analysis that allows success at non-prohibitive costs. The root problem is that most black people are not willing to pay the cost for what we've been proclaiming we wanted since 1960.

Q. Where does that leave us?

A. You have to look at Marxism-Leninism. You have to stimulate class consciousness. Once you find this necessary, "race" has no place. The trouble with Leftism as it has operated here is that it sets utopian goals incapable of implementation.

[LOUISE PATTERSON]

SHE'S A SILVER-HAIRED WOMAN in her twilight years but still packing a wallop. She grew up in Berkeley which was then as jim-crow as any Southern town. ("I had to pass for a Mexican to get a decent job.") She was a school teacher in the Old South when it was not uncommon to find black people fleeing to Pine Bluff after a lynching in Little Rock. She fomented and aided the earliest black student strike at Hampton University which was what she calls "a Colonial black school". With a glee you'd expect she'd show if the rulers turned over to workers the total means of production, she remembers the time in the '20s when South Africa's Gen. Jan Smuts came to compare notes with the Hampton University Colonialists, and black students humiliated the white educators. (Smuts and the other dignitaries sat there waiting for the natives to sing Negro Spirituals. The president of the school had heard of their plan not to sing, and had pleaded for them to change their minds. Everything was quiet. The music started. Not a single mouth opened.") Even now Mrs. Patterson seems embarrassed by the memory of a time when her consuming hatred of all white people extended to all things white (I even hated white chickens").

Her husband, William "Pat" Patterson, headed the Civil Rights Congress, which, before it was repressed during the McCarthy era, had almost upstaged the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in advocating black liberation. A folk hero to black commu-

"If Black Studies functioned as we planned, they would no longer exist. They would cope with the causes of oppression, would turn on key issues: international trade and finance. They would produce people able to cope with this structure. No society would subsidize its own destruction."



[HARRY EDWARDS]

State College battle he suffered a TKO at the hands of S. I. Hayakawa.

"When they accused the NAACP of being a communist-front organization, I told them, 'Someday, you'll want it respectable.' Once they were considering putting Muslims on the subversive list. I predict that someday they'll want Black Panthers respectable."

Q. What is Black Leftism?

A. Militancy and what it is changes with the times. Revolutionary Nationalism is now open to Marxian analysis. The Panthers have made the Left fashionable and have projected it but, on the other hand, have set back for ten years the possibility of black people embracing Marxism.

Q. Why do you say that?

A. Because Panthers allowed themselves to come too much under the influence of white elements: White Marxists, Women's Liberation, the Gay Liberation Front. They gave too much credence to a strict Marxist analysis, failing to properly incorporate color. As always, without a theory capable of relating revolution to the black community, the result is that Marxists hold black militancy in contempt and black communities hold Marxists in contempt. A bizarre by-product of this failure is that they find themselves picketing a black business in Oakland and returning to the church, an institution that has lost influence in black communities.

Q. How do you see Leftist ideas affecting the black future?

A. People must be raised to a greater sense of desperation. They must adopt a stronger sense of sacrifice and struggle. Economically, things must get worse—and they seem to be. Eventually, we'll have to get into class analysis in black terms. The thing to be feared is that the black bourgeois will assume the role of the white oppressor.

Q. Harry Edwards told me: "All the Panthers have done is to get their best men killed or run out of the country. You know that's no way to run a revolution."

A.. At the very least, the Panthers are failing in their revolutionary goals.

Q. What is the role of violence in achieving justice?

A. Much of the Panther violence is expressive, or symbolic violence. They show a marked vulnerability to white policemen's bullets. The Republic of New Africa, on the other hand, has not lost a man, with at least three white policemen dead.

Q. What accounts for this?

A. I don't know. Perhaps the same adulation for white Marxist ideology affects their ability to cope with white policemen's bullets.

[ HUEY NEWTON ]

**H**UEY NEWTON, NATIONAL PANTHER CHIEF, refuses on ethical grounds to comment over the media on his split with Eldridge Cleaver, or on any other black people with whom he has differences. Newton analyzed the Cleaver trouble in the *Black Panther*, April 17, 1971. In an essay "On the Defection of The Black Panther Party from Eldridge Cleaver," Newton painted Cleaver as a romantic, undisciplined adventurer who misunderstood the Panther gun strategy. Newton's analysis is cool and controlled and even here betrays linger-

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[NATHAN HARE]

contrasted the Newton in prison with the free Newton, who still gives himself to abstract political thinking as, perhaps, no other man does.

*Q.* Can a purely black movement achieve a Socialist America?

*A.* A Socialist America can't be achieved. It would have little effect in changing the total world order, which is what we want. It is necessary to apply a world view. Our goal of "Revolutionary Communalism" negates the outmoded concept of nationhood. Revolutionaries in each country will seize power to achieve a redistribution of wealth on an intercommunal level before achieving the communist, stateless world. Nor is it possible for black people alone to achieve a revolution—not even in Africa. In all cases, it is necessary to apply a world outlook.

*Q.* Some people I talked with think your party is finished.

*A.* On the contrary, the Black Panther Party is stronger than ever. We've organized more people and have more programs than ever before. Those who think we're weak are in for a surprise. A colossal event, to unfold sometime around May, will change their opinions.

*Q.* Colossal event? Is it to be local?

*A.* It will be national. It's a shame your interview came a little bit too soon.

*Q.* May I have clues?

*A.* Just let me say that it will make the Sacramento legislative invasion by Panthers look like child's play. The party will rise up like a storm, like a hurricane . . .

*Q.* The press has played up the expensiveness of this apartment and the fact that you're way up here on the 25th floor of a swanky apartment building. Has your life been threatened?

*A.* Often. Through the mails and by telephone. But, if you're black in this country your life is always in danger. I've always lived by the principle that death comes to everyone but it varies in its significance. To alter a Chinese expression a bit: "To die for the reactionary racists is lighter than a feather. To die for the revolution is heavier than a mountain."

*Q.* Dr. Carlton Goodlett says that black people will ultimately opt for a separate American land mass, since, otherwise, justice seems unattainable. Do you agree?

*A.* It's naive and antiquated thinking. The pace of technology and of communications has negated the land question, has become more important than educational systems and the ground they sit on. We see and base our theories on the view that all is in a constant state of transformation. The Chinese lauded the Black Panther Party for its original contributions to Marxist thought.

*Q.* If Panthers coalesce with other black liberation groups, is there a chance the party might alter its policies?

*A.* We'd be blind if we gave up our eyes. But we are willing to enter into coalitions, keeping in mind that power is the ability to define phenomena and to make that phenomena act in the desired manner.

Our approach now is to be the left wing in all institutions. We try to influence the Church rather than have the Church influence us. We want a hand in creating the "new"—the kind of new that's desirable.

*Q.* So you don't believe in the separate land mass idea?

*A.* Here is a kind of riddle for you: The peasant is chained

to the soil just as the nationalist is tied to the nation. It is capitalism which cuts the first chains, by wrenching the peasant from the soil, then what alone must cut the chains of the nationalist? The answer is imperialism. I can forgive Muslims, exonerate them for promoting this idea because they are Idealists. It is ridiculous for so-called Marxist scholars to think this way.

*Q.* Speaking of antiquated Communist Party theories. Some black spokesmen are criticizing the CP for making over Angela Davis and neglecting the Ruchell Magee case.

*A.* This is true, although Angela Davis is beautiful. We plan to do a big Ruchell Magee campaign.

*Q.* Back to the question of Panther emphasis on guns, have you given up this approach? Are you convinced it won't work?

*A.* It's obvious it never caught on with the people, since we didn't overthrow the U.S. government. Armed struggle will succeed when the people—not an elitist group—take up arms. What happened was that we were slaughtered while the people watched.

*Q.* Do you feel safe here?

*A.* Why not? If they want to get me, they'll have to use a cannon.

*Q.* Then they run the chance of hitting Mrs. William Knowland. I understand she lives here too.

*A.* Right On!

**T**HE PEOPLE WE TALKED TO agreed that the difficulty facing the Black Left is not so much in being identifiably Left, but in being forced through the national black experience to grind out a counter ideology. What's Left of the Black Left, therefore, is a massive uneven and unformulated grievance groping toward other than existing national solutions.

Dr. Carlton Goodlett, in a July, 1970 speech at Salt Lake City, Utah told a National Broadcast Editorial Conference: "A new black man, as opposed to the old 'Negro,' asserts that there is one duty to be done, one end to be achieved: to destroy racism—by any means in his power. Between 11 and 12 million young blacks under age 20—or half the black population—will no longer tolerate either the overt or covert acts of a racist majority which dehumanizes and robs the black nation of its birthright, freedom."

It is clear that the fact that the black U.S. population has shunned more than token involvement in Left movements does not invalidate black people as America's most potent revolutionary force.

Our sources agree that what has so far developed in the approximately 33 years of organized Black Leftism pales in comparison with the massive reservoir of potential Leftism remaining in an aggrieved population which is increasingly declared surplus in a technological society.

The chilling fact is that, if the Subversive Activities Control Board succeeded in decoding and articulating the political ideas of some 24 million black Americans, authorities would promptly jail them all for the safekeeping of Capitalist America.

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