

African American History and Radical Historiography

Essays in Honor of Herbert Aptheker

Edited by Herbert Shapiro

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Special Issue honoring the work of Herbert Aptheker

**AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY
AND RADICAL HISTORIOGRAPHY**

Edited by Herbert Shapiro

Part I

Impact of Aptheker's Historical Writings

Essays by Mark Solomon; Julie Kailin; Sterling Stuckey;
Eric Foner, Jesse Lemisch, Manning Marable; Benjamin P.
Bowser; and Lloyd L. Brown

Part II

Aptheker's Career and Personal Influence

Essays by Staughton Lynd, Mindy Thompson Fullilove,
Catherine Clinton, and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn

Part III

History in the Radical Tradition of Herbert Aptheker

Gary Y. Okihiro on colonialism and Puerto Rican and
Filipino migrant labor

Barbara Bush on Anglo-Saxon representation of Afro-
Cuban identity, 1850–1950

Otto H. Olsen and Ephraim Schulman on Truman's path
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Special Issue

**African American History
and Radical Historiography**

Essays in Honor of Herbert Aptheker

Edited by Herbert Shapiro

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Publisher's Preface

African American History and Radical Historiography: Essays in Honor of Herbert Aptheker is a tribute to the man long regarded by many of us as the dean of U.S. Marxist historians. Herbert Aptheker has been a member of the editorial board of *Nature, Society, and Thought (NST)* since its inception in 1987 and has been closely associated with the work of the Marxist Educational Press (MEP), which issues the journal. He has been a prominent speaker at several Marxist Scholars Conferences sponsored by MEP. He was the principal lecturer at the MEP Marxist Summer Institute in 1984 and 1985. Two sets of his taped lectures, *Lectures on U.S. History* and *Lectures on Fascism*, are still available from MEP, as well as a thirty-five-minute talk on John Brown especially popular with students. A selection of his previously uncollected essays was published by MEP in 1987 under the title *Racism, Imperialism, and Peace*, edited by Marvin J. Berlowitz and Carol E. Morgan, as volume 21 of the series *Studies in Marxism*.

Because of the appropriately scholarly emphasis in this academic volume, the activist aspect of his life is alluded to only indirectly here. No tribute to Herbert Aptheker should leave the impression, however, that his entire life has been spent in the archives. In his early twenties, for example, he engaged in hazardous educational work in the South, at one point traveling under the pseudonym H. Biel for the Committee to Abolish Peonage. He has always found energy, passion, and courage for popular and polemical speaking and writing, for organizing and agitating—in the finest sense of that old and honorable left tradition.

The editorial board and staff of *Nature, Society, and Thought* and the Marxist Educational Press take great pride and personal

satisfaction in publishing this Festschrift in honor of Herbert Aptheker. We have all learned much from our association with him and look forward to his continuing contributions to the eradication of racism from our country, the strengthening of Marxist scholarship, and the advent of scientific socialism.

Erwin Marquit
Marxist Educational Press

Editor's Introduction

This collection of essays honors Herbert Aptheker's contributions to scholarly discourse in the United States. For more than five decades, in a vast array of publications—monographs, documentary histories, the edited works of W. E. B. Du Bois, and numerous review essays—Aptheker has illuminated the processes of social change. He has provided abundant evidence that the dead weight of outworn ideas and institutions ultimately cannot stand in the way of human progress. Despite political repression that has often denied students and professors the opportunity to hear him lecture, he was able to reach thousands in the academic community through his writings and in public forums on and off the campus. At observances of Negro History Week, Herbert Aptheker often spoke to student audiences when few other white historians involved themselves in these commemorations. He vigorously debated such academics as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. and Henry David on such questions as the possibilities for cooperation between liberals and Communists.

Aptheker's career has been marked by partisanship and commitment, but he has always stood firm in the conviction that those seeking a more humane world are served by truth rather than falsehood. Those engaged in social activism, in the struggles for racial and gender equality, for world peace, and for the rights of all who labor have found sustenance in the historical record he has laid before them.

Herbert Aptheker was born in New York City in 1915. Following his primary and secondary education in the city's public schools, he received his Bachelor of Science degree at Columbia University. At Columbia he was also awarded the M.A. and then the Ph.D. degree in 1943 upon completion of his seminal doctoral dissertation, "American Negro Slave Revolts." In this work he presented a powerful refutation of the previously dominant

historiography of slavery, exemplified by U. B. Phillips, which contended the plantation system, ruled by superior whites, sought to civilize an inherently inferior Black population. Where Phillips saw submissive slaves, Aptheker found that resistance and rebelliousness were characteristic of African Americans. While Phillips claimed slavery was marked by a paternalistic ethos, in which masters and slaves related to each other on the basis of intimacy and affection, Aptheker revealed a system of class exploitation and brutality.

Following service in the U.S. Army during World War II, where he attained the rank of major in the artillery, Aptheker was the recipient of a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in 1946. In 1951 the first volume of his *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* appeared, bringing together source materials that have inspired and informed *ix*

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Following service in the U.S. Army during World War II, where he attained the rank of major in the artillery, Aptheker was the recipient of a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship in 1946. In 1951 the first volume of his *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* appeared, bringing together source materials that have inspired and informed several generations of scholars since. W. E. B. Du Bois tells us in his preface what the *Documentary History* signified: "It is a dream come true to have the history of the Negro in America pursued in scientific documentary form." Aptheker's work had been preceded by "the long hammering" of Carter Woodson and a series of studies by both white and Black scholars. But at long last, Du Bois writes, "we have this work which rescues from oblivion and loss, the very words and thoughts of scores of American Negroes who lived slavery, serfdom and quasi-freedom in the United States of America from the seventeenth to the twentieth century." Aptheker's work, Du Bois concludes, was "a milestone on the road to Truth."

During the 1967 Senate hearings on the confirmation of the appointment of Thurgood Marshall to the Supreme Court, Mississippi's James Eastland saw fit to question Marshall concerning his citation of the *Documentary History* in a Circuit Court of Appeals case (*New York v. Galamison*). But actually, both before and after 1967, the scholarship of almost every researcher in the field of African American history has been enriched by this book, which is still regarded as a standard reference work.

Aptheker has built his scholarly achievements virtually without institutional support, never having held a permanent

university position. In response to student demand, he has been granted many temporary academic appointments, beginning with Bryn Mawr in 1969. He has taught at Hostos Community College (CUNY); University of California, Berkeley; and the University of Santa Clara (until a major donor demanded his dismissal). For ten years (beginning in the late 1970s), he taught at the Law School of the University of California, Berkeley, where he created a course entitled *Racism and the Law*—a new area of study then, but widely recognized since. He has been elected a Nonresident Fellow at Harvard University for 1998–1999.

Throughout his long career Aptheker has produced a steady stream of scholarly works. The many historians who are now engaged in studying the life and thought of W. E. B. Du Bois stand on the shoulders of Aptheker, who for years served as custodian of the Du Bois papers, arranged for their deposit at the University of Massachusetts, and meticulously edited for publication a multivolume set of the Du Bois writings and a three-volume collection of his correspondence.

The essays published here reflect the wide influence that Herbert Aptheker has exerted and continues to exert on U.S. scholars. The themes with which the authors are concerned center upon questions of race, class, and gender, and the linkages joining these categories. Several of the authors focus directly upon Aptheker's own writings, critical where they believe criticism is appropriate, while recognizing the contributions that have made him one of the twentieth century's foremost historians. Aptheker is candidly presented as a symbol of the struggle for academic freedom, the Marxist intellectual who excited such fear among a group of historians at Yale University that they would not even tolerate his engagement as a short-term leader of a student-initiated seminar on Du Bois. Aptheker's career reminds us of the political conformism of the Right and Far Right that did not stop at dispute but sought to destroy careers and altogether exclude radicals from the marketplace of ideas.

The collection also includes essays exhibiting the work of scholars who explore sociological and psychological questions suggested by Aptheker's work. The critical spirit that animates

Aptheker's researches is evident in essays probing a variety of liberation struggles.

Above all, this is a collection that seeks to honor Herbert Aptheker by emulating his willingness to go where the evidence leads and his humanistic concern with the aspirations and dreams of the oppressed.

Herbert Shapiro
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Part I
The Impact of Herbert Aptheker's
Historical Writings

Herbert Aptheker's Contributions to African American History

Mark Solomon

When John Hope Franklin, the dean of African American historians, heard Herbert Aptheker deliver a paper more than four decades ago on Blacks in the Civil War, he was appalled—not only by Aptheker's moving and graphic account of the bloodshed, caused in part by poor training of Black soldiers, but also by the fact that earlier Civil War historians scarcely recognized the role of Blacks as fighters for their own freedom. By contrast, Aptheker's research and commitment illuminated the predominantly racist current in U.S. historiography in the first half of the twentieth century (Franklin 1991, 5).

In the 1930s, when Herbert Aptheker began a life's work of study of African American history, he was nearly alone among whites who struck upon that scholarly path. Aptheker acknowledged his debt to the Black scholars who preceded him, especially the distinguished historian Carter G. Woodson. Those pioneering scholars had, under severe obstacles, built the foundations for wide-ranging exploration of the African American experience and its pivotal relationship to the larger society. Aptheker, working without the advantages of long-term academic appointments, without student research assistants, without computerized data bases, with few fulsome grants, went on to produce a massive body of work in African American history, which, in Franklin's words, "made it more and more difficult to ignore or neglect the history of the Negro in America" (1991, 5).¹

In his formative years, Aptheker was also undoubtedly influenced by traditions already firmly established by the Communist

Party, which he joined in his youth. Unprecedented in the history of U.S. radicalism, the Party placed the “Negro Question” at the very heart of the problem of social transformation. With the full participation of Black and white U.S. Communists, the Sixth Comintern Congress in 1928 defined the Negro Question in the United States as a national question, with Blacks in the Black Belt of the South entitled to national self-determination. The theory was anchored in a view that African Americans had been separated from the emerging bourgeois democratic society by their chains. They had looked to liberation with the advent of abolitionism and with the victory of bourgeois democracy in the Civil War. But Reconstruction was betrayed by the rising northern corporate order, racist violence, and the collapse of their hope for land—with sharecropping, peonage, and tenantry becoming their fate. The rise of modern imperialism froze Blacks further into their landless and semislave condition, blocked a Black-white fusion into a single nation, and sealed their special oppression. Thus, the Black Belt of the South had become a “nation within a nation” (Foner and Allen 1987, 189–96).

The implications of the theory for political activity and for explorations of Black history and culture were immense. Black striving for freedom was seen as a national liberation struggle welded to the fortunes of the working class—creating an inseparable link between the movement of workers to free themselves from capital and the movement of Blacks of all classes to end national oppression. That oppression transcended race and class—sweeping an entire people into a vortex of special political, economic, and cultural subjugation. At the same time, that oppression had forged a dialectic of layered, many-sided resistance driven by a deepening national consciousness. However, a nation was a *transient* community, not an eternal category. As Lenin had pointed out, the speed of capitalist development in the United States was shrinking vast national differences quickly and radically into a single “American nation.”² While a geographical solution to national aspirations was invalid, recognition of Black national sensibility and striving was profoundly valid (Lenin 1964, 275–76).³

Whatever the flaws in the Black Belt thesis, the Communists had come upon a vital insight regarding the national consciousness of the African American community, the revolutionary potential inherent in that consciousness, and the indispensability of the struggle for Black liberation to the progressive aspirations of all working people. Communists and their sympathizers cast an appreciative eye upon growing African American solidarity nourished by major Black institutions such as the church and press. They perceived a progressive thrust in the work of Black artists and intellectuals who gave that solidarity a cultural and historical grounding in art, music, literature. Slave songs, work songs, heroic poetry were understood by Communists as expressions of a great folk culture from whence came a confirmation of both suffering and struggle. The concept of rising national consciousness ignited a passion among Communists for studying and celebrating the slighted tradition of Black resistance. At a time of rampant racism and segregation, they and their sympathizers demanded full equality, fought racism in their own ranks, probed neglected areas of African American history, and stressed the connections between African Americans and Blacks around the world.

Pioneer Black Communists, especially Cyril Briggs and Richard B. Moore, in the late twenties and early thirties organized "Negro Weeks" in which scores of public meetings were held to celebrate and commemorate the uprisings of Toussaint L'Ouverture, Gabriel, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner, as well as the struggles and sacrifices of the heroic Black women and men who conducted the Underground Railroad and fought in the Civil War.⁴

In such an environment Aptheker commenced his work in African American history—seeking to develop and synthesize the shards of piecemeal and scattered research into a coherent portrait of African American history and its inseparable role in understanding the history of the nation as a whole. Aptheker's historiography was grounded in Marxist historical materialism, an insistence upon the objective nature and causal relatedness of historical facts. Such historical facts were never sealed off from their social and political implications; they commanded

understanding, and such understanding had to foster morality and constructive social action.

From that perspective, Aptheker challenged openly racist schools of history as well as sentimental, liberal interpretations of African American life and of race relations. Gunnar Myrdal's classic *An American Dilemma*, published in 1944, defined the "dilemma" as a conflict between the "American creed" of "high national and Christian precepts" on the one hand, and various forms of prejudice rooted in community conformity and complex social interests on the other. Thus, Myrdal wrote: "The American Negro problem is a problem in the heart of the American. It is there that the interracial tension has its focus. It is there that the struggle goes on" (1944, 1:xlvi). Aptheker vigorously rejected the notion of a battleground of the heart. The oppression of African Americans was not the product of a conflict between obscure sentimental longings and vague social habits. It was rooted in concrete relationships grounded in economic and political power; it had to be fought not in the subjective and inert realm of the sentiment but in the arena of political and economic life.⁵

That perspective was manifest in Aptheker's earliest writings. His 1941 study, *The Negro in the Abolitionist Movement*, noted two dominant trends in the study of slavery. One was undisguisedly racist and openly offered apologetics for that institution. It defined the system of chattel labor as beneficial, efficient, and conducive to forging a contented laboring population. (Thirty-three years before the publication of Fogel and Engerman's *Time on the Cross* in 1974, Aptheker was producing data and analyses to expose the false claim of a dynamically productive and morally acceptable slave system). From this interpretation, abolitionists were meddling knaves and miscreants. The other trend, liberal and humanitarian, was exemplified by Dwight L. Dumond's *Antislavery Origins of the Civil War in the United States* (1939). It acknowledged the horror and brutality of slavery and the central role of abolitionism in ending the system. But both widely disparate trends shared a common characteristic: they "forgot" the Negro. The openly racist position dismissed the slaves as innately inferior beings whose condition was an adaptation of what was ordained by God and nature. The liberal

humanitarian view ascribed no important role to Blacks in struggling for their own liberation—either in independent movements or in coalition with white allies. Aptheker noted that for those historians, the abolitionist movement was little more than “a white man’s benevolent association,” with the African American at best a suppliant and meek presence (1941, 3–5).⁶

Aptheker’s rejoinder would constitute the very heart of his contribution to African American history: it was to rediscover and present the voices of African Americans who bore witness to the falsehoods of those who would denigrate or ignore their roles in the historical panorama. The actions and testimony of Blacks, rendered through prodigious research, provided the most compelling refutation of both currents. Those who had been reviled or silenced reappeared in Aptheker’s works: the African American soldiers who bled and died in shocking numbers on Civil War battlefields; the anonymous Black sailors who constituted 25 percent of the Union navy; the Blacks who were obliged to train themselves with broomsticks instead of rifles—drilling in rubble-strewn lots while pleading for a call to fight for their own freedom; the maroons who escaped slavery, carved communities out of swampy wilderness and defiantly fought guerrilla wars against their oppressors; the Blacks who built and ran the Underground Railroad and were its passengers; the Black antislavery societies that were formed before the major white organizations; the vigilance committees that sheltered fugitive slaves; the African American antislavery appeals, broadsides, petitions, and newspapers that appeared before Garrison’s *Liberator*; the women and men who hoarded dimes and pennies to support Garrison’s paper and sustain the embryonic antislavery movement; the seamen who smuggled antislavery literature into the Deep South; the slaves who feigned fidelity to their masters while plotting to attain their freedom; the slaves who openly rebelled or who mutilated animals, broke tools, escaped, or found innumerable other ways to mitigate their exploitation.

The capstone of Aptheker’s efforts to render the voices and contributions of African Americans is his monumental multi-volume *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, the first volume of which appeared in 1951. In his preface

to this volume, W. E. B. Du Bois noted that the publication of the history of the Negro in America in scientific documentary form was “a dream come true” and “a milestone on the road to Truth.” In the nineteenth century, Black historians William C. Nell, William Wells Brown, and George Washington Williams made the first attempts to gather a documentary record of Black history—only to be met with little sympathy or comprehension by white historians. Carter G. Woodson trained a continuum of students, Black and white, to burrow deeply into a neglected record to recapture the lives and struggles of African Americans; the culmination was Aptheker’s exhaustive and meticulous scholarship that salvaged the words and deeds of scores of African Americans over centuries from slavery to peonage to quasi-freedom.

One of the most vibrant testimonials to the significance of Aptheker’s painstaking compilation of thousands of letters, petitions, articles, speeches, and reports was given by historian John Bracey, who recalled the excitement among students at Howard University in the turbulent 1960s when they first encountered the *Documentary History*. They had found in the first volume the intellectual and emotional bloodlines that quickened their self-awareness and helped them forge a bond with past generations. That bond shaped their own identities and buttressed their commitment to work for change. When they went into battle against Jim Crow in the nation’s capital, they carried what they called “The Documents” to confirm and fortify the vast change in consciousness taking place within them and within society.⁷

Aptheker’s *American Negro Slave Revolts*, published in 1943 while he was on the battlefields of Europe, was an early, exhaustively documented rebuttal of the view held by Ulrich B. Phillips (and echoed by some to this day) that “slave revolts and plots very seldom occurred in the United States.” Starting with the record of Southern fears of rebellion (especially fearful pleas for the expansion of the chattel system to minimize the danger of revolt by Blacks in concentrated areas), Aptheker demonstrated that Southern legal, social, theological, political, and cultural life was molded at its very deepest levels to circumscribe the “restlessness, discontent, and rebelliousness” of the slave

population. Fear of rebellion drove the myth of Black subhumanity. The myth became basic to the social order; its implications were to be acted out in the daily behavior of both races—from modes of eating, to talking, to work, to religious worship, to sex. The masters of Southern society were not content, however, to depend upon social inertia derived from cultural conditioning. In addition to psychological, intellectual, and theological debasement of an entire people, the legal and political structure forbade slaves to learn to read and write, to possess weapons, to testify against whites in courts, to resist the commands of white masters. Traitors and spies were cultivated among the slaves; overseers, militiamen, bounty hunters, guards, policemen, volunteer posses, and federal troops were all mustered to staunch the plots and rebellions, real and imagined, that underlay Southern life. The slightest slave transgression (or perceived transgression) brought bleeding backs, cropped ears, and the lyncher's rope.

The growing awareness of the horrors of such repression stimulated in turn a deeper understanding throughout the nation of the magnitude of the brutality inflicted by the slave system and a grasp of the repressive, antidemocratic character of slavery itself. A question arose: if the South was the patriarchal paradise it claimed to be, why the terror? This question provoked a broader concern with the threat to the democratic rights of all should the physical reach and political influence of chattel slavery grow. The relationship between the institutionalized brutality of slavery and the threat to democracy was pivotal in winning whites, especially white labor, to the struggle to end the peculiar institution. Aptheker thus fashioned his portrait of slave plots and rebellions on a broad canvas—linking the struggle to end slavery with realization of the nation's democratic promise (Aptheker 1943, 368–74).

Aptheker grounded his study of slave plots and rebellions in thorough research and judicious interpretation of the facts. There was neither the need nor compulsion to exaggerate or mythologize (indeed Aptheker objects to historical myth-making). Rumors (false or real), unrest, plots (thwarted or consummated), and actual uprisings are accurately defined, labeled, and

differentiated; distinctions between conspiracies hatched in the minds of frenzied planters and actual rebellions are sharply drawn. John Hope Franklin, in an address at Harvard University in the spring of 1965, vigorously rebutted an assertion from the audience that Aptheker conflated the evidence of rebellion. He noted that Aptheker draws the distinctions between rumors, plots, and uprisings very carefully. Elsewhere, he characterized this work on slave revolts as the “best study” written on the subject. (Franklin 1991, 5).

The basis for slave unrest is located by Aptheker in the material circumstances and spiritual yearning that shaped the slaves’ lives. Plots and rebellions had neither metaphysical, mystical, nor romantic origins. A variety of circumstances could, and often did, upset the system’s fragile equilibrium—leading to rebellion. News of the arrival of a new colonial governor who might carry a promise of freedom, tidings of a slave uprising in Haiti, a sharp increase in slave sales and subsequent family breakup, the relatively rapid concentration of slaves in a limited area, the filtering into the slave quarters of antislavery propaganda, sharp downturns in a fluctuating cotton market and a consequent reduction of food and clothing allotments to bare minimum standards, plantation bankruptcies and liquidations—all could trigger unrest and rebellion (Aptheker 1943, 79–131).

Aptheker’s grasp of the interrelated nature of events was manifest in his 1937 M.A. thesis on Nat Turner’s rebellion. Here he draws a compelling picture of the interpenetration of local economic and social circumstances with Nat Turner’s powerful spiritual nature and militant disposition. Southampton County, Virginia, in 1831 was in the grip of a depression. Cotton prices had fallen—and that brought a corresponding drop in the price of slaves. The county had also experienced a decade-long low rate of increase in the white population compared to a higher increase for Blacks. Around that time, there was an accelerating movement for emancipation, especially in Great Britain and Mexico; *David Walker’s Appeal* had been circulating for two years; Garrison’s *Liberator* was launched in 1831; the Negro Convention movement met for the second time in that year; there were slave revolts in Antigua and Martinique. Governor John Floyd of

Virginia in 1830 reported “a spirit of dissatisfaction and insubordination” spreading across the state. Local authorities regularly reported slave flight and the killing of Blacks by white vigilantes. In the face of growing unrest as slaves bore the brunt of depression, a new spate of repressive laws had been pushed through Southern legislatures.

Basing his assessment of Nat Turner on the observations of white Southerners, Aptheker observes that “the evidence reveals a highly intelligent man who finds it impossible to accept the status quo and discovers his rationalization for his rebellious feelings in religion.” He found in Turner’s “Confession” nothing less than a willingness to die for the liberation of his people. He also found that Turner’s followers were not “deluded wretches and monsters . . . but rather . . . further examples of the woefully long, and indeed endless, roll of human beings willing to resort to open struggle in order to get something precious to them—peace, prosperity, liberty, or in a word, a greater amount of happiness” (Aptheker 1966, 5, 7–32).

That was written three decades before the publication of William Styron’s self-characterized “meditation on history,” *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967). Aptheker’s analysis of the Turner rebellion uncannily anticipated the tortured psychobabble that undergirds Styron’s “meditation,” converting Turner into a hesitant, disoriented, sexually ambivalent vessel of hang-ups. Through exhaustive study of the social conditions surrounding the rebellion, and through a subtle and persuasive reading of the words of contemporary observers, Aptheker obliterates the aspersions that reduced Turner to a contradictory mix of fanaticism and procrastination and his followers to predatory rabble. The clear-eyed appraisal that marks Aptheker’s early study of the Turner rebellion was based in large measure on his fierce antiracism and on his respect for his historical sources. This interpretation offers a revealing contrast to Styron’s subjective, tormented, and racially charged interpretation of one of the transforming events of the nineteenth century. Styron’s novel ultimately reveals far more about the psychological demons haunting Southern-bred liberalism than it does about Nat Turner.

Aptheker’s stress on the yearning for freedom in the Turner

rebellion and other cataclysmic events does not suggest that he has been blind or insensitive to the perverse and pathological in the lives of Blacks under slavery and in their New World experience in general. His writing does not shrink from destructive behavior adduced from intense suffering. He does not overlook betrayal from within, and other reprehensible acts as major factors in thwarting rebellions. However, the writing of Black history by whites (to the extent that it has been written) has been grievously overbalanced and distorted by a fixation with docility, apathy, backwardness, and pathology. That alone underscores the heavily racist content of much historical writing about African Americans. Missing, except in the work of primarily African American scholars, had been the nonpathological—the multitude of heroic and mundane acts that engendered survival, such as building a family structure, educating children, creating religious and cultural institutions, fighting for justice in the economic and political realms, keeping the flame of freedom alive for generations. That is, in Aptheker's view, a dominant theme of Black history that urgently needed expression.

By placing Nat Turner's rebellion in its social and economic context, Aptheker was consistent with his basic approach to history. That approach was summarized in a lecture in July 1956 on Ulrich B. Phillips's writings. There Aptheker explored Phillips's heralded 1928 paper sympathetically defining "The Central Theme of Southern History" as "a common resolve indomitably maintained—that [the South] shall be and remain a white man's country" (cited in Aptheker 1956b, 184). Aptheker, on the contrary, saw the central theme as "the drive of the rulers to maintain themselves in power, and the struggle against this by the oppressed and exploited."⁸

While class struggle in his view was the basic force in history, the South held peculiar features within that fundamental motif—most important, the distinct and pivotal place of African Americans in the overall battle for liberation from the dominant class. The "heart of Southern Negro history" was the enslavement of Africans, connected organically to the emergence of capitalism, as well as peonage and Jim Crow, which were connected to the rise of modern imperialism. That understanding,

according to Aptheker, demolished the notion of a monolithic white South bound together by racism. The South was riven by conflict that stemmed from the social relations of the capitalism and imperialism that were engendered significantly by the superexploitation of Blacks. The South was divided sharply between rich and poor, big business and small, debtors and creditors, and Blacks and whites. Submerged beneath Phillips's alleged "common resolve" to maintain white supremacy was a complex tapestry of striving by poor whites to gain a rightful share of the region's wealth—a striving that at times was welded to cooperation with Blacks and at times was fearfully retarded by racism. However, that false consciousness did not negate the centrality of social class in Southern history, but underscored the role of white supremacy in propelling ruling-class interest. Aptheker insisted that Marxism did not ignore the force of racism in Southern life, nor did it minimize the power of irrationality, emotion, and generationally transmitted prejudices. Rather, it explained white racism in terms of its material origins and its function in advancing the interests of the ruling elite. That insight pointed the way to principled battle against white supremacy. Indeed, that battle, within the larger context of class struggle, was a prerequisite for the democratization of the South. And there was a substantial record of efforts by Southern white workers and small farmers to bring progressive change to the region (Aptheker 1956b, 182–91).

Those words were spoken during the first stirring of the great midcentury civil rights movement. Aptheker concluded his talk with the observation that Marxists did not ignore the "mystic chords" of Southern life to which Lincoln referred. Along with its class and racial relations, the South was not all oppression, racism, and sexism. It also embodied the intangible elements of culture—distinctive food, climate, and its people, who were "mostly kind and interested, and quizzical, mostly neighborly and long suffering and courageous." While the region (in the midfifties) remained reaction's bulwark, it held within its mind and heart a tradition of gallant acts to advance progress by a number of its Black and white citizens. Therein lay the potential for breaking the grip of reaction and ushering in an era of

democracy, equality, and economic progress (Aptheker 1956b, 190–91).

With his perspective on the centrality of class conflict, Aptheker was among the first historians to respond to Robert W. Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman's *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery* (1974). Probing the quality and reliability of the data that supposedly formed the foundation for the book's principal conclusions, Aptheker revealed the authors' uncritical handling of deeply flawed materials (especially the DeBow census that was manipulated to serve the interests of the planters), truncated quotations, major omissions, and misreading of cited sources. Utilizing his enormous reading, Aptheker exposed the straw men set up (without documentation) by the authors to caricature historical writings on slavery—and through such misrepresentation to produce their “sensational” findings. Thus, according to Fogel and Engerman, slavery was efficient, productive, and profitable; slaves in this system were ambitious—working harder and more effectively than free farm laborers. One straw man “destroyed” by the authors was the notion that the planters were driven by cultural compulsives that obliged them to irrationally maintain the system against their own economic interests. To that, Aptheker points out: “With the exception of Eugene D. Genovese, scholars (and everyone else) have understood that slavery is instituted in order to make money from the slaves' labor and that a system of slavery is maintained, basically, because in the opinion of the slave owners it pays” (1974, 6).

Fogel and Engerman claim that their cliometric reassessment of slavery was an attempt to resolve an apparent contradiction between their “discovery” of the system's efficiency and the claims of historians that slavery was brutal, sluggardly, and degrading. The answer to the riddle, they assert, is that slaves were motivated and efficient because enslavement was not seriously oppressive. Indeed, they claim to have restored to African Americans the allegedly suppressed story of achievement under (mild) adversity and to have rescued Blacks from the dual stereotypes of an inferiority by biology and inferiority by environment (Fogel and Engerman 1974, 258–64).

Strangely, Fogel and Engerman never consider that efficiency and superexploitation were not mutually exclusive—something known to anyone who ever had to work hard and productively for a living (especially to slaves who were coerced into working productively for *no* living.) To assert that culture, competence, and dignity developed among slaves because the system itself was a vessel of bourgeois rationality (thus echoing the slave owners who maintained that their system was placid, well ordered, and humane) was to reveal an abysmal ignorance of the dialectics of oppression.

Aptheker notes that leading Black scholars, and many white scholars, understood that “the fire did not consume its victims.” With oppression came victimization, but that was not all. The system debased the oppressor, not the oppressed. Indeed, the scope of the slaves’ response to the system transcended the shop-worn resistance vs. accommodation debate. In myriad ways, the slaves developed culture, a psychological makeup, morality, and religion. They struggled to keep the memory of Africa alive; they fought to maintain their families, their communities, their dignity, and their yearning for freedom under a system that was unspeakably exploitative and destructive of individual autonomy. That struggle was manifested in a rich vein of music, folklore, and literature—and is a precious heritage for the entire nation. Aptheker ends his critique by noting that it was only a dozen years from George Fitzhugh’s proslavery apologia, *Sociology for the South* (1854), to Lee’s surrender at Appomattox. “How long will it be,” he asks, “from *Time on the Cross* to the time of Jubilee?” (Aptheker 1974, 31).⁹

Aptheker’s scholarly work has been by no means limited to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He has written extensively on twentieth-century Black history and on the contemporary struggle for racial justice. His scholarly commitment to Black history and his related social commitment to peace and justice brought him into collaboration with the greatest scholar of modern times, W. E. B. Du Bois, and into the editorship of Du Bois’s massive papers. The seventh volume of the *Documentary History of the Negro People*, which carries the record up to the death of Martin Luther King Jr., was published in 1994.

In 1992 Aptheker published his *Anti-Racism in U.S. History: The First Two Hundred Years*. The book was inspired by an event some years ago when, after hearing a lecture on John Brown, a Black youngster asked Aptheker if he had heard correctly that Brown was white. When told that he was indeed white, the teenager exclaimed, "God, that blows my mind." That inspired Aptheker to tackle the neglect and obfuscation of white antiracism that had often bred the despairing notion that racism was not only pervasive in the United States history, but was virtually innate, immutable, and unchallenged. *Anti-Racism in U.S. History* is an ambitious effort to restore the dialectic to history: there was racism, but there was also impassioned, unrelenting struggle against racism. With that, the book presents an impressive record of antiracist sentiment and action through the nation's first two centuries. While some of Aptheker's characterizations of what constituted antiracist thought and action have been questioned (Solomon 1993), the book constitutes a scholarly, impassioned affirmation that racism can be fought and eradicated, that Black and white unity can be won. That alone would have been a fitting climax to Aptheker's career. But another volume is promised—carrying the record of antiracism from Reconstruction to the present.

Now in his eighties, Herbert Aptheker continues to be a powerful example of scholarship in the service of equality and justice. His work will endure and will continue, as the African American community and all progressive humanity will endure and continue.

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NOTES

1. Aptheker's debts to Black scholars are acknowledged in *The Negro and the Abolitionist Movement* (1941, 4–5) and his article, "By Way of Dedication" (1956a, 7–9).

2. Aptheker traced the elements of a Black national consciousness in his 1949 article, "Consciousness of Negro Nationality to 1900," (1956c, 104–11).

3. For a summary of Lenin's view of the sources and components of nationhood, see Institute of Marxism-Leninism 1977, 19–41, and Lenin 1969, 313–23.

4. *The Liberator*, under Briggs's editorship, regularly featured historical and cultural pieces as well as extensive reportage on "Negro Week" activities. For examples of early Communist writing on racism and racist violence, see Haywood and Howard 1932; Allen 1932, 1934, 1937; Padmore 1931.

5. For Aptheker's characterization of the Myrdalian school, see Aptheker 1946.

6. Aptheker noted that Dumond chronicled scores of obscure white abolitionists, but did not mention a single Black, not even Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass.

7. Bracey's remarks were made at a panel discussion on "Marxism and Black History" at the Annual Meeting of the Organization of American Historians, New Orleans, October 1979.

8. Aptheker's concept of the centrality of class in Southern history has gained considerable acceptance. The distinguished specialist in comparative history, George M. Fredrickson, at the 35th Annual Robert Fortenbaugh Memorial Lecture at Gettysburg College in 1996, compared the protracted guerrilla war conducted by the Boers in South Africa with the failure of the Confederacy to fight a guerrilla war after the fall of Richmond. He concluded that a distinct lack of enthusiasm and resistance to a guerrilla struggle by poor whites in the South was the essential factor in inhibiting such an effort. Any sense of holistic Southern nationality (compared to South Africa, where the Boers did maintain a sense of all-class national identity) was undermined by sharp class divisions in the South.

9. Following Aptheker's critique, historians and cliometricians, among them Paul David, Herbert Gutman, Richard Sutch, Peter Temin, and Gavin Wright, published *Reckoning with Slavery* (1976), a devastating rebuttal to Fogel-Engerman that expands on many of Aptheker's themes. Fogel himself affected a modest retreat. His *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* concedes that slavery "permitted one group of people to exercise unrestrained personal domination over another group of people," denied economic opportunity, denied citizenship to slaves, and denied cultural self-identification (1989, 394–99).

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Toward Nonracist Historiography: The Early Work of Herbert Aptheker

Julie Kailin

Herbert Aptheker entered the field of African American history in the 1930s, when dominant opinions about African Americans were patently racist. While the Great Depression and New Deal reforms raised tremendous challenges to basic assumptions about race and class, the field of U.S. history as a whole, in its failure to include African Americans, scarcely reflected enlightened views. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, the prevailing scholarship on slavery in the United States was dominated by the views of Ulrich Bonnell Phillips (1877–1934) and William A. Dunning (1857–1932). Phillips portrayed slavery as a benign, patriarchal institution, using such euphemisms as a “homestead,” a “school,” a “social settlement,” and a “chapel of ease” (1929). Employing the classic language of white supremacy, Phillips asserted that slavery was ultimately beneficial for the “civilizing influence” that it had upon the Africans, whom he described as “notoriously primitive, uncouth, improvident and inconstant, merely because they were Negroes of their time; and by their slave status they were relieved from the pressure of want and debarred from any full-force incentive of gain” (1929, 197).

Phillips was, of course, following in the footsteps of his mentor, William A. Dunning of Columbia University, and Dunning’s protégé, Walter Lynwood Fleming (1874–1932). Their scholarship collectively reflected the racist views of their day. They created a history that not only vindicated the racism spawned within the slave plantation system, but also continued

to denigrate Black people. Characteristic of this racist historical tradition was Dunning's claim that during Reconstruction

the Negroes exercised an influence in political affairs out of all relation to their intelligence or property. . . . The Negroes who rose to prominence and leadership were very frequently of a type which acquired and practiced the tricks and knavery rather than the useful art of politics, and the vicious courses of these Negroes strongly confirmed the prejudices of the whites. (1931, 354–55)

Dunning contended that the real problem in the Old South was not simply slavery as such, “but the coexistence in one society of two races so distinct in characteristics as to render coalescence impossible. . . . [S]lavery had been a *modus vivendi* through which social life was possible” (1931, 384–5).

In *The Civil War and Reconstruction in Alabama*, originally published in 1905, Fleming had written in the same vein that “the Negroes worked contentedly . . . and though often mistreated . . . were faithful. Women and children felt safer then, when nearly all the white men were away, than they have ever felt since among the Negroes” (1949, 209). Concerning the “behavior” of slaves in the Civil War, Fleming claimed, “On the whole the behavior of the slaves during the war, . . . was most excellent. To the last day of bondage the great majority were true against all temptations. With their white people they wept for the Confederate slain, were sad at defeat, and rejoiced in victory” (212).

In sum, Fleming portrayed the slave as devoted and faithful—traits he described as “one of the beautiful aspects of slavery” (210). However, he warned, these virtues were the “faithfulness of trained obedience rather than of love or gratitude, for these were fleeting emotions in the soul of the average African.” This training made insurrection by the slaves impossible, concluded Fleming, for they lacked the capacity for organization or leadership, and were “as wax in the hands of a stronger race” (210). Only white “outside agitators” could coerce them to revolt.

These racist views constituted the standard interpretation of Black history in the white academic community as well as in the society at large. Such “scholarship” played a central role in legitimizing and perpetuating racism. As Mohr writes, “By providing a facade of scholarly underpinning for contemporary attitudes toward the Negro, they did their share (often more than their share) in molding a hostile climate of white opinion” (1974, 179). Indeed, commenting on the predominant intellectual climate in the period when her father began to write, Bettina Aptheker notes that the attitude towards African Americans could be measured by the fact that a best-selling biography of the day, *Meet General Grant* (1928) by William E. Woodward, had this to say about African Americans:

The Negro is lovable as a good-natured child, with the child’s craving for affection, but his easy temper is deceptive. It is merely the pliability of surrender, the purring of a wild creature that has been caught and tamed. . . . Negroes are the only people in the history of the world, so far as I know, that ever became free without any effort of their own. (cited in Aptheker 1979b, 165)

Counterpoising these racist distortions of African American history, however, was another historical tradition, which evaluated the experience of African Americans in universal human terms. Such were the works of William E. Burghardt Du Bois, Charles H. Wesley, and Carter G. Woodson, all Black historians, who recognized in the African American peoples’ reactions to racial oppression, beginning with slavery, the virtues and weaknesses that were characteristic of all human beings. Whenever possible (even under impossible conditions), African Americans made positive contributions to the development of American society—not to mention the fact that it was on the basis of their labor that the society was built. Such works as Du Bois’s *Souls of Black Folk* (1903), and his classic reinterpretation of the Civil War and Reconstruction, *Black Reconstruction* (1935), offered very powerful and persuasive challenges to the Dunning-Fleming school, as did the works of Wesley, Woodson, and others. These views were in the minority, however, and as a

graduate student at Columbia, Aptheker found himself in an intellectual climate in which the voices of Phillips, Dunning, and Fleming prevailed. Thus for Aptheker the dissenting voices of such pioneers as Du Bois, Wesley, and Woodson became beacons that pointed to the path along which he had to proceed.

Aptheker's first published work in African American history was a two-part article published in *Science & Society* in 1937 and 1938 entitled "American Negro Slave Revolts." Here he began his serious examination of the question of Black resistance to slavery. He argued that slavery was not the paternalistic institution portrayed by the "Dunning-Fleming school of mythology," but rather was a brutal system of exploitation, against which slaves constantly resisted. These views were further elaborated in *Negro Slave Revolts in the United States, 1526–1860*, published by International Publishers in 1939, and in his doctoral dissertation, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, published by Columbia University Press in 1943. In these extended treatments he described the harsh living conditions and the physical as well as psychological brutalization of the slaves. He also discussed the more sophisticated ways of perpetrating the slave system—the promoting of divisions along race and class lines, for example. Travelers to the South, he noted, had often commented on the restlessness and discontent of the slaves. In Aptheker's estimation, the most consistent index to Black discontent was white fear:

Fear of slave revolts and the panic that ensued upon the discovery or supposed discovery, of plots or the suppression of revolts, were factors of prime importance in the social, political and economic life of the United States. This panic was no rare phenomenon. Indeed it occasioned at least one hundred thirty times between 1670 and 1865. (1943, 512–13)

While Aptheker found no evidence of revolts until well into the 1600s, organized revolts began to increase in frequency by the year 1720. Resistance to slavery often took more subtle forms than revolt, such as the purchase of freedom, sabotage, suicide, self-mutilation, flight, and enlistment in the military forces

during the American Revolution and the War of 1812 in exchange for the promise of freedom. Of course the Underground Railroad and the abolitionist movement depended largely on slaves and former slaves.

It should be acknowledged that a few of Aptheker's contemporaries also wrote on slave resistance, although their analyses were less penetrating and far from exhaustive. These were Joseph C. Carroll, *Slave Insurrections in the United States, 1800–1865* (1938); Harvey Wish, "American Slave Insurrections before 1861" (1937); R. A. Bauer and A. H. Bauer, "Day to Day Resistance to Slavery" (1942); and Kenneth W. Porter, "Florida Slaves and Free Negroes in the Seminole War, 1825–1842" (1943). Except for Carroll's 1938 work, this scholarship appeared only in the *Journal of Negro History*. In fact, no articles addressing this question were found in any of the "mainstream" journals of American history until 1943. Aptheker would be among the first to counteract this systematic exclusion and marginalization of African Americans from the "official story" of United States history.

In *The Negro in the Civil War*, Aptheker took issue with one of the major strains of thought that characterized the slaves as readily taking up arms on behalf of their Confederate masters. Instead, Aptheker contended that "not one Negro soldier fired a shot for that creature raised up by his people's oppressors" (1938b, 202–3). He reiterated that after 1862, when the North reluctantly began enlisting Negroes as soldiers, some 125,000 Blacks from the slave states would serve in the Federal armies. This was in addition to 80,000 Blacks from the North. The Confederates first considered the possibility of arming their slaves in 1863. However the idea was quickly abandoned since it posed an extremely serious dilemma. For in return for enlisting Blacks, they would have had to promise freedom, or else face either an armed insurrection or flight backed by guns. In either case, the Confederate states would lose their slaves, not to mention the principle over which they launched the war in the first place. Aptheker concluded, as had Du Bois before him, that Negroes, "by their own struggles had, for all practical purposes, killed slavery" (emphasis in original).

Around the time that Aptheker published this study on the Civil War, some of the more conservative historians were also revising the assessment of the slaves' role in the war. Notable among these studies was Bell I. Wiley's *Southern Negroes 1861–1865* (1953), published in 1938. Wiley, a student of U. B. Phillips, did not disagree with the racist characterizations of Phillips, but rather questioned the role of slaves in taking up arms for the Confederate cause. Using racist epithets like “darkey” and “buck,” and employing a highly exaggerated Black dialect, Wiley nonetheless concluded that Blacks were not very loyal slaves, and that they did rebel and defect to the Federal armies.

Beyond criticizing racist accounts of Blacks, Aptheker felt a compelling need to undertake original research in order to provide alternative explanations of Black history. As a continuation of his research on slave resistance, Aptheker pioneered in research on slave maroon communities, and their significance for the Southern plantation social system. His article, “Maroons within the Present Limits of the United States,” published in the *Journal of Negro History*, documented the existence of at least fifty of these communities, established between 1672 to 1864 (Aptheker 1939a). Geographically, maroon settlements were located mainly in the mountainous, forested or swampy regions of the slave states. These sanctuaries posed a great threat to slave owners, since their very existence was regarded as encouragement for the slaves in the nearby plantations to rebel. As a matter of historical record, Aptheker claimed that in plantations contiguous to such maroon outposts in North Carolina, there were several insurrections in 1830. Aptheker's research on maroon communities further exploded the myth of the contented slaves.

In 1940 Aptheker made still another important contribution to African American historiography with his critical examination of the role of the Quakers in the abolitionist movement. In “The Quakers and Negro Slavery,” Aptheker contradicted the prevailing view that Quakers had always been opposed to slavery because of their own experiences of persecution as a minority. He argued that the development of antislavery sentiments among

the Quakers was a gradual process that by no means constituted the consensus among them until just before the Civil War (332). While some Quakers owned slaves, by the late 1700s the institution of slavery among them had practically ceased to exist. But around the 1830s the antislavery issue began to divide the Quakers into Hicksites, who stood for abolition, and the more orthodox groups who condoned slavery. Thus, Aptheker concluded, while the Quakers were among the groups that adopted a progressive stand on the issue of slavery, in the 1850s they were “scarcely in advance of the majority and moved forward only with the utmost care and difficulty, and in doing so came near wrecking [their] own existence” (1940, 362). In these early works, Aptheker also examined the role of Black people in the abolitionist movement (1941b).

With the exception of a few Black scholars, most notably Carter G. Woodson, the literature on abolitionism fell into two main categories. One common approach ignored the role of Blacks altogether and viewed the abolitionists as crazed, fanatical white men. The other approach considered the abolitionists to be humanitarian, but also assumed that they were all white men (Aptheker, 1941a). Again, Aptheker showed that Blacks played a decisive role in the movement for the abolition of slavery.

As we have seen, by the time Aptheker published his seminal work, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, in 1943, he had already made several significant contributions to American history. In demonstrating the integral role of the African American people in the development of that history, he not only provided one of the most effective sustained critiques of the racist tradition in American history, but also contributed to its fuller understanding. His work represented a radical departure from his established contemporaries and consequently provoked criticism and controversy among the majority of his colleagues in the historical profession.

These reactions were reflected in the reviews of his work in the scholarly journals. In 1939, *The Negro in the Civil War* was reviewed by Charles S. Sydnor of Duke University in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*. Sydnor accused Aptheker of exaggerating Blacks’ efforts to end slavery, while belittling the

importance of the Union Army in determining the outcome of the war. He disputed Aptheker's contention that the slaves had contributed to the demise of slavery, and denounced the book as "valueless to the historian." He snidely recommended it as "of some interest to students of current propaganda techniques" and recommended instead *Southern Negroes 1861-1865* by Bell Wiley (1953).

Wiley himself also reviewed *The Negro in the Civil War* for the *American Historical Review* in 1939. Wiley's review turned out to be another *ad hominem* attack on Aptheker, rather than an examination of the substantive claims of his work. A portion of this review is worth quoting here for its illustration of the climate of racism and anti-Communism among the leading historians of the period:

This little volume would make an excellent Emancipation Day oration before an audience composed of Negroes, Marxists and descendants of William Lloyd Garrison. It is pithy. It is written in lucid and vigorous style. It IS interesting. It reflects odium and scorn upon the slavocracy and the "Wall Street Imperialists." It pours the sweet oil of uncritical praise upon those whose bonds were broken by the "great rebellion"—in fact the "rebellion" is said to have been "foiled essentially" by the "internal revolt" of the slaves. . . . He attaches undue importance to the part played by Negro soldiers in the Union Army. . . . The author overexerts himself—and the evidence—to portray the Negro of the Civil War times in an aggressive, heroic role. Less colorful, but more substantial, is the picture, as otherwise drawn, of the average slave waiting opportunistically for the Northern armies to bring freedom close enough to grasp it. (Wiley 1939, 244)

While Wiley had acknowledged in his own work the participation of Blacks in the Union Army, he was not prepared to accept them as a decisive factor in the war's outcome.

When Aptheker's doctoral dissertation *American Negro Slave Revolts* was published by Columbia University Press in 1943, it made a decisive impact on African American historiography and

received wider attention than his previous work. The academic debate over slave revolts in the United States is generally considered to have begun with this work. Reviewing the book for the *American Journal of Sociology*, E. Franklin Frazier (then at Howard University) praised the book as “an important contribution to the literature on the Negro. Although it deals with the slavery period, it contains much information that might aid our thinking today concerning the so-called ‘adjustment’ of the Negro to his subordinate status in the South. . . . The information contained in this book will provide a corrective for the tendency on the part of sociologists to over-emphasize the accommodation of the Negro to slavery” (1944, 374).

That same year, Theodore M. Whitfield, reviewing the work for the *Journal of Southern History*, commended Aptheker for reexamining a neglected issue, and turning up hitherto unknown data. Whitfield wrote that Aptheker had performed a “real service in calling again to our attention the fact that not all those associated with slavery lived in sweet contentment or undisturbed security” (1944, 105). However, Whitfield argued, there was a contradiction in Aptheker’s argument, which on the one hand asserted that the slaves rebelled against their condition, while on the other, that the slave owners were so paranoid that they often imagined revolts that did not exist, prompting them to undertake extremely repressive measures. For Aptheker, however, the imagined revolts and the real revolts were not mutually exclusive conditions, but rather were an obvious and integral part of antebellum Southern life in which any sign of resistance could evoke nightmares of Armageddon. Such quibbling and constant oversimplification of Aptheker’s arguments represented yet another index of the mood of his critics at the time he launched his career in history.

There was more than quibbling, however, when it came to defending the overtly racist views of U. B. Phillips. The thesis died hard, and it was J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton, as much as Bell Wiley, who defended the Phillips perspective. In a review for the *American Historical Review*, Hamilton, a professor at the University of North Carolina, criticized Aptheker for failing to appreciate the perspective of the slave owners. Hamilton wrote:

This volume is clearly the result of tireless industry and tremendous research. The elaborate documentation and extensive and valuable bibliography of source and secondary material both bear witness to the long path the author has followed . . . [but] it is quite evident that the author does not know the South of the period of slavery, nor yet does he know slavery as it was. He has overlooked the sources that would have informed him, and discounted the secondary works based upon those sources. Instead he has painted the picture painted by Garrison and his disciples. (1944, 504)

Hamilton charged that Aptheker had completely failed to prove his thesis of slave rebelliousness, not to mention the question of whether they were actually treated cruelly! As for their harsh treatment, Hamilton wrote:

The whole body of authentic sources proves fairly conclusively that cruelty was the exception rather than the rule. . . . A somewhat constant reference to the author's belief that the slave holding South consciously and deliberately debased a whole race for the sake of profits makes it not out of place to suggest that a contrast of the Negroes who emerged from slavery with those brought over from Africa, or with those here today, clearly exposes the fallacy of such reasoning.

Most of the few positive reviews of *Slave Revolts* came from Black or leftist sources. Lewis K. McMillan of Wilberforce University wrote that although the book was clouded by "too much of the doctor's thesis atmosphere," it was evidence of painstaking research and would "help to bring the Negro into his true historical perspective in the shaping of American democracy" (1944, 598–99).

In the *New Republic*, R. Malcolm Cowley also commended Aptheker, but took exception to the book's academic style, "like an iceberg nine-tenths submerged in footnotes and inhospitable to landing parties, since it is written in a ruggedly academic style; but it contains a mass of neglected information" (1944, 352). Citing the bias in the historical profession that treated the

slave as a docile, childlike character, incapable of organized resistance, Ellis O. Knox wrote in the *Journal of Negro Education* that *Slave Revolts* was invaluable, for it offered the documentary evidence necessary to refute such myths. He called it “a contribution to Southern, American and World history. Future historians must depict the American slave as a human being who possessed a will to resist oppression, and a brain with which he hoped, and even helped to plan its demise” (1945, 208).

Significant but rare recognition of Aptheker’s work from the mainstream of the profession came indirectly from Richard Hofstadter’s review of U. B. Phillips’s work, in which he criticized the latter’s portrayal of the slave as contented and docile. By contrast, Hofstadter referred to Aptheker as “a recent student [who] found records of no less than 250 slave revolts and conspiracies” (1944, 122). Hofstadter credited Aptheker with demonstrating how the published rules of slave society themselves often revealed important evidence that was ignored by U. B. Phillips.

Notwithstanding the interest that *American Negro Slave Revolts* generated in the historical profession and the other social sciences, and the fact that the book was clearly a major revision of American history, the *New York Times* refused to print a favorable review that it had earlier commissioned. The *Times* had planned to give the book a major promotion and, according to Aptheker, the galleys of the review went to press. Aptheker was sent a copy of the galleys, but for some mysterious reason, at the last minute, the *Times* decided that a complimentary review of this work did not fall under the category of news they deemed “fit to print.”

In 1945 Aptheker published his *Essays in the History of the American Negro*, which was a collection of the essays he had written from 1938 to 1941. Historian John Hope Franklin, then teaching at the North Carolina College for Negroes, wrote in the *Journal of Negro Education* that the book was an example of what was yet to be accomplished in the writing of Negro history. He saw the value of the essays, not only in the kind of information that they presented, but in the interpretation that ran through

all of them. He called the book “one of the most vigorous indictments against modern American historiography that has appeared in recent years. For, in presenting these phases of our national liberty Mr. Aptheker points up the fact that there is still much to be desired in the way of balance, completeness, and accuracy on the part of those who write our ‘standard’ histories” (1946, 199).

Similarly, Hugh H. Smythe of Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College, another Black scholar, wrote that the book counteracted the “incessant propaganda of the slavocratic oligarchy to promote the ideas that the Negro was cowardly and stupid, as well as being happy in slavery,” and recommended the book as a supplemental history textbook for high schools (1946, 188).

Unfortunately, progressive voices like those of Franklin and Smythe were in the minority in the academy. Aptheker’s work was more often received as unfounded exaggeration of the evils of slavery, which was still, even after World War II, seen by the majority of white scholars as a benign institution. Typical was the review by Frank J. Klingberg, a historian of the South teaching at UCLA, who thought Aptheker’s interpretation “too narrow,” in the sense that it ignored what he felt were the “positive” aspects of slavery. Although Klingberg wrote in the *Journal of Southern History* that the book “is well written and in good temper, [and] deserves an attentive reading public,” he made no attempt to camouflage his overtly racist views:

The author does not point out the beneficial influence of white civilization upon the Negro race. . . . The Negroes in the United States are better off than anywhere else on earth. Not only did the white man enslave the Negro here, but he has also made titanic efforts to help him. . . . The basic assumption that the Negro was a white man enslaved, is not new. It was fundamental in the thought of such abolitionists as Garrison and Wilberforce. (1946, 280–81)

More harshly, W. W. Davis of the University of Kansas wrote in the *American Historical Review* that the content of *Essays in*

the History of the American Negro was undocumented, misquoted, and exaggerated (1946). Also in a hostile tenor, Vernon L. Wharton, in the March 1948 issue of the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, charged that Aptheker exaggerated the extent of slave revolts, which in Wharton's words were simply "the products of the fears and imagination of the frightened white population, much like the present-day 'race riots.'" He used the occasion to red-bait as well, charging that Aptheker failed to mention the "unreliability" of many of the witnesses of these revolts because this "would not be in accordance with the 'genius of Karl Marx.'" Echoing the words of U. B. Phillips, Wharton argued that

slavery . . . did not involve physical cruelty as a general characteristic. The great mass of the slaves were not militant revolutionists, but were ignorant, timorous, servile and apathetic. The really beastly thing about the slave system (and the caste system that succeeded it) was that it prevented the development of human potentialities among the Negroes, and made of the slave something less than a man. The cultural characteristics which it fostered made the Negroes ineffective in their struggle for civil rights during Reconstruction, and these characteristics continue to fetter many of them even today. (1948, 674)

Such virulent characterizations of Blacks coming from the mainstream of the American historical profession in the late 1940s give us a sample of what Aptheker and others like him faced in trying to counter the racist hegemonic discourse that prevailed in the academy.

An interesting debate in African American historiography during the immediate postwar period centered around Aptheker's critique of Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, which was hailed by scholars as well as the popular press upon its publication in 1944 as the definitive study of Black history and sociology. Aptheker's critique of the Myrdal study, entitled *The Negro People in America* (1946), was no ordinary book review. It ran some eighty pages in length and examined the major dimensions of Myrdal's two-volume study, which encompassed

philosophical orientation, history, socioeconomic life, and ethics. Aptheker went right to the heart of the matter when he questioned the very title of the book, asking whether a historically complex problem like racism could be reduced to a moral dilemma. Myrdal had been hired by the Carnegie Foundation to conduct this major study of race relations—despite the fact that he had no formal background in American race relations. Aptheker questioned the qualifications of a scholar like Myrdal, so divorced from the American context, to conduct such a sensitive study.

It is perhaps understandable how an advisor to and an official of the government of Sweden, which treated the late war against fascism as a dilemma and preferred neutrality (especially a neutrality made lucrative by “necessary” trading with Nazi Germany) might decide to christen the fact of exploitation and oppression of the Negro people a dilemma—“a situation involving choice . . . between equally unsatisfactory alternatives.” (1946, 19)

Myrdal asserted that the problem of racism in American society constituted a contradiction between the “American Creed” and the reality of racism. The “American Creed” comprised a constellation of such ideals as “the essential dignity of the individual human being, of the fundamental equality of all men,” and “inalienable rights to freedom, justice, and a fair opportunity” (1944, 1:4). According to Myrdal, this contradiction constituted a “dilemma”—an insoluble problem.

In *The Negro People in America*, Aptheker argued that doctrines of racial superiority had their origins not in the minds of whites but in the large-scale introduction of slaves into Southern plantations in response to an economic need. The subsequent system of rationalizations in the form of racist ideologies was a result of a material interest in slavery. Further, such doctrines continued to be nurtured in their current form by the super-exploitation of minorities and women in the course of capitalist development. To reduce racism to a moral issue was, therefore, a gross error that “vitiates the entire book, and leads one to assert

not only that it is not definitive, but that it is vicious” (1946, 18). Concerning the redeeming aspects of the book, Aptheker wrote:

The book contains interesting and keen insights into the minds of—significantly—middle and upper class whites and Negroes, and apt material on the vested interests in segregation that lead some of the latter to adopt reactionary attitudes generally and even specifically towards the aspirations of their own people. (1946, 18)

Ernest Kaiser, the noted African American bibliographer, took up the Myrdal-Aptheker debate in an article in *Phylon* entitled “Racial Dialectics: The Aptheker-Myrdal School Controversy” (1948). Kaiser argued that Aptheker had oversimplified the class nature of racism, implying that only the rich are racially prejudiced. He observed that historically it had been demonstrated that often poor whites took comfort in their whiteness to compensate for material deprivation. While Kaiser agreed with Aptheker that eventually the objective conditions would force Black and white workers to come together as a class in order to put an end to an oppressive capitalist system, this alone did not spell an end to racism. Kaiser’s main objection to Aptheker’s critique of Myrdal, therefore, was that it underestimated the psychological dimensions of racism—an affliction that affected all segments of society in the United States, not just the ruling class. Changing the objective conditions through class struggle would constitute a necessary, but not sufficient condition for the elimination of racism. Kaiser did not agree with the Myrdal school, however, in which he included writers such as Richard Wright, Horace Cayton, and St. Claire Drake, for he thought that they erred in characterizing (in his estimation) African Americans as having been completely destroyed by racial oppression.

Kaiser’s review alludes to some lively issues that were being debated on the Left. Among these were the degree to which racism derived from the dynamics of capitalist development, and the effects of racism on the social structure and personality of African Americans—questions that would come to dominate American historiography twenty years later.

Aptheker made still another momentous contribution to American history in 1951 with the first volume of the multivolume *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*. In the first volume he presented over 450 documents by African Americans from the period 1661–1910. W. E. B. Du Bois wrote in his preface that the book “is a dream come true. . . . I hasten to greet the day of the appearance of this volume, as a milestone on the road to Truth” (Aptheker 1951). The *Documentary History* received generally favorable reviews in the historical journals. L. D. Reddick of Atlanta University wrote in *Phylon*:

Why did it take this book so long to get born? Why was it sired, finally, by the cultural “left” and not by the “right” or “center”? Why was it not produced by some Negro scholar? These are some of the preliminary questions that come to mind when this publication is first picked up. . . . Many others have talked about the need for some such book and many of these have toyed with the idea of working on it. However, it remained for a resident of New York, of a middle-class, Jewish background and left-wing political tendency to do the actual production. And he has done a splendid job of it! (1952, 168)

Reddick’s only criticism of the book was that the title was misleading because it did not include documents by white people.

In a review for the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Harvey Wish offered the same criticism, but credited Aptheker for presenting more evidence than any other historian to show that Blacks played an active role in American history (1952). Wish thought, however, that Aptheker was too partisan and that he distorted facts with his “Marxist insistence” on blaming monopoly capitalism of the 1890s for capturing American agriculture in the West and South, and for launching an imperialist war against Spain. Wish concluded, “It is indeed unfortunate that so useful a project as this should be so badly marred particularly in the final section, by partisan distortions and dubious principles of selection. Nevertheless, this volume will fill a necessary place until a better anthology is available” (1952, 112).

John Hope Franklin admired Aptheker's "tireless, energetic digging for documents" (1952). His main criticism of the work was that it omitted some important figures such as William Monroe Trotter. A. A. Taylor, of Fisk University, called the book "a highly valuable contribution to the literature of its field" (1952, 755).

Like *American Negro Slave Revolts*, however, the work was largely ignored by the leading reviewers in the white popular press. When Lloyd L. Brown, one of the coeditors of *Masses and Mainstream*, asked the editors of the *New York Herald Tribune* why they did not review the book, they replied,

"Frankly we did not review *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, because reports we got of it from the historians we consulted were not good. . . . If you want a really good book on the subject of the Negro in the United States I suggest you read Saunders Redding's *They Came In Chains*. Mr. Redding, himself a Negro, is a distinguished novelist and student of the history of his race." (Brown 1952, 52)

Obviously, Redding was not among the historians whom the *Tribune* consulted, as he had expressed his indebtedness to the works of Herbert Aptheker in, among other works, *They Came In Chains*. Redding also wrote a syndicated review of *The Documentary History* for a number of Black newspapers, in which he wrote "Nothing important is left out, . . . [its] assiduous research will solve certain research problems for a generation of students . . . Here, are the Negro people" (Brown 1952, 53).

In his early work, Herbert Aptheker made major contributions to the field of American history. Yet hostility toward Aptheker by his white critics would mount, against the background of increasing racial tension and anti-Communism of the post-World War II era. The relatively conciliatory mood of the war years was already yielding to a climate of reaction that was taking its toll through racial violence, the retrenchment of war-time employment, and racist practices in housing and education. Within this environment, conservative scholars found themselves riding the crest of reaction, while liberals found themselves

required to justify constantly the legitimacy of their scholarship and their loyalty to “American democracy.” As for Marxist scholars like Herbert Aptheker, they would find themselves isolated and persecuted as scholars, as well as citizens of the United States.

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**From the Bottom Up: Herbert Aptheker's
*American Negro Slave Revolts and
A Documentary History of the Negro
People in the United States***

Sterling Stuckey

This the American black man knows: his fight here is a fight to the finish. Either he dies or wins. If he wins it will be by no subterfuge or evasion of amalgamation. He will enter modern civilization here in America as a black man on terms of perfect and unlimited equality with any white man, or he will enter not at all. Either extermination root and branch, or absolute equality. There can be no compromise. This is the last great battle of the West.

—W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*

Among friends of the Negro, Aptheker is way up there.

—Mathematician and Melville critic Joshua Leslie

In July 1957, at 31 Grace Court in Brooklyn, I had an audience with W. E. B. Du Bois. He opened the door himself, smiling broadly on meeting the great-nephew of Vivian Elma Johnson-Cook of Baltimore, a graduate of Howard and Columbia universities who had married Ralph Cook, an engineering graduate of Cornell in the 1890s and a tennis partner of Du Bois when the latter on occasion visited Baltimore. Moreover, my great-aunt was a friend of Du Bois's daughter, Yolande, a teacher in the Baltimore school system. It was Yolande, on hearing of my admiration of her father, who arranged the meeting,

but Dr. Du Bois handled the logistics of my getting to his home, his voice clear and firm at eighty-nine as we talked by phone.

There were stepladders along the sides of his large book-lined study. Haltingly, I answered a few questions about myself and my goals as he did most of the talking, at one time referring to “the ignorance of an Eisenhower and the chicanery of a scoundrel like Truman.” There was mention of labor having sold out to capital in a conversation that ranged widely before, in the most gracious way, Shirley Graham Du Bois entered, precisely when my thirty minutes were up, asked if I’d like to see a portrait of the young Frederick Douglass and one of Harriet Tubman, and led me upstairs, first to the Douglass portrait, which hung over a fireplace. Speaking tenderly of Dr. Du Bois, she remarked that he considered Herbert Aptheker “the finest young historian in America.” Though the assessment was unexpected, I was not particularly surprised. I had been reading what was then referred to as “Negro history” from my early teens and knew that the history of the Negro was for centuries central to the economic and spiritual history of the country, and I was conversant with Aptheker’s landmark achievement, *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*.¹

When Du Bois’s *Black Folk Then and Now* appeared in 1939, Aptheker was a graduate student at Columbia. This was a time in which, as Du Bois put it, the “champions of white folk” were “legion.” *Black Folk* was another of his efforts to demonstrate why attitudes about Negro inferiority “can no longer be maintained.” Still, scholarship on “slavery and Reconstruction” by the 1930s remained so poor that he was “aghast at what American historians have done to this field” (1975, ix; 1976, 725). There was not, for that matter, a single university in the country in which serious work on slavery or Reconstruction was being done by professors of history and there was no study of African history. In the main, U.S. scholarship mirrored U.S. racial realities.

The influential U. B. Phillips was mainly responsible for the racist treatment of slavery that prevailed in the profession into the thirties and for a time thereafter. In the view of Du Bois, Phillips’s use of “facts and opinions in order to prove that the South was right” and “the Negro stupid” marked his approach to slavery, an approach that Aptheker was preparing to attack even

as *Black Folk* was being readied for publication (1976, 732). In much the manner that a scientist looks for a cure for a disease that is ravaging the bodies of a great many people, Aptheker identified Phillips's 1918 *American Negro Slavery* (1959) and his earlier work on which it is in part based, *Plantation and Frontier Documents, 1649–1863* (1909), as important contributions to racism. Certainly Phillips helped reinforce the tie of scholarship to the world around him, of how the one could mirror the other. Although he took his doctorate from Columbia in 1902 when lynchings showed little sign of subsiding and capstones were being placed on segregation and the disfranchisement of African Americans, such developments aroused in him no more sympathy than understanding. He writes in the preface of his most respected work, *American Negro Slavery*:

My sojourn in a National Army Camp in the South while this book has been going through the press has reenforced my earlier conviction that southern racial asperities are mainly superficial, and that the two great elements are fundamentally in accord. That the harmony is not a new thing is evinced by the very tone of the camp. (1959, viii)

That African American soldiers in the United States were being lynched in their uniforms no more affected Phillips's analysis than that nearly 200,000 former slaves fought for the Union and hundreds of thousands more fled the plantations to the Union troops, many of them working in various capacities against the beleaguered South. Instead, Phillips writes of the African Americans at Camp Gordon, Georgia: "The grim realities of war, though a constant theme in the inculcation of discipline, is as remote in the thought of these men as is the planet Mars." This after writing that "a throng" of African American soldiers, in the quiet of the day, had sung: "I ain' go' study war no mo' (2) / Study war no mo'!" (1959, viii). He completely missed the irony of the lyrics-in-context, a crude racism curbing his ability to understand.

Such disregard for the feelings of African Americans was an emblem of the discipline. If this were not true, then how could a person of Phillips's sensibilities have risen to the top of his field with vignettes—such as African Americans shooting dice—out of

The Birth of a Nation? When writing about African Americans, he was expert at knowing which chords to strike. And so he depicted African Americans as Sambos, writing of African American soldiers: “The negroes themselves show the same easy-going, amiable, serio-comic obedience and the same personal attachments to white men, as well as the same sturdy light-heartedness and the same love of laughter and of rhythm, which distinguished their forbears” (viii). In this bias, Phillips recalls Amasa Delano, the American whose portrait is supremely drawn by Herman Melville in *Benito Cereno*, the greatest literary study of slavery. The archetypal racist, Delano thought the slave possessed “docility arising from the unaspiring contentment of a limited mind” and “susceptibility of bland attachment sometimes inhering in indisputable inferiors” (1986, 212).

There is reason to believe that Aptheker, aware of the disregard of African Americans in the selection of documents by Phillips in *Plantation and Frontier Documents*, targeted this work as well as *American Negro Slavery*, for Phillips relates one to the other:

For twenty years I have panned the sands of the stream of Southern life and garnered their treasure. Many of the nuggets rewarding the search have been displayed in their natural form; and this now is a coinage of the grains great and small. The metal is pure, the minting alone may be faulty. The die is the author’s mind, which has been shaped as well by a varied Northern environment in manhood as by a Southern one in youth. In the making of coins and of histories, however, locality is of less moment than are native sagacity, technical training and a sense of truth and proportion. (1959, vii)

The treasures to which Phillips refers were used in the writing of *American Negro Slavery* and purport to mirror vital Southern experience, leaving the reader to think African Americans no more consequential than beasts of burden. Though passages in some of the works cited provide insight into the slave experience that might lead one to think otherwise, they are unremarked by Phillips. For example, he mentions Mungo Park but there is no suggestion that the book contains evidence of a wide variety of

African work skills, including the cultivation of tobacco (27).² Phillips was blind to the possibility that slaves might have taught whites work skills, and he added gross insensitivity to the mix. In recounting a personal experience important to his understanding of the management of cotton cultivation, widely known to Africans, he remarks:

But the harvest of this crop of my own brought pain of mind and body. My hands, cramped from the plow-stock, made no speed in snatching the fluffy stuff, and my six foot stature imposed a stooping in its day-long continuance. The college year beginning, a woman and her brood were engaged to finish the job and I hied again to the halls of academe. (1929, 124)³

An African American woman and her children did the work that this strapping white man could not do, and we can only imagine what they were paid. The so-called brood joined legions of African American children who were forced to work so that white adults and children could go to school. The African American woman behind the plow and her children deserved a better lot in life than to have come Phillips's way.

Even "advice from a Negro neighbor" enabling Phillips to set his "course diagonally from one curving terrace-balk to another," which "went very well," was not for him a source of insight into African Americans as humans (124). Nor did he allow himself, from his own experience with cotton, to enter the inner life of slaves, under the Georgia sun, dragging cotton sacks through waves of humid air. He simply did not have it in him to appreciate the horror of the experience that slaves transmuted into song:

Oh, by and by, by and by,
I'm gonna lay down dis heaby load.
Oh, by and by, by and by,
I'm gonna lay down my heaby loady.

I know my robe's gwinna fit me well,
I'm gonna lay down my heaby load.
I tried it on at the gates of hell,
I'm gonna lay down dis heaby load.⁴

Although *American Negro Slavery* was indirectly dealt a succession of terrible blows by Du Bois over a period of years, for some time it remained the most influential book on slavery. Meanwhile, Phillips had gone from an instructorship at Wisconsin to a professorship at Michigan, and then on to a professorship at Yale in 1929. In that year, he received honorary doctorates from Columbia as well as from Yale, where he taught until 1934, a year before the appearance of Du Bois's *Black Reconstruction*. One of the finest works of history ever published in this country and the most impressive effort to bring philosophy to bear on the meaning of U.S. history, *Black Reconstruction* contains brilliant excursions into slavery and its aftermath (1976, chaps. 1–5, and 16). A radical intellectual for whom capitalism was distasteful and entry into U.S. society on white terms inconceivable, Du Bois was the consummate outsider. But it would be years before he and Aptheker met.

Having served as a major in field artillery and helped arrest Nazis, Aptheker returned from the war and, after securing the doctorate, was without a regular appointment, probably because he was Jewish and a member of the Communist Party. Within a few years, however, his contacts with historians interested in the kind of work he was doing could not have been better. Although being a Communist largely closed him off from colleagues in the universities of the forties and fifties, through his friendship with Carter G. Woodson and Du Bois, both of whom were excluded from teaching at white universities, Aptheker learned far more of their outsider status and that of their people than perhaps any other white historian of his time. In spite of their rejection by the Establishment, Woodson and Du Bois were preeminent in their field, which was essential for understanding the meaning of U.S. history.

In time, certainly by the fifties, no white historian was as greatly respected by African American scholars and artists as was Herbert Aptheker. Well before then, however, he was closely associated with Du Bois and, as early as 1937, shared important experiences with Woodson, the “father” of Negro history. Since whites and African Americans could only eat together at the counter in the Washington, D.C., Grand Central

Terminal, Woodson decided that he and Aptheker should go into the Negro section of the city to eat. Noticing Aptheker's apprehension at entering a Negro restaurant, Woodson reassured him by remarking, "We are civilized" (Aptheker 1997). No doubt his experiences with Du Bois and Woodson were in part responsible for Aptheker's being foremost among scholars protesting against conferences of historians to which African Americans were not invited as participants.

Despite Aptheker's sharp criticism of Du Bois's *Dusk of Dawn*, which appeared in 1940, the two men became close, Du Bois providing space for him in his NAACP office in New York with access to Du Bois's library and the right to "interrupt" him (Aptheker 1996). The key to understanding Du Bois's high regard for Aptheker's scholarship is found in this passage in *Black Folk Then and Now*:

The Negro has long been the clown of history; the football of anthropology; and the slave of industry. I am trying to show here why these attitudes can no longer be maintained. I realize that the truth of history lies not in the mouths of partisans but rather in the calm Science that sits in between. Her cause I seek to serve, and wherever I fail, I am at least paying Truth the respect of earnest effort. (1975, ix)

More than ten years later, in the preface to the *Documentary History*, Du Bois writes: "It is a dream come true to have the history of the Negro pursued in scientific documentary form." He added that the efforts of pioneers such as William C. Nell, Wells Brown, and George Washington Williams were received "with tolerance, but with little sympathy or comprehension," for it was thought that "Africans even in America had no record of thought or deed worth attention." Then came "the long hammering of Carter Woodson" and the "researches of a continuous line of students, African American and white, and especially the painstaking and thorough scholarship of Herbert Aptheker." According to Du Bois, despite attempts to "excuse the shame of slavery by stressing natural inferiority which would render it impossible for Negroes to make, much less leave, any record of revolt or struggle, any human reaction to utter degradation," a number of

scholars knew “of the existence of wide literature which contradicted such assumptions and efforts.” He contended that Aptheker had retrieved “from oblivion and loss the very words of scores of American Negroes who lived slavery, serfdom and quasi-freedom in the United States of America from the seventeenth to the twentieth century.” “For fifteen years,” Du Bois writes, “Dr. Aptheker has worked to find and select 450 documents to make an authentic record of what it meant to be a slave . . . and what it meant to be free after the Emancipation Proclamation.” Not usually known to offer much praise, Du Bois hastened “to greet the day of the appearance of this volume, as a milestone on the road to Truth” (1951).

On one occasion, his research took Aptheker to a hostile Southern archive—his combination of interest in African Americans and membership in the Communist Party was known to the archivist—to research slave revolts and the *Documentary History* that quickly became a classic. After he was officially rebuffed, an African American janitor said to be more knowledgeable than the archivist opened the archive to him on a Sunday and provided all materials relevant to his project.

The young scholar’s sensitive, tactful nature had led to an earlier friendship with another African American. At that time Aptheker, twenty-one, organizing against peonage and staying in a tenement house in Georgia, was urged by an African American who was cleaning the hallway: “Go home!” When Aptheker asked, “What did you say?” the African American, more loudly but without looking up, said: “Go home!” almost certainly in that racial climate saving young Aptheker’s life.

Nearly two decades later, during World War II, he asked to be assigned to African American troops in Louisiana following brutal repression of African American soldiers there who protested racism in the army. A number of months later, he led an *armed* company of African American troops through particularly racist Pollock, Louisiana, singing “John Brown’s Body!” He recently remarked, after laughing joyfully, that he had enjoyed the experience “so very much” (1997). Such military experiences should not be divorced from Aptheker’s relations with the historical profession any more than those of U. B. Phillips.

But how is such uncommon conviction to be explained? What forces helped shape Aptheker's opposition to racial injustice—to the enslavement of human beings? His conviction took root during his youth in Brooklyn. In fact, from the earliest time contact with African Americans was not unknown to him. A West Indian woman, hired by his well-to-do family, helped raise him, and his bond with her was strong and loving. Greatly respected by his mother, she was his most certain reference point when the humanity of African Americans was called into question, which, the youngster was to discover in time, would be often (Aptheker 1997).

While young Herbert was in high school, a riveting event occurred. His attention was caught by the sight of a man with a megaphone on a truck which carried another man in a cage. Leaflets were being distributed to bystanders. The strangely symbolic protest concerned the death sentence of Angelo Herndon, an African American man jailed for organizing a march against hunger in Georgia during the Depression. This was as decisive an experience politically as Aptheker had growing up, and one that he could no more have grasped immediately than have forgotten. He puzzled over it for some time before its meaning began coming through, thanks mainly to a visit South with his father. The first stop was in Washington, D.C., where Jim Crow signs were on display in public places. South of the nation's capitol in an area in which African Americans were clad in rags, Aptheker befriended an African American youngster by offering him a cookie. Wanting the gift but afraid to take it, the youth took a bite as Aptheker held it out to him, the boy's mother looking on distrustfully, arms akimbo. Aptheker could not reconcile such events with pledging allegiance to the flag and, on returning North, made them the basis of a series of articles in the Erasmus High School paper (1997).

As a high school teacher in Chicago in 1962, I ordered copies of Aptheker's *Documentary History* for my students, many of them from the projects that still line State Street, and there was such intellectual excitement about the book that a number of the students had me order copies for their parents. It was a time when African American self-hatred was such that Negro history was not generally appreciated in public schools, to say nothing

of universities and colleges. About twenty of my students, knowing their Du Bois and Aptheker, were members of the Student Advocates of Negro History. During the boycott of Chicago schools in the fall of 1964, when over two hundred thousand African American students, answering the call for "quality education," boycotted the schools, the Student Advocates were active in "Freedom Schools" in African American churches on the south side of the city for the duration of the boycott. Teaching Negro history in the Freedom Schools with the *Documentary History* a principal text, these students were among the first anywhere to be exposed to history from the bottom up.

Such a breakthrough, however, was made by Aptheker with *American Negro Slave Revolts* a quarter of a century before historians in this country, spurred on by the protests of the sixties, began considering the merits of such history. Du Bois thought the *Documentary History* marked yet another departure from the history of elites, and he provided some sense of the gravity of the problem: "We have the record of kings and gentlemen ad nauseam and in stupid detail; but of the common run of human beings, and particularly of the half or wholly submerged working group, the world has saved all too little of authentic record and tried to forget or ignore even the little saved" (1951, i).

The thoroughness of Aptheker's research into the circumstances and meaning of slave revolts and conspiracies meant exposure to a body of data that many scholars, for various reasons, would prefer never to face up to.⁵ And we may be certain there was that period in which work on the *Documentary* was underway even before he realized it, materials for it falling into certain categories as they were filed away in memory. At such times, his research into slavery led him beyond the limits of his dissertation, which helped lay the foundation for the most important documentary history of African Americans that has yet been done. Taken together, *American Negro Slave Revolts* and *Documentary History* constitute a contribution to history from the bottom up that is second to none. Writing in the Introduction of his *Documentary History*, Aptheker had this to say: "These are the words of the very great and the very obscure; these are the words of the mass. This is how they felt; this is what they

saw; this is what they wanted.” That is history for Aptheker, the endurance of the masses, their resistance forming “the body” of history (vii).

Though there would be more impressive volumes in time, the first volume of the *Documentary History* is a masterpiece of research, its subject matter the stuff of which the spine of history is formed. Aptheker does a superb job in editing one of the great speeches in U.S. history. Unsurpassed for its combination of elegance and power, Frederick Douglass’s “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” offers a spiritual mirror into which the nation might peer. By removing a number of references to formalities of the occasion to highlight Douglass’s genius at exposing contradictions, Aptheker raises the floodgates and allows the current of Douglass’s thought to gain in strength before emptying into the rushing waters of resistance. Even as we recall the full text, Aptheker’s sifting gives more, not less, meaning to the document’s ultimate thrust.

Certainly, when volume one appeared, David Walker and Martin Delany, major figures in the nation’s history, to say nothing of Robert Alexander Young and John Copeland, were known to very few college graduates and professors of history. Indeed, even leaders among African Americans were part of the anonymous masses, their profiles no higher than those of the most ordinary African Americans. Aptheker, then, played a major role in the recovery of African American leaders as well as those led. In addition, he presented texts without concern that some of the authors were nationalists. Thus, he writes of Martin Delany’s *Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered* (1852): “The feeling of nationality which pervades the work is particularly noteworthy,” and documentation is rich in which interest in Africa is unmistakable (Aptheker 1951, 326). That dimension represents another aspect of history from the bottom up, since slaveholders made such an effort to convince slaves that Black Africa had no history, a theme trumpeted in academic circles until recently.

Of documents that might have been represented in Aptheker’s documentary, only James McCune Smith’s *Introduction to*

Henry Highland Garnet's Memorial Address before Congress (1865) would seem of such unquestioned import that it might have been included. It is perhaps unrivaled for its insights into how African Americans from various parts of the diaspora were shaping themselves into a single people culturally in the North, and for the light it throws on that remarkable group of African American youths who attended the New York African Free School in the 1820s—Garnet, McCune Smith, Ira Aldridge, Alexander Crummel, Charles L. Reason, and Thomas S. Sidney. But the McCune Smith document continues to be overlooked since Aptheker published his *Documentary History* nearly half a century ago. Of the documentaries that have been published since the early fifties, only Dorothy Porter's *Early Negro Writing* (1971) deserves mention in the same breath as the Aptheker volume. Of a different order and fulfilling a different need, of course, is the fine multivolume work of Philip Foner, *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass* (1950–1975). For a work of its kind, the Aptheker volume stands alone.

The guiding principle of Aptheker's study of slave resistance is that insurrection is like "the flash of lightning that told of the profounder atmospheric disturbance creating it" (1974, 3). *American Negro Slave Revolts*, then, is a study of both slave revolts and of slavery as an institution, with Aptheker systematically exploring conditions that bear on slave disaffection, illuminating the institution by concentrating on phenomena important to its preservation. Economic downturns that depressed slave living standards still further, slave awareness of revolts elsewhere, surges of radicalism by whites determined to improve their lot—such matters and more led to plans of revolt and to eruptions of violence. In fact, no other study of slavery has so imaginatively revealed connections between resistance and catalytic circumstances in time. This interplay marks it off from others. In addition, it is a measure of Aptheker's respect for slave ingenuity that he does not make the fatal mistake of assuming that slave culture was either woefully deficient or nonexistent.

It is to his credit that he does not make the claim, damaging to studies of slavery, that slaves were mainly Christian. Although Aptheker is not a cultural historian, that insight alone elevates

his work above the confusion that reigns in this area of scholarship. He is cogently brief on the matter, writing that attending church with whites was considered a chore by most slaves. Not arguing that all masters were cruel to the same degree, he believes that “cruelty was characteristic of the institution of American Negro slavery,” a position that is supported by slave testimony in all of its forms. Aptheker writes, almost certainly with Phillips in mind, that those holding the view that “kindliness [was] the rule . . . tend to base it upon a theoretical proposition which they appear to believe is self-evident and need merely be stated to have its truth immediately and universally recognized” (131).

The belief that slaves overwhelmingly rejected the institution is supported by slave folklore, which offers no support for the view, which Aptheker rejects, that paternalism was a significant factor in slave-master relations. The relationship of folklore to the field of slavery is implicit in a remark by L. D. Reddick, who in *The Journal of Negro History* in 1939 observed that

there are but two important aspects of the field unexplored. First, there is need for a thorough study of the attempts to break the system by the slaves through suicide, flight, individual resistance and group insurrection. Secondly, there is not yet a picture of the institution as seen through eyes of the bondsman himself. (cited in Aptheker 1974, 17)

By not introducing the cultural contexts of slave resistance, specifically the role of spirituality and art appropriate to slave sensibility, and how such culture affected resistance—the one missing element of interaction that might deepen our understanding of resistance and its sources—Aptheker reveals a deficiency, perhaps most notably in his treatment of the Denmark Vesey conspiracy that occurred in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1822.⁶ And yet, again wisely, he does not argue that slave culture was of no consequence relative to resistance. Nor does he make the more egregious error of arguing that African Americans somehow derived their values, to the extent they had any of worth, from whites. Thus, his main arguments in *American Negro Slave Revolts* are propounded without violating one’s

sense of the humanity of enslaved African Americans and are not undermined by far-reaching advances in the past two decades in scholarship on slave culture.

Sixteen years after the publication of *Slave Revolts* and three years after the publication of *The Peculiar Institution* by Kenneth Stampp (1956), Stanley Elkins in *Slavery* (1969) made an effort to rehabilitate Phillips—in part, no doubt, because his Sambo thesis resonated so nicely with Phillips’s depiction of slave personality. Indeed, Phillips was the first major historian to offer the image of the slave as childlike, laughing through his tears. That the principal difference between Phillips and Elkins on slavery is that Phillips writes of a benign institution and Elkins of one that was harshly exploitative does not conceal the fact that both were wrong on slave character and personality, thereby misinterpreting other features of the institution such as its meaning and legacy in American life.⁷ Although he failed on both counts, Elkins calculated correctly that to resurrect Phillips Aptheker must somehow be buried. Like William Styron later, he failed in the attempt because he played fast and loose with both documentation and interpretation.

Elkins writes that the Aptheker volume “can offer nothing but this kind of ‘evidence’—fear of subversion—for a multitude of ‘revolts’ that never materialized” (1969, 221). It is not surprising that, in criticizing the work, he avoids meaningful discussion of its opening chapter, the powerful “The Fear of Rebellion.” This chapter is so deeply researched, so often reveals the fear of rebellion at the highest rungs of Southern society—indeed, at the highest rungs of the nation—that one cannot begin to understand the slaveholder or slavery without taking it seriously. To be sure, the accumulation of evidence of fear in *Slave Revolts* builds to such a point that either there was a basis in reality for fear of resistance or much of the white South went through cycles of paranoia that did not reduce delusions but enhanced them. Aptheker’s evidence of tensions growing out of slave-white relations is related to Thomas Jefferson’s fear, passed down over time, of the “firebell in the night,” which might signal “the extermination of one or the other race” (1984a, 1434; 1984b, 264). It is precisely this relationship that he establishes, quoting

Jefferson on the Missouri debates that led to the memorable phrase concerning the firebell and the possible sundering of the nation. Especially relevant for our purpose is the vital passage Aptheker quotes from a statement by Jefferson in 1822:

If Congress has the power to regulate the conditions of the inhabitants of the States, it will be but another exercise of that power to declare that all shall be free. Are we then to see again Athenian and Lacedaemonian confederacies? To wage another Peloponnesian war to settle the ascendancy between them? Or is this the tocsin of merely a servile war? That remains to be seen; but not, I hope, by you or me. (1974, 270 n, 20)⁸

Moreover, rumors of slave disaffection are so pervasive in the sources that not to take them into account, or to attempt to depreciate their importance, in the fashion of Elkins, is to minimize the degree of tension between slave and master that fear of conspiracies and revolt calls to attention. Such an agitated state of mind by whites is related to expressions of rage that took violent form when resistance, whether individual or collective, occurred. The bloody heads atop chimneys and on poles for public viewing are horrid signs, as Aptheker suggests, that whites were trying to exorcise their fear by terrorizing African Americans. The study of this pathology (Aptheker clearly considers it such) remains to be done.

In addition to concern about a possible cataclysm, there is enough documentation of other forms of resistance, including the killing of whites by slaves, to prove that hatred of slaveholders had some basis in reality. It is a reasonable conclusion that a combination of paranoid fear and reasoned alarm drove the slaveholder activity recounted in the chapter entitled “The Machinery of Control.” That machinery always had to be poised, although slaves were not always thinking of resistance—nor, even when they were, were they usually prepared (considering the odds) to act on such thoughts. Matters were further complicated: not only did Southern whites have no one thing to fear from African Americans, no single line of fear could be traced back to any moment in slave-master relations. Jefferson was right to

remind Southerners of “ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained.” Under such circumstances, the slavemaster lived with the fear of coming “convulsions,” to use Jefferson’s term. And that is precisely the context—Jefferson uses the word “circumstances”—that Aptheker brilliantly establishes in discussing slave resistance and white responses (Jefferson 1984b, 138).

Elkins attempted to revive Phillips at a time when historians were in agreement that Phillips had been overthrown. Yet in *Slavery* Elkins argues approvingly that Phillips “showed the institution through Southern eyes” and was “guided by scholarly standards,” making “it possible for the subject to be debated on scholarly grounds.” Perhaps it did not occur to him that there was a African American as well as a white South. In any case, he thinks that masterful scholarship was Phillips’s achievement despite Phillips’s conclusion that African Americans were not fully human. Elkins writes:

The basic assumption in *American Negro Slavery* was that of innate and inherited racial inferiority. There is no malice toward the Negro in Phillips’s work. Phillips was deeply fond of Negroes as a people; it was just that he couldn’t take them seriously as men and women: they were children. (1969, 10)⁹

We again get a glimpse of Phillips’s type in *Benito Cereno* in Melville’s description of Captain Delano: “In fact, like most men of a good, blithe heart, Captain Delano took to negroes, not philanthropically, but genially, just as other men to Newfoundland dogs” (1986, 213).

Elkins writes that Phillips’s

approach to the subject involved the most painstaking and responsible scholarship; it was necessary, he thought, to go to the sources . . . he paid little attention to travelers’ accounts, since these accounts were intolerably distorted by antislavery bias. The true sources for the subject—the sources from which the full flavor of plantation life might be evoked—were the actual plantation records. (1969, 10–11)

Evidently a proslavery bias accorded with Phillips's scholarly standards.

Slaves kept their own records, however, in their folklore, which was profoundly at odds with the "flavor of plantation life." Consider these lines from one of the great slave songs, one that clearly distinguishes between the values of the master and those of the slave, and warns of what novelist James Baldwin refers to as "cosmic vengeance" (1993, 105):

Poor man Laz'rus, poor as I,
Don't you see?
Poor man Laz'rus, poor as I,
Don't you see?
Poor man Laz'rus, poor as I,
When he died he found a home on high,
He had a home in dat rock,
Don't you see?

Rich man Dives, he lived so well,
Don't you see,
Rich man Dives, he lived so well,
Don't you see?
Rich man Dives, he lived so well,
When he died he found a home in Hell,
He had no home in dat rock,
Don't you see?

God gave Noah de Rainbow sign,
Don't you see?
God gave Noah de Rainbow sign,
Don't you see?
God gave Noah de Rainbow sign,
No more water but fire next time,
Better get a home in dat rock,
Don't you see?¹⁰

In addition to the spirituality and analytic force of such songs, Elkins's problem is revealed in documentation he uses to establish Sambo as a historical type. Although the conception of

slaves as children, vital to the Phillips myth, was seldom believed in or employed by leading theorists of the South, slaves were routinely referred to as “boy” and “girl,” the master knowing perfectly well they were not, and that is where the element of calculated cruelty entered. What the slave thought of such cruelty is hardly a concern of Elkins, but the concern was real for them and their descendants.¹¹

As evidence of slaves being regarded as boys and girls, Elkins offers a few quotes, one being: “The negro is a child in his nature and the white man is to him as a father.” Its source, we are told, is “an anonymous Southerner.” To further support his Sambo thesis, he relies on John Pendleton Henry’s *Swallow Barn* and other Southern sources, and writes that it would be a mistake to think the whip was mainly responsible for Sambo’s “finer shades” of personality, for his “performance” that won “sweet applause.” Elkins thinks nothing so crude could achieve the “sincerity and feeling” that “melted all hearts.” We are told that many “performances” were observed and a great deal of labor was “lavished upon this chef d’oeuvre,” “touch after touch” through the years, “and the result—embodied not in the unfeeling law but in the richest layers of Southern lore—had been the product of an exquisitely rounded collective creativity.” Elkins argues: “Here was the ante-bellum form of a now-venerable debate—the debate over Sambo” (1969, 131, 132, 192)¹²

Attention has been called to such examples of research and interpretation to give some indication of what Aptheker and other students of slavery were up against by the close of the fifties. There is certainly irony here, for while Elkins rejects the relevance of morality to the debate over slavery, no historian in our time has contributed more than he has to keeping the moral debate alive. In fact, he presents Sambo as historical with less attention to Negro sources than Phillips, failing to present anything even approaching credible evidence. And there is no attempt to acknowledge Phillips’s lack of methodology on Sambo, one supposes, because Elkins needed Sambo for his own sense of interracial relations in slavery. Shortly after the appearance of *American Negro Slavery*, however, Du Bois

described it as “a readable book but one curiously incomplete and unfortunately biased.” In his opinion: “Nowhere is there any adequate conception of ‘darkies,’ ‘niggers’ and ‘negroes’ (words liberally used throughout the book) as making a living mass of humanity with all the usual human reactions” (1918, 722).¹³

An admirer of Elkins is at odds with him on slave resistance, but it is not certain that novelist William Styron is aware of the difference. Nor does he seem aware of the difference that he has with himself on the question. While violence by a single slave or by small numbers of slaves against whites apparently does not constitute “evidence” for Elkins, such violence concerns Styron. In fact, he writes that Aptheker demonstrates that “murderous violence” against whites “*abounded* from Delaware to Texas,” but in the next paragraph denies such violence was “characteristic.” For acts of violence to exist “in great quantities,” for slavery to “teem with” such violence, as any definition of *abounded* tells us, does not in Styron’s opinion amount to a distinguishing feature—to being “characteristic”—of the institution of slavery. On the contrary, he argues that Aptheker, by claiming that “discontent and rebelliousness were not only exceedingly common, but, indeed, characteristic of American Negro slaves,” indulges “in distortion.” To buttress this opinion, however, it is Styron who distorts by ignoring Aptheker’s carefully framed definition of what constituted rebellion, and by further qualifying the word by certifying acts of “*true* rebelliousness” (1963, 19; emphases added).¹⁴

If “murderous violence” against whites was as pervasive as Styron contends, how greatly does it matter that there were, as he alleges, but few “true” rebellions? Would not those instances of violence that he concedes, and that Aptheker’s sources confirm, call into question the pervasive Sambo presence with which Phillips-Elkins-Styron are at ease? Actually, Sambo poses insurmountable problems in nearly every area of slavery, not least with respect to slave labor. Though conditions of that labor are of great interest to Aptheker as relevant to slave resistance and, therefore, to the slave’s self-conception, Elkins does not explain how slave work could occur under conditions of unrestrained brutality, nor does Styron, despite their alleged interest in

slavery. But one can understand this failing in both cases, for their depictions of slave character and personality rule out the possibility of slave labor as we have known it. Basing himself on flights of glaring imagination, Styron refers to “many millions of slaves, reduced to the status of children, illiterate, tranquillized, totally defenseless, ciphers and ants.” His lack of preparation leads him to argue that slaves were reduced to such a state by “a capitalist super-machine which managed to cow and humble an entire people with a ruthless efficiency unparalleled in history” (19).¹⁵

One notes that Styron’s conclusions regarding slave personality are as deficient as the numbers he summons to give them force; referring to Nat Turner’s 1831 revolt, and greatly outdoing Elkins, his enthusiastic “many millions of other slaves” leaves no slaves able to join Turner in rebellion. Seeking to strengthen his attack against Aptheker, and oblivious to what he has posited earlier, he compounds matters still more:

In his brilliant analysis, *Slavery*[,] Stanley Elkins has demonstrated what must have been the completely traumatizing effect upon the psyche of this uniquely brutal system, which so dehumanized the slave and divested him of honor, moral responsibility, and manhood. The character (not characterization) of “Sambo,” shiftless, wallowing in the dust, was no cruel figment of the imagination, Southern or Northern, but did in truth exist. (19)

Having switched gears, Styron has oppression subduing all before it, reducing humans to such a state of helplessness that they are incapable of “murderous violence.” It is a conception of human nature, and of what we know of slavery, that is not convincing. A more complex reality is captured by Elma Stuckey in “Scars and Stripes”:

I seen ’em whipped and branded too,
And strung up in the trees,
I seen a many baby sold,
Ole Marse do what he please.

My head is full of Marsa's scars,
My back is full of stripes,
And I am even branded too,
But I wiped out my gripes.

I took my chance and grabbed his gun
And held it very steady,
Blowed off his head, I got to run—
They look for me already. (1976, 52)

The individual act of rebellion sent forth currents of fear and at times assumed the dimensions of legend, as with the “bad or crazy nigger,” here portrayed in Stuckey’s “Rebel:”

I break the hoe, I break the plow
And here he come, that hellion.
I say right then unto myself,
This a one-man rebellion.

I stand foursquare and face Ole Marse,
He call me crazy nigger,
I rush him and I take his gun
And then I pull the trigger.

My time is come and I don't care
If they hang me from a tree,
By bein' crazy like a fox
I sent Marse 'head of me. (43)

When the controversy broke concerning Styron’s *Confessions of Nat Turner*, Aptheker entered the debate against Styron, which was to be expected since Nat Turner was the subject of his master’s thesis at Columbia. In a relatively brief article, he easily demolished Styron’s novel on historical grounds, which was appropriate since Styron played historian in his *New York Review of Books* critique of *American Negro Slave Revolts*, and in promoting his book claimed that he had deeply researched the subject of slavery, including the history of the institution in Virginia. Styron’s “Author’s Note,” Aptheker reminds us, reads: “I have rarely departed from the known facts about Nat Turner and

the revolt of which he was leader.” He shows that Styron’s departures were gross and writes that he is “confident that the rejection of ‘Sambo’ is accurate.” In addition, he correctly identifies the Negro as beast as more characteristic of Southern white lore than a conception of the Negro as a child, and calls to our attention important relationships: “The fictional image of the Dunning school was *The Clansman*; the fictional image of the Phillips school was *Gone With the Wind*; the fictional image of the Elkins school is William Styron’s *The Confessions of Nat Turner*” (1971, 83, 84).¹⁶

There existed in this country a slave community with more spiritual resilience and energy than that of the master class, and there is nothing in Aptheker’s work that is at variance with this thesis. Not only was that community the creative force in the Southern economy, its artistic achievements were of crucial importance to the development of modern culture. Moreover, during the American Revolution, as Edmund Morgan has shown, the labor performed by slaves was vital to the liberty of whites (1965).¹⁷ One finds it impossible to agree with Elkins and Styron that slaves embraced the cultural values of their masters, because slave masters had so little to show in the way of spiritual values, a view that courses through almost everything that Aptheker has written on slavery and race relations.

In a comment not unrelated to Aptheker’s work, art historian Robert F. Thompson addresses the long-term value of slave culture and raises an issue of methodological value for students of slavery. Referring to West African musical continuities such as call-and-response, emphasis on the percussive concept in music, and phrasing of melodic accents in off-beat fashion, Thompson finds that such attributes “reappear in the United States” in “the work song and the ring shout” of the slave:

Indeed, from the further development of the work song and the ring shout have arisen the basic café musics of the world in the twentieth century. The triumph of jazz and the blues indicates that something is wrong somewhere with the theory of slaves rejecting their meaningless past for the cultural standards of their master. (1969, 126)¹⁸

Since the foundations of two of the most important musical forms in modern world history, jazz and the blues, were laid in slavery, and since the sacred dance of the slave has been important in the development of “secular” dance forms, the Charleston being the supreme example, it is incorrect to argue that virtually no slaves possessed spiritual autonomy. And since the sort of autonomy that leads to the creation of new cultural forms has social implications that bear on resistance of the type discussed by Aptheker, much of slave art reveals the consciousness of the slaves who resented slavery. The art of the slave, especially sacred song and dance, is mainly about discontent and its uses in countering slavery. Aptheker’s contention that slaves, overwhelmingly, were discontented is exactly on the mark. This reality no doubt explains his endorsement, in the late sixties, of the new emphasis on slave folklore, which he places in a context that is worth quoting in full:

Contemporary evidence—newspapers, court records, journals, diaries, letters, speeches—make crystal clear to anyone who views black men as human beings that American Negro slavery was a monstrously cruel system of exploitation and that its victims despised it and sought in every way possible to oppose it. Most meant also, of course, to live through it, and survival is a form of struggle. But everything—from songs to tales, from heroes to villains, from religion . . . to action—shows that the central idea and the never absent dream was to end slavery, to be free. (1974, 2–3)

American Negro Slave Revolts opened a chapter in the writing of U.S. history that could not be closed. Its use of a single standard for African Americans and whites in treating the question of freedom strikes at the heart of U.S. hypocrisy on freedom for African Americans. “Which humans are dogs and monsters depends,” Aptheker has written, “upon class and, often, upon nationality, too.” Thus, he writes that “early in the summer of 1831, the U.S. press was lavish in its praise of Polish rebels against tsarist oppression; none was more lavish than the Southern press.” With the Nat Turner uprising in late August,

however, the rebels were not “sons of the noble” but “banditti, blood-thirsty wolves and deluded wretches.” He asks a fateful question: “How shall one explain this extraordinary shift except to observe that now the rebels were at home, not six thousand miles away, and that now the rebels were not white, but black?” (1974, 1). Instead of the typical view that African Americans put up little in the way of struggle and when they did they were evil, Aptheker argues as clearly as anyone has that during slavery African American men killed white men and it was good. No doubt it was this aspect of his scholarship, as much as any other, that so impressed Richard Wright that, on meeting him, the great novelist expressed the desire “to kiss the hand of the man who wrote *American Negro Slave Revolts*” (Aptheker 1997).

Not only an unusual measure of skill has gone into Aptheker’s scholarship, but an equal measure of moral courage. Indeed, his brand of courage helps define and explain his scholarship and is related to an extraordinary sensitivity and ability to reach out to others. Those who know him know that to be in his presence is to be in the presence of a man who takes in everything around him. They also know that he is as free of racism in interpersonal relations as he is in scholarship.

But such convictions led to problems not yet referred to. Following a speech at Chapel Hill in 1947 in which he called attention to the all-white audience, he was attacked by a group of white men and left unconscious. Since he is known to be prompt for appointments, friends of his came looking for him and found him, a few hundred yards from the university, lying in a field (Aptheker 1996).

A decade later, I was invited to the Du Bois residence. Then in internal exile, denied the right to travel out of the country, Du Bois had for years been the object of persecution that had not ceased. Charged with being an agent of a foreign power, this prophetic soul was handcuffed, but finally acquitted. Denied the right to speak on college campuses throughout the fifties and not supported by the academic community or by his own people, some of whom publicly opposed him, Du Bois said he had bent but had not broken. That was evident within a year of his departure from the United States for Ghana. At Dunbar High School in

Chicago, wearing a white formal jacket and bow tie, he quietly delivered his remarks, at one moment extending his arm with clenched fist. He was about ninety. Having made Aptheker the executor of his papers, it was not long thereafter that he decided to leave for Ghana, to which he had been invited by Kwame Nkrumah. And it was Aptheker and his wife Fay who were called to gather Dr. Du Bois and Shirley Graham at 31 Grace Court for their departure for Africa, from which Du Bois did not return.

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NOTES

10. Volume one of this work was divided and first printed in two parts in 1951. The first volume covers the period "From Colonial Times through the Civil War," and the second covers "From the Reconstruction Era to 1910." Although the second part is brilliantly done, I focus on the first (hereinafter referred to as *Documentary History*) because it so directly concerns slavery, my main subject here. While no attempt will be made to go beyond these texts (and his output has been vast) in evaluating Aptheker as a historian, these alone are sufficient for us to begin to gauge his lasting worth as a scholar.

11. With Phillips's blindness to the humanity of Africans, one would not expect him to pioneer understanding of the uses to which African work skills were put in North American slavery. In any event, despite Park's mention of cotton and iron in discussing West African trade, Phillips does not note that West Africans were smelting iron and cultivating cotton.

12. Phillips's description of the problems he encountered in the cotton fields recalls Du Bois's reference to "the gift of sweat and brawn to beat back the wilderness, conquer the soil and lay the foundations of this vast economic empire two hundred years earlier than your weak hands could have done it" (1969, 275).

13. Lyrics taken from Paul Robeson's performance of the song "By 'N' By," *The Power and the Glory*, Columbia compact disc CK 47337.

14. This research formed the basis for his dissertation, later published as the exemplary *American Negro Slave Revolts* (1943; rpt. 1974).

15. Aptheker fails to consider the ethnic dimension of the Vesey conspiracy that Robert Starobin, nearly three decades later, introduces into the discussion, in the process disproving the thesis that African ethnic forms cannot be studied in North America as late as the nineteenth century. But there has since been virtual silence about Starobin's superb contribution to our understanding of slave resistance and culture. See Starobin 1970, 1–9. See also Stuckey 1987, 1–97, for treatment of African ethnicity in nineteenth-century U.S. slavery.

16. Eugene Genovese lavishes praise on Phillips—some would say far too much—but rejects Phillips’s racism. Moreover, Genovese has attempted to give flesh and bone to the barely sketched conception of master-slave reciprocity within Phillips’s paternalistic model. See Genovese’s introduction to Phillips’s *American Negro Slavery* (1966).

17. Jefferson expressed similar concerns a generation before the Missouri Compromise. He wrote in 1793, “It is high time we should foresee the bloody scenes which our children certainly, and possibly ourselves (south of Potomac), have to wade through, & try to avert them” (Aptheker 1974, 42). In large measure, John Randolph shared Jefferson’s concern when writing that Virginia slaves “exhibited a spirit, which, if it becomes general, must deluge the Southern country in blood. They manifested a sense of their rights, and contempt of danger, and a thirst for revenge which portend the most unhappy consequences” (cited in Cabell 1922, 2:250). Robert McColley notes that “Randolph,” after the Gabriel conspiracy, “was thereafter possessed by the idea of a slave rebellion. In 1813, he protested against the withdrawal of militia from his neighborhood for service against the British, because of ‘the danger from an *internal foe*, augmented by the removal of so large a portion of our force” (McColley 1964, 109).

18. This was but one example of Phillips, “guided by scholarly standards,” in the opinion of Elkins, providing “principled opposition” (1969, 11). But Elkins is naive if he thinks Phillips or any other Southerner thought African Americans children. In a chapter entitled “The Maritime Slave Trade,” Phillips wrote: “In previous years grown slaves alone brought standard prices; but in Moore’s time a specially strong demand for boys and girls in the markets of Cadiz and Lisbon had raised the prices” (1959, 28).

19. Lyrics from “I Got a Home in Dat Rock” (Brown, Davis, and Lee 1941, 435–36).

20. Poet Elma Stuckey has captured the African American point of view in “Boy”:

I’s e eighty year old and my name is Boy,
Ain’t had no fun, but I’s e had joy,
Had my joy when Marsa died,
When I wailed and moaned and laughed inside. (1976, 14)

The sons of the masters continued the practice of calling African American adults “boy” and “girl.” When a white man in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1937 at the Firestone Rubber Company, called Hobart Johnson “boy,” Johnson hit the man with the palm of his hand with such force that he knocked him down. Oliver Johnson, the nephew of Hobart Johnson, related the incident to the author in the summer of 1993. An elderly member of his church who worked at Firestone with Hobart told Oliver about the incident.

21. Venerable? His “rich layers of Southern lore” are shown by Sterling A. Brown to be laughably sad. See Brown 1991–1992; see also Brown 1969. In this regard, it should be noted that historian Peter Kolchin’s observations (1987) on slave folklore and character alternate between being either sadly

wrong or simplistic mouthings from a time when the subject was virtually unknown to U.S. historians.

22. Interestingly, Du Bois notes that “from the fourteenth to the twentieth century Mr. Phillips sees no essential change” in the Africans’ “characteristics” (723).

23. In 1858, the State of Texas defined slave insurrection as “an assemblage of three or more, with arms, with intent to obtain their liberty by force.” Aptheker’s definition is a good deal more rigorous: “a minimum of ten slaves is involved; freedom as the apparent aim of the disaffected slaves; contemporary references labeling the event as an uprising, plot, insurrection, or the equivalent of these terms,” excluding “the scores of outbreaks and plots that occurred upon domestic or foreign slave-traders” (1974, 162).

24. Styron argues that slaves in their entirety were “tranquilized” at the same time that he argues that Aptheker “makes a good case against the theory of universal content and docility among the slaves.” His estimate of “many millions” of slaves at the time of Nat Turner’s revolt in 1831 compounds the confusion, for the census of the previous year lists the total number of slaves at 2,009,043 (*Fifth Census* 1832, 168).

25. Eugene Genovese’s defense of Styron’s *Confessions* is more interesting than the novel itself (1968; Wells, Harding, Thelwell, and Genovese 1968). The Styron book is overmatched by *Black Thunder*, Arna Bontemps’s masterly novel of the Gabriel Prosser conspiracy (1968).

26. “To a large degree it may be said that Americans bought their independence with slave labor” (Morgan 1975, 5). The work of Peter Wood on slave labor puts all manner of questions, a number that are unanswerable, to the Phillips-Elkins-Styron school, for Woods shows that Africans brought work skills, among them skills at cultivating rice, into slavery that were crucial to the economy of South Carolina (1974, chaps. 2 and 7).

27. Again we see how racism doomed any insight Phillips might otherwise have had into slave culture. With characteristic chuckle and blindness, he wrote of roustabouts on the Mississippi:

Should anyone in the twentieth century wish to see the old-fashioned prime negro at his best, let him take a Mississippi steamboat and watch the roustabouts at work—those chaffing and chattering, singing and swinging, lusty and willing freight handlers, whom a river captain plying out of New Orleans has called the noblest black men God ever made. (1959, 292)

Of course, it would not have occurred to Phillips, who thought roustabout labor was meant “merely to loosen their muscles and lighten their spirits,” that something was occurring that was important to the development of the blues. It is, in fact, a point that André Malraux has made: “The first great music of Africa does not sing of a lost or even an unknown paradise, but of a very simple, very ordinary human happiness wrested forever from the unfortunate men who improvised songs on the banks of the Mississippi” (1966, 30).

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The Historical Scholarship of Herbert Aptheker

Eric Foner, Jesse Lemisch, and Manning Marable

From a discussion at the Institute for Research in African American Studies at Columbia University, 30 October 1996

Eric Foner: This is Eric Foner, and I'm here with Professor Jesse Lemisch and Professor Manning Marable for our discussion of the historical scholarship of Herbert Aptheker. I am professor of history here at Columbia University. Jesse Lemisch is professor of history at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in the City University of New York, and Manning Marable is professor of history and director of the Institute for Research in African-American Studies at Columbia University. Let me begin by simply asking if anybody would like to talk about the impact of Herbert Aptheker's work on their own scholarship. To what extent have Aptheker's writings influenced your own? Would anyone like to say anything about that?

Manning Marable: For an entire generation of young African-Americans, our entry into learning about our own people's experience in this country was Herbert's *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*. There is no way that I can describe the extraordinary impact it had for young African Americans growing up in this country in the fifties and sixties. It was a constant reference work. Far more profoundly influential than Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, it gave us a concrete sense of the voices of Black protest throughout history. It provided a

living connection with Frederick Douglass and with W. E. B. Du Bois, with Martin Delany and Henry Highland Garnet. It gave us a sense of political continuity and possibility. And it also gave me, as an undergraduate student in the late sixties, a sense that history could be a profession where the critical rethinking of the past might shape possibilities for the future. Herbert Aptheker's work symbolized that effort to combine a scholarly pursuit with a political vision, based on understanding how people create their own history through struggle.

Jesse Lemisch: Preparing for today's discussion, I thought about Herbert's direct influence on my work and on the work of others as well, not only through his books, but also through his pamphlets—for example, *Laureates of Imperialism*, and his work on Gunnar Myrdal, C. Wright Mills, and others. My book, *On Active Service in War and Peace: Politics and Ideology in the American Historical Profession* (1975), was directly influenced by the example of Herbert as intellectual historian detecting and taking apart ideology in the social sciences, particularly liberal ideology. Turning to his books, in particular *American Negro Slave Revolts*, I think that, for me, Herbert was Eric Hobsbawm, and George Rudé, and E. P. Thompson before I got to Hobsbawm, Rudé, and Thompson. I see this influence very directly in my dissertation, "Jack Tar vs. John Bull: The Role of New York's Seamen in Precipitating the Revolution" (1962; Garland Publishing, 1997). In *American Negro Slave Revolts*, Herbert talks about "individual acts of resistance," and finds in slaves an alternate moral code. Hobsbawm addresses related themes, though in a somewhat different way. But at that point, I'm at Yale as a graduate student, and nobody is telling me anything about Hobsbawm, not to mention the potentially enormous relevance of his work for American history. Hobsbawm's notions—"primitive rebels" and "pre-political rebellion"—are very clearly foreshadowed, albeit in somewhat rough form, in Aptheker. The Rudé component in Aptheker is the notion that we should take the mob seriously, that we should see the rationality in violent behavior, and should look for the politics that are being expressed through riot. Aptheker, like Rudé, writes at a

time when LeBon is still the dominant lens through which others see the crowd. With Aptheker, you have the assumption of rationality and the pursuit of causality.

Aptheker tells us about what Thompson would later call “agency,” which is, after all, the central New Left notion. The great irony in Aptheker is that this notion emerges from a Stalinist party that believes in iron-bound determinism. And yet, popular front ideology presents ideas of struggle. There is much to be said about Aptheker’s work on slavery itself, but I do want to put his influence in the broadest context: I believe that it prepared me for Thompson and the others, and later meshed with the experience of agency in the Movement of the sixties.

Eric Foner: Let me just say that the way I encountered Herbert’s work was a little different from the two of you because I didn’t have to discover Herbert Aptheker. He was there, in that his books were in my house as I was growing up. His particular portrait of history was very much just taken for granted in the kind of Old Left household that I grew up in. *The Documentary History of the Negro People* was on our shelf, as were *American Negro Slave Revolts* and some of his books of essays on the abolitionist movement. The notion of lower-class people exercising agency in history was simply taken for granted. Like Jesse, I found it quite surprising when I became a history major at Columbia and then a graduate student that his work was totally unknown. Well, not unknown, but it was not taught. People knew about the book *American Negro Slave Revolts*, but the general point of view was that it was grossly exaggerated, that he had magnified little incidents into rebellions. The only scholar who adopted a different point of view was James P. Shenton, who actually assigned the book in a seminar that I took, to my good fortune, as an undergraduate, on the Civil War period. We actually read the book and took it seriously as a work of scholarship that had to be on the agenda for any discussion of slavery. His essays on abolitionism and particularly the emphasis on the role of African Americans in the movement had a lot to do with how I thought about abolitionism as an interracial movement rather than simply whites in the North helping Blacks in the South.

Of course, in all of these areas, Aptheker's insights are now widely accepted. Everybody now accepts that resistance was a major, permanent feature of slave life, and that African Americans played a major role in the struggle against slavery in the North and South. These insights were off the radar screen of mainstream history for such a long time.

Let me pose another question in relation to this: "What does it tell us about the history profession that Aptheker was blacklisted for so long?" Both as a person, who could not teach for many, many years, and as a set of ideas, blacklisted as well as the individual. Another way of thinking about it is, at what point did Aptheker cease being a nonperson as far as the official mainstream historical world was concerned?

Jesse Lemisch: Well, remember that I have fairly direct experience of how long-lasting the blacklist against Aptheker was, through my experience in organizing, along with Marv Gettleman, the campaign to censure Yale—the Yale-Aptheker affair of 1975–76. When I first knew of Herbert back in the fifties, he was being denied employment at institution after institution. I grew up knowing about political discrimination in academia through his experience. I recall historian Norman Pollack introducing a lecture by Aptheker at Yale in around 1961. It was an act of courage just to do this. But 1975–76 was not the forties or the fifties, yet Yale's history department—with C. Vann Woodward playing the leading role—did a contemptible thing, long after McCarthyism, by blocking Aptheker's appointment in another department at Yale—an insignificant one-semester lectureship in a program whose standards had been met by such appointees as the sportscaster Howard Cosell.

Manning Marable: There is another aspect of Aptheker's professional career as it relates to the field of African American history. Aptheker, for many years, was denied a formal academic position, until I believe 1969 or thereabouts. Herbert has told me that it took about twenty-five years after the time he received his doctorate at Columbia before he received at least a continuing appointment. But in traditional Black colleges and universities

throughout the 1950s and 60s, Herbert Aptheker's voice was heard and was a familiar voice interpreting the African American past. There is a hilarious story that's been told to me by Gwen Patton. Patton was the head of the student government association at the historically Black college Tuskegee Institute. In the midst of the civil rights movement in the mid-1960s, the African American student movement looked to history, to Black history, to try to understand the roots of their own struggle. Some students at Tuskegee were sitting around and they said, "You know, what we need is somebody who can really present Black history from an activist's perspective." And they said, "Now there's this one guy, this Black guy named Herbert Aptheker—let's bring him here." So they find his address and write him. He writes back and says, "I'll come to Tuskegee." Gwen's waiting there at the bus station at Tuskegee. This is 1964 and this white guy gets off the bus. Gwen's amazed, shocked—it's Herbert Aptheker. Aptheker delivers a stirring address before the students and he's accepted as part of the Black liberation struggle. So, I suppose white academia's loss was the Black community's gain.

Eric Foner: We haven't yet mentioned another major part of his scholarly contribution, which is his work on W. E. B. Du Bois. Herbert Aptheker was very close to Du Bois toward the end of Du Bois's long life, edited three volumes of the letters and put out a multivolume edition of Du Bois's voluminous writings and book reviews and many other things. He has put back into print a vast array of Du Bois writings that were very difficult to find, as well as helping with the final autobiography. Do you think Aptheker's work is partly responsible for the revival of Du Bois? Because Du Bois was also more or less written out of history, for a while at least, among mainstream academics. What do you think the cumulative impact of all this work on Du Bois has been?

Manning Marable: From a personal standpoint, Aptheker shaped my own development in a very profound way and the nexus was Du Bois. In 1979 I was a twenty-eight-year-old assistant professor at the University of San Francisco. Back in those days I was also a member of the *Socialist Review* collective and I

was living in the Bay area. Herbert was teaching at Berkeley and somehow we made contact and every Monday evening at about five o'clock during the entire semester in the winter and spring of 1979 we had dinner together and we just talked about Du Bois. He told me all these stories about Du Bois, how he met him and the evolving working relationship. He had just finished the three-volume edited letters of Du Bois and he was working on other kinds of volumes. That sparked in me an interest in doing work on Du Bois which continues to this day.

Eric Foner: I'll bet I know where you had dinner with him, because I was teaching as a visiting professor at Berkeley that spring and I used to meet him now and then. It must have been the International House of Pancakes. Herbert seems to be a creature of habit, at least when it comes to cuisine.

Jesse Lemisch: Let me add two things to that. First, on the Du Bois papers, of course there is a continuing story of political discrimination when we get into the question of NEH funding for this project, leading to the parsimonious conditions under which Herbert ended up doing this. It was impossible to pry funding loose, clearly because he was a Communist. Second, if I can return to *American Negro Slave Revolts*, the economism of the thing really gets to me. That is, he says at one point that you can graph rebellion against figures for economic depression. If anything, this is like Rudé (Thompson once said that if Rudé had been present at the Crucifixion, he would have counted the nails), but not at all like Thompson's "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century" (*Past and Present* 50 [February 1971]).

Eric Foner: Although he does put in other factors. It is true there is always a material base, as it were, for the incidents in *Slave Revolts*. He talks about demographic differences between different regions of the South in terms of ratio of the Black and white populations. As a book written in the Marxism of the late thirties, it's very much grounded in a base-superstructure model.

Jesse Lemisch: In his little piece about the British Communist Party Historians' Group, Hobsbawm talks about how they stayed

away from C. L. R. James because he was a Trotskyist, and I think that Herbert's work, though influential on mine in a positive way, had a similar downside. Coming from that historiographical background, I was cut off from other influences, in particular James and the people around him. I did finally make contact with George Rawick and his important work, but I came late to the important notion of self-activity which emerged from these circles. Self-activity is not the same as agency, but they are connected concepts.

Eric Foner: Let me ask you to be precise on that, because I'm not quite sure what the notion of self-activity actually means. I thought you said before was one of Aptheker's emphases was agency.

Manning Marable: I suppose the way James would put it is that agency implies a form of intervention on the part of intellectuals, where activists construct a vehicle, an instrument of change. Self-actualizing activity from below is where the role of the radical intellectual is not as an organizer from above but as a catalyst, as a person who provides information or resources. But the masses themselves, through their own self-activity, create new structures, new possibilities. And that is how James saw the process of revolution unfolding. He and George Padmore, in writing about the Convention People's Party or intervening in Trinidad in the 1950s and the development of the people's national movement, attempted to think about political struggle as being generated by the activism from below of everyday working people. And the task of the social historian is to find that voice and to capture the expressions of people constructing their own history.

Eric Foner: But wouldn't you say that elements, at least, are in *American Negro Slave Revolts*? Particularly regarding what we now call day-to-day resistance to slavery.

Manning Marable: Yes.

Eric Foner: In other words, how outright rebellion grows out of daily struggles. There are these daily struggles against slavery, which involve things that might not be considered resistance by

some people—shirking work or breaking tools or making believe you're ill.

Jesse Lemisch: But I think that's too easy a way out of the James-Aptheker conflict. As I said, there was indeed a form of agency in Aptheker's work, and it was important. But it would have been fruitful for my work to have been exposed to the Trotskyist alternative; here was an alternate left, a whole other group of people and a different intellectual tradition utilizing other notions.

Eric Foner: I'm sure that's right. As an active member of the Communist Party one would not expect Aptheker to be influenced by Trotskyist history. Although one thing I think we have to say about Aptheker and my uncle Philip Foner, another Old Left historian, is that one of their great strengths lay in the gathering of material. They were indefatigable researchers. Aptheker's *Documentary History*, my uncle's documentary collection of four volumes on Frederick Douglass, the documentary history of Black labor which my uncle did—without funding from anybody, they dug up documents incessantly. Thanks to them, the material is there for people to use in whatever way they want. You can go through it from a different perspective. So, part of their contribution was unearthing this vast array of material, which was largely ignored by other historians. And, as all of us know, that takes a lot of work. It's not easy to do.

Let's move to one or two other issues. Jesse, you mentioned the pamphlet literature that Aptheker produced, some of which has been rediscovered of late. I see his critique of Myrdal cited very frequently now that we have just gone through the fiftieth anniversary of Myrdal's *American Dilemma*. What would you say is the contribution of his historical scholarship in that form?

Jesse Lemisch: Aptheker, you know, wrote an extraordinary essay, or maybe it was a pamphlet, on Bridgeman, the physicist who questioned reality and causality. And much the same debate is taking place now, some forty years later, around postmodern antisocialism and denials of reality. Aptheker's piece on Bridgeman had a deep impact on me and helped to lay the foundations of my critical feelings about poststructuralism today.

There is, in Aptheker, this older tradition of Marxist engagement with science. There was also Herbert's essay on Myrdal, his writings on C. Wright Mills, and a wonderful pamphlet called *Laureates of Imperialism*, which looked at N. S. B. Gras, the business historian at Harvard. He also criticized Allan Nevins; I use some of this in my *On Active Service in War and Peace*. Aptheker went through Nevins's 1940 book on Rockefeller and found interpretations that reflected the liberalism of the time, and noted that when Nevins put out a new edition in 1953, the sentences had been rewritten so that what in 1940 looked to Nevins like evidence of dissatisfaction by employees now become converted into a feat of industrial statesmanship by Rockefeller.

Eric Foner: Perhaps this work ought to be gathered and published by somebody because it is pretty hard to get hold of right now.

Manning Marable: The American Left between the early 1930's and the mid-1960s did not develop like the Left in Europe. Because of anti-Communism in the United States, the Left's intellectuals never found a home in the traditional academy. And so they were connected with trade-union movements, with political organizations. I'm thinking about Black intellectuals; a good example would be Oliver Cromwell Cox. They found employment at historically Black institutions, but they were always marginal to the liberal discourse which defined social analysis. So Myrdal could receive a great deal of money to carry out a social science study but somebody like Cox was never funded. But Cox, an unaffiliated Black progressive, could at least get employment; people who were affiliated with the Communist Party could not. In a way we have never overcome that thirty years, that absence. In some respects, Aptheker's intellectual biography reflects the pervasiveness of anti-Communism in the sense that he felt the need to respond to all the ideological issues of his time. And so, if you look at the contours of his work in the 1950s and 1960s, you see polemics against Mills and conservative intellectuals and writings about the war in Vietnam and other kinds of concerns. It seems to lack focus, but the real issue for Herbert was practical engagement with both corporate

liberalism and the Right. There were so few intellectual voices on the Left that he felt compelled to carry a great burden and respond to everything.

Eric Foner: Here's an amazing fact of which I was unaware until I reviewed for the *New York Times Book Review* the third volume of the Du Bois letters edited by Aptheker. This was in the early 1980s, I believe. Aptheker told me that this was the first time any publication of his had been reviewed in the *Times*. As you pointed out, it took a long, long time for McCarthyism to die. Now it is also true that in the 1980s, and I wonder if anyone wants to speculate on whether this has any broader significance, Aptheker finally began to get recognition. There have been sessions at the Organization of American Historians convention devoted to his work. A book of historical essays assessing the impact of *Slave Revolts* has appeared. He has been on panels, commenting on the work of others. In other words, by the 1980s his work is being recognized and indeed celebrated. Does this mean that we have now put this unhappy episode behind us? Are we now able to pat ourselves on the back and say, "Okay, academe is no longer guilty of this kind of discrimination?"

Manning Marable: I think that the academy became more comfortable with left history when the prospect, or perhaps specter, of a left alternative receded from the present. By 1989, as the Berlin wall fell, some conservatives could openly embrace Aptheker because the real "danger" to civilization had passed.

Eric Foner: But of course it's also true—and this raises another issue—that many people who were active in the New Left now hold academic positions and the obsessive anti-Communism of a previous generation of scholars was not part of their own politics. They had already in the New Left period rejected making anti-Communism a major hallmark of their point of view. And so, as they came to be an influential group in the historical profession, perhaps it's natural that they not consider Aptheker beyond the pale.

Manning Marable: I think that is absolutely correct. By the time I was in graduate school at Wisconsin in the early 1970s,

Herbert Aptheker's work was not assigned by traditional American historians. In fact, Genovese's work was sneered at and criticized. But there were younger liberal historians in the department who did assign Aptheker and Genovese and the culture of the graduate students at the time was actively engaged in critical reflections on their work. It had a tremendous impact upon the work we did. As these people came into professional maturity within a decade or two, they greatly changed the shape of the curriculum, and Aptheker's voice was then heard.

Eric Foner: Let me raise a question related to this. Do you think it may be the case that work of Aptheker's variety is easier to accept if it is in the realm of African American history, where there is a tradition of emphasizing struggle? He has written other work which I don't think has really been assimilated. Work which makes class struggle the central point when it is not related to African Americans is harder to accept. Herbert has written books on the American Revolution, on the Civil War, which try to emphasize the class dimensions of these conflicts, and I don't think those works are assigned or cited nearly as often as those works on African American history. Take my uncle Philip Foner's work on labor history. It's known, of course, but much of the new labor history was based on criticizing the work of people like Philip Foner. It wasn't assimilated into new history the way that Herbert Aptheker's work was assimilated into a new generation of African American scholarship.

Jesse Lemisch: There's another way of looking at that. Maybe a little less grim than what Manning has just said about the defanging of radical ideas. When reality forced its way into academe with the Black liberation movement, academics had to say, "Well, we really have to take a second look at these things."

Eric Foner: One thing I must say about Herbert Aptheker: when I was an undergraduate in 1960-61, when the blacklist was still very, very powerful, Herbert was extremely generous and also quite insightful and helpful. When I was doing an undergraduate senior thesis, here at Columbia, on the Free Soil Party—not the most central point in American history, perhaps—he was at the

New York office of the American Institute for Marxist Studies. I went down to talk to him about my work and get his advice. I found no bitterness. After all, I'm coming from Columbia, a place that would never allow him to teach. No, he wasn't a bitter person who was obsessed with the injustices that had been meted out to him. He was very open and generous. He told me, "Don't neglect the Black component of the antislavery movement even though you are studying its racism. Don't neglect the way that some of these antislavery people are able to overcome prejudice, or at least compare their views to the degree of racism elsewhere in the society. Don't judge it by the standards of 1960." This was good shrewd advice from a historian to a student. It would have been very easy for him to retreat into a bitter sentiment that the academic world has not dealt the cards straight to him.

Jesse Lemisch: I had a similar experience. With Aptheker, you see intense Communist political commitment and the strength that came from that tradition. I come from the New Left, which was (choose one): a) more in touch with its feelings, or b) self-indulgent. When I was blacklisted after being fired from the University of Chicago in 1966, and then from Northwestern in 1969, I looked at Herbert's experience, and I thought, "Jesus, how does this guy take it? You know, they portray him as a monster, don't cite him except to attack him, revile him, don't give him a job, etc., etc." And my memory is that I went to visit him at the same place that Eric went, the American Institute of Marxist Studies in New York. Herbert is there, sitting in what can only be described as a bomb shelter, and necessarily so, given the threats against him. So I said to him (this is a classic moment of dialogue between New Left and Old Left—there ought to be a Currier & Ives print of this), "Herbert, how do you take it?" And he answers, "You redouble your efforts." I was impressed by his courage, but also struck by the evasion of emotional reality. There must have been a lot of anguish around that kind of career. I do think, for instance, that Herbert was hurt by Woodward's attacks during the Yale-Aptheker affair in 1975 and 1976; he really thought that this alleged gentleman scholar would treat him as a gentleman.

Manning Marable: But that's what strikes me about Herbert. His predominant characteristic is a great kind of peace. His willingness to engage in conversation with students, to listen to the concerns that they have, to think through problems of a senior's paper. The story you tell, Eric, I've seen happen when I taught at Colgate. I've seen it here at Columbia with one of my doctoral students, Tim McCarthy, who has maintained a steady flow of communication with Aptheker, and how Herbert has taken time to go over his essays and to talk with him about this or that issue in his dissertation. Herbert doesn't have to do that but that's who he is. That's a part of how he sees his commitment to the profession of history. I think it's the old small "c" communist where you really try to work with young people, those young people who have something to say that speaks to the history of struggle and the history of resistance. He has a remarkable history of being a constructive supporter of a whole series of generations of young people.

Eric Foner: I don't think we should make Aptheker into a saint. This would be unfair to any person. I also remember talking to him after my first book was published and he complained, as many people might under similar circumstances, that I had not cited a particular work of his on the American Civil War. I didn't quite understand at the time that not citing Herbert Aptheker carries more meaning than not citing other people because it is, even inadvertently, joining in the conspiracy to ignore his work. I said, "Herbert that may be true, but I did cite your work on abolitionism here." And he replied, "Well, nobody could write about your subject and not cite that." So, he has a healthy pride in his accomplishments.

Let me ask before we stop if there's any other aspect of his scholarship or career that anybody wants to put on the table? . . .

Jesse Lemisch: In 1969, which was the glory year of the radical caucus in the American Historical Association, two thousand people came to the business meeting. Somewhat inflated ideas of what the radical caucus planned had gotten around, and it seemed that everybody had advice for me. I had lunches, as the

convention got started, separately with Herbert and with Gerda Lerner. From both, I got essentially the same advice. From Gerda: “Don’t go too far too fast.” I will always remember those words. Herbert lectured me against “adventurism.” I think both of them, viewing the impending confrontation through Old Left lenses, underestimated the strengths of the New Left’s approach. The Old Left was in many ways not a very radical place. I think we were right, but who knows?

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The Sociology of Herbert Aptheker

Benjamin P. Bowser

As a child in the 1950s, I grew up in a working-class household on the edge of Harlem. My father worked nights as a subway clerk dispensing tokens in stations all over New York. He preferred the night shift because it gave him a lot more time to think, read, and talk with friends. At home amidst the *Reader's Digests* and newspapers, the first book I can remember was the first volume of Herbert Aptheker's *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (1951). I could not read it yet, and remember spelling "Aptheker" over and over again. I remember my father's conversations as well. I learned there was something special about connecting "history" with "Negroes," and Aptheker had something to do with it. I was still too young to know that we were not supposed to have a history.

In these conversations, I first heard of W. E. B. Du Bois. Here was another special name, always used as a sort of last word. No matter how long and animated my father's conversations, they would end with what Du Bois said. He seemed to explain why such awful things happened to "the Negro." I also got a sense that there were people who were not happy with Du Bois and were out to silence him. I also vaguely remember being taken to the Harlem YMCA and seeing a group of men talking on a panel. The only white man there was Herbert Aptheker. His presence at a "Negro" history lecture seemed quite normal.

It was not until I was in high school and attended the March on Washington in 1963 that I heard the name Du Bois again. He had just died in exile in Africa. Some years later, during the height of 1960s Black nationalism in Harlem, Aptheker's name came up again. But this time the context was not so positive. He

was alleged to be part of some vague conspiracy—a Communist and a white man who had the great Dr. Du Bois’s papers and would not release them to scholars in the movement. So in 1983 I was very interested in meeting Professor Aptheker when he came to speak at Santa Clara University. Gary Okihiro, then Director of Ethnic Studies, invited him, and my office, Black Student Affairs, cosponsored his visit. Only a few students came to his presentation, and he was not invited to dine with the president as was the custom with less controversial scholars. I was delighted with Aptheker’s directness in answering my questions. W. E. B. Du Bois had asked Aptheker to edit his papers and writings. Aptheker and his wife, Fay, organized and cared for those papers for Shirley Graham Du Bois for years prior to the 1960s. Aptheker’s knowledge of Du Bois was obvious, but what was most remarkable was his devotion and love for Dr. Du Bois.

I have subsequently interviewed Herbert Aptheker a number of times. The first interview resulted in “Anti-Racism in the U.S.: An Introduction” for *Sage Race Relations Abstracts* (1987). This essay led to his book, *Anti-racism in U.S. History: The First Two Hundred Years* (1992). He then contributed to my *Racism and Anti-Racism in World Perspective* (1995) with “Anti-Racism in the United States: 1965–1900.” This essay was to be expanded into volume two of his *Anti-Racism in U.S. History*. This very important work was stopped by his first stroke.

Last year, my wife, Deborah Whittle, and I interviewed Herbert and Fay Aptheker on Du Bois. The result is “Personal Reflections on W. E. B. Du Bois: The Person, Scholar, and Activist by Herbert and Fay Aptheker,” which appears in Rutledge Dennis, ed., *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Scholar as Activist* (Dennis 1996). In doing these projects and from occasional visits with the Apthekeers, Deborah and I have learned a great deal about Du Bois and the life, struggles, motives, experiences, and humor of the Apthekeers. It is a great pleasure to write this essay, based on my synthesis of Herbert Aptheker’s writing, what others have said about his work, many hours of conversation with him and Fay, and a recent interview for this chapter in which I asked him pointed questions about his writing and activism.

About this contribution

Anyone who looks at Herbert Aptheker's scholarly record cannot deny his enormous contribution. Before computerized library searches, most of a card-catalog drawer had to be devoted to historic work under his name. I will briefly review the implications of his work on slavery in the United States, the documentary history of African Americans, his critiques of U.S. foreign policy, and his most recent scholarship on antiracism. Others in this collection will have much more to say about these achievements, and his editing of the Du Bois legacy. My central point is that Herbert Aptheker's contributions in these areas are not isolated to history, but are systemic and have implications for other fields, in particular, sociology. In this sense, Herbert Aptheker has contributed to sociology as well. He was not trained as a sociologist, has made no conscious contribution to sociology, and in fact, virtually all of his references to sociology and sociologists are critical. He has pointed out over and over again that mainstream sociology has intentionally avoided the sociological implications of Marx's and Du Bois's work. He is correct. In Aptheker's critiques, essays, and activism, there are important theoretical and methodological implications and lessons for sociology.

Aptheker's implicit sociology

In studies of slavery

Aptheker's earliest work on slave revolts, beginning in 1937, was much more than a decisive repudiation of the then-dominant Ulrich B. Phillips school of U.S. history. The hallmark of the Phillips approach was to show disdain for the post-Civil War freedoms of Blacks by arguing that they were better off and happiest as slaves (1918). Aptheker showed that these "happy people" conducted guerrilla warfare against their former masters (1943, 1948), and engaged in work slowdowns, broke tools, faked illness, poisoned work animals, mysteriously burned property, ran away, and attempted to kill their masters in frequent rebellions (see Bracey, Meier, and Rudwick 1971). Resistance to slavery was a shocking revelation for those who saw Blacks as

inferior and docile beings, but what has yet to be appreciated is Aptheker's demonstration that Blacks were not the only ones in rebellion. In many of the cases Aptheker describes, poor and otherwise marginalized whites actually fought and died in revolts with slaves, and were involved in planning, escapes, and acquiring weapons and intelligence (Aptheker 1943). The slave rebellions in the United States were therefore not against whites in general, but were specifically against the plantation system and those who defended it. Many a rebellion could not have happened without crucial white involvement.

The focus of the rebellions on the plantation as a system of oppression and the support of whites have enormous implications. First, slave resistance and rebellion were not against a few particularly vicious masters. They were against an entire economic system and way of life that could not exist without slave labor and the impoverishment of whites. Second, the slaves must have recognized that a successful rebellion required white support. Finally, every single slave rebellion was a statement about the social system and affected the organization and maintenance of the economy and society. Here Aptheker's historical work has important implications for sociology.

Aptheker did not simply write about slavery or about a particular historical period. He wrote about the barbarity of a phase in a general economic and social system in which we still live. Capitalism did not die with the plantation South and the end of slavery. Instead, capitalism has modernized and is still the dominant economic and social system. Even in its new sophistication, capitalism is still barbaric because it continues to thrive on subjugation and exploitation to generate profits for a few. This is also the case with the mutual funds that bring large numbers of people into the stock market to share in profits. The small investors do not dominate, control, or get most of the profits from corporate investment and management policies. Now with the collapse of the Soviet-led socialist bloc, Western capitalism has unopposed access to the world to exploit for profit and to further extend elite privilege.

The first sociological implication of Aptheker's writing about slave rebellions is that rebellions are endemic to capitalism. His

central hypothesis is that subjugation and exploitation call for resistance and rebellion as dialectical responses to capitalism. Aptheker's impatience with sociologists is that through their theories and methods, they somehow miss what seems to be obvious, as in Aptheker's comments regarding the sociologist C. Wright Mills (1977). Resistance to capitalist exploitation goes on all around us every day, and, as in slavery, there are even occasional rebellions, riots, and collective unrest. But sociologists have yet to look seriously at present-day deviant and problematic "behaviors" as resistance and rebellions that in turn influence the shaping of social structure.

The implications of slave rebellions for social systems do not simply align Aptheker with social-class theorists or the conflict school of sociological theory (Kaern, Phillips, and Cohn 1990). Aptheker does not present evidence for an ethnic-solidarity model (Bonacich and Modell 1980), because some whites joined the rebellions and other slaves rejected rebellion. He does not offer another notion of C. Wright Mills's power elite (1956). The exercise of power and control is more precisely defined in Marx, and it takes more than elites to maintain capitalism. It is not Aptheker's thesis that greater levels of poverty generated rebellions—an idea already refuted in sociology (Dahrendorf 1954). Nor were slave rebellions generated out of such circumstances as relative deprivation in comparison to more privileged slaves or whites (Williams 1976). Aptheker's thesis is that the greater the "exploitation," the greater is "resistance" to exploitation, and the more likely there will be both planned and unplanned collective expressions of resistance and rebellion against agents of control. In this view, exploitation and resistance are not episodic.

Exploitation is the systematic appropriation of the product of labor from those who perform the labor; resistance to exploitation arises when the exploited know they are exploited and have no immediate or permanent way meaningfully to end their exploitation—all the legally recognized societal institutions being set in place to maintain the vulnerability of the exploited. The resistance is to minimize not only the degree of exploitation but also the exploiter's gains from the exploitation—in the case of

capitalism, profits. Rebellion is to attempt to overthrow or end the exploitative relationship by direct and physical means. Most sociologists may object to such value-latent terms—*exploitation, resistance, and rebellion*. But this is exactly the way slaves, their white allies, and anyone else responding to exploitation see it, and Aptheker provides ample documentation of this view in the case of slaves in the U.S. South (1951).

The relationship among exploitation, resistance, and rebellion is an unexamined hypothesis, even among conflict theorists and those who have looked at Marx's sociology (Feenberg 1981; Lefebvre 1982). Aptheker's application of Marx's macrosocial theory was not only meant to interpret slave rebellions. If we apply Aptheker's view to contemporary society, it puts a different light on "the war on drugs," the criminalization of up to 70 percent of Black males between the ages of sixteen and twenty-nine, police harassment in U.S. ghettos and barrios, welfare reform, and the blacklisting of antiracist whites and labeling them as "race traitors" and liberals.

In all of these cases, there is an unspoken attempt to keep Blacks and other marginalized people in menial labor, and as a politically disfranchised reserve force for such labor. Aptheker calls the marginalized peoples' response to their structural circumstance "resistance." They are not ignorant, nor acting out of a culture of poverty. Neither are they biologically defective, lacking education, or a criminal class. They resist in a number of ways: by being unwilling to work, by "abusing" welfare, by attempting to form alternative economies, by not paying taxes, by trashing public space, by refusing to cooperate with the police even when it is in their interest, and by destroying exploitative rental property. They resist by hit-and-run tactics in the miniriots now common in most U.S. cities—although news organizations do not report them as such. The 1992 Los Angeles riot showed the continuing potential for larger and much more racially diverse rebellions than in the 1960s.

When Aptheker's work on slavery was first published in 1937, macrosociological theory was dominated by notions of natural forces that were responsible for shaping and defining society. For one of the best surveys of these theories, see "social

Darwinism” and “psychological evolution” in Timasheff 1967. During the 1930s, Marxism was popular in the streets and among labor radicals. In contrast, university faculties were still places of upper-class privilege. So the dominant figures in sociology made a very conscious effort to comment on, and simultaneously distance themselves from, Marx (Zeitlin 1994, part 4). Robert Park and Ernest Burgess had the most popular textbook, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, where they had modernized and moderated the older and more rigid social Darwinism of Spencer and Sumner with their ecological theory of society (1921). There was Pitirim Sorokin’s *Social and Cultural Dynamics* (1937–1941), where society’s central institutions, beliefs, and values had life courses and cycles of dominance, subordination, and reemergence. Talcott Parsons had just introduced Durkheim and Weber to U.S. sociologists (Bierstedt 1981, 498). The most promising initiative in the field from the 1930s onward was the application of probability theory and the use of statistical techniques as a way to achieve objectivity in research (Bannister 1987). By the 1950s, Talcott Parsons’s structure functionalism (Talcott and Shils 1951) and Kingsley Davis’s human ecology (1949) dominated mainstream macrosociology.

Today, mainstream sociology accommodates notions of class, race, poverty, and attitudes toward work, self, and others as variables in complex multivariate analysis. Evidence of this focus can be found in the articles in the field’s flagship journals, the *American Sociological Review* and the *American Journal of Sociology*. But the macrotheory underlying this complex manipulation of variables is still heavily influenced by functionalism and other notions of social structures defined by extrapersonal and process-driven dynamics. For sociologists, society is still a larger complex set of interactions between institutions and social forces—people are not causal agents. This is also true for the sociological alternative to this social-systems perspective, post-modernism (Woodiwiss 1990).

Aptheker’s theoretical view of society is far more direct than current macrotheory in sociology. In Aptheker’s view, social institutions are defined and driven by human actions and inactions, not impersonal social forces or by the construction and

deconstruction of realities as in postmodernism. Collective experiences, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of distinct groups, are codified as physical institutions: courts, police, businesses, universities, etc. As during slavery, the purpose and objective of these institutions are to advance and defend controlling-group interests and privilege. When one group dominates the social system, inequality results for those dominated and there is a direct relation between what the dominated must surrender and what those who dominate gain in privilege. The gap between oppression and privilege generates resistance and rebellion.

Aptheker's framework is not a simplistic application of Marx to interpret the U.S. slave experience. Certainly, there are parallels—Marx described the dialectical conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and how the wealth of the bourgeoisie is based on the impoverishment of the proletariat. Aptheker has consciously worked within this theoretical framework. The difference is that the U.S. historical evidence compelled Aptheker toward a more focused and localized framework to explain the specific dynamic among masters, slaves, and nonelite whites. The emphasis in Marx and among sociologists who write about Marx, such as Israel (1971), Bradley and Howard (1982), and Elster (1985), is on the dynamics of capitalism, while the emphasis in Aptheker is more focused on the dynamics of oppression. In Aptheker, capitalism is not a problem to understand as it was for Marx. Aptheker assumes the exploitative character of capitalism and moves forward to focus on the dynamics of exploitation in the plantation economy of the United States, which would later replace Great Britain as the architect of modern capitalism.

Implicit class theory

Not only does Aptheker outline the dynamics of oppression and the human face behind social structure, his theoretical framework also has an implicit class theory with implications for the present. There is certainly a rough parallel between poor whites and slaves as a Marxist proletariat, and slave masters as a Marxist bourgeoisie. But there is also an important and subtle

difference. Marx wrote about an emerging industrial capitalism where the differences between classes were based upon one's position relative to the means of production: capitalists owned the means of production and the proletariat had only their labor power. While the plantation South was part of the capitalist system, its organization was intentionally racialized. The controlling class of planters wanted, worked toward, and succeeded in creating a racialized social system—Black slaves against all whites regardless of class (Allen 1994). An interpretation of Marx without regard for the unique U.S. character of slavery and racism could have affirmed such a racialized view. After all, slaves were African and could not own or control the means of production, while no matter how poor whites were, they could own and control. Aptheker's work showed that the class lines were not simply around one's position relative to the means of production, but rather also around perception of oppression and what one does about it.

This understanding of class is also different from the dilemma in Marx of class-for-itself, or class-in-itself. Those who resisted and rebelled cut across existing status groups and consisted of slaves, freed Negroes, poor whites, and occasionally more privileged whites. Those who struggled to maintain the system were planters, poor whites, more privileged whites, but also some slaves and freed Negroes as well. In Aptheker, one's position relative to the means of production was not sufficient to define precisely whether or not one supported slavery or resisted and rebelled against it.

Aptheker's evidence regarding the classes of those who rebelled and those who maintained the system has enormous implications for sociological studies of class. We are living in an updated and modernized capitalism with the same necessity to oppress and generate inequality as during slavery. In such a case, an updated U.S. class system consistent with the slave experience would not be organized around income, education, and occupation as in William Lloyd Warner and Paul S. Lunt's social class study (1941). Nor would class be defined strictly around one's position relative to the means of production—Marx's economic class. A modern U.S. class system evolving from the

slave experience would be defined by one's view of and reaction to the current social system, whether or not one sees it as oppressive and what one is willing to do either to defend or change the system. Certainly those who experience oppression directly would be more likely to resist and rebel than those who do not, as was the case during slavery. But those who are oppressed can also defend the system. Most of the slave rebellions documented by Aptheker were betrayed by other slaves (1943). There were even former slaves and descendants of slaves who owned plantations and defended them against rebellions (Johnson and Roark 1984)—Clarence Thomas is not new. In the same way, all of those who are privileged by the system are not going to defend it or be unwilling to change it radically. What was particularly shocking to the plantation owners was the involvement of trusted house slaves and local whites in violent rebellions.

Aptheker's perspective strongly suggests that the divisions of conflict in modern capitalism are more accurately understood around a "political classes" dynamic rather than social or economic classes, or race (Cox 1948). Political classes cut across races and social and economic classes. Each political class recruits disproportionately from one or another social and economic class for those who rebel as well as for those who defend the system. Membership in a political class is based on allegiance and commitment to its ideas and way of life. Political classes are also always small. They are never a majority. Political classes also increase and decrease in size, in potency, and in mobilization for conflict in relation to each other. It is very interesting that Herbert Aptheker's perspective of class exploitation and resistance derived from the study of slavery in the United States is closest to that of Oliver Cox (1948), the only Black classical sociologist who was an unaffiliated Marxist and who produced formal theory. For both men, changing times and conditions in the Americas required updating and modification of Marx's class divisions, which were based on the early English experience with industrialization.

In documentary history

There is a lesson for sociology in Aptheker's *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (1951–1994)

and in *And Why Not Every Man?* (1961). What is so powerful about Aptheker's historical work is that he intentionally limits commentary and interpretation. He believes that documents can speak for themselves and are self-evident. One does not have to guess, interpret, or surmise what slaves or abolitionists thought, desired, or felt. They speak for themselves. People who are happy with their lot do not leave documents such as those in the *Documentary History* and *Why Not Every Man?* protesting their treatment and working against the institution of slavery. Furthermore, there was no question in slaves' minds as to who was responsible for their condition, and the responsible parties were not impersonal forces or complex institutional dynamics. If there had not been extensive collaboration between slaves, freedmen, and antislave whites, many of these appeals, petitions, letters, lawsuits, biographies, and advertisements would not have survived.

What is of significance for sociological methods in Aptheker's approach is the following: People leave indirect records of their thoughts, desires, protests, aspirations, and feelings in two ways. There are "insider records," in which people speak to themselves, friends, and sympathizers; and there are "outsider records," in which they speak to others. In both records, the "others" are most often those in power. Comparing "insider" with "outsider" records provides a valuable way to see how people attempt to change and shape their experience by getting powerful interests to act in their favor. Here we can see the interplay between aspirations, feelings, and life conditions with attempts to influence and make changes.

Sociologists overlook the obvious in pursuit of the gold standard of representative data. Some urban anthropologists and sociologists who do observational studies realize this bias (Silverman 1985)—that rich evidence of the human experience is potentially everywhere. Graffiti, song lyrics, slang, nicknames, rap music, changing fashions, even what people have in their garbage—all provide potentially useful information in addition to written materials. Many sociologists would say that the historical evidence Aptheker compiled is of limited importance because there is no way to know how representative each document was.

Such an assessment misses the point, then and now. It is significant that slaves had *any* opinion, *any* view, *any* thoughts, *any* aspirations, or *any* assessment of their situation. If illiterate slaves can leave records of their intent and actions for us across the centuries, so also can Black youth, elites, the homeless, suburban housewives, and any of a hundred other human voices sociologists write about, but do not allow to speak for themselves. Like Aptheker, we have to find “their records,” let them speak for themselves, and compare their insider and outsider voices.

Finally, the most intriguing contribution of Herbert Aptheker’s scholarship to sociology is in exploring the indefinable quality of “spirit.” One cannot read the historical documents Aptheker compiled and not wonder how slaves and antislavery whites found the wherewithal to protest, petition, resist, and ultimately to rebel, when their chances of success were so slim. Almost every single slave rebellion on which Aptheker found records was betrayed, discovered, or defeated. Obviously, there were additional plots and rebellions for which there were no records. There were probably rebellions that succeeded with the plotters escaping north, to the Atlantic and Gulf, or among the Indians. Written evidence of successful plots was especially suppressed. Whether slave rebellions were successful or not, they happened often enough that each generation of slaves undoubtedly had knowledge of prior and mostly unsuccessful attempts. Plantation owners had always to be wary of rebellion, and occasionally they panicked—untold number of slaves and local whites were killed or run out because of alleged conspiracies. Aptheker’s evidence of rebellions has been dismissed because of this very point. A critic suggests that these were not real rebellions, they were panics and rumors printed in rural newspapers (Elkins 1976: 221–22). The bottom line is that the unlikely and the impractical happened over and over again.

Nothing in Marx’s writing or historical materialism can explain such “spirit.” Aptheker suspects that some slaves did not care whether or not they were discovered, succeeded, or failed—death was better than slavery. Genovese also wondered

about the slim odds of success and why slaves nonetheless rebelled (1974). This question of motive and spirit has had a profound influence on Herbert Aptheker, and the spirit of slave rebellions has been a constant source of inspiration in his activism.

In foreign policy

Another side of Aptheker's life and work has significance for the sociology of knowledge. Herbert Aptheker is not controversial because of his historical writing and editing of the Du Bois papers. What has made him controversial has been his membership in the U.S. Communist Party during the Cold War and his self-described polemical writings critical of U.S. foreign policy (1955; 1962; 1987). For this, he has been followed, had his telephone tapped, been put on trial as a subversive during the McCarthy period, had his passport confiscated (requiring him to sue—successfully—the federal government for its recovery), been targeted by Herbert Hoover's COINTELPRO, and even been physically assaulted. Despite his groundbreaking work on slavery and his editorship of the Du Bois papers and writings, he has never been offered a full-time tenure-track university appointment in the United States.

A series of his views has made him "so dangerous" and such an outcast. First, the rich and powerful in the United States have been threatened by the Soviets ever since the 1917 revolution (Aptheker 1955, 181–83). The rich and powerful in the United States have consistently sought ways to destroy the socialist economic and social alternative to capitalism. World War I was not fought over the interests of common men and women. It was a rivalry between Western European elites over colonies as sources of resources, wealth, and power. The bourgeois classes in the West allowed fascism to arise in Europe after World War I as a force against socialism, only to have to fight the fascism themselves. This concern about the Soviets also led to the rise of imperial Japan in Asia. The United States government provided scrap iron to Japan so it could build its military as a western force against the Soviets (Aptheker 1955, 196). Aptheker's

second “dangerous” view is that the Cold War was initiated by the United States in 1946 to contain and destroy the potential spreading of the socialist economic and social alternative to capitalism in a world hungry for freedom from colonialism. The Soviets were no economic or military threat to the United States in the 1940s; in World War II they had lost twenty-five million dead, and the European part of the Soviet Union had been completely destroyed.

Third, Aptheker demonstrates that in pursuing a policy of containment, the United States, through its Central Intelligence Agency, was responsible for creating and supporting dictatorships in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, Zaire (Congo), Guatemala, Panama, pre-Castro Cuba, Haiti, Argentina, Chile, and Jordan (Aptheker 1962). The CIA tried to do the same but failed in Hungary in 1956 (Aptheker 1962, 207–8) and in Cuba in 1963. Every single military action the United States has engaged in since World War II has been to defend or fight against its own puppet governments, most notably dictatorships in Korea, Vietnam, Iran, and Panama. Fourth, the United States was never serious about nuclear-disarmament negotiations, Aptheker has argued, and sought ways to deliver a successful first strike against the Soviets. The principles of democracy and popular self-determination that are embodied in the U.S. Constitution have never been at the root of U.S. foreign policy. The bottom line has been dollar diplomacy and advancing monopoly capitalism.

Defenders of the U.S. system counter that Aptheker was a high official in the U.S. Communist Party (CPUSA), which had been controlled by the Soviet Union through the Comintern and various espionage agencies (Lewy 1990, 6). Party members allegedly took strict loyalty oaths, followed Soviet directives, and set up front organizations to use socialist sympathizers, or what Lenin referred to as “useful idiots,” to advance Soviet interests and policies in the United States (25). In effect, as a member and official in the Party, Aptheker was a foreign ideological agent and anti-American. Furthermore (the indictment runs), his views and those of the CPUSA are morally bankrupt because

they supported the 1939 Hitler-Stalin pact and the massive crimes of Joseph Stalin against his own people, crimes acknowledged by Khrushchev in 1956.

Aptheker has responded to these charges. He never took a loyalty oath to the Communist Party; in 1939 the only thing he did to join was pay fifty cents. He laughs at the idea that the Comintern or Soviets dictated his views or that he cynically used non-Party members. He supported the Hitler-Stalin pact in 1939 because it bought Russia twenty-two months to prepare for war with Germany. In 1956 he too was outraged at Stalin's crimes and finally quit the Party in 1991 along with Angela Davis and others.

One might ask about the implications of Aptheker's views and experiences for sociology. First, Aptheker's critical writings regarding U.S. foreign policy suggest that influence and dominance of institutions by powerful interests should be a much more active area of research in social stratification. Institutions such as Congress, the executive office of the federal government, church organizations, the military, the Department of State, and large multinational corporations advance certain group interests and not others. Sociologists need to find out who, how, and why? How do complex organizations become dominated by particular interests and not others, and what can be done to make critical national institutions more representative of all the diverse interests in a democratic society? Sociologists should not leave these questions to journalists and political scientists.

The second implication of Aptheker's writing on foreign policy addresses the role of the rich and powerful in overseas economic development. If Aptheker is correct about the rich and powerful using the U.S. government to set up repressive governments abroad, then sociological studies of developing nations have missed the role of power in explaining why some nations are and remain more or less advanced than others (Horowitz 1966). Nations are not at different stages in economic and technical development simply because of culture, history, temperament, location, and chance. They are also at unequal developmental levels because of manipulation of resources,

investments, and external control of government leadership and markets (Rodney 1982). Decisions regarding what “underdeveloped” nations will create, grow, build, import, or export are made by unnamed and very powerful people outside of these countries. Immanuel Wallerstein’s *The Modern World-System* (1974) has shown this historically, but we need the equivalent of this work for the contemporary world (Marable 1983). Finally, we need to review critically the emphases, directions, and goals of sociology since World War II and ask how has avoidance of Marx and support for the West in the Cold War affected the development of macrotheory and sociological methods? My guess is that this avoidance of the full implications of Marx’s sociology has been a major barrier to the development of a more dynamic sociology.

The implications of Aptheker’s critique of U.S. foreign policy have become all the more important with the passing of time. The most notable Aptheker foreign-policy vindication is that the war in Vietnam was exactly what he called it—unnecessary (1966). If anyone should know (and has now told), it is Robert S. McNamara, the secretary of defense who built up the Vietnam fiasco (1995). If Aptheker was right on Vietnam, he might be right about the Cold war as well. The release of classified documents from the 1940s after the collapse of the Soviet Union now has scholars questioning U.S. assessments of the Soviet threat and the necessity for a protracted arms race and Cold War (Leffler 1994; Allin 1995). It seems that new information is slowly finding its way into the press and coming out in new books verifying Aptheker’s claims of CIA covert operations in the very countries he identified. Aptheker may be vindicated on all points not because he was a Communist, but because his theoretical premises are correct about the way in which capitalist dollar interests have been executed through U.S. foreign policy. Colonial slavery was the model. Aptheker is very clear on the origin of his view of U.S. foreign policy. It started with Lenin’s *Imperialism* (1933) in drawing the connection between capitalism and imperialism—Aptheker believes this is the book sociologists should pay particularly attention to. Lenin’s thesis

was then further extended in Aptheker's work by Du Bois, who connected slavery and racism with capitalism and imperialism.

In antiracism

Sociologists also have much to learn from Herbert Aptheker's writings on antiracism. The traditional sociological race-relations paradigm in the United States focuses primary attention on the minority or subordinate race, as in Myrdal (1944) and Jaynes and Williams (1989). Either "they" are the problem, as in "the Negro Problem," or "they" have the problem, as in more crime, teen pregnancy, and unemployment than whites (Bowser 1995, xiv). So "their" problems are studied intensely. The implication of this approach is that race barriers no longer exist. Significant progress has been made, and race problems are created and sustained by deficiencies in the minority group's culture, behaviors, history, biological constitution, or psychology (Burman 1995, 51–74). If "they" could only correct these deficiencies, their troubles would disappear as well as their inequalities relative to whites. The denial of white involvement in racial inequality was more fully expressed after obvious Southern racial segregation and discrimination were outlawed after 1965. It is denied that whites were responsible by default and omission for the problems faced by Black and other people of color, nor is it clear that whites contribute to Blacks' problems in any way. In the perspective of denial, the only focus on whites is the extent to which their attitudes become more or less favorable to people of color (Kluegel and Smith 1982). But even here, studies of white attitudes toward Blacks are not tied to the extent to which whites discriminate in their behaviors against Blacks. Whites can have favorable attitudes toward Blacks, but still discriminate against them. One of the few exceptions is Bobo and Kluegel (1993).

The alternative in sociology to the traditional approach is in the concept of personal, institutional, and cultural racism (Carmichael and Hamilton 1967; Blauner 1972). The racism perspective focuses on what whites think, believe, and do to promote racial inequality. At the heart of racism is the belief that "whites" and European cultures are superior to all other peoples

and cultures (Fredrickson 1971). This is cultural racism. If you are a superior people with superior cultures, if you are generally better than “nonwhites,” then you are supposed to control, rule over, and be more highly regarded and rewarded. In this case, your most important institutions must affirm white cultural superiority in performance. So whatever the institutional procedures, the performance of whites will be superior to that of people of color. This is institutional racism. Then, individual whites who are properly acculturated and convinced of the fairness and integrity of the central institutions and procedures are also superior to “nonwhites.” They are smarter, harder working, more deserving, and, of course, should be more highly rewarded than “the others.” This is individual racism.

All three levels of racism are clearly interrelated, mutually reinforcing, and hierarchical—with cultural racism as the highest and core of the system (Bowser and Hunt 1996, 23–44). In the long term, you cannot reduce institutional racism without eliminating cultural racism. Nor can you reduce for long individual racism without also reducing institutional racism. If you reduce one and not the others, whatever gains made will be lost. This model of race relations is closer to the real dynamics of race relations than is the traditional view. Its focus is specifically on the centrality of white power and its responsibility in maintaining and changing the terms and conditions of racial inequality. The focus is on whites, who are the dominant players in race relations.

Herbert Aptheker’s historical work has advanced the racism model of race relations. He makes two important points. The first is that there is not only opposition to racism, but this opposition has its own dynamic. In the documentary evidence of *And Why Not Every Man?* (1961) and more clearly in *Anti-Racism in U.S. History: The First Two Hundred Years* (1992), Aptheker shows antiracism as acts of individual opposition, as attempts to change racist institutional practice, and as assaults on racist beliefs. Antiracist opposition occurs continuously at the individual level through untold acts of defiance. At other points, antiracism advances to collective action as in the abolitionist movement. And at still other times, the cultural cornerstones of racist

ideation are successfully weakened. An example of progress in reducing cultural racism can be seen in the progressive modification of social Darwinism from the presumption of rigid and absolute inferiority between Europeans and all others in the 1850s (Stanton 1960) to a belief in conditional inferiority by the 1940s (Park 1949). In providing this sketch of antiracism, Aptheker challenges sociologists to explore antiracism's dynamics. When and under what circumstance do individual acts of antiracism mobilize into organized efforts? When and under what circumstances do organized antiracist efforts successfully impact cultural racist ideation? The historical documentation may be too limited to answer these questions, but the dynamics of racism and antiracism in contemporary society provide ample opportunities to address these questions (Bowser 1995).

The second point Aptheker makes about the study of racism is that antiracism, like racism, is not white versus Black, nor is it what Blacks or whites do independently of each other. Some whites have been consistent actors in antiracism throughout the history of this nation and continue to be so (Aptheker 1992; Thomas 1996). I should add that some Blacks have been a consistent part of the defense of racism from the beginning and continue to be so—they are proportionately few, but participants nevertheless—in which case, the study of contemporary racism and antiracism must take into consideration the interracial reality of both racism and antiracism. Furthermore, the use of racial polarity is intrinsic to maintaining cultural and institutional racism (Allen 1994). To take the interracial character of racism and antiracism into consideration is necessary not simply for principled or idealistic reasons, but also because it is an empirical reality. The continuing presumption that racism is polarized between Black and white is consistent with the colonial objectives of the planter-class goal of ignoring and weakening the interracial character of antislavery and antiracist resistance and rebellion among Blacks and whites alike (Kushnick 1996). This is crucial not only for the empirically accurate study and practice of antiracism, but also for building more successful and sustained assaults on institutional and cultural racism. Aptheker is convinced, as I am, that racism cannot be defeated in the United

States without genuine and long-term interracial resistance and rebellion. This requires much more than conditional coalitions between peoples whose lives and communities continue to be separate and informed by different histories.

Summary: *The sociology of Herbert Aptheker*

One of the reasons why Aptheker's view of society should be compelling to sociologists is the way his work has been first dismissed and then later vindicated. In history, the number of slave revolts and the involvement of whites were dismissed as based upon unsubstantiated rumors in antebellum rural newspapers (Elkins 1976, 221–22). Elkins maintains that no evidence exists of actual rather than imagined rebellions behind many of the reports. Subsequent work on slave revolts affirms Aptheker. Aptheker's work on Nat Turner focused on Turner's antislavery motives for rebelling, while William Styron attempted to attribute Turner's actions to personal delusions and psychological disorder (1967). Aptheker's analysis of Turner still stands as one of the best, while Styron's analysis is more properly attributed to fiction.

Since the 1940s, Aptheker has consistently called racism a recent development that came into being in the sixteenth century. The prevailing argument has been that racism, like sin, has been with us throughout human history. Work on race in classical Greece and Rome has affirmed Aptheker's view (Snowden 1970; Drake 1987–1990). Aptheker's writing on the Cold War also has a vindication. While his charge that the Cold War was unnecessarily prolonged has yet to be fully confirmed, he asserted in *American Foreign Policy and the Cold War* (1962) that if the Soviet "threat" was removed (a purpose for the Cold War), capitalism would be unrestrained and would freely move toward world dominance. We have been witnessing precisely this event ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989. Aptheker pointed out that there was a failure to "de-nazify" Germany fully after the Second World War (1962, 152–64). The importance of this point is now evident in the falsification of Nazi wartime bank accounts throughout Western Europe, failure to return Jewish war survivors' property and other assets, and the

dispersal of former Nazi officials to the United States, Argentina, and Canada. Aptheker also argued that racism would be only temporarily uprooted by the 1960s civil rights reforms (1987, 157–62).

Aptheker is certainly not a prophet and does not claim to be one. Aptheker's accuracy regarding historical and contemporary developments in U.S. society comes out of three perspectives. The first is Marx's recognition of the connection between slavery and capitalism. In contrast, Marx's contemporaries in U.S. sociology wrote defenses of slavery—Henry Hughes's *Treatise on Sociology* (1854; rpt. 1968) and George Fitzhugh's *Sociology for the South: The Failure of a Free Society* (1854). To Hughes and Fitzhugh, Blacks were naturally inferior, and a society organized around the natural inferiority and superiority of peoples was proper, just, optimal, and should not be tampered with. In retrospect, one does not have to be a Marxist to see the obvious. Marx's connection of slavery with capitalism was closer to the actual organization of society at the time. Today, any fair-minded person would reject Hughes and Fitzhugh's defense of slavery and be more inclined to favor Marx's view, as has Aptheker.

Aptheker's second key to describing societal developments accurately is in Lenin's linking of capitalism and slavery to imperialism. While the most influential U.S. sociologists of Lenin's time, Sumner, Ward, and Giddings, were still describing society in terms of natural and psychological evolution, Lenin linked world imperialism with capitalism. To Lenin, imperialism is not simply the military aggression that ended with World War II. He described imperialism as essentially financial control of world markets and of domestic and overseas economies (1974). Unrestrained "imperialism" is the phase that capitalism has now reached. Again, which perspective is closer to the mark and is verified daily? Aptheker's third key is W. E. B. Du Bois. Du Bois advanced Marx and Lenin's observations by linking racism and the class basis of the Cold War to capitalism, slavery, and imperialism. Now as we learn more and more about the inner workings of the Cold War, Du Bois's thesis is coming home as accurate. Ironically, Marx, Lenin, and Du Bois are three

men left out of modern mainstream sociology. Their views are precisely the perspectives that Aptheker has used to practice better sociology than many leading sociologists.

What we have in Herbert Aptheker's work is the possibility of addressing the bias in sociology due to its close alliance with wealth and power through the university. Mainstream sociology's refusal to integrate seriously and accept Marx, Lenin, and Du Bois into its theory, as it has Durkheim and Weber, partly explains why racist macrosociological theory survived well into this century. It also accounts for the continuing centrality of theories that do not have people and groups as defining, maintaining, and changing institutions, and ultimately social structure. This failure has produced a contemporary sociology fundamentally out of touch with the dynamics of human society. Aptheker provides a measure of just how out of touch sociologists have been. Not one mainstream, or for that matter Marxist, theorist in U.S. sociology has directly questioned the character and conduct of the Cold War, nor accurately predicted the present high point of capitalism. If the Cold War was unnecessary, exaggerated, and prolonged, it should have been surmised as such by sociologists doing critical analysis of power and society, and working with empirically accurate constructs of how society operates. Aptheker's specific application of Marx, Lenin, and Du Bois within U.S. society offers a corrective useful to Marxists and non-Marxists alike. The corrective is deceptively simple: whatever your interests and whatever variables or concepts you are working with, keep your eye on power, who has it, and how it is exercised. The goals and objectives of the rich, powerful, and influential are to shape institutions and to define and redefine society in their favor. Sociologists who are serious about understanding social change should be willing to study systematically the real exercise of power, the use and accumulation of wealth, and the interconnections among changes in wealth, overseas investment, poverty, unemployment, racism, and the conduct of foreign and domestic policies.

Finally, no study of power and its exploitative exercise is complete without attention to resistance and rebellion against exploitation. This is Aptheker's central contribution to the

lessons of Marx, Lenin, and Du Bois. To describe accurately resistance and rebellion in the U.S. experience, it is necessary to go beyond class as Marx described it. While the general architecture of capitalist economic classes exists in the United States, Marx could not have anticipated how race and racism are used to obscure and defend economic class (Omi and Winant 1986), and to compromise organized resistance to the system. In the United States and in other contemporary multicultural societies, rebellion and resistance to exploitation are carried out across economic class *and* race lines (Bowser 1995). The dynamics of resistance and rebellion within an interclass and interracial framework are not understood. The presumption that rebellion and resistance can be successful only through interclass and interracial participation also remains to be better understood and studied. We must also remember that in Aptheker's slavery studies, Black and poor-white collaboration with plantation owners was necessary to control slaves and other poor whites, and to put down rebellions. Are interclass and interracial working relations also necessary to defend the system? These are not just historical questions, they are also questions for the present and are some of the central questions and challenges Herbert Aptheker's work contributes to sociology.

Herbert Aptheker, like his *Documentary History*, is his own best evidence. Aptheker has said jokingly, "If nothing else, I have outlived my critics." He has also lived and worked long enough to see the fundamental validity of his perspective increasingly affirmed by non-Marxist scholars and observers. Do not confuse vindication of polemical Marxism and historical materialism with vindication of Aptheker as a scholar and observer. Rebellion against exploitation was embodied in both the American and Soviet revolutions and then compromised in both places. The collapse of the Soviet-led "second world" and its experiment with socialism does not in any way diminish Aptheker's past contributions and growing importance for the future, nor does it suggest a triumph of capitalism. The socialist experiment may have collapsed in the Soviet Union, but so have attempts to humanize capitalism or make representative democracy work in the United States. Aptheker has lived his life

by Marxist-Leninist principles at their highest level—that of humanistic action. His concept of exploitation and resistance may have come out of Hegel’s dialectic and Marx’s critique of capitalism, but it is not limited by Marxism. I suspect that Aptheker has touched on something bigger than Marx, or capitalism. Regardless of the social system—capitalism, socialism, feudalism or otherwise—where there is exploitation, there will be resistance and rebellion even under the most repressive and hopeless of circumstances. In this sense, Herbert Aptheker has been touched by a “spirit” greater than historical materialism and has become its champion.

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Aptheker and Myrdal's Dilemma

Lloyd L. Brown

Now I push my rewind button and go back to 1946, over fifty years ago, when I first met Herbert Aptheker. Here on my desk, retrieved from my files, is a brochure printed that year, which was a promotion for "*New Masses*, a crusading cultural political magazine based on Marxist analysis and Marxist criticism." In that brochure the weekly magazine announced in text and photographs the appointment of several new members to its editorial staff.

Two of those persons, shown wearing army uniforms, were recently returned World War II veterans. The first, in alphabetical order (and coincidentally with due regard for military rank), was identified as

HERBERT APTHEKER, [who] recently received a John Simon Guggenheim Foundation award—a post-service fellowship to “young scholars who have served the nation’s war efforts in the armed forces and other governmental services.” Mr. Aptheker, who rose from private to major in the war, is well known as an authority on the American Negro. His recent books are *Essays in Negro History*, and *Negro Slave Revolts in the United States*. A forthcoming work is on the American Negro in the second world war.

The second uniformed man was identified as

LLOYD L. BROWN, thirty-three, born in St. Paul, Minn. He had participated in the initial CIO organizing drive in the steel industry of western Pennsylvania and worked with trade unions in that area for several years and traveled extensively in Europe as correspondent for labor

press. He was recently discharged from the army after more than three years service as a staff sergeant in a Negro squadron of the Army Air Force.

As dissimilar as we were in ethnic background and experience, I found in Herbert Aptheker a true soul brother. He was not only philosophically opposed to the dominant capitalist system and its white-supremacist practices that had oppressed me since birth, he was a fighter. I loved him for that. I greatly admired the way he rushed out to challenge each new expression of the academic stooges of the "Big White Folks," as Paul Robeson, one of our contributing editors, termed the U.S. ruling class.

A typical example of Aptheker's militant scholarship was his singular demolition of a work, written by Gunnar Myrdal, that was universally hailed as a masterful analysis of the status and outlook of Americans of African descent. In 1947 it was my pleasure to write the following review in *New Masses* of an Aptheker study that cut through all the hoopla about Myrdal's work and revealed fundamental truths about the African-American condition that are as valid today as they were a half-century ago.

From the *New Masses*, 21 January 1947

"Dilemma" debunked: In his latest work Herbert Aptheker attacks the foundations of Myrdal's "monumental" structure

[A review of *The Negro People in America: A Critique of Gunnar Myrdal's "An American Dilemma,"* by Herbert Aptheker, New York: International Publishers]

"What are the five greatest books of all times on race relations?" This question was asked by the *Negro Digest* of "a cross-section of nineteen experts in the field . . . foremost educators, book critics, authors and race relations specialists." Their replies were published in the November 1946 issue of that magazine. The top-ranking book of the five selected, named by fifteen of the nineteen jurors, was *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and American Democracy*, by Gunnar Myrdal. (The other four books which polled the highest number of votes were *Autobiography of Frederick Douglass*; *The Souls of Black Folk*, by W. E. B. Du Bois; *Up from Slavery*, by Booker T.

Washington; and *Black Metropolis*, by St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton.)

This book was the result of a project, sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation, for a general study of the Negro question in the United States. Dr. Myrdal, a member of the Swedish senate and the faculty of the University of Sweden, was selected to direct the project as a man "free [from] presuppositions and emotional charges." The study was conducted over a period of five years, with the findings published by Harper in 1944.

The *Negro Digest's* poll is a striking example of the acclaim which this work has elicited in many quarters as a "monumental study," "the definitive work on the Negro problem," etc. Probably its major influence has been among liberals who, to a greater or lesser extent, count themselves among the foes of the Jim Crow system and who are part of the progressive movements of our country. Many of these men and women exert a considerable public influence through their writings, teachings and leadership of organizations. Hence it is clear that Myrdal's work has been placed in a vantage point of great strategic value.

It can be argued that many who hailed this study do not subscribe to the conclusions which Myrdal reaches, just as many who worked in amassing the material upon which the book is based do not agree with the author's findings. That is true. It is also true that many who find value in the enormous collection of data in this two-volume, 1500-page work choose to ignore the philosophic content of its analysis. But nevertheless it is a fact that Myrdal's ideas have been extensively and uncritically accepted in a field in which ideological clarity is vital. Unchallenged, these ideas would disorient the growing struggle of the 14,000,000 Negro people for equal rights.

The publication of Dr. Aptheker's critique of *An American Dilemma* is thus of singular importance. Brilliant in polemic, solid in scholarship, fired with a crusading passion, Dr. Aptheker attacks the foundation of Myrdal's "monumental" structure.

Readers of *New Masses* may recall the main outline of his argument which was published in these pages as an article entitled "A Liberal Dilemma" (May 14, 1946). The subject was further discussed in an exchange of opinion between Dr. Aptheker and the co-authors of *Black Metropolis*, Horace R. Cayton and St. Clair Drake, in *NM* of July 23, 1946.

In his new book Dr. Aptheker carefully examines Myrdal's philosophy, history and ethics and finds "Myrdal's philosophy to be superficial

and erroneous, his historiography demonstrably false, his ethics vicious, and, therefore, his analysis weak, mystical and dangerous.”

The central target for Dr. Aptheker’s attack is the Myrdal repudiation of a materialist concept of society and the adoption of an idealist base for his analysis and conclusions. From this standpoint Dr. Myrdal sees, in the words of his book’s introduction, “The Negro Problem as a Moral Issue.” Dr. Aptheker quotes Myrdal’s principal thesis:

The American Negro problem is a problem in the heart of the American. . . . This is the central viewpoint of this treatise (xlili). “What we usually call “social trends” have their main significance for the Negro’s status because of what is in the white people’s minds. . . . The important changes in the Negro problem do not consist of or have close relations with “social trends” in the narrower meaning of the term but are made up of changes in the people’s beliefs and valuations (p. 998). [All italics in the original.]

There is abundant evidence that Dr. Myrdal’s viewpoint, which conceals the real socio-economic basis for Negro oppression—the root source of white chauvinism and the lynch tree—is being amplified by his American followers. Thus we see Horace R. Cayton writing in his *Pittsburgh Courier* column (Dec. 21, 1946): “We are a nation of Hamlets who do not know whether it is nobler in the mind to suffer or to take arms against a sea of troubles.”

The marked class bias of Myrdal’s brand of idealism is revealed in his finding that “the Negro’s friend—or the one who is least unfriendly—is still rather the upper class of white people, the people with economic and social security” (p. 69).

While the essential emphasis of Dr. Aptheker’s polemic is against Myrdal’s analysis—that is, his ideology—the major portion of his work, in terms of space, is taken up with pointing out the errors of fact with which Myrdal’s work is filled and which seriously vitiate its value even as a collection of data. These errors, running into the dozens, include the amazing assertion that science shows the Negro to be inferior! In a detailed challenge of these errors which bulwark Myrdal’s false philosophy, Aptheker presents the historical, sociological and psychological facts in refutation.

As opposed to Myrdal, who claims that for the Negro problem the “scientific solution is far beyond the horizon,” Aptheker concludes: “The oppression of the American Negro has served as a stumbling block to the forces of progress and freedom for the entire nation

throughout its history. It must no longer be tolerated or permitted. In fighting it we fight not only for the Negro, but for all Americans.”

In an introduction to the critique Doxey A. Wilkerson provides an outline of the current aspects of the Negro people's struggle. The facts which he presents complement Dr. Aptheker's thesis that the basis of Negro exploitation is to be found in our economic system.

Herbert Aptheker's work in the field of Negro history has been of notable value. His criticism of Myrdal, illumined with Marxist insight, is another signal service to the Negro people and their allies. This is a book which should be widely circulated; it can help dispel the smokescreen which has been generated by *An American Dilemma*. Dr. Aptheker has spoken well, and convincingly. It is the duty of the progressive movement to ensure that he is heard.

New York

Part II
The Career and Personal Influence
of Herbert Aptheker

The Bulldog Whitewashed: A Critique of the Investigation of Herbert Aptheker's Nonappointment at Yale University

Staughton Lynd

A seminar on W. E. B. Du Bois was taught by Herbert Aptheker at Yale University in fall 1976. Staughton Lynd details the controversy surrounding this event in an article written at the time but not previously published.

A joint committee of the two leading associations of U.S. historians has recently concluded an investigation of the Yale University History Department's opposition to the appointment of Dr. Herbert Aptheker to teach a one-semester seminar on the life and thought of the late W. E. B. Du Bois. A confrontation between Aptheker and Yale was inescapably dramatic. Herbert Aptheker, a Communist Party member all his adult life, is beyond question the American historian most discriminated against because of political belief. He described the situation in a letter written in 1971:

My graduate degrees, from Columbia, included the Ph.D. granted in February 1943. Prior to that my efforts at job-hunting had been quite unsuccessful, in colleges within New York, and the reason clearly was political. When I returned from combat overseas and inquired of the late Prof. W. L. Westermann of the possibilities of appointment at Columbia he gently remarked that while he thought I belonged there it was not possible for Columbia

to hire one with my political beliefs. Thereafter letters to the employment office and to the history department at Columbia went unanswered. Efforts to obtain an appointment continued through the forties and fifties and sixties; I applied at Howard, Univ. of Wisconsin, Reed and many more. Departments indicated interest in employing me at Reed, Northern Illinois, Buffalo and other places but these were always cut off at the administrative level—usually without anything in writing—though from Buffalo there was first an enthusiastic offer from the Chairman and then a curt note from the same person to the effect that the Administration did not look with favor at the appointment.

Very recently, at the request—or demand—of the Dept. of Afro-American Studies at the Univ. of Mass. (Amherst) I was actually interviewed by the Chancellor there (who came to the interview with written questions prepared for the Trustees)—I was not hired as a faculty member, though I shall be giving special lectures there as a guest of the aforementioned department. History departments have invited me at many institutions for single lectures or for a stay of a few days; this has occurred at many colleges. At times (as Berkeley in 1963) a hall on campus was cancelled at the last moment and I spoke for the department (on Abolitionism) just off campus with Prof. Stamp as Chairman. At Chapel Hill I brought suit after being denied access to campus (following invitation) and after about 18 months won.

In 1969, at the urging of the Black students at Bryn Mawr I was hired (for the first time in my life) by a College. I was appointed Visiting Lecturer in the History Department and taught under that title in 1969–1970 and 1970–71 and will do so again 1971–72 with the same title. I have taught a course (two hours, once a week) on THE HISTORY OF THE AFRO-AMERICAN PEOPLE. In 1972 I shall also give an upper level seminar on LIFE AND WORK OF W. E. B. DU BOIS.

The other protagonist, Yale University, has a history of public anti-Communism. Harvard in the 1950s professed a liberalism

that it apparently did not practice.¹ In contrast, Yale presidents Seymour and Griswold agreed that Communists should not and would not knowingly be appointed to the Yale faculty, and the university endorsed an Association of American Universities statement that declared Communist Party membership incompatible with a university appointment (*New York Times*, 22 June 1949 and 18 February 1952).² This endorsement does not appear to have been repealed.

1. The facts

The facts of the first phase of the Aptheker affair are presented as follows in a source presumably not biased in favor of Aptheker, the *Yale Alumni Magazine*:

In the spring of 1975 Mr. Aptheker was invited by the Davenport College seminar committee—approximately eight Fellows and 15 students of the college—to propose a course for the spring of 1976.

Mr. Aptheker proposed the course on W. E. B. Du Bois, a founder of the modern black liberation movement and of the Pan-African Movement. In the years immediately before his death in 1963, Du Bois had been a friend of Mr. Aptheker and had chosen him as his literary executor. In that capacity Mr. Aptheker had edited Du Bois' posthumous "Autobiography," published in 1968, and was also editing a three-volume edition of Du Bois' correspondence.

Mr. Aptheker's other credentials included a Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1943; authorship of many books, including "American Negro Slave Revolts," and a position as professor in the social sciences department at Hostos Community College (City University of New York).

In short, Mr. Aptheker seemed qualified to teach the course, and the seminar committee foresaw no difficulty finding a department at Yale which would be willing to sponsor him as a visiting lecturer—a prerequisite for approval of a college seminar.

Last fall the chairman of the History department,

Professor John Hall, appointed a committee to informally consider the appointment. It consisted of the three senior historians whom he considered most familiar with Mr. Aptheker's work.

In early October, Mr. Hall told Jack Sandweiss, Master of Davenport College, that his committee was opposed to the appointment. This, he said, did not constitute official refusal but made it unlikely that the appointment would be approved if it were formally requested by Davenport.

The chairman of the committee, C. Vann Woodward, Sterling Professor of History, agreed to meet with the Davenport seminar committee. "The discussion was very brief," Mr. Woodward recalled recently, "but I should say that I made it perfectly plain that I didn't find his scholarship up to our standards." He also told the committee that he had briefly been a member of the editorial board for publication of the Du Bois correspondence but had resigned after the first volume appeared because he "could not endorse what Mr. Aptheker was doing." He declined to comment at length, explaining that it was against departmental policy to reveal information detrimental to the candidate.

"He didn't fare well in convincing people of his stand," recalls Mrs. Letha Sandweiss, a member of the seminar committee. Because the committee was not persuaded, and because the deadline for submitting course proposals was approaching, the committee took an unprecedented step. It mailed a form letter to each of five departments—History, American Studies, Sociology, Afro-American Studies and Political Science—requesting an appointment for Mr. Aptheker.

History responded first, officially—rejecting the request. Its decision met immediate criticism. One undergraduate, Robert A. Blecker, '78, wrote in the *Yale Daily News* that no one could claim that "Aptheker doesn't measure up to 'Yale's standard of scholarship.'" Countless non-scholars, ranging from lawyers to political cartoonists, have taught residential college seminars for

credit. Numerous graduate students have run seminars, and last year an undergraduate taught one on the weighty subject of chess. Surely Mr. Aptheker is at least up to that high standard!

“The true reason for Woodward’s rejection of Aptheker is ideological. Woodward essentially claims that Aptheker, a Marxist, overemphasizes Du Bois’ years as a Communist in editing the latter’s papers.” (Du Bois joined the American Communist Party in 1961, two years before his death.)

Professor Woodward replied with a statement to the Yale Daily News which was endorsed by the other two members of his committee, John W. Blassingame, professor of history, and John M. Blum, Woodward Professor of History. “Some apply a double standard to [college seminar] courses,” he wrote, “and the result has sometimes been apparent. We do not. We take college seminars as seriously as any other courses for which academic credit is given and apply the same standards.”

He also replied to what he called “the political issue,” saying that “if Herbert Aptheker had been a Republican and a champion of Herbert Hoover capitalism, the decision would have been the same. The real issue is a judgment of scholarly standards. We have to make hundreds of such judgments every year. Like other departments, we do not subject applicants to public exposure of unfavorable assessments. It would seem unfair to single out Professor Aptheker as an exception.”

The next day Mr. Aptheker asked to be made an exception. In a telephone interview with the Yale Daily News he accused the History department of “McCarthyism disguised as benevolence.” He demanded that the department make public the specific reasons for his rejection. The History department declined to comment. The Yale College Council asked that “specific reasons [be] made public as to why the seminar did not receive approval,” and a group of students gathered 1,275 signatures for a petition in support of the seminar.

On the same day that Mr. Aptheker's demands appeared in the Daily News, the Political Science department met and—to the surprise of many, including the chairman of the department, Professor LaPalombara—approved his appointment as a visiting lecturer without a dissenting vote.

“We are mindful that Yale's departments differ in their certifying procedures,” said Mr. LaPalombara, explaining his department's vote. “In our case certification means that, all things considered, a proposed seminar related to political science will be taught by a person who seems relatively qualified to handle it.

“We do not apply the same standards of evaluation to teachers of college seminars that we apply to persons seeking regular appointments in our department. Were we to use this latter standard, then it is clear that all but a small handful of college seminars that come before us for approval would fail.

“As for Aptheker's political commitments, they will hardly be a secret to those who take his course. Some of us feel that the subject matter of this seminar, interpreted by a skilled and committed Marxist, should generate the unusual and varied educational experience that the college seminar system is supposed to provide.”

Finally, in a paragraph which he later said was intended to “specifically deny a confrontation,” Mr. LaPalombara said, “some may think it curious or unfortunate that sister departments arrive at conflicting judgments on this kind of question. It should be clear, however, that different premises may lead to different conclusions. It is much more germane that the Yale community recognize that these apparent inconsistencies are invited, if not encouraged, by the rules that now govern procedures for legitimating college seminars.”

On that conciliatory note the battle seemed over. Subsequently the appointment was sent for review to the Junior Appointments Committee—a committee of six faculty members, appointed and chaired by the Deans of Yale

College and the Graduate School. Written statements supporting and opposing the appointment were given to the committee by the departments of Political Science and History. The committee approved the appointment without a dissenting vote.

The Vote and the Reaction

On the day preceding the meeting of the Joint Board of Permanent Officers, Dean Taft reminded Professor LaPalombara that the Aptheker appointment was one of the 41 appointments for college seminars which would be considered. Despite the reminder, Professor LaPalombara decided not to attend.

“I had been led to believe,” he said later, “that Aptheker’s opponents had decided to let the appointment go by. And there was no reason to think he would be singled out for the apparently massive attack on a minor appointment which was launched at the meeting.”

Two members of the Political Science department appeared at the meeting and approximately 10 members of the History department were among the 40 professors there. Both Professor Woodward and Professor Blas-singame delivered prepared statements opposing the appointment. The appointment was overwhelmingly defeated. (Aptheker case 1976)

The Report of the Joint Committee of the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians (hereafter the Report and the Committee, respectively) gives a reasonably accurate account of the second phase of the affair:

Outspoken, sometimes extreme criticism of the Joint Board’s [Yale University Joint Board of Permanent Officers] action developed immediately and continued into the spring. Professor William Foltz of the Political Science Department pointed to the “brilliant” strategy of the opponents of Aptheker, who spoke at the meeting of the Joint Boards “as if they were talking about a regular Yale appointment” (i.e., as distinguished from a college

seminar appointment). The decision of the Joint Boards was further criticized as an eleventh-hour action and as “academic overkill.” Aptheker, in a statement published in the *Daily World* on December 18, 1975, characterized the Joint Board’s action as a “flagrant instance of the violation of elementary concepts of academic freedom.” The Committee to Support the Du Bois Seminar urged a retraction of the decision and a full review of the Joint Board’s authority. Some 2200, half the student body, signed a protest. Rallies were held and petitions circulated. One, signed by more than sixty faculty members including nine historians deplored “the methods by which approval of the Davenport College seminar to be taught by Dr. Herbert Aptheker was refused. . . .” The petitioners asserted that “the vague, conflicting and unsubstantiated charges accompanying this action” were “a blot on the record of the University,” declared Aptheker to be “fully qualified to teach this seminar,” and urged “prompt approval of it.” Many students saw the issue as an example of the authoritarian character of the university establishment and demanded reform. Aptheker insisted on a public disclosure of all charges against him. On February 9, 1976, on one of several visits to New Haven, he delivered a public lecture on Du Bois before a capacity audience. At this lecture he spoke also of his personal situation, and he declared his conviction that he had been rejected because he was “a leading member of the Communist Party.” The audience gave him a standing ovation. This meeting, and the case generally, received much publicity in the press.

The Davenport College seminar committee, despite the opposition of some (especially faculty) members, voted to submit the proposal a second time. Accordingly, on February 23, 1976, Sandweiss resubmitted it to the History Department, and a month later, on March 23, Hall responded with a statement of History’s second rejection. In April the Political Science Department again approved Aptheker. This time the department made explicit the

criterion for appointment that it employed. The department did not make a judgment on Aptheker's credentials as a historian but suggested that he was qualified "to teach this particular seminar by virtue of his personal acquaintance with Du Bois, a major political figure of the 20th century, and his familiarity with Du Bois' work and life." The Junior and Term Appointments Committee gave its approval for the second time. Thus in February, March, and April, 1976, the initial steps were taken again for the appointment of Aptheker, now with a view to scheduling the seminar in the fall of 1976.

In April, President Kingman Brewster and Dean Taft attempted to explain the History Department's refusal to elaborate upon the reasons for the rejection. "This policy of ultimate faculty responsibility in all academic appointments," Brewster explained:

applies to appointments for the college seminars as well as other faculty appointments. . . . Yale could not hold or attract a good faculty if they felt that faculty membership were determined by student, alumni, administrative or trustee pressure. . . . The confidentiality of the deliberations of the faculty about individual cases was reaffirmed in my 1969 talk on governance, in which I noted that, "Unless opinion can be received in confidence in such cases, it may well be withheld or watered down to banalities in order to avoid offense or injury." Very often this is in the best interest of the individuals under consideration. . . . However, it is not for the interest of the candidates alone, so it cannot be waived by them.

And Dean Taft explained:

To subject the reviewing bodies to the requirement that each decision be publicly justified . . . would jeopardize the objectivity of the appointments process. . . . I am determined that the appointments process shall be fairly and firmly adhered to and that those charged with the responsibility for considering such appointments be free to do so objectively and conscientiously. I hope that you will assist me in preserving this fundamental academic freedom.

The meeting of the Joint Boards, scheduled for April 23, was awaited with much anticipation and publicity.

Advance notice that the Aptheker appointment would be on the agenda was now circulated, as it had not been on the previous occasion. Over 90 professors attended the three-hour meeting. Students picketed outside and demonstrated in favor of Aptheker. Again we have no record of the discussion. The vote was 53 in favor to 39 opposed with two abstentions. Because it was a majority but not a two-thirds vote, Taft, in accordance with normal practice, referred the question to the Executive Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. The favorable decision was then approved by the Executive Committee on April 26 and confirmed by the Yale Corporation on May 16.

The course on the life and thought of Du Bois was given by Aptheker in the fall of 1976, one term later than originally planned. His one-term appointment to the Yale faculty was sponsored by the Department of Political Science. Fifteen students, the maximum number for a college seminar, were enrolled. Aptheker later stated that attendance was good, motivation was high, students were “on the whole splendid,” and “almost all papers were first-rate.” (Report 1977, 10–14)³

In April 1976, the Aptheker affair was considered by the Organization of American Historians (OAH).

The Constitution of the Organization of American Historians states that a resolution may be proposed through a petition signed by 100 members and submitted at the business meeting. The business meeting of the 1976 convention of the OAH occurred on April 9 in St. Louis. A petition bearing over 100 names and calling for an OAH investigation of the Yale-Aptheker affair was submitted at this meeting by Professor Jesse Lemisch of the State University of New York, Buffalo. In accordance with the OAH constitution the petition was not a matter for discussion or vote at the business meeting but went directly to mail ballot. (Report 1977)

The vote was 833 for an investigation, 818 against. Thus the OAH was constitutionally obligated to conduct an inquiry.

2. Procedure

a. Composition of the Committee.

The resolution on Aptheker and Yale presented to the annual OAH meeting in April 1976 reflected the long-standing concern of insurgent historians that the profession, rather than referring academic freedom problems to the AAUP, and so, all too often, to oblivion, should monitor itself. Clearly, that task called for a special sort of investigator: respected by all factions among historians, but sufficiently independent of the profession's establishment to be able to speak truth to power.

Aptheker had initially protested, not to the OAH, but to the larger and more conservative AHA (American Historical Association). Then, in April 1976, the OAH meeting passed its resolution calling for an investigation by that organization's "Committee for the Defense of Historians." In fact, there was no such committee, but rather, a Joint AHA-OAH Committee on the Defense of the Rights of Historians under the First Amendment. Seeking to make procedural sense out of the situation, Richard Kirkendall, executive secretary of the OAH, informed the membership that, if the resolution passed, the investigation would be conducted either by the OAH members of the Joint Committee, or, if the AHA preferred, by the full Joint Committee made up of members of both organizations (*OAH Newsletter*, July 1976, 3).

After the results of the OAH vote were in, Lemisch called Mack Thompson, executive director of the AHA, to inquire about the status of AHA action: Would the organization continue its own investigation, or would it join in the OAH initiative? Thompson replied that the matter would come before the December meeting of the AHA Council, more than two months later; since Aptheker was now teaching the Du Bois seminar at Yale, the issue did not seem to him "pressing." When Lemisch disagreed, Thompson added, angrily, according to Lemisch, "we can't short-cut procedures." Lemisch suggested that rather than waiting for the AHA Council to meet in December, Thompson might place a conference call.⁴

On 26 October 1976, Henry Turner, chairman of the Yale History Department, asked the AHA to join in the investigation

(Report 1977, 16). On 4 December, Thompson initiated a conference call to the AHA Executive Committee. On 27 December, the AHA Council decided that the AHA should join in the investigation through the Joint AHA-OAH Committee.

This decision signified not only that AHA personnel would take part in the investigation, but also that the Professional Division of the AHA would not. The guidelines of the Professional Division contemplate “aggressive activity . . . such as a full-fledged investigation.”⁵ One of its members at that time, Berenice Carroll, had long been active within the profession on behalf of the rights of women. AHA participation in the Joint Committee gave Thompson a welcome excuse to terminate an inquiry by the Professional Division that had barely begun.

Thus it came about that the investigators were the prescribed members of the Joint AHA-OAH Committee on the Defense of the Rights of Historians under the First Amendment: the presidents of the two organizations, the executive secretaries of the two organizations, and one other historian from each group. One of the two presidents had received his B.A. and Ph.D. from Yale. (The circumstance invites speculation as to the reaction had a committee member been trained by the other institution implicated by the investigation, the Communist Party.) Moreover, a committee majority made up of the four highest officials of the AHA and OAH was, in the nature of things, less free to follow the evidence wherever it might lead than a less elite committee would have been. Officials must placate groups and cannot alienate important people. The logic in choosing them was the opposite of the logic that, in a not dissimilar situation, led to the selection of Archibald Cox and Leon Jaworski.

b. Standards.

Although the AHA endorses the academic freedom guidelines of the AAUP, it was natural for this in-house inquiry to turn for guidance to the “Statement of Professional Standards” proposed by an ad hoc AHA Committee on the Rights of Historians, and adopted by the AHA in 1974 (Statement of Professional Standards, *AHA Newsletter*, December 1974, 12).

These guidelines presented a difficulty. Section 16(2) of the Statement, as adopted and published, reads as follows:

If the candidate requests to be informed in writing of the reasons for a recommendation against *appointment*, promotion, or award of tenure, the department should explain the possible adverse consequences of confirming the oral statement in writing. Should the candidate persist in the request for a written statement of reasons, it is recommended that written reasons be given. (emphasis added)

Those who sponsored the resolution calling for an OAH investigation cited this passage in support of their claim that the department should have told Aptheker the reasons for the department's rejection of him (Lemisch 1976, 7).

Sometime in the fall of 1976, the department chairman, Henry Turner, inquired of members of the since-disbanded Committee on Rights of Historians whether they had, in fact, meant to say not "appointment" (which covered Aptheker), but "reappointment" (which did not) (Taylor 1976). The committee consulted its notes and working papers and determined that Turner was correct. Mack Thompson then wrote as follows to the chairman of the former Committee on Rights of Historians:

The error in Section 16(2) of the Ad Hoc Report is not a trivial one. On reflection I think it should be corrected. The problem is how best to do this and when? May I suggest the following: that you, as chairman of the committee, provide me with the evidence that George Taylor refers to in his letter to Professor Turner, December 31, 1976 that it was the intention of the committee to use the word "reappointment" and not "appointment" in Section 16(2). I think it would also be best if you requested that the report be corrected. I cannot make corrections in copies of the report already distributed, but I can insert a correction in all remaining copies and I could even run a brief notice in the *AHA Newsletter*.

I think there is need for more than "deliberate" speed in this matter, so I urge you to let me know whether my

suggestion makes sense. Do you feel it is useful to consult all members of the defunct committee, or merely to notify them? (Mack Thompson to Sheldon Hackney, 2 March 1977)

The chairman of the defunct committee promptly replied, agreeing with Thompson's suggestions as to procedure and adding innocently:

Thank you for acting so swiftly on this matter. I suppose it could be of some importance in the future and we ought to get it cleared up as soon as possible. (Sheldon Hackney to Mack Thompson, 7 March 1977)

Section 16(2) was obviously relevant to the issue of whether Aptheker had a right to be told the department's reasons for opposing his appointment. In their haste to clean up this criterion, however, the investigators neglected the still more relevant Section 3. Section 3 deals with the need to resist interference with academic appointments by persons outside the department concerned. Section 3 states in pertinent part:

Departments should base recommendations for *appointment*, reappointment, promotion, tenure, or nonrenewal on professional criteria alone, and administrators and governing boards should override such recommendations only rarely and for compelling reasons stated in detail. When an administration or a governing board disagrees with a departmental recommendation, every effort should be made to resolve the disagreement through mutual consultation. *If the department's recommendation is overridden without compelling reasons stated in detail, the rights of both the department and the candidate have been violated. A department in such a position should seek a reversal, enlisting the support of the entire faculty of the institution and, if necessary, of appropriate professional associations.* (Statement of Professional Standards, *AHA Newsletter*, December 1974, 10; emphasis added)

Such, as will appear, was precisely the position of the Yale Political Science Department when the Yale History Department

sought to block its appointment of Herbert Aptheker.

Perhaps because (thanks to Mack Thompson's labors) the Committee felt unrestricted by Section 16(2) of the Statement of Professional Standards, the Report nowhere offers a reasoned defense of confidentiality, or a critique of its invocation during the Aptheker controversy. The following questions are not posed, let alone answered: Since Hall, Woodward, and Blassingame initially indicated that the reason for confidentiality was to protect Aptheker, could they in good conscience refuse to make their reasons public when Aptheker demanded it?⁶ Supposing for the moment that the university as well as the affected individual has an interest in confidentiality, so that the individual alone may not waive it, does a department waive any right to keep its reasoning private after that reasoning has been shared with several dozen persons outside the department, including students? Finally, to ask the same thing in a different way, is confidentiality an absolute value, or must it not, like other values, be balanced against competing concerns and be regulated in its expression by considerations of time, place, and taste? Aptheker sought to ask this when he concluded his response to the report with the statement: "Confidentiality is precious; but the good name of a scholar also is precious—even if he or she is a Communist" (Aptheker n.d.). It must be emphasized that confidentiality as understood by the senior members of the Yale History Department is not a consensus value at Yale University, or even in the Yale History Department. Sixty-two members of the faculty, representing fourteen departments and including nine historians, signed a petition that stated:

We the undersigned members of the University deplore the methods by which approval of the Davenport College seminar to be taught by Dr. Herbert Aptheker was refused and feel strongly that the vague, conflicting and unsubstantiated charges accompanying this action are a blot on the record of the University. . . .

Should concrete charges be made during the course of the reconsideration of this appointment, Dr. Aptheker must be given the opportunity to reply to them. (cited in Report 1977)

c. Evidence.

The most important procedural decision of the Committee was not to go to Yale. In academic freedom investigations by the AAUP, the standard practice is for a subcommittee to go to the institution involved and talk to the parties in the dispute. Aptheker specifically requested such a visit to Yale, so that personal interviews might be conducted with “at least the following”: representative members of the Davenport College seminar committee, representative members of the Junior Appointments Committee, representative participants in the two meetings of the Joint Board of Permanent Officers that considered the Aptheker appointment, representative members of the Political Science Department, the university Executive Committee, including President Kingman Brewster, and, of course, Professors Woodward, Blassingame, Blum, and himself (Aptheker to Richard Kirkendall, 24 March 1977 and 25 May 1977).

The Committee decided not to go to Yale. It has explained this decision variously. The Report itself states:

The responses [to initial letters to the participants in the affair] persuaded the committee that it should not hold hearings in New Haven. Hearings would be costly; many participants had moved away, and committee resources were limited. More important, the committee found no significant gaps in the story of what happened and no disagreement among those involved except for the elusive issue of hidden motives. (Report 1977, 16–17)

Insofar as this official explanation emphasizes cost, it is unconvincing. The committee that lacked the money to go to Yale has found the money to mail its report, not only to the OAH membership, but, unnecessarily, to the larger AHA membership as well. Privately, the Committee apparently offered other reasons. One member of the OAH board wrote to Aptheker: “I do know that the board’s legal advisers discouraged as active an investigatory approach as you outlined to Kirkendall” (Robert Wiebe to Aptheker, 7 June 1977). To another member of the OAH Board, Kirkendall wrote:

The committee met in Chicago for most of the day on June 16th [1977]. We considered, among other matters, the suggestions that had been made to us about the ways in which we should proceed. We decided that the decisions that had been made about procedures were satisfactory and that the committee was not obligated to follow the practices of the AAUP. In fact, we're convinced that we have neither the experience, nor the financial resources necessary to proceed as the AAUP does. (Richard Kirkendall to Stanley Katz, 8 July 1977)

The theory was apparently that an inexperienced group could better determine the truth if it stayed away from the scene of the action.

By deciding not to go to Yale, the Committee limited itself to written evidence. Another series of decisions further restricted written evidence to its least reliable variant: self-serving statements written after the event with the investigating committee as intended audience. Aptheker offered to make available to the Committee the correspondence connected with Woodward's resignation from the advisory board of the Du Bois Papers, provided the other principals, Woodward and the University of Massachusetts Press, also consented (Aptheker to Richard Kirkendall 25 February 1977).⁷ It appears to have been common knowledge at Yale that this event helped to shape Woodward's attitude toward Aptheker. The *Yale Daily News* commented on 12 April 1976, "It is daily becoming less of a secret that the truly damaging charges against Aptheker come from Woodward's knowledge of the candidate and the way he edited the Du Bois papers. The Committee, however, never responded to Aptheker's offer of this material. Similarly it showed no interest in Lemisch's letter making available the mass of written material he had collected in preparing the OAH resolution that gave rise to the investigation (Jesse Lemisch to Richard Kirkendall, 7 February 1977)."⁸

The Committee seems also to have made no effort to obtain the many statements in which the department and its members, as well as other *dramatis personae*, justified their positions *at the time*. The Report itself mentions many such statements. In fall

1975, the Junior and Term Appointments Committee “received a written summary of History’s reasons for declining to sponsor the appointment” (8). On 4 December 1975, at the Joint Board meeting that rejected Aptheker’s appointment, Woodward and Blassingame “delivered prepared statements in opposition to the appointment” (9). The obvious value of such documents is that they offer contemporary rather than post hoc insight into the thinking of the department and those of its members who opposed the appointment. On 4 August 1977, Thomas Emerson, professor emeritus of the Yale Law School and a leading authority on the First Amendment, wrote to the Committee that “fairness to Dr. Aptheker requires that the material collected include . . . every statement made at the time in which the Yale History Department explained why it objected to Dr. Aptheker’s appointment.” Emerson explained:

The importance of this class of documents cannot be overestimated. Obviously, where the motives of a decisionmaker are at issue, it is essential to consider statements made by that decisionmaker at the time the decision was made. Post hoc rationalizations will not do. . . .

There should be no objection to the production of these documents. They were discussed at meetings attended by large numbers of persons and can hardly be said to be private communications. (Thomas Emerson to Richard Kirkendall, 4 August 1977)

The Committee never answered this letter.

The Committee began to draft its report after receiving five letters: from Aptheker, Turner, LaPalombara (who did not respond in person because he was on leave), President Brewster, and the Davenport College seminar committee.⁹ Indeed even this statement overstates the diversity of viewpoints available to the Committee, since the Davenport College seminar committee was required to send a draft of its response to the office of the university president where it was “coordinated” by Yale counsel José Cabranes before being sent on.¹⁰

For the Committee to say—as the Report does say—that this perfunctory procedure was appropriate because letters revealed

“no significant gaps in the story of what happened and no disagreement among those involved except for the elusive issue of hidden motives” is a spectacular misunderstanding of the reason for an investigation in the first place. No one needed an investigation to establish a superficial chronology of events. That had already been well done by many hands, including the *Yale Alumni Magazine* and Lemisch. The Report adds nothing in this respect to what already was well known. The sole reason for the Committee’s existence was precisely to explore in systematic and aggressive fashion “the elusive issue of hidden motives,” not *who done it*, which was always obvious, but *why*. It is too generous to the Committee to say it failed in this assignment. The Committee did not even try.

d. How the Report was released

In its initial letter to Aptheker, in February 1977, the Committee represented that “upon completion of our inquiry the Committee will report its *findings* to the Executive Board of the OAH and the Council of the AHA for *their consideration and transmission* to the members of the association and the parties to the controversy” (Richard Leopold and Charles Gibson to Herbert Aptheker, 18 February 1977; emphasis added). It did not work out quite that way.

At no time did the Committee pause to explain to Aptheker what procedure it was following and when it expected to complete its task. Writing to the Committee on behalf of Aptheker on 4 August 1977, Emerson concluded:

I ask a prompt response to the foregoing requests. Surely it would make a mockery of your profession as historians and mine as an attorney were your inquiry to come to premature closure with obvious sources of important evidence untapped. If you are not prepared to collect this evidence prior to the September meeting of the committee, I ask that no final decision be made at that time and that a future date be set, by which time the evidence can be assembled. (Thomas Emerson to Richard Kirkendall, 4 August 1977)

The next thing either Aptheker or Emerson knew about the work of the Committee was when the *Yale Daily News* announced on 8 November 1977: “Historians finish Aptheker inquiry.”

Although the Committee had previously stated “that no public statements about the work of the committee will be made while the inquiry is in progress,”¹¹ someone had leaked something to the *Yale Daily News*. Moreover, Kenneth Stampp, president of the OAH and a member of the Committee, was quoted in the story as saying that the report would be issued in January, “after both the OAH and the AHA have gone through the formality of having the decision approved by their board members” (*Yale Daily News*, 8 November 1977).

Even this “formality” was dispensed with so far as the OAH was concerned. Later in the second week in November, the OAH board met. It was presented with the narrative portion of the Report but not the Report’s commentary. The board, as the Committee was to put it delicately, “chose to delay its response until after the full document was available”¹²—that is to say, the board, to its honor, refused to approve a pig in a poke. The Committee presented its full report to the AHA Council in December, and this body, not the governing body of the organization that mandated the investigation, “determined that the professional and constitutional rights of Dr. Herbert Aptheker were not violated by the actions of the Yale history department” and further determined that the “text of the entire report, including the findings and commentary, should be distributed to all AHA members” (*AHA Newsletter*, February 1978).

Aptheker was offered an opportunity to respond to the Report in the July issue of the *OAH Newsletter* (Conkin, Gibson, Thompson, et al. to Herbert Aptheker, 3 January 1978), long after the Report’s initial distribution, safely after the meetings of the OAH board and OAH membership in April, at a time when the academic world is on vacation and does not read its mail. Thanks, again, to the intervention of an OAH board member (Stanley Katz), Kirkendall agreed to let Aptheker’s response be circulated to OAH board members before its April meeting.

Unfortunately, this is not all that was amiss with the way the Report was released. Next to the November 8 story in the *Yale Daily News* entitled “Historians finish Aptheker inquiry” was a second story under the headline, “Fraud case settled.” The story described a suit brought against Aptheker and his publisher, the Kraus-Thomson Organization, for purported plagiarism in the preparation of a Du Bois bibliography. The suit had been settled the previous December. Even had the story been accurate, there would have been cause to wonder at its miraculous appearance side by side with the announcement of the Report’s completion.

And the story was not accurate. After a vehement protest by Aptheker’s publisher, the *Yale Daily News* published on 19 January 1978 a “Correction” in which it stated that the words “fraud” and “plagiarism” should not have been used.¹³ *Even after the publication of that correction*, Henry Turner, chairman of the Yale History Department, allowed himself to be quoted in the *Yale Alumni Magazine*:

The findings in this report, by six distinguished historians, along with the outcome of the recent plagiarism suit against Aptheker, will presumably give pause for thought even to those who at the time insinuated that the whole affair amounted only to a denial, on political grounds, by Yale’s historians of a “minor appointment” to “a good, solid Communist intellectual.” (February 1978; emphasis added)

3. Substance

a. When is a department a department?

The most egregious action of the Yale historians was their opposition to the Aptheker seminar after the seminar came to be sponsored by another department, the Political Science Department. The most important conclusion of the Report is that in so doing, the Yale historians did not act as a department, but as individuals. In reaching this conclusion, the Report echoed the self-assessment of the department.

Department: The only action taken by the department in relation to Herbert Aptheker . . . was to decline to serve as Mr. Aptheker's departmental sponsor. All the other actions or presumed actions referred to were taken by other bodies in the university. Members of the department participated in some of those actions but as individual members of the faculty of the university, not as members of the department. (Hall 1976, 5)

Report: The evidence available to us suggests that the Yale History Department simply decided that a candidate for a position did not meet its standards. All other acts by historians, including the presentations made at the meetings of the Joint Board, were by individuals acting for themselves. (Report 1977, 20)

How did the investigators reach their conclusion that the ten members of the History Department who attended the meeting of the Joint Board in December 1975 were "acting for themselves"? This statement is made twice. Earlier, in the recitation of facts, the Report states: "At the meeting of the Joint Board Woodward and Blassingame, acting as individual officers, not as representatives of their department, delivered prepared statements in opposition to the appointment" (9). No evidence is presented for this judgment.

Several points should be noted.

First, the Report does assume that the Political Science Department acted, or failed to act, as a department. "The sponsoring department—Political Science—did not have representatives present to defeat [this is a typographical error: read "defend"] the appointment," the Report states (24). Yet the ten members of the History Department who were present to defeat the appointment are assumed not to have been representatives. Why?

Second, as so often elsewhere in the Report, a seemingly descriptive term actually conceals an implicit analysis. What does it mean to "represent" a department? When the Aptheker seminar was first proposed to the History Department, the chairman asked three senior professors to look into the matter. Their

evaluation, although not presented to a meeting of the department and concededly unofficial, is said to have represented the department. "It was understood to signify that a formal request of the department of History would be likely to be rejected," the Report tells us (6). Yet when ten members of the same department appeared at a meeting of the Joint Board, and two of the ten presented prepared statements, and those two were two of the three members of the committee whose rejection of Aptheker is said to have represented the department, these ten acted as individuals.

Third, what are we supposed to conclude about occasions such as Woodward's appearance before the Davenport College seminar committee? (6) Was he representing the department or himself only? Does common sense not suggest the answer: the department? And if this be so, why does Professor Woodward's appearance together with nine colleagues before the Joint Board to read a prepared statement in opposition to the seminar not represent the department?

Fourth, and perhaps most important, this is one of several instances when the Report uncritically adopts the department's own post hoc rationalizations for what it did. When the Joint Board met again in April 1976, the department protagonists were at pains to stress that they acted as individuals. Woodward, for instance, stated: "We're taking no position on the proposal and will not *this time*. Any position will be individual" (*New Haven Register*, 23 April 1976; emphasis added). Hall, the department chairman, concurred: "Any action at the meeting will be by private individuals, and not a *departmental presentation*" (*Yale Daily News*, 20 April 1976; emphasis added). Surely, the ordinary reader could only understand these statements to mean that *last time*, i.e., at the December 1975 Joint Board meeting, the members of the department did take a position; and that the presentations made by Woodward and Blassingame at the December 1975 meeting were intended and understood as presentations on behalf of the department.

When the department was confronted by an impending investigation of its conduct, it pretended that there had been no difference between last time and "this time," and that the

presentations to the Joint Board in December 1975 were not “departmental presentations.”

By embracing this fiction, without explanation, the investigators were enabled to construct the following argument:

1. When Woodward, Blassingame, and Blum rejected Aptheker, this was not a decision by individuals but a departmental decision. “In the History Department the decision of the ad hoc committee, approved by the chairman, amounted to a departmental decision” (Report 1977, 7).

2. When Woodward and Blassingame, together with eight of their colleagues, opposed Aptheker at the Joint Board meeting of December 1975, this was not an action by the department but an action by individuals.

3. Ergo, the department, as a department, did not interfere with the autonomy of the Political Science Department in sponsoring a seminar unanimously approved by Political Science.

The failure of the Report to deal with the History Department’s blatant interference with the value of departmental autonomy is revealed in its discussion of the difference between various Yale departments in their standards for seminars.

It is evident that Yale departments do not agree on this matter. But it should be noted that there is in some measure an agreement to disagree. LaPalombara does not challenge the right of the History Department to follow its own procedures in evaluating proposed teachers of college seminars. (19)

The obvious next sentence is: But the History Department *did* challenge the right of the Political Science Department to follow its own procedures in evaluating proposed teachers of college seminars. The Report avoided that sentence by accepting the department’s fiction that it did not act as a department in December 1975.

Indeed the investigators—walking, as it were, the second mile with their investigatees—paraphrase the issue at the Joint Board meeting of December 1975 thus: “Several eminent historians were prepared to argue that the proposed course would not meet the standards they expected for any history course offered at

Yale” (23). The course before the Joint Board in December 1975, however, was a political science course.

The Report even suggests gratuitously that the Joint Board’s acceptance of the Aptheker seminar in April 1976 was “in no sense a defeat for the historians, for it entailed no challenge to their earlier rejection of Aptheker and no criticism of their appointment standards” (25). The investigators know this, it seems, despite the fact that “we have no record of the discussion.” Somehow, nonetheless, they have learned that

spokesmen for the Political Science Department now very carefully qualified the grounds of their sponsorship and dissipated any notion that they were circumventing the History Department. . . . They emphasized that they approved Aptheker not on scholarly grounds but as a former associate of Du Bois and one familiar with the Du Bois Papers, a criterion that had been used before regarding well-known political figures. (Report 1977, 13)

Thus summarizing a discussion for which it elsewhere purported to have no record, the Report disregarded some readily available sources of information.

According to the *Yale Daily News*, 20 April 1976, the meeting of the Joint Board in April 1976 was preceded by a meeting of the Junior Appointments Committee, which recommended approval of the Aptheker seminar. At the Junior Appointments Committee meeting,

two representatives from the Political Science Department, including Joseph LaPalombara, were present at the meeting to deliver an oral presentation in support of the appointment.

Sterling Professor of History C. Vann Woodward, chairman of the history department committee which twice rejected the Aptheker seminar, was also present to answer the committee’s questions about the refusal to sponsor Aptheker.

This hardly suggests that Woodward was acting as an individual rather than as a representative of the department. Moreover,

according to Associate Professor of Political Science William Foltz, “We had substantially more material available to us this time than we did last time” (*Yale Daily News*, 20 April 1976).

What kind of material? The *New Haven Register* reporter Jan Hemming had this to say about the subsequent meeting of the Joint Board:

Sources attending Friday’s senior faculty meeting, when Aptheker’s appointment was discussed for a lengthy three hours behind closed doors, said about half a dozen issues emerged.

Some faculty members were disgusted with the whole seminar program and the lack of definable standards by which seminars are selected. *Others argued about Aptheker’s Marxist affiliation and his scholarship.*

The issue of how much influence the students should have in proposing and choosing seminars, the personal animosity between members of the political science and history departments, and *the questionable methodology and research on an Aptheker book written in 1943* were also expressed as points of contention between the senior faculty members. . . .

According to one source, LaPalombara’s arguments in favor of Aptheker were presented in a very incisive, scholarly manner. *He had contacted Du Bois’s widow to answer some questions about research done by Aptheker on Du Bois* and had investigated his arguments well. (*New Haven Register*, 27 April 1976; emphasis added)

One does not receive the impression of a departmental Peace of Amiens. Rather, someone was still arguing about Aptheker’s scholarship and even his “Marxist affiliation”; someone was critical, not of volume one of the Du Bois letters, but of *American Negro Slave Revolts*; and someone was asking questions about research done by Aptheker on Du Bois that prompted the chairman of the Political Science Department to take the extraordinary step of contacting Mrs. Du Bois—not, it would seem, in regard to the personal relationship between Du Bois and Aptheker, but concerning Aptheker’s “research.” Might not a

provisional hypothesis be that these someones were historians? And does it not follow that at this meeting, as at every other meeting on the subject, except one where the opposition was unprepared, the judgment of History was rejected by the Yale faculty?

The most serious mishandling of evidence in the Report is its failure to convey the indignation with which the Political Science Department regarded the action of their colleagues from History at the Joint Board meeting in December. The Report several times quotes from the letter published by the chairman of the Political Science Department immediately after that meeting of the Joint Board, but it does not identify the source of the quotations, and gives a wholly inadequate impression of the letter as a whole. The full text of the letter as it appeared in the *Yale Daily News*, 17 December 1975, is as follows:¹⁴

Aptheker: Academic Overkill, by Joseph LaPalombara

The opponents of Herbert Aptheker's appointment have ill-served the Yale community.

The issue was this: Should Herbert Aptheker be permitted to hold a one-semester-only college seminar on W. E. B. Du Bois (an important American political figure whose papers Aptheker officially edits) for approximately fifteen Yale undergraduates. The Department of Political Science, without a single dissenting vote, said yes. A group of other faculty members said no, and were able to persuade a majority of about 40 tenured full professors present at the Board of Permanent Officers (BPO) to support their negative view.

No one challenges the constitutionality of the BPO decision. Rather, there are some of us who feel that grave questions of equity and of freedom of inquiry are raised [by the failure of those opposing the appointment] to communicate the full grounds for their opposition to the Department of Political Science, to the Committee on Teaching in the Residential Colleges or to the Committee on Term Appointments in Yale College. Indeed, the written grounds for opposition submitted to that Committee

was found by it not to represent sufficient reason for not putting the candidacy forward.

A request by me to the Chairman of the History Department for detailed information regarding the grounds for Aptheker's rejection by that department met with the reply that they could not be shared with us!

The full force of the objections was not presented until the eleventh hour, to a meeting of the BPO where those present were asked not to share what was said with anyone not present there. Some of those in attendance, including members of my department, reveal that Aptheker's credentials were subjected to a degree of scrutiny that is unusual even in the case of senior appointments that come before the BPO, and manifestly unprecedented in the temporary appointment of persons from outside Yale who are proposed as teachers of college seminars.

At the recent meeting of the Yale College faculty I protested these tactics as unfair. I said there, and repeat, that common courtesy—to say nothing of the requirements of responsible collegiality in an intellectual community—would have suggested that Aptheker's opponents come forward early on to offer an academic department an opportunity to hear allegedly damaging evidence against Aptheker. The fact that this was not done, that the case against Aptheker was handled in the utmost secrecy, that it was not made at any point along the appointments and review channels until the very last one (i.e. meeting of the BPO), and that the opponents did not give fair warning that they intended at the last minute to mount a massive attack on Aptheker's candidacy amounts to academic overkill.

These tactics are not made more acceptable when they are paraded under the banner of due concern for the protection of Yale's high academic standards.

Yale has been ill-served because students are rightly puzzled and distressed about last-minute reversals of decisions in which they have had some voice, however minor; because the community is now rife with rumors regarding

the grounds and motivations that lie behind the opposition to Aptheker; because, intended or not, this episode may place in jeopardy the college seminar program itself; and because the issue seems to have precipitated a confrontation between two of Yale's distinguished academic departments even though it is clear that neither department really sought such an outcome.

If ever a molehill was converted into a mountain, this episode surely qualifies for that unfortunate status. We can perhaps rectify the problem if the Aptheker seminar is eventually approved, or if Aptheker's detractors will come forward to share with the entire Yale community the specific grounds for their opposition. I don't particularly admire Aptheker or his writings. I am also convinced that my department would not put him forward for a regular appointment in Yale College. But that is not the issue.

I believe Aptheker is entitled more substantive due process than he has thus far been accorded. I believe the burden is on us to show that this episode is not an example of the kind of obscurantism that can sometimes afflict even the most intellectually open and venturesome academic communities.

Mr. LaPalombara is the Arnold Wolfers Professor of political science.

b. Motives hidden and not-so-hidden

Apart from History's interference with Political Science, there remains the matter of History's interference with Aptheker.

The Report resolves this problem by placing the burden of persuasion on Aptheker. Attorneys who argue discrimination cases know that their outcome is usually predetermined by where the burden of persuasion is lodged. If one claiming discrimination can establish a prima facie case by showing *conduct* that departs from customary procedure (as here, the veto by the Joint Board), or has the effect of penalizing a member of a minority (as here, a Communist), so that the burden then shifts to the alleged discriminator to show that he/she/it did not discriminate, the claimant usually wins. But if the burden remains on the

claimant to provide convincing evidence of improper motivation by decision makers, who, in the nature of things, decide secretly and may not fully voice their reasons even to one another, the purported discriminator is usually home free.¹⁵

So it was here. At the outset of its inquiry, the Committee asked Aptheker, “Do you believe that your academic freedom was violated [?] If so, what evidence supports this belief?” (Richard Leopold and Charles Gibson to Herbert Aptheker, 18 February 1977). This methodology permitted the Committee to conclude at the end of its noninvestigation that evidence of wrongdoing had simply not been produced.

Simply, the substantive issue boils down to one question: Did the History Department as a whole, or individuals within it, oppose Aptheker’s appointment on ideological or political grounds? We find it difficult to respond to this question. It involves either unconfessed motives or voiced considerations hidden in confidential records. To probe hidden motives is risky; we have no means of prying secret information from Yale University. The testimonies gathered from many participants *do not persuade us* that the History Department or individual members opposed Aptheker’s appointment for political or ideological reasons. (Report 1977, 20; emphasis added)

Here, as elsewhere in the Report, pious agnosticism precedes blind faith. Having stressed the impossibility of “prying” information which, in fact, the Committee never tried to get, and after loftily conveying the difficulty of divining the motives of the actors, the Report then presumes to describe why one of the principals did what he did.

Against Woodward’s wishes, his former relationship to Aptheker in the publication of the *Du Bois Correspondence* became an issue in the campus debate. *To still wild rumors*, Woodward again stressed the scholarly issues and referred students to book reviews of the first volume of the *Du Bois Correspondence*. (22; emphasis added)¹⁶

How does the Committee know that the incident concerning the Du Bois correspondence became known against Woodward's wishes? Or is it that everybody's motives are hard to know except Woodward's? The only *evidence* presented in the Report points in the opposite direction. After the department's initial rejection of the Aptheker seminar, we are told Woodward met with the Davenport College seminar committee and "told the Davenport College seminar committee that he himself had resigned from the University of Massachusetts Press editorial board for the publication of the Du Bois correspondence because, as he later reported, he could not endorse Aptheker's editorial practices" (6). There is no indication that this statement was torn from him on the rack. He seems to have volunteered it, and thus to have introduced it into the campus debate himself.

Moreover, there is something odd about the Report's grammar at this point. Describing Woodward's meeting with the Davenport College seminar committee, the Report states, "According to a subsequent report, Woodward stated that he had made it plain that he did not find Aptheker's scholarship up to the History Department's standards" (6). Are we not to conclude that the "subsequent report" was Woodward's letter to the Committee wherein *he* stated that *he* "had made it plain," etc.?¹⁷ And if so, does this not mean that the Committee's insight into Woodward's motives came from Woodward himself? And should that be the case, has the Committee itself not confessed to accepting the department's description of its own motives as the truth? QED.

The Report concludes by echoing the contemptuous snarl, disguised as Ivy League witticism, which is thus far Woodward's last public account of his behavior:

Woodward: Most disappointed applicants go about their business with the perfectly plausible consolation that teaching or studying at Yale is not the only possible way to pursue an honorable and rewarding career and that there are other good colleges available, even some good community colleges. A healthy response of this sort is to be encouraged. (*Yale Daily News*, 2 February 1976)

Report: One does not normally interpret an adverse judgment in the appointment process as a challenge to an historian's integrity, or as a bill of charges that should warrant a public airing and the opportunity for a detailed refutation. (Report 1977, 26)

4. Conclusion

“Yale University and Dr. Herbert Aptheker” reports a process that was not an investigation at all. A committee made up primarily of officers of the leading historians' associations compiled a chronology which was common knowledge and, because it failed to visit Yale, to talk to participants, or to insist on seeing documents by which protagonists justified themselves at the time, failed to penetrate beneath the surface of events. This failure was rationalized by reference to the value of confidentiality, although no reasoned defense of that value, or inquiry into its use or misuse by the Yale History Department, appears in the Report. The so-called findings of the Report are nothing more than the History Department's own prior self-assessments. They are made to seem plausible by rhetorical devices that should not deceive a child: calling group actions by historians departmental actions in one context, individual actions in another; requiring Aptheker to prove that the department was invidiously motivated, and exonerating the department when he necessarily failed to meet that burden.

Civil liberties require self-distancing from the very groups and causes to which one is most committed. It is easy to be bold for civil liberties when allied with friends in the elite against the passions of the multitude, or vice versa. What is hard is to be at odds with friends, like John Adams defending British soldiers charged with the “Boston Massacre”; or the Supreme Court of the United States affirming, in the early perilous days of World War II, the right of schoolchildren not to salute the flag; or ACLU attorney David Goldberger appearing on behalf of Nazis seeking to march in Skokie, Illinois.

This has been the story of a civil liberties investigation which failed to meet that threshold test. It is a story of investigators who belonged to the same in-group as investigatees, and who,

when push came to shove, were unwilling to put at risk, or even to regard as premises in need of a rationale, the idols of their tribe.

Youngstown, Ohio

NOTES

28. See Diamond 1977 and Bellah 1977.

29. Cited in Lemisch 1975, 50. See also “Why Are There So Few Marxists at Yale?” *Yale Daily News*, 20 April 1977.

30. “Yale University and Dr. Herbert Aptheker. A Report of the American Historical Association—Organization of American Historians Committee on the Defense of the Rights of Historians under the First Amendment,” December 1977, 10–14. Page references are to the typewritten version of the Report distributed to Herbert Aptheker and other principals. The printed version is unpaginated.

The Report makes no reference to the evaluation of the seminar by the sixteen students who enrolled in it—two con (*Yale Daily News*, 24 January 1977) and fourteen pro (*Yale Daily News*, 18 February 1977).

31. The preceding paragraph is based on the files of Professor Jesse Lemisch.

32. “Interim Procedures to be Followed on Protests and Allegations of Grievances,” Recommendation of the Professional Division, 8 March 1975. These guidelines were in effect at the time the Aptheker investigation began.

33. Professor Hall stated that there were “specific reasons” for History’s decision but “the less said the better. It’s a protection for the individual” (*Yale Daily News*, 22 October 1975). Professor Woodward said, “Like other departments, we do not subject applicants to public exposure of unfavorable assessments. It would seem unfair to single out Professor Aptheker as an exception” (*ibid.*). Professor Blassingame told Professor Lemisch that he would not tell Lemisch the reasons, but that he would tell Aptheker. When Aptheker thereupon wrote to Blassingame, the latter did not answer. (Herbert Aptheker to John Blassingame, 4 February 1976). Aptheker publicly demanded the reasons, characterizing the History Department’s position as “McCarthyism disguised as benevolence” (*Yale Daily News*, 23 October 1975 and 30 January 1976). It was only in April 1976 that President Brewster first stated that an individual could not waive confidentiality (Report 1977, 12).

34. Aptheker’s side of the correspondence suggests that Woodward’s major criticism had to do with material omitted from the former’s three-volume edition of the Du Bois correspondence (Herbert Aptheker to C. Vann Woodward, 1 March 1974). As Aptheker pointed out to Woodward, he, too, would have preferred a ten-volume edition, but the funds were not forthcoming for political reasons. (“All foundations have turned down requests for funds; the rejections

have not been on the basis of scholarly considerations.”) So it was, as Lemisch notes, “Catch-22. Aptheker doesn’t get the money to do the complete correspondence and is open to criticism for selecting what is, in his opinion, ‘the historically significant correspondence’” (1976, 4–5). It may be added that there is independent corroboration of the fact that at least the Research Division of the National Endowment for the Humanities was politically motivated in three times rejecting requests for funds to assist in the publication of the correspondence.

35. Kirkendall replied: “I am passing it [your letter] on to the members of the committee so that they will be informed of your willingness to be helpful” (Richard Kirkendall to Jesse Lemisch, 24 February 1977). Lemisch heard nothing further.

36. The Committee “sent a second set of letters at the end of June” (Report, 1977, 16) but had decided on 16 June “that one member should write at this point a preliminary draft of our report” (Richard Kirkendall to Stanley Katz, 8 July 1977).

37. This assertion is based on a statement by Louis Armmand, a member of the Davenport College seminar committee, 4 April 1977. For Mr. Cabranes, see “At universities” 1976, wherein he is quoted as saying, “I get a tremendous kick out of defending the interests of this institution.” Aptheker forcefully protested Cabranes’s role vis à vis the Davenport committee in his letter to Kirkendall of 25 May 1977. Kirkendall, writing to Katz on 8 July 1977, missed the point when he rejected “the charge that the response to us from the Davenport College Seminar Committee was . . . dictated by the President’s office including the legal council [sic].” The charge, of course, was not that the response had been dictated but, rather coordinated or, as Aptheker put it, “laundered.”

38. “I should tell you that the committee is unanimous that no public statements about the work of the committee will be made while the inquiry is in progress” (Mack Thompson to Alfred Young, 15 February 1977).

39. Paul K. Conkin, Charles Gibson, Mack Thompson, Richard Kirkendall, Paul Murphy, and Kenneth Stampp to Herbert Aptheker, 3 January 1978.

40. According to Aptheker’s publisher, the facts are as follows: Prior to any association between the Kraus-Thomson Organization and Aptheker, the publisher contracted with Paul Partington to prepare a Du Bois bibliography. They were quickly notified by Bernard Jaffee, attorney for Mrs. Du Bois, that Aptheker was in the final stages of such a work and that it was Mrs. Du Bois’s wish that Dr. Aptheker undertake the publication. Kraus-Thomson then cancelled the agreement with Partington, signed an agreement with Aptheker (who knew nothing of the relationship between Partington and Kraus-Thomson), and then signed a new agreement with Partington whereby he granted to Kraus-Thomson all rights for whatever work he had done under contract with them.

Years later, Partington brought suit against both Kraus-Thomson and Aptheker. The firm undertook the defense for both. A settlement agreement was entered into that provided that at no time would the settlement be considered an admission of culpability (“without any admission of liability for any

purpose by any of the parties by whom liability on any claim directly or indirectly related to the action is expressly denied”).

Meantime, Partington had voluntarily made his work available to Aptheker, and Aptheker, in the introduction to the Du Bois bibliography, published in 1973, states as follows:

Special note should be taken of the bibliographical efforts of Paul G. Partington, who, from about 1960, undertook—quite independently and at first without Du Bois’ knowledge—the preparation of a listing of his writings. The very considerable labors of Mr. Partington have been placed, with great generosity, at this writer’s disposal; Mr. Partington has indeed continued to supply leads and suggestions to the present time. His help is acknowledged with deep appreciation.

41. It would seem that the resignation of Davenport College master Jack Sandweiss, in the third year of a five-year term, may also have been an expression of protest (*Yale Daily News*, 13 February 1976).

42. See, for instance, Proof of Racially Discriminatory Purpose 1977.

43. Aptheker observes that at the time Woodward, Blassingame, and Blum made their original decision against his appointment, book reviews of the *Correspondence* had been uniformly favorable (n.d., 4–5).

44. The Committee solicited a letter from Woodward at the end of June 1977 (Report 1977, 16).

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Texts, Contexts, and Subtexts: Herbert Aptheker and the Human Spirit

Mindy Thompson Fullilove

Introduction

My life and work have been influenced in more ways than I can count by the life and work of Dr. Herbert Aptheker. I first met him, if I may call it “meeting,” when I was a very young child. He came to our house in Orange, New Jersey, to teach history to friends and neighbors. That was at the height of the McCarthy era, and Aptheker was a blacklisted scholar earning a living as an itinerant teacher and author. My parents told me of his work when I was young and gave me his books as soon as I was old enough to tackle reading history. I found his work deeply inspirational. I thought then that he was speaking directly to me, helping me solve some of the most puzzling issues I faced: I thought of him as my friend. As a college student involved in building a Black studies program at Bryn Mawr College, I urged that “my friend,” Dr. Herbert Aptheker, be hired to teach African American history.

As it turned out, the times had changed enough so that my proposition, impossible in the fifties, could be considered by the administration, faculty, and students of the college. In the spring of 1969, he came to the college to give a lecture. Such lectures are a standard part of academic hiring procedures; however, his talk was far from ordinary. He chose to talk about the ways in which historical writing could distort truth. He used, as one example, the ways in which William Styron had stepped away from the known facts in developing the central character of his novel, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967). At the high point

of the speech, Aptheker described Turner, the captured rebel, bloody and dressed in tattered rags, being interviewed in his jail cell. The interviewer, Mr. Gray, asks him if he regretted what he had done. Aptheker, summoning all the tremendous authority he is able to exert while speaking, shook his fist in the air, as Turner was reported to have done, and repeated Turner's electrifying answer: "Was not Christ crucified?"

It was a rapturous moment for me. The little room in Taylor Hall had not, in the years I had been there, hosted a speech that vindicated Black life and experience the way that one did. I felt that he had created the potential for me to be *Black* at Bryn Mawr. My fellow agitators and I were determined that he would join the faculty, but much depended on our president, Elizabeth McBride. She was under pressure from us, but more importantly there was an outpouring of opposition from the Right. Many were horrified that she would even consider hiring a known Communist. In a stunning display of courage, President McBride chose to do so, and in the fall of that year, Herbert Aptheker took his first job teaching at a U.S. institution of higher education. My life was indeed changed because I had the opportunity to take classes with him and to prepare an honors thesis under his supervision.

Nearly thirty years later, in my work as a psychiatrist, I know that not many of my colleagues have ever read *American Negro Slave Revolts* (1943) or the seven volumes of the *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (1951–1994). The same can be said of colleagues in other mental health disciplines. It may seem bold, therefore, to argue that Aptheker has influenced our understanding of the human mind. I cannot prove this point by counting citations of his work in major psychiatric and psychological texts. Rather, I wish to assert that his style of work and his philosophy of science have been deeply influential in U.S. scholarship, perhaps all the more influential because Aptheker was not allowed to be part of the mainstream of academic life, and he therefore exerted his influence through subversion, that is, by creating the under, hidden, other text: that text created in defiance of the dominant canon.

As people like me, who needed to hear that other text, entered the university, we searched for his works, and we were influenced by them. In our student days, we read Herbert Aptheker because he provided an alternate voice. By reading, we learned how to find, understand, and present alternate voices. We carried aspects of his style into the academy proper. In the 1990s, it is impossible to pick up a book on cultural criticism, to choose one example, that does not discuss the problem of alternate texts and submerged voices. The task we faced then of reading the approved and the alternate books side-by-side has become the style of scholarship for many now working, researching, and teaching in U.S. universities and colleges.

How does this style of work—this search for the alternate view—inform our understanding of the human mind? In the following pages, I will argue that Aptheker made two contributions to our modern understanding of the person. First, he provided fact to replace myth. As it turned out, the facts restored dignity to people and gave them a clearer vision of their possible futures. Second, he demonstrated a method that might be applied to new questions. At the heart of Aptheker's contribution to the understanding of the human mind is his insistence on text, context, and subtext. In this essay, I will address the ways in which each of these is represented in Aptheker's work, and the implications for mental health. I will conclude by describing the ways in which my colleagues and I have applied his methods to our work on the crack epidemic, one of the most neglected and devastating epidemics of the past decade.

“Doc” Aptheker and the treatment of amnesia

Herbert Aptheker, in addition to editing his *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, has demonstrated his devotion to texts throughout his long and illustrious career. He conducted his research with the fundamental assumption that a Marxist historian would make a contribution both because he reexamined old texts and because he located others which had not been recognized. Important to his work on texts was his insistence that every text be read in *context*. Context

could be understood because one had assembled texts, and texts could be understood because one had correctly described the milieu within which they were created. I believe that these two areas of his work are widely known, and I will describe the ways in which I believe they make a contribution to the psychological understanding of human beings. But there is a third aspect to his method, his insistence on subtext, that deserves consideration as well.

In 1955, Robert S. Cohen, then assistant professor of physics and philosophy at Wesleyan University, wrote an introduction to Aptheker's book, *History and Reality*. He pointed out that Aptheker's writings represented "a union of understanding, morality, and activity," a style which made Cohen uncomfortable. He went on to say,

I fear Aptheker's emotional and pejorative *style* contrasts, in a self-righteous way, with his factual and rational *methods*. The light which scholarship can shed on public issues is dimmed when sarcasm darkens the facts or presumptions dilute the logic. . . . Aptheker's *method* is rarely dependent on either sarcasm or mere praise, and it seems to me that this is the best reason why he should have avoided the outraged tone of some of these essays. (8–9)

The tone and, more specifically, the *sotto voce* asides to the reader are an extraordinary part of Aptheker's work. In my view, Cohen did not appreciate their scholarly value, and I shall offer an alternate evaluation of their role and utility. Before examining these three topics, however, I should like to discuss the key assumptions in Aptheker's approach to the writing of history.

In *History and Reality*, Aptheker describes the principles of historical materialism that inform his work. First, he assumes that "truth" exists and that it is possible for knowledge to achieve closer and closer approximations to the truth. Second, he thinks that the complex set of relationships surrounding the means of production are central to historical processes. The historical condition reflects the actual modes of production and the relationships engendered by these modes; the contradictions driving the

historical process are derived, and can best be understood, by understanding these forces. Third, he assumes that there is a fundamental (I infer biological) intrapersonal drive toward the betterment of the human condition. For want of a better word, I shall call this a drive toward health. In Aptheker's view, this drive motivates people to improve their living conditions. This drive is fulfilled, however, within the limits imposed by class position: the rich improve their lives by getting richer, the workers improve their lives by winning decent pay for a day's work.

Conducting research based on these traditions requires, Aptheker argues, both partisanship and facts. Partisanship he already had: he felt himself to be aligned with the rising class in society, that is, the working class. The facts were what he needed to find. He asks in *History and Reality*, "How shall the victim of amnesia fend for himself—and in a hostile world?" (1955, 41). The suffering individual could protect the self with facts, Aptheker concluded. This search for facts, for texts, has been his mission in life. They were to be "Doc" Aptheker's healing balm for the disease of forgetfulness.

In reading texts, Aptheker insists on staying close to what is documented. His mastery of detail is formidable, and his insistence on accuracy unrelenting. He could, and often did, rip others to shreds over the careless ways in which they handled information. Even W. E. B. Du Bois, for whom he had the utmost respect, came in for occasional criticism because of a lack of the precision that Aptheker considered essential to science.

Aptheker was a master of all detail, but he searched always for specific facts that had greatest leverage. Ulrich Bonnell Phillips wrote *American Negro Slavery* (1918), which pictures slavery as a benign institution and slaves as contented with their lot. Herbert Aptheker wrote *American Negro Slave Revolts* (1943), which describes the continuous and pervasive pattern of protest characterizing African American people in their struggle for liberation from bondage. The evidence of massive resistance to slavery was so voluminous that it was incontestable. His findings, and the publication of his book, vitiated the arguments

offered by the apologists for slavery. That he was able to deal such a death blow to an entire school of thought was due to his keen instinct for asking and answering central questions.

A final part of Aptheker's method was that he saw himself as following in the footsteps of important African American historians, most especially Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois and Dr. Carter G. Woodson. This is a point of great importance. Aptheker wrote about Black people, but he knew himself to be an outsider to the culture and the experience of African Americans. He never questioned his ability to make a contribution to the historical record, but he drew clear boundaries separating the issues he would address and those he would not. I remember in class a student commented that Booker T. Washington was a "sell-out." Aptheker paused and considered that idea. He drew into himself as he considered what he knew about the issue. His face was somber as he responded to the student. He proceeded to describe the enormous power and prestige that Washington had, unique for a man of color in that era. "What did it mean for him, a former slave, to know the most influential white men in America?" he countered. "How do you judge a man like that? His life was not simple." That brief interchange demonstrated to us the line in the sand: he would not make judgments about the interior life of Black people. What they did and what they said was fair game: what they felt could only be surmised. As a white man, however knowledgeable he might be, he did not choose to make what he saw as uninformed guesses.

Texts

Finding and reading texts are at the heart of Aptheker's method and constitute the first of his contributions to psychology. Aptheker's insistence on a close reading of evidence is best examined in his essays, where he often takes on the work of others. The well-publicized controversy aroused by the publication of William Styron's *Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967) provides a useful example of Aptheker's style. In *Afro-American History: The Modern Era* (1971), he devotes a chapter to exposing the errors, omissions, and distortions in Styron's text, some

of which were the material I had heard him talk about in his audition speech at Bryn Mawr in 1969.

William Styron's book was hailed by book clubs, reviewers, and the media as a great achievement, representing as it did a white author's effort to portray the thinking of a Black man. It was also presented as a book faithful to the known facts. Aptheker disagreed. "Whatever this book is, it is certainly not Turner as the available evidence presents him, and it is certainly not the slave society of nineteenth-century Virginia, where Turner lived and whose foundations he shook" (85). Aptheker provides evidence for his conclusion by demonstrating important omissions and distortions. The first omission he notes is the following:

One of the very well established facts concerning the slave Nat Turner is that he fled from his owner in the mid-1820s, stayed away about a month, and then, moved by religious qualms, returned to the service of his earthly master. We know, too, that upon his return he was berated for this by many of his fellow slaves. They said he was a fool to have come back and, as Turner said, "they murmured against me." No hint of this central experience is in the novel. Especially important in the original *Confessions* is the evidence of the antislavery feelings of his peers; this is not in the novel. (85)

Aptheker found that, in general, where Styron did quote from the original *Confessions*, he did so accurately, except on two occasions. Aptheker notes that Styron

has Turner saying that "my mother strengthened me" in a belief in his special capacities. The actual *Confessions* has Turner saying, "my *father and mother*"; the two italicized words are omitted. A little further along, Styron quotes Turner as saying that "my mother" and others offered the opinion that with his marked "sense" he would develop into a difficult slave; in the *Confessions* at this point one finds "my *grandmother*." Mr. Styron has Turner say, "I never laid eyes on my grandmother"; Turner, however, not

only “laid eyes” on her but remembered her rather well and specifically says that he “was much attached” to her. (86)

Aptheker detailed other problems with Styron’s development of the material, but these will serve my purposes in establishing Aptheker’s insistence on precision. These are not trivial points. Either there is widespread antislavery feeling, or there is not. Either Turner had a family, or he did not. The readings are not equivalent in terms of their implications for our understanding of Turner’s character, his revolt, or slavery in the antebellum South. Aptheker’s work is directed at the truth. Any small deviation from fact, he believes, carries one away from truth, rather than toward it. In one version, we are collecting a set of facts that suggest that Turner came from a “broken” family and acted alone in wanting to overthrow slavery. In the other version, we are collecting a set of facts that suggest that Turner came from a united family that understood him to be gifted, which gave him authority to guide the antislavery feelings of his peers. Those are two different stories; Aptheker insists that we choose between them on the basis that one story adheres to written record, while the other does not.

The second point to be made about text has to do with Aptheker’s choice of text. As I have noted, he was concerned with finding the sources that were not included in the work of other historians. United States history has tended to distort the experience of African Americans by excluding documents created by African Americans and including documents created by Euro-Americans. Aptheker’s *Documentary History* was designed to collect those missing parts of the historical record. Du Bois wrote in the preface to the first volume, published in 1951:

Historical scholarship has done all too little of this sort of research. We have the record of kings and gentlemen ad nauseam and in stupid detail; but of the common run of human beings, and particularly of the half or wholly submerged working group, the world has saved all too little of authentic record and tried to forget or ignore even the little saved. With regard to Negroes in America, in addition to

the common neglect of a society patterned on assumed aristocracy, came also the attempt, conscious or unconscious, to excuse the shame of slavery by stressing natural inferiority which would render it impossible for Negroes to make, much less leave, any record of revolt or struggle, any human reaction to utter degradation.

As is always true of source material, the documents collected in the multivolume series transport us into the issues and concerns that were shaping the writers' lives. The Revolutionary War, which espoused liberty and justice for all, influenced a group of slaves to write,

Your Honours who are nobly contending, in the Cause of Liberty, whose Conduct excites the Admiration, and Reverence, of all the great Empires of the World; will not resent, our thus freely animadverting, on this detestable Practice [slavery]; altho our Skins are different in Colour, from those whom we serve, Yet Reason and Revelation join to declare, that we are the Creatures of that God, who made of one Blood, and Kindred, all the Nations of the Earth. (11)

As we now know, the failure of the founding fathers to heed this reasonable advice and to extend the blessings of liberty to slaves and to women seeded two centuries of turmoil.

In a documentary as rich as this one, we can experience the passing of time in the changing tone and changing issues; simultaneously, we are reminded that the struggle against inferior status was ceaseless. Chapter 4 of volume 1 closes with a "Petition of Wisconsin Negroes." They wrote:

The undersigned Colored Citizens of the State of Wisconsin, respectfully petition your Honorable bodies, and ask that the necessary legal steps be taken, and provision made in accordance with the Constitution of this State, to submit the question of granting the right of suffrage to Colored men of the age of twenty-one years, to the voters of the State at the next general election. We respectfully submit that by Law we are taxed and liable to military Duty as

other men. It seems to us but justice that we should have a voice in determining how the taxes should be expended, and how and when our services shall be rendered. (532)

To read such texts is to have a history. “How shall the victim of amnesia fend for himself—and in a hostile world!” Aptheker wondered. The question is, of course, rhetorical. Aptheker has a treatment for amnesia induced by history books that distort, misquote, or omit the record of struggle of African American people. First and foremost, the afflicted person might read *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* and through it, recapture the lost past.

Contexts

It was exciting to attend Aptheker’s classes at Bryn Mawr. He was a master teacher who kept us mesmerized. This fascination was not just with his outstanding abilities as lecturer and storyteller, but also with his ability to see and communicate the scope and process of historical events. As he took us through the years leading up to the Civil War, he carefully elaborated a picture of the workings of a nation: the split between the agricultural South and the industrial North; the periods of economic expansion and collapse; the superexploitation of the soil and the workers that characterized slavery; the growing sentiment against slavery and the development of the Abolitionist movement. One had a sense of change: of growth and death, of expansion and contradiction, of integration and segregation. It was a dynamic view of history in which new developments arose from conflict and contradiction.

Materialist history, as taught by Aptheker, was vital, fluid, and sensible, and it made a lasting impression on me. Although the facts that I remember from his lecture by now constitute a random assortment of bits of information, I still ponder them in order to understand their implications. Aptheker had an impressive background in the military (he was an officer in charge of Black troops in World War II) and in writing military history (he wrote part of the official history of the war). He brought to the study of the Civil War an insider’s view of troops, weapons, supply lines, and strategies—all the paraphernalia of war. He went

through these issues with his usual attention to detail. He concluded by saying that the Civil War was a remarkably short war compared to others of the period. It was brief for several reasons, among them the industrial might and better supply lines of the North, and the widespread insurrection against the Confederacy among the slaves in the South.

The import of his discussion was clear. The historical moment existed in a much larger continuum of time and space. Without knowing that bigger picture, we could not order the details with any sense of surety. In creating the larger picture, it was essential that we examine the ways in which people made their livings, their relationship to the means of production. How did slavery affect the lives of slaves? of free workers? of owners? No one in the United States was unaffected by the existence of slavery. The essential tension in the years prior to the Civil War was that slave states and free states could not continue to exist side-by-side. Both sides knew this to be true. Yet what would happen, how it would play out, who would win were unanswered questions. It is here that the actions of individuals created the series of events that led to resolution of the underlying problem. Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and Robert E. Lee are remembered because their actions galvanized their contemporaries and shaped the course of history. Other actors might well have made different choices, would have used other words, taken different actions. Nonetheless, anyone acting in that period had to respond to the era's dominant concern.

Aptheker's discussion of Nat Turner is an example of his concern with context. When he noted that William Styron did not indicate the antislavery feelings of Turner's fellow slaves, he is not making a light point. Rather, it is Aptheker's contention that it is impossible to understand the man and his actions without taking into consideration the milieu in which he found himself. From the original *Confessions*, we know that Nat Turner was considered by friends and family to have a special gift. Like Joan of Arc, he repeatedly heard the voice of the Spirit, instructing him in his great work. Like Joan, who led the armies of France during a period of nation-building, Nat Turner led the slaves during an era of insurrection. His ideas made sense to

others, we can postulate, because they were thinking along the same lines and welcomed his leadership.

Context, for those of us who study the psychological life of the individual, is what we call “nurture.” Although the boundaries between “nature” and “nurture” are indistinct, the contribution of each and every moment of life to brain development is now widely accepted. Studies from all parts of the world have established significant differences in neuropsychological functioning based on life experiences. For example, people in some societies see three dimensions when shown certain pictures, while people from other societies do not. Assuming we can get away from the connotation that one way of thinking is superior to the other, we can begin to imagine, from the psychological perspective, the meaning of historical materialism. For example, people who live in small tribal societies organized around hunting and gathering—and therefore living in close connection to the “natural” world—have a sense of unity with nature that disappears with the increasing division of labor and the enclosure of life tasks inside buildings.

To expand on this concept, we can compare people who live in industrialized societies to those who live in other forms of social and economic life. Under the former conditions, people think of many things as separate, and they group items by principles of abstract reasoning. But this thought pattern does not exist in the latter group of societies. Asked to separate a hatchet, a hammer, a saw, and a log, a child raised on television shows like *Sesame Street* immediately puts the axe, hammer, and saw in one group (tools) and the log in another (raw material). In the 1930s, the great Soviet neuropsychologist Alexander Luria asked this question of three illiterate rural farmers living in Central Asia. He recorded the following exchange:

I. “They’re all alike. The saw will saw the log and the hatchet will chop it into small pieces. If one of these things has to go, I’d throw out the hatchet. It doesn’t do as good a job as a saw.”

II. “I also think they’re alike. You can saw the log with the saw, chop it with the hatchet, and if it doesn’t split, you can beat on the hatchet with the hammer.”

Luria returned to this issue a little later on in the conversation.

I. "It's the hammer that doesn't fit! You can always work with a saw, but a hammer doesn't always suit the job, there's only a little you can do with it."

II. "You can throw out the hammer, because when you saw a log, you have to drive a wedge into it."

[Luria says] "Yet one fellow threw out the log. He said the hammer, saw, and hatchet were all alike in some way, but the log is different."

III. "If he wants to make planks, he won't need the log."
(63)

No effort on Luria's part could make the men agree with the idea that hatchet, saw, and hammer should be grouped together because they are members of the category "tools." The shift in reasoning, however, does follow exposure to school. The acquisition of literacy accounted for marked differences among men in the area where the study was conducted. Minds are not fixed by past experience. It is important, in my view, to point out what many would argue in the 1990s: the loss of the sense of connection among all things was accompanied by a loss of the connection to nature. The disconnection from the natural world foreshadowed abuse, superexploitation, and careless use of natural resources, that is to say the ecological disasters of the present day.

The capacity to group and to abstract has other negative consequences as well. It appears to feed the tendency to see problems as problems of the "other," the person not in "my" group. The AIDS epidemic is but one example of the problems that arise from seeing disease as a problem of the "other." Thus, context creates ways of thinking that illuminate some issues, but obscure others. The shift in the material conditions of life has very real consequences for the individual and the group; the shift not only creates the moment, but it creates the problems that will have to be resolved in the future.

Aptheker's insistence on context was legendary among my contemporaries who flocked to his lectures in the sixties and seventies. One Aptheker story that circulated in those days

concerned his response to a question on the meaning of the term *Black*, which was just coming into use, as compared to *Negro*. Aptheker gave a detailed explanation, which delineated the history of each term, and the meanings associated with each across centuries of discrimination. At the end of this lengthy answer, the questioner said, "So you mean . . ." and he then paraphrased Aptheker's ideas in a couple of sentences. "Young man," Aptheker responded, "when I take twenty minutes to answer a question, that is because I think it takes twenty minutes to answer the question. No, that is not what I meant." I cannot vouch for the accuracy of this story; if a myth, it certainly was drawn from the man as we knew him.

Subtexts

W. E. B. Du Bois, throughout his work, defied the rules of capitalization. In the preface to volume one of the *Documentary History*, he wrote, "I hasten to greet the day of the appearance of this volume, as a milestone on the road to Truth." Not truth, but Truth. Herbert Aptheker had no such quarrels with capitals. Rather, he insisted on having a private conversation with the Reader. This is not a common style in scholarly work (as signaled by Robert Cohen), and deserves, I believe, closer examination. (Bear in mind that unexpected capitals and interesting asides are to the psychiatrist what a red flag is to the bull.) In Cohen's analysis, the passion and the asides detract from the work. I believe, to the contrary, that the asides have a serious and even scholarly purpose closely related to the construction of history as a healing art. The subtext, I argue, is directed at the victim of amnesia functioning in a hostile world.

Let me give some examples of what I mean. In the first chapter of *History and Reality*, Aptheker writes, "Aligning oneself with the rising class . . . resolves not only the problem of what is good, it resolves the problem of what is true." In a footnote at the bottom of the page he explains,

For a Marxist approach to morality and "the good," see Howard Selsam. . . . As to those who raise the question, how does one know that such things as health, security

and education are “good”?—one need not reply, for such individuals, and they are increasing in our society, require therapeutic treatment, not argumentation. (44)

A second example (of many) may be found in an essay in that volume, an open letter to Sidney Hook, a leading anti-Communist scholar. Hook had charged that no Communist could conduct ethical scholarship. Aptheker—so ardently concerned with the truth that he objected to a single mislaid word in a quotation—was deeply offended. He asked Hook to participate in an open debate; Hook wrote back to decline. Aptheker, confined to expressing himself in an open letter, commented, “Enough, however, for the externals of your letter. Let us turn, now—taking a deep breath and exhaling slowly—to the contents of the letter.” He then proceeded to do that.

The content of the asides (“one need not reply,” “taking a deep breath and exhaling slowly”) is simply funny to me and, I think, to others who have experienced oppression. Aptheker often talked about the differences between Jewish humor and Black humor, but he thought they were differences of form, not intent. Always what was needed was a quick antidote to the poison of oppression, delivered before the hurtful blow could eat into the soul. Aptheker’s particular brand of point-counterpoint is the sound of New York of the thirties and forties, when working people of many ethnic groups struggled to make a way in a new world. We hear in these asides the sharp and savvy tongue of one has jousting with the best of them and mastered a set of winning strategies.

Why are they in his scholarly books? I believe that they are offered as advice. Should you discuss things with a madman? No. Should you take a deep breath when angry? Yes. It is solid advice. I believe that Aptheker’s books have the wonderful quality found in the best cooking shows. Not only does Julia Child tell you what to do, you watch her fumble through the process. When all is said and done, it is just as much work for her to cook as it is for me. I need to know that. The by-play in Aptheker’s writing adds a crucial element to the healing. It is taken out of the realm of the mystical. I do not know how Du Bois survived,

but I have many clues about the tactics employed by Aptheker. To extend my cooking metaphor, if the text provides the raw ingredients of memory, then the subtext offers the instructions for preparation. In the sense I am using it here, what we are preparing is a whole person, restored in mind and spirit, and able to act to shape the future.

Aptheker took care of people attentively. I saw him lecture to a group of students at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, on the occasion of the dedication of the W. E. B. Du Bois Library. It was a great day, celebrating Du Bois and Aptheker: Du Bois got a library, and Aptheker, an honorary doctorate. It was a moment of triumph. Later, he gave a lecture to students. Aptheker began the lecture telling students stories about Du Bois. Shortly after he had started, a door opened in the back of the room. A young Black man stepped inside the door, trying not to disrupt the meeting that was in progress. Aptheker stopped what he was saying. "Come in. Welcome. I'm so glad you could make it. We were just talking about Dr. Du Bois." Only after he was assured that the young man had found a comfortable seat did he continue with his talk. I consider that gesture to hold a more profound message than any of the wonderful stories he told that day.

Aptheker did not choose to address the psychological life of Black people, but that is not to say that he did not know—as much as any white man might—what it was all about. He argued against the idea of the "Mark of Oppression" because it was misrepresentation and gross overgeneralization, not because he thought there were no scars left by the brutalities of slavery and of Jim Crow. As part of a documentary about the life of Du Bois, Aptheker described how Du Bois, then a teacher at Atlanta University, had been affected by a lynching.

He was going to the newspaper, *The Atlanta Constitution*, to register some kind of a complaint. Walking down the main street of Atlanta, he passed a butcher shop and on display with a label were the knees of the victim—next to the pigs and the pork. He saw that, and didn't go to the newspaper. He went back and wept. (quoted in Shipp 1997, 26)

What does a man do, who sees so clearly the pain and must act to ease it? Aptheker chose to speak directly to the Reader, conveying his own store of survival skills in the subtext of his books.

From history to psychology

If history is concerned with changes in human societies over time, psychiatry, by contrast, focuses on the narrow world of the individual. Despite the seeming differences, Aptheker's strategies have great relevance. I wish to illustrate the use of text, context, and subtext by discussing studies of the crack epidemic conducted by my colleagues and me. We first became interested in the crack epidemic because it was associated with a rise in the rate of gonorrhea infection among African American teenagers in San Francisco. In addressing such research questions, our research group uses a three-part strategy in our work: first, the definition of a key problem for further study; second, the development of a precise description of the phenomenon of interest through qualitative research; and third, the testing of hypotheses with quantitative methods. For purposes of describing our use of text, I wish to present two excerpts from a focus group discussion* with young men who had had gonorrhea infections, and were engaged in street sales of crack cocaine.

Text

The interview took place in August 1988 at the Bayview-Hunter's Point Foundation, a community-based organization active in San Francisco. It was organized by outreach workers from the local clinic that treated those with sexually transmitted disease. It was conducted in front of a one-way mirror; the six participants knew that researchers and treatment providers were watching. In all, more than ten people concerned about the outbreak of gonorrhea had gathered to listen to and learn from the young men in the focus group.

In brief, for all of the observers and for the young man who conducted the interview, this focus group was a shocking experience; it constituted our first contact with the brutal culture that was evolving around the crack scene. The young men described

their involvement in drug use and sales, their relationships with women, and their history of sexually transmitted disease in language that was loaded with profanity and nearly bereft of morality.

The first excerpt concerns their involvement in selling drugs.

Leader: But you've all sold [crack] now, right?

Man: Yeah, I sold it.

Man: I sell the shit everyday.

Man: Once or twice.

Leader: How many of you are still into it?

Man: I'm into it.

Man: I'm still into it.

Man: I am gon still be into it, even if I'm working, I'm gon be into it.

Man: It's part of my life. Til I go to the pen [penitentiary].

Man: It's a career.

Man: Know why I am gon be into it?

Leader: Why?

Man: Cause I'm good at it!

. . . .

Leader: Now, what was it that first got you into it? I mean was it the money, was it a friend that . . . (interrupted)

Men: The money.

Man: The money!

Man: You see all that money comin' in, you say fuck it!

Man: You don't want to be broke, brother.

Man: You'll see what other niggas have.

Man: Moms ain't gon give you that kind of money.

The lure of money, in the absence of other viable means of earning a living, is by now well established as a force drawing young men into the drug trade. But at that point in the crack epidemic, the emergence of young teenage boys as the main force of street dealers was still quite new. The stoic acceptance that jail—and perhaps violent death—lay in the future was another revelation that, by the mid-1990s, had become a commonplace.

The second excerpt has to do with the group's understanding of the AIDS epidemic. The leader posed a series of questions

exploring the youths' concepts about the origins of AIDS and the means and extent of spread.

Leader: Did y'all know that one out of every four people with AIDS is black? Did y'all know that? That it was that many?

Man: More white.

Man: Are you trying to say that it comes from black people?

Leader: No, I'm just saying that there's a lot of black people that have it.

Man: They be say all that woop, wop and bam shit over the radio.

Men: [All speaking at once about blacks and AIDS.] . . .

Man: So, if you see fo' or five white boys and one nigga, the nigga got AIDS?

Leader: No, I meant, no, I meant out of every four people that has AIDS, one of them is black.

Man: So, then you're saying all six are white. That's bull shit! Nigga! [makes a smacking sound] Man, hell naw, nigga!

Leader: Then tell me the truth, how do you see it?

Man: It ain't that many niggas fuckin'. If they is then they a fucked up mind. [laughter] If they do the white boys influenced them into that shit. But, ain't no nigga just gon go fuck no. . . . That's the nigga that grew up in the avenues.

Man: If he is, he's gettin paid. [laughter] Or just somethin' out the lick [prison]. That nigga just ain't no faggot.

Man: Or been involved with the white man.

Man: If he is real nigga, he ain't gon be no faggot!

Leader: Actually, most of the black people that have it, got it from shooting up. Did you guys hear that?

Man: Why didn't you say that when you said the question?

Man: I know, you got us all. . . . [laughter]

Leader: No, I didn't mean to mislead you. No, did y'all know that? Most of them got it from shooting up.

Man: Naw, you just told us.

Leader: They still have AIDS. The end result is the same.

Isn't it? I mean, once you've got AIDS, you've got it!

Man: Yeah, but it is a different way, man!

Man: They got it from being a dope fiend, not a faggot.

You gon have more respect for a fa . . . a dope fiend
then you gon have for a faggot! I know I am.

The focus group leader's careful attention to following the reasoning of the group is very helpful in this section. The young men make a number of assumptions that are investigated by the leader, ensuring that, when we read the text, we can follow the thinking of the interviewees. The first assumption has to do with their understanding of the concept "one in four people with AIDS is black." Given the low level of numeracy in the U.S. population, many people have found this concept confusing. The response, "if you see fo' or five white boys and one nigga, then the nigga got AIDS?" indicates that the speaker is among those with little or no mastery of arithmetic. The confusion is compounded by the assumption, hinted at but not spoken, that those infected must be homosexuals, because, after all, it is homosexuals who have AIDS. This becomes an emotional issue for them, as it is seen as a critique of black manhood. It must be impossible, or at least the statistics must refer to some definable subgroup: the niggas who are from the avenues, just out the lick, getting paid, or influenced by white people. Black people, in their worldview, do not do unnatural things. When the explanation is offered that most of the blacks with AIDS used drugs, it is received as a reprieve of sorts. "Why didn't you say that when you asked the question?" they complain to the leader. The relative stigma borne by homosexuals, as compared to drug users, is a theme that has great import for AIDS prevention strategies.

Texts such as these are not the stuff of Nat Turner's *Confessions*. These young drug dealers are not slave rebels attempting to overthrow oppression. Efforts to romanticize or sentimentalize them are a betrayal to what they themselves have said, and said over and over, in their raps, in their music videos, and in their lives. The twenty-four-year-old rapper, Notorious B.I.G., was

murdered in March 1997, and his last album, *Life after Death*, was released soon after. He was clear, if no one else was, that rap, crack, and death had defined his life chances. I believe that a text like this one, filled with profanity and horror, should be treated with the same care and respect with which we approach Nat Turner's *Confessions*. What was said has meaning. But it is also clear that it is impossible to understand the text without pondering its context. Why has drug dealing become so important? Why are these young people so devoid of morals? These questions are not answered in the data, and answers require an understanding of the social and historical processes shaping the larger communities within which these young men were located.

Context

Aptheker stresses in his work that relationship to the means of production is a central element in understanding the individual's life context. The young men interviewed here saw their lives as intimately connected to the sale of crack, even though that meant risk of death and prison. Drug dealing has gained prominence in the economy of many inner-city communities because of the loss of unskilled jobs in manufacturing and service. Clearly, young people who are confused about the meaning of "one out of four" are ill prepared for work in the highly technical industries that now dominate the city center. The mismatch of jobs and people has left many facing long-term, if not lifelong, unemployment; they turn, as these young men did, to the underground economy. As the young men made clear, they wanted what others had and saw drug dealing as a surefire way to get it.

In the days of slavery, whatever else was going on, the slaves knew that everything of value was produced by their hands. Not only did they do everything for the master class, they also took care of themselves. Contrary to the view that slaves were cared for by their masters, the reality is that the slaves did all the work. Their relationship to the means of production was clear, it was important, and it was unjust. By contrast, the growth of a chronically unemployed population that is excluded from the workforce (in traditional Marxist terms it would be correct to characterize this group as the *Lumpenproletariat*) poses a threat

to the safety and stability of the working class. The *Lumpenproletariat* is not the ally of the working class, but tends to be parasitic on it. This excluded group is not bound by the moral values engendered by collective work settings. Rather, each member of the group acts to ensure his or her own survival, without regard and perhaps concern for the needs of others.

The growth of an excluded class has implications for the individual and the community. At the community level, the proportion of people engaged in the legitimate workforce shapes the day-to-day life of all living in the area. As the proportion of permanently unemployed people grows, the life of the community declines. This decline influences school achievement, control of adolescent sexuality, sale and use of drugs, violence in the streets and at home, and the spread of a variety of diseases.

Reflecting on the meaning of text and context for the gonorrhea epidemic that motivated our study, my colleagues and I wrote in our report on this research:

In communities that are marginal to the economy there are fewer material and human resources to motivate and support an extended adolescence. In this case, early and more frequent sexual activity are predictable outcomes as is teen pregnancy and the inability of these sexually active teens to form families. People who are not a part of the industrial world have little reason to behave as if they are. Their sexuality can revert to preindustrial norms, according to which sexuality was not delayed. Under these circumstances, general prohibitions against extramarital sexuality are not very effective. In declining communities, what is crucial about teen sexuality and its implicit goal, pregnancy, is not its immorality. The social meaning of early teen sexuality is that these young people have opted out of long-term adolescence because of a lack of economic mobility. (Bowser et al. 1990, 60)

Subtext

Although each of my colleagues has a unique way of presenting information, all of us know that we must help people with the task of assimilating bad news. There is little in our data to

hearten people. Not surprisingly, people are wary of hearing such truths; they tend to push the information aside. The downward trajectory of many communities and the decline in resources to change the future feed despair. What, then, does one say?

My coworker and husband, Robert Fullilove, has found that a reliable way to bond with his audiences is to assure them that he understands how burned out they feel. This gesture of support unleashes their angst that downward momentum seems to have outstripped progress, that unemployment will be made worse by welfare reform, health problems aggravated by managed care, etc. The ensuing discourse on caring for the self builds the listener's strength to take in the message and to continue the struggle.

It turns out that the tried-and-true advice still works. Identify the madness. Take deep breaths. Draw on the deep sources of faith in humanity and its potential for goodness. Be stern, unrelenting, funny, convinced. Demonstrate in your own life that trials and tribulations can be endured. Let people see you struggle.

In the conclusion to our paper on teens and AIDS risk behavior cited above, we addressed some of these issues of subtext when we wrote:

To attempt to educate young people about AIDS high-risk behavior and not address the underlying conditions that encourage and reinforce their early, frequent, and unprotected sexuality is self-defeating. No serious AIDS prevention can be conducted without addressing root conditions. In communities where the "crack man" appears to have the only employment and the only source of income and mobility, what reason would a young person have for believing an anti-AIDS message? The danger would not become apparent until friends began to die from AIDS, as is now the case among intravenous drug addicts. But by then, it would be too late. The message would have to come with hope and with serious efforts to bring the dispossessed back into the mainstream through self-empowerment and community regeneration. In which case, the AIDS-prevention message will have to come from within the community. (Bowser et al. 1990, 64)

Conclusion

Aptheker's example of meticulous scholarship and courageous advocacy is an important one for scholars in many fields of endeavor. The mental health professions have much to learn from his work and his method. At a minimum, his treatment for amnesia should be in every medical textbook in every country in the world! Why stop there, however? Why not make "Doc" Aptheker's insistence on the worth of each person a part of the day-to-day work of each of us?

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NOTE

*Focus groups are a method of research originally developed for marketing research. A group includes six to twelve "experts" on the topic of interest. Groups follow a semistructured format, answering questions designed to collect their insights.

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Remembering Herbert Aptheker

Catherine Clinton

I had heard his name before, but had never read him, when I first saw Herbert Aptheker speak at Harvard over twenty-five years ago. I was an undergraduate at Harvard in the early 1970s with a budding interest in Afro-American studies, which was my undergraduate “concentration,” Harvard’s designation of a major, and Harvard’s typical manner of dealing with anything: give it a different name, obfuscate, cultivate the “secret handshake” mind-set.

I was one of a select group majoring in this brand-new enterprise of Afro-American studies, being one of less than a handful of white undergraduates electing to concentrate in the department (where the departmental chairman would not only allow, but initiate debate over whether or not whites should be privy to discussions of curriculum and departmental issues). Despite this separatist campus atmosphere, the courses were frequently filled with white undergraduates, enrolled with a variety of motives—from those seeking a “gut” course, to young Spartacists demonstrating solidarity with their Black brothers, to those pursuing intellectual interests (as in my case). I was used to controversy, but unprepared for the likes of Herbert Aptheker.

And how could I be? As his daughter Bettina reveals in her bibliographic essay for the volume in his honor, *In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean, and Afro-American History* (Okihiro 1986), Aptheker was an extraordinary pioneer. From his high school newspaper features on “The Dark Side of the South,” penned in 1932 at the age of seventeen, he showed a maverick streak. His master’s essay on Nat Turner blossomed

into a full-scale study, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, which was published by Columbia University Press in 1943. His scholarly pursuits were interrupted by World War II: Aptheker enlisted in the U.S. Army and, true to radical form, requested service with Black troops. His return to his academic interests was disrupted, this time by another war—the domestic battles over Communism—when the rising tide of anti-Communism swept across the nation in the forties and fifties, wrecking lives, careers, and academic freedom.

This was how I had heard Aptheker's name—that he was a Communist. And thus, I was indoctrinated to believe, he would be humorless, ideologically rigid, and definitely *not* a rigorous scholar. This was the context within which I first encountered Herbert Aptheker—brought to campus by the Department of Afro-American Studies to discuss the great W. E. B. Du Bois and Aptheker's guardianship of the Du Bois flame. (Aptheker was steadfastly resistant to Harvard's entreaties to lodge Du Bois's papers in Cambridge, as I recall.)

Imagine my surprise to find Aptheker extremely funny, witty at Harvard's expense. Imagine my shock to find him open about matters on which I thought he would have taken a strict party line. When earnest undergraduates probed, Aptheker responded thoughtfully. When annoyed academics postured, Aptheker was abrupt and dismissive. He did disappoint me on some minor matter relating to slave women, which was no minor matter to me at that time—nor since. But the years have allowed me to gain some perspective on this issue.

Even though I left the auditorium disabused of Aptheker as automaton, I do remember walking away thinking of him as a typical male academic. At that time I viewed all historical material through the extreme prism of feminist orthodoxy, willing to debate the relative merits of the Emancipation Proclamation as a historical document versus Mary Lincoln's diary in a heated discussion over sources and sexism. This blinded me to the fact that Aptheker could not by a long shot be labeled as typical.

Despite my prejudices, I was curious. Seeing Aptheker in action prodded me into the library stacks, where I extracted a

well-worn copy of *American Negro Slave Revolts*. I can still hear Aptheker's mesmerizing recitation of the title—which he rightly proclaimed was a purposeful rebuke to U. B. Phillips's title: *American Negro Slavery* (1918). Aptheker's voice started out softly, "American" . . . (then louder) "Negro" . . . (louder still) "Slave" . . . (several decibels more, and this time, with feeling) "REVOLTS!"

In David Brion Davis's influential time line of slave historiography (1974), perhaps Herbert Aptheker has the distinction, by virtue of his request to serve with Black troops, of passing and being passed over. Kenneth Stampp, author of *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (1956), an impressive scholar and a towering man, is given credit for toppling U. B. Phillips and his views from the pedestal. Stampp certainly did replace Phillips to become the most influential scholar on American slavery. Indeed, perhaps it took a Stampp, a rising star within the firmament of the traditional academy, to overturn King Phillips. Yet it remains a scandal that Herbert Aptheker's heroic salvo, aimed directly at Phillips and his loyal legions tilling the fields and tending the vines (with sentinels standing nearby, shotguns over shoulders), should remain so uncelebrated.

Aptheker's restrained response, forty years after his book was published, can be derived from his comments included in *In Resistance* on Orlando Patterson's 1977 article "Slavery" in the *Annual Review of Sociology*. Patterson had devoted only 150 words to Aptheker's monumental work in his review essay, and had suggested that Aptheker drew "conclusions about the revolutionary potential of the American slave that in no way relate to the facts of the case." Aptheker nevertheless finds more in Patterson's review. Patterson had continued:

We think that the total rejection of Aptheker has gone too far. The man and his work have literally been purged from the company of polite scholars. . . . Like the work of [Stanley] Elkins (1959), it did break new ground; and like that work it was largely wrong in its conclusions and biased in its interpretations. We therefore find it difficult to understand why it is that Elkins remains respectable and

continues to be credited with the initiation of new studies in American slave studies, yet Aptheker is totally rejected, even ridiculed. Something is amiss here. (cited in Aptheker 1986, 10–11)

I should like to think that a future generation of students of American slavery will not be subjected to the same kinds of prejudices about Aptheker's groundbreaking research. Indeed, I remember clearly taking my questions about Aptheker into a tutorial with Patterson in the fall of 1972. And I remember that he had no reasonable explanation for the way in which Aptheker had been given this Siberian status, in some faux intellectual Gulag. Just as the debates over American slavery began to be reignited by major studies by Herbert Gutman, Lawrence Levine, and Eugene Genovese during the mid-1970s, this glass booth around *American Negro Slave Revolts*—for historians and scholars to keep his work on display, but allow his reputation to wither—was cruel and unusual. Also a good lesson for a young academic just starting out, as I was.

This treatment of Aptheker was not about the work, but about the politics of the academy. That serious intellectual reassessment would (in part) be launched by a young scholar at Harvard, Peter Wood, who took Aptheker's premise more seriously than so many of his mentors, was deeply ironic. Wood produced his own prize-winning study in 1974, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*, and work on slave resistance has flourished for the past two decades and threatens to blossom even more as the twenty-first century approaches. Charting this course and revealing the way in which scholars remain stubborn over admissions of prejudice and neglect are not my intention. Rather, I want to celebrate the way in which the rejection of the work, as well as the work itself, inspired many of my scholarly generation.

But beside my own copy of *American Negro Slave Revolts* on my bookshelf rests another important volume which has been equally inspiring: *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (1951). My fifth-edition copy of this monumental undertaking is but one of a series of texts in which

Aptheker laboriously reproduced scores of documents that challenge white academics to listen to the voices of African Americans. Readers can pick and choose from an impressive array of arguments and examples of articulate spokespersons. It was within the pages of Aptheker's documentary project that I first encountered James Forten, Henry Highland Garnet, John A. Copeland (hanged for his role in John Brown's raid), William H. Carney (the first Black to win the Medal of Honor), Charlotte Forten, Anna Julia Cooper (if only as a signer of a petition as "Annie J. Cooper"), and, finally, the indomitable Ida Wells-Barnett.

Aptheker showcases the speeches and writing of those forgotten Black Americans, free and slave, whose testimony refutes the whitewash of U.S. history, just as his own work smudges the shiny surface of pristine, monochromatic scholarship. This was a treasure offered to scholars even before I was born, and a gift that keeps on giving.

Debates over his ideological allegiance have too long obscured the value of his work, as has been discussed elsewhere in this volume. So many of his principles, as opposed to his interpretations, have indeed won out within the field, that we must finally celebrate his vision without reservation and applaud his continuing engagement.

A recent conference was organized on John Brown at Pennsylvania State University, Mont Alto, by Professor Peggy Russo. Imagine her delight at being contacted by Herbert Aptheker to express his interest in the program in advance, and even more, his willingness to participate. Due to his wife's illness, Aptheker was not able to attend his panel in person, but made an indelible impression on his listeners as he was beamed in by satellite. Several members of the audience were moved to tears—while he offered his insights from across the continent. This kind of devotion is indeed moving, and all too rare within scholarly circles, and it has a continuing impact.

Despite its shortcomings, *American Negro Slave Revolts* continues to grow in stature. I should certainly not want to defend in detail all of Aptheker's assertions about slave conspiracies. But the fundamental truth of his text has become the credo to which

most scholars in slave studies subscribe: that African Americans were agents within their own lives and even within the constraints of slave society.

Aptheker perhaps took his cue from the *Journal of Negro History*, a really remarkable publication that included not only scholarly findings, but letters and clippings, and provides us today with an incredible resource. At the time that Aptheker began to draw on this wonderful journal, it would be safe to say that the majority of scholars working on the Old South did not read it. Additionally, Aptheker absorbed the themes laid out in W. E. B. Du Bois's monumental *Black Reconstruction*, published in 1935 and only recently superseded by Eric Foner's prize-winning *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, which appeared in 1988. (In a similar "blinded by color" fashion, Du Bois's work on Reconstruction went unheralded for fifty years until Foner's volume paid tribute to Du Boisian analysis. Foner salutes Du Bois, especially since he carried out his heroic research while denied access to segregated Southern archives.) Aptheker always acknowledged his debt to Du Bois, and one can see the influence of Du Bois's chapter, "The General Strike." At the same time the credit must go to Aptheker's raw and relentless emphasis on the theme of Black agency and slave resistance. Aptheker modestly concluded his book in 1943: "The data herein presented make necessary the revision of the generally accepted notion that his response [the slave's] was one of passivity and docility."

American Negro Slave Revolts was really a pickax wielded against the mountain of work that came before it. Some felt that Aptheker's hyperbolic claims—based on a "slim" body of evidence—placed too heavy a burden upon fragile foundations and caused his work to collapse in upon itself. But many more have found the weight and strength of his convictions worth further pursuit, and generally the field has actually moved in extraordinary ways toward his conclusions, even if by alternate routes.

First, Aptheker was one of the first scholars to take conspiracies seriously. (Ironic, considering the way in which our entire culture tilted this direction during the 1960s.) Following this

premise, a lot of controversial new interpretations of slave culture blossomed: Was the prevalence of fear among whites a product of Black insurrectionary activity or paranoia? Could all these activities be chalked up to “rebellions” in the works, or did they represent a (counter) culture of resistance among slaves? New work on runaways indicates that as many slaves ran to make a point and negotiate with masters as did those who planned to seek out freedom, or more commonly, separated family members. We need fresh eyes, not fresh data, in many cases. In any case, Aptheker’s combing the archives to come up with meticulous evidence (such as his correction of U. B. Phillips’s body count following Gabriel’s revolt)—despite conflicts over what these incidents and cases might mean—stimulated important reassessment.

Second, Aptheker offered examples of patterns of resistance, showing distinctive waves of rebellion among enslaved African Americans over the course of settlement and into the antebellum era. This periodization was extremely important, even if it was rejected, for it allowed discussion on two important points that were wholly neglected before Aptheker.

In Aptheker’s notes to his introduction, he mentions that a reviewer (of Helen Caterall’s monumental work) suggested that *only* two important aspects of slave studies remained unexplored: first the study of “attempts to break the system by the slaves though suicide, flight, individual resistance and group insurrection,” and second, “a picture of the institution as seen through the eyes of the bondsman himself.” Although clearly pursuing one topic with vigor, Aptheker dynamically embraced both issues, I think, in his own fashion.

First and foremost, Aptheker insisted American slavery had a history—it was not a static system floating within the past, but rooted within historical context. It was not just a system of laws, or a set of documents, or a tally of figures in a plantation ledger, but a body of evidence once flesh and blood, as well as ideas and records. So many of the revisionist texts of the 1970s push this point to its limit—even to go so far as to slash and burn those who committed the sins of plucking a date off a time line to do comparative history—not seeing that slavery might be in infant stages

in one region, and in full flower in another, and dying on the vine elsewhere, all at the same time. Comparisons were useless unless one recognized that slave societies had their own history—beginnings and middles and, eventually, an end. But to invest this system with the sense of chronology that it required for analytical purposes was an important step forward, to Aptheker's credit.

Second, Aptheker used the vehicle of slave resistance and rebellion to make slaves agents, and to move us toward that important stage whereby we insisted upon exploring slaves not as property or even contested terrain, but as people, caught within the terrible crushing circumstances of enslavement. Aptheker's was an important boost over that hurdle, of viewing the "institution through the eyes of the bondsman himself." (Though "bondswoman/herself" sadly continues a hurdle!)

But the whole notion of conspiracies and the recorded waves of resistance which periodically swept the countryside tunneled into the mountain and brought many cherished notions crashing down. Clearly, enslaved persons formed their own networks and communities and means of communication, both outside the boundaries of and within the confines of white society—at times invisible, but generally visible and undetected. Slaves' coded meanings were woven into the cultural fabric of antebellum Southern society. Aptheker read these signs long before it was the academic fashion.

Within *American Negro Slave Revolts*, Aptheker does not bother to establish African American agency and culture, but just accepts this crucial concept as a given and builds his case around it. U. B. Phillips, Avery Craven, and the like portrayed slaves as childlike in their devotion to masters, and indeed, overidentified with owners whom they supposedly regarded as role models. But Aptheker was clearly jackhammering away at outdated myths and his brand of dynamite was a rude awakening to the grand old men of paternalism, who tried to bury him in the rubble.

It took time and patience, but Aptheker's groundwork paid dividends. While everyone squabbled over whether or not bits and pieces of his evidence "indeed" constituted slave rebellion, a growing legion of diggers slogged along. From many different

perspectives, scholars could demonstrate that control of slaves was not the one-sided affair of Phillips's legend: slaves were subjects as well as objects, and slavery was more brutal and harsh than a kindly family affair. (And as I continue to chime in, an unwanted Cassandra—even if we persist in viewing masters and slaves as one big happy family—we cannot forget incest, child abuse, and all the ugly secrets that must have permeated plantation as well as other households.)

So whether or not we accept Aptheker's conclusions about his evidence, the premises upon which he built his thesis had a profound impact. Slavery was a dynamic system that deserved more fluid, less static overviews. Slaves were agents within their own lives. Whatever the consequences of those lives and subsequent histories, they deserved better than the stereotypes promoted by scholarship riddled with racist assumptions about white supremacy and African American docility. This message was mightily resisted, not in spite of, but because it was produced at an Ivy League institution. That Columbia University Press would publish it was most likely adding insult to injury for Phillips's fans.

Perhaps I was part of the postblacklist generation who could read Aptheker in a different light, and appreciate the power of his resistant questions rather than regret any weakness in his arguments for slave rebellions. And so I was overwhelmed by the outpouring of research and revisionism that seemed revolutionary (as opposed to revolting) during my undergraduate and graduate years. The 1970s was an era fertile with subversive slave studies—looking at slaves as people, as agents, as provocateurs, turning even more perverse and diverse in the 1980s as we came to see Southern antebellum African Americans as a gendered, “naturally alienated,” trickstering group who might even, at times, become slaveholders themselves. (Score one for class theory after all!)

From this great outpouring of work, we learned enslaved African Americans were productive, skilled, and efficient, or inefficient and feigning ignorance, or both; that they were extremely fertile with high birth rates, or practicing birth control, suffering from sudden infant death syndrome and using abortifacients, or all of the above; that they readily adapted the

religion of their masters, or were clinging to the belief systems of their ancestors, or both. We can now enjoy intriguing research on the diets, heights, hairstyles, jewelry, language, grave decorations, diseases, mortality rates, marital patterns, migration rates, jokes, songs, stories and folktales, masks and masques, and much, much more about the lives of enslaved African Americans.

I am not going to claim all of this was made possible by Herbert Aptheker's work—but it is impossible to imagine that slave studies could ever have turned into the beguiling Babel it has become without his vibrant voice: challenging, calling forth, and making us realize that *our* motto must be resistance as well. The work must stand, as his *American Negro Slave Revolts* has stood for over fifty years. And following his example, we must each take our own stand—if not for this generation, then for the next—if not for this century, then for the twenty-first.

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A Black History Journey: Encountering Aptheker along the Way

Rosalyn Terborg-Penn

In the 1960s, the image some had of Queens College of the City University of New York was of enlightened radical students, many of whom struck against academic freedom violations and attacked discrimination against Black people by participating in the civil rights movement. At home some of us joined the northern student movement, while others went south to work with SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee).

This image was deceiving, however, because we were not really enlightened. Many of us were groping in the dark for the roots of our radicalism. Only a few students came to the college radicalized by their parents' politics. For most of us, our formal secondary education had been just as conservative as any other consensus system of the 1950s and early 1960s, both intellectually and politically. Our college education was similarly conservative, as we battled against the status quo in our search for "truth."

Our struggle was enacted in campus chapters of the NAACP (of which I was a member), SANE (Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy), and the Young People's Socialist League. Our extracurricular activities were perceived as radical, but in our classes in contemporary civilization and history, we continued to learn about the elite European-American society we had studied on another level as younger students. As we sought the other—the hidden past—the dichotomy was mind-boggling.

A coalition of radical students pooled our limited resources one semester, and we invited Malcolm X and Herbert Aptheker

to give lectures on the Flushing campus. I shall never forget the impact each had upon my growing consciousness in my teens, as a Negro-turning-Black person and as a future scholar.

The exhortation by the charismatic Malcolm X was an emotional experience that incited anger and reproach, feelings I had long held repressed when outside of my own community. Tall and slim in his classic Nation of Islam attire, he reminded the few Blacks in the packed audience about how white people would view those of us who dared to earn the Ph.D. degree—not as “Doctor,” but as “nigger.” I knew of Malcolm X through the media, but I was really not emotionally prepared to see him in real life.

As for Herbert Aptheker, I had not heard of him before his coming to campus, and his lecture was a new experience for me. A stockier, older white man, he did not make a particularly exciting presentation. He opened a whole new world to me, however, not just by talking positively about Negro accomplishments, something I had heard at home, but by discussing what was then called “Negro history” as a legitimate field of inquiry, a topic worthy of serious analysis that challenged the consensus school we all hated, but could not seem to revise adequately.

The first leg of the journey: Undergraduate history major

I must have been in my sophomore year when I heard Aptheker speak. In my junior year I was still trying to figure out what I really wanted my major to be. After entering college as a biology major, then changing to an anthropology-sociology major, I had not found a home where I was not seen first as a “colored” student. On the advice of a college friend, Andrea Benton (Rushing), I switched to history, because, as she said, I was good at it.

History was fine. In this male department, nobody really noticed me. In one sense this was good, because I did not stick out as one of the “colored” student members of the NAACP. Before they realized it, I had become a member of Phi Alpha Theta, the international history honor society, and professors began to take me seriously. Soon after, my thoughts returned to Herbert Aptheker, because something was missing. Since his

lecture, no history professor or scholar on the Queens College campus had engaged us in any discussions about what was then called Negro history. I began to probe, and ask questions, but only one of my professors responded—Dr. Solomon Lutnick, who admitted that early nineteenth-century United States history was his specialty, but not the Negro role in it. Yet he did know a Negro historian, John Hope Franklin, who had chaired the history department at Brooklyn College a few years before. Lutnick assured me that there were others who researched and wrote about the Black experience. He encouraged me and advised me to continue my search.

My research led me to a few additional names such as Carter G. Woodson, John Henrik Clarke, and Philip S. Foner, and I continued to find the name of Herbert Aptheker. My curiosity drew me into this field, apparently not a new one, as I had presumed, just one hidden from view by the mainstream circles of the profession.

What next, I pondered. My parents assumed that I would go to graduate school and stay in New York City to follow my father's footsteps to NYU. I wanted to go to Washington, D.C., however, where all the action was—research centers like the one at Howard University, the Library of Congress, and the National Archives. Applying to all the universities in the District of Columbia, I was accepted at George Washington University. Disappointed because I had not heard from Howard University in time to apply for my guaranteed loan, I embarked for GWU.

The second leg of the journey: Earning the MA degree

When I arrived at the office of my new adviser, he asked if he could help me find the right office, because he assumed I was in the wrong one. Soon I realized that the graduate school had admitted me assuming that I was white—the name, the college, the deceiving photo. Having been undaunted by Queens College, I was not going to allow GWU to scare me away. I worked very hard my first year, trying (to no avail) to find courses and paper topics that would allow me to study Black history. Nonetheless, I decided that for my thesis I would research something about Black people regardless of the cost. In spite of my hard work, I

received all B grades the first semester. This was a problem, because MA students needed two A's to graduate from the program.

The time was the mid-1960s, and I did not know how fortuitous it was that I came to the history department just when universities were being pressured by civil rights activists, particularly in the South, to accept Black students into graduate programs. I learned from one of my sympathetic colleagues, a teaching assistant in the Ph.D. program, that the professors, after second thoughts, had changed their strategy. Instead of seeing to it that I failed to make the grade, they would see to it that I at least passed the course requirements. Sure enough, before I completed my class work, I received the two A's.

Because there were no Negro history courses taught at GWU, my thesis adviser, Wood Gray, gave me permission to take a course at Howard University being taught by his former classmate, Elsie Lewis, now chair of the history department. Lewis, who was the first Black professor of history I knew, opened wider the door Aptheker had cracked for me a few years before. At the Founders Library I found Aptheker's *American Negro Slave Revolts* (1943) and the first two volumes of his *Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (1951–1994).

Both books were important in my decision to focus my thesis on the antebellum period in Black history and to look at Black protest as a historical theme during this period and the Reconstruction years that followed. For my thesis adviser and other faculty and fellow students, I was definitely a radical attempting to ask questions that nobody else asked. However, I argued for my topic on the ground that this was a revisionist framework, one that had antecedents, as I produced my library copies of Herbert Aptheker's books and other works by prominent historians. Why was I not surprised when my colleagues did not admit ever knowing about Aptheker's views? I must give Wood Gray credit, however, because he agreed to let me keep the topic, although he did not allow me to use the word "Black." Gray also insisted that I refer to Aptheker as a "Marxist historian," and he seemed to distance himself from what he must have perceived as his radical "Negro" student.

My master's thesis title became "The American Negro Protests: A Study of Negro Demands for Equality: 1800–1877." I focused on "free Negroes," moving from the idea that slave revolts were only one manifestation of Black protest. I later learned that I was the first Black student to earn the M.A. degree in history from George Washington University.

Reviewing my thesis thirty years later, I realized that I had indeed drawn upon the work of Herbert Aptheker throughout, especially for references to the voices of Black protesters found in his documentary history. I also argued from Aptheker's position that at that time many historians had ignored Black protest in their studies of the abolitionist and other early nineteenth-century social and political movements. Writing his critique before Benjamin Quarles published his classic study, *The Black Abolitionists* (1969), Aptheker specifically criticized those historians who often neglected to mention, much less emphasize, the importance of the role Blacks played in the movement (1964, 114). The time had come, I asserted, for secondary and primary school books, as well as college texts, to reflect the new knowledge. By the end of the 1960s leg of my Black history journey, I was identifying myself as a revisionist and an activist-scholar.

The third leg of the journey: Teaching at Morgan State

While writing my thesis, I was employed as a day-care teacher at a settlement house on Capitol Hill. I had hoped to find a teaching position in one of the two-year or four-year colleges in the Washington metropolitan area after graduation, but I found nothing. As a result, I continued working in settlement houses and later as a federal government employee, always pushing and sometimes writing about Black history. Finally, I heard of an opening and began my college-teaching career at Morgan State College in the fall 1969 semester.

At Morgan I met the illustrious Benjamin Quarles, whose works I had discovered while researching my thesis. The former chair of the history department, he had written *The Negro in the Making of America* (1964) for a supplemental text in required U.S. history courses. Our mandate was to integrate Blacks into these survey courses, because our experiences were missing in

the conventional texts. I was in heaven and ready for the task.

Reading the Quarles text, I found numerous references to women. Engendering history was far from the minds of most of us in the sixties, although we knew the names of Black women of the past and some, like Rosa Parks and Fannie Lou Hamer, of the present. Quarles, who was nearing retirement as I was beginning my career, seemed to be in tune with the accomplishments of Black women of the past more than a generation before we historians of women's history began to claim that the experiences of Black women were unique, different from those of anyone else.

In my thesis, I had not sought women's names and roles, although a few found their way into my conventional narrative. Quarles's works challenged me to integrate not only more Blacks (men) into my U.S. history courses, but more (Black) women also. Finding resources was very difficult during my first three years, however, especially research topics for my students to select that allowed them to interrogate the lives of Black women from a historical perspective.

In the meantime, my senior colleagues pressured me to earn a Ph.D., arguing that I would perhaps remain unpromoted and untenured if I did not go back to school. Although Morgan State was primarily a teaching institution, where in the past instructors could obtain promotions and tenure without earning a terminal degree, the trend toward professionalizing college teachers by requiring doctorates had arrived. I agreed to consider it.

In 1971, *Key Issues in the Afro-American Experience* was published (Huggins, Kilson, and Fox 1971). Both Herbert Aptheker and Benjamin Quarles had been invited to contribute essays to this anthology specifically intended as scholarly contributions to a field still distrusted by the historical profession (Aptheker 1971; Quarles 1971). I assigned these essays, both in the section called Ante-Bellum Black Activism, to my students for reading and class discussion. Aptheker's essay about slave resistance was an updated summary of his classic book, *American Negro Slave Revolts*. Both historians mentioned Black women specifically, but I was particularly struck by Aptheker's analysis of female slave resistance:

Rather striking are the references in contemporary sources—all media dominated by the slaveowners, of course—to the special militancy and passion displayed by slave women. . . . When one bears in mind the excruciating oppression borne by the black woman slave—as woman, as worker, as a black person—this particular intense passion is understandable. (1971, 172)

Here was a feminist analysis. I did not recognize it as such at the time, but Aptheker had not only included women in his discussion of slave resistance, he viewed them in terms of gender, work, and race. I asked my students: “What evidence does Aptheker give of slave female resistance, and what is significant about his interpretation of it?” With this essay Herbert Aptheker enabled me to expand upon my interpretation of women’s roles and motivations as I taught the Black experience in the United States.

I had finally decided to apply for graduate school for the next fall, 1972—this time, only one—Howard University. I knew what I wanted to study, and this time the topic was Black women. On the basis of my experience, I was expecting to break new ground.

***The fourth leg of the journey:
A Ph.D. degree at Howard University***

Howard University’s history department was unlike any other I had experienced. First, two Black women in a row had been chair of the department, Elsie Lewis and now Lorraine A. Williams. In addition, the head of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center was a Black woman, Dorothy B. Porter. All were engaged in researching the lives of Black people. What a set of role models for me to emulate! Howard University was, like many historically Black universities, a nurturing place. Black graduate students were not minority students who had to prove to their professors and cohorts that studying Black life and history was acceptable.

Even so, some looked askance at my idea about writing a dissertation on a theme in Black women’s history. “What was

that?” some asked, or “Why not look at race relations and Black women?” Nonetheless, there were those, like Lorraine Williams and Harold Lewis, the director of the department’s graduate program, who supported me and other students who followed.

During my first semester, I wrote a paper about Black women in the woman’s rights movement, which later evolved into my article, “Discrimination against Afro-American Women in the Woman’s Movement, 1830–1920” (1978). Finding data for this project required me to go back to what I had learned from both Aptheker and Quarles—revisit the old sources, both primary and secondary. In the case of Aptheker, I was looking for ways to recast his analysis to conceptualize my findings and conclusions within the framework of Black women’s experiences. The paper won the Howard University Rayford Logan graduate essay contest for 1973. The committee acknowledged having had doubts about the paper when first reading the title, but being convinced by my research that the subject of Black women and their organizations was on the cutting edge. The essay became the foundation for my research for my dissertation, as I narrowed the topic to look at African American men and women and their relationships to the woman suffrage movement.

Like many others in the Ph.D. program at Howard, I was working full time as an instructor in a nearby college. Benjamin Quarles and other senior professors were retiring from Morgan State, and I joined several junior professors who took their places teaching the advanced survey course, “The Negro in U.S. History.” Our challenge was to bring the most recent scholarship into the classroom. Howard University certainly prepared me for this, but there was still no text for teaching the history of Black women. Consequently, in 1974, Sharon Harley, one of my Howard fellow graduate students, and I proposed editing a book of original articles and recruited our colleagues. I contributed two articles, the award-winning essay and a new one entitled, “Black Male Perspectives on the Nineteenth Century Woman” (1978b). My essay attempted to revise the indictment 1970s white feminists presented of Black men for historically opposing women’s rights and woman suffrage in particular. My research, including the essay by Benjamin Quarles (1940) about Frederick Douglass

as a woman's rights supporter, had convinced me to challenge the feminists' assertion. Not only turning to Quarles, but also returning to Aptheker's documentary collection and other sources, helped to build my case. I used at least three documents cited in Aptheker's documentary history that revealed the voices of T. Thomas Fortune and W. E. B. Du Bois in support of Black women's rights.

Once *The Afro-American Woman: Struggles and Images* was completed, I continued writing my dissertation full time. Returning to Aptheker time and again, I found documents that led me to names and places associated with activities for women's rights and woman suffrage. These clues helped me find additional information about often nebulously cited data in *The History of Woman Suffrage* (Stanton, Anthony, and Gage 1889–1922). For example, Aptheker made reference to Mary Olney Brown, who wrote Frederick Douglass in 1872 asking him to encourage the Black male readers of his newspaper who were voters to support woman suffrage. Aptheker thought erroneously that Brown was a Black woman; however, he gave me enough other clues to find her letter in Douglass's newspaper, which opened up more to me on the debate among suffragists over the enfranchisement of Black men versus the enfranchisement of women (Aptheker 1951–1994, 1:626). The topic was a major section in one of the early chapters of my dissertation, "Afro-Americans in the Struggle for Woman Suffrage," which I completed in the summer of 1977.

Leg five of the journey: Becoming a historian and a scholar/activist

Returning to teaching and research was demanding because I wanted to do it all, including raising my young daughter, Jeanna Penn, traveling to conferences, doing research, developing new courses on Black women, and reforming the profession. Teaching four courses each semester made the task daunting, but somehow I did it, often sacrificing my research and writing. During this time I became a cofounder of the Association of Black Women Historians and served a term on the American Historical Association's Committee on Women Historians. My

activism pushed me toward issues beyond the protest, usually targeting white men, against racism and sexism in the historical profession. These issues concerned problems Black women historians faced with Black men and other women in the profession. Addressing issues about equity and radicalism in the profession was certainly in the Aptheker tradition.

By the early 1980s I was involved in several of these arenas on both the scholarly and the professional level. One such occasion was the fortieth anniversary celebration of the publication of *American Negro Slave Revolts*, at a conference organized by Gary Okihiro, then in the Ethnic Studies Program of the University of Santa Clara, where Aptheker taught. The conference was hosted by St. Claire Drake at Stanford University.

In 1983, twenty years after first meeting Herbert Aptheker, I was presenting a paper at the conference and then having dinner in his home with him, his wife Fay, and their daughter, my long-time colleague Bettina. The conference focus was cross-cultural, because we engaged topics about Blacks and resistance in Africa, the United States, and the Caribbean. I met people I knew only through their works, and some whom I learned about for the first time. It was most productive for me, for I had recently redirected much of my research from primarily Black women in the United States to women of the African diaspora, and this was the first conference where I could test my ideas. What a stir, as some—men and women—argued against the paradigm I introduced, based on Filomina Chioma Steady's theory of African feminism, while others, including Drake and Aptheker, detected an antifeminist response from my critics similar to the anti-Black response they had received when researching Black life and culture was not considered acceptable for an academic. Like Aptheker, I had to decide whether or not to challenge the status quo, or follow my intellectual curiosity and go with the documents, listening for the many voices often ignored by other scholars. I accepted the challenge.

The experience was significant. I began to understand the professional risks scholars must sometimes take by doing work in fields considered unimportant and in being true to their politics and scholarly interpretation, regardless of the cost.

Herbert Aptheker reminded us all of this, when he spoke at dinner, without bitterness, of the many years he was blackballed by universities because he was a member of the Communist Party, denied a permanent academic position because he dared to challenge the prevailing interpretations about submissive Blacks. In writing about their forms of resistance, he proved his points by citing the evidence. Being a scholar/activist meant that I was suspect in academia because of my politics and questionable among community activists because I was perceived as an “egghead.”

My essay was published in the anthology, *In Resistance: Studies in African, Caribbean and African American History* (1986), along with essays by others, most of whom had participated in the conference, including Herbert and Bettina Aptheker. The article was my first published piece with a comparative focus on women of African descent and resistance. Once again, I cited works by Herbert Aptheker throughout, including *American Negro Slave Revolts* (1943), “Slave Resistance in the United States” (1971), and *To Be Free: Studies in American Negro History* (1948), all of which I view as classic works to be used over and over again.

The Herbert Aptheker legacy remains with me as I teach and research what we now refer to as African American history, in general, and African American women’s history, particularly. A theme constant in his work is the dialectic between oppression and resistance. You cannot have one without stimulating the other, whether the theme deals with issues about race, class, gender, or in the case of Black women worldwide, all three.

Looking back, I notice the way in which Aptheker’s work introduced me to my field of historical research and teaching, yet continued to inform it. His work has been with me throughout my intellectual journey. Herbert Aptheker has been a model to me not just because of his close interrogation of the sources, but because he often faced the storm of critics and nonbelievers in his validation of voices that history kept silent.

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Part III
History in the Radical Tradition
of Herbert Aptheker

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Colonialism and Migrant Labor: A Comparative Study of Puerto Rico and the Philippines

Gary Y. Okihiro

All too often, perhaps in our quest for verities, we in the academy find safe havens in discrete bodies of knowledge. We define our problem, our theory and methodology, our discipline by delineating boundaries that demarcate them from other problems, theories and methodologies, and disciplines, thereby allowing us to isolate, dissect, and manage our epistemology. To be sure, American studies, area studies, and ethnic, gay/lesbian/bisexual, and women's studies have understood the efficacy of, indeed the necessity for, multidisciplinary lenses for reading their texts. And recently practitioners have even sought to problematize and destabilize the very borders that once defined those fields by "internationalizing" American studies, by fracturing the heretofore solid constructs and specific locations of geopolitics and nationalisms, and by roaming the interstices and articulations of race, sexuality, and gender. Those ventures have taken us, like the new generation of Trekkies, to places where no one had gone before.

But a quick survey of the academic universe still reveals the predominance of insular bodies of knowledge—like black holes, departments have drawn in and absorbed all comers—and interdisciplinary programs are typically, in practice, aggregations of faculty trained and based in single disciplines. Further, from the position of ethnic studies, our subject matter—race—overrides and has not yet fully come to terms with class, gender, and sexuality, and within the United States race pivots principally upon

the solitary axis of white-nonwhite. We have only begun to understand “white” as a raced category, and to comprehend the significance of African and Asian relations, as an example, for explicating “race” and cracking the reductive but persistent and pervasive black-white dyad. And we have, at least in Asian American studies, generally failed to venture beyond the borders of the United States in defining our field of study, perhaps in reaction to the representation of us as perpetual aliens, perhaps in seeking the relative comfort of assimilation. Another consequence, it seems, of our U.S.-bound subject matter is a failure to comprehend macrolevels of analysis, including the development of capitalism and its imperial reach and influences. Although we might have ventured boldly, we still have places to go.

Among the numerous possibilities for exploration along the borderlands of Asian American and U.S. ethnic studies, the colonial experiences of Puerto Rico and the Philippines beg serious comparative attention and study. Obviously, both are island communities located within the tropical zone, both were colonized for over four hundred years successively by Spain and the United States, and both have achieved varying measures of autonomy and have been constrained by degrees of dependency under the new world order. In the words of William Howard Taft, a man central to the U.S. project in the Philippines, writing as a United States Supreme Court justice on behalf of the majority in *Balzac v. Porto Rico* in 1922, Puerto Ricans and Filipinos lived “in compact and ancient communities, with definitely formed customs and political conceptions . . . distant ocean communities of a different origin and language from those of our continental people,” and thus possessed little capacity for self-rule (cited in Lewis 1963, 111).

Bruno Lasker, a scholar commissioned by the American Council of the Institute of Pacific Relations to study the “Filipino problem” in the late 1920s, observed that connection between Filipinos and Latinos in the streets of the United States. “According to the more Asiatic or Caucasian character of their appearance,” he wrote, “Filipino students were vaguely classed by their fellow-students either with Orientals or with Latin Americans.” He went on: “A Filipino in New York finds that because he often speaks Spanish with his friends, many people

class him, though aware of his nationality, with Latin-Americans—sometimes wondering a little why a person coming from somewhere in the West Indies, as they think, should have partly Oriental features” (Lasker 1931). Of course, neither Lasker nor his alleged person in the street recognized the fact that besides native peoples, Africans, and Europeans, the West Indies were also populated by Asians. I suppose Lasker’s confused New Yorkers might have resolved their problem by placing the Philippines somewhere between Cuba and Puerto Rico.

Indeed, in debates in the United States Congress, the fates of Puerto Rico and the Philippines were frequently linked (and muddled?) within the minds and rhetoric of some of the legislators. British historian Raymond Carr noted that congressional consideration of Puerto Rico’s status in April 1900 was tempered by the realization that the outcome could set a precedent for the incorporation of the Philippines. Many congressmen, according to Carr, approved of U.S. citizenship for “peaceful,” white Puerto Ricans, but could not contemplate that same privilege for Filipinos, “physical weaklings of low stature with black skin, closely curling hair, flat noses, thick lips and large clumsy feet . . . mongrels of the East . . . with harem habits,” in the words of a congressman (Carr 1984, 35). Another connection not to be missed here is the link between domestic race and international imperial relations. The congressman’s characterization essentialized African American with Filipino, as a singular racial Other, like Southern racists in Congress who saw a different racial type from the “peaceful,” white Puerto Rican in 1917 when the Jones Act, imposing citizenship upon Puerto Ricans, was being debated. One of those Southern racists declared, in language deeply situated within both racial and sexual discourse: “I really had rather that [Puerto Ricans] would not become citizens of the United States. I think that we have enough of that element in the body politic already to increase the nation with mongrelization” (Carr 1984, 52; see also Weston 1972).

Puerto Ricans, too, saw their political connection with the Philippines. From 25 July 1898, when U.S. troops landed in Puerto Rico, to 1 May 1900, military governors ruled the colony. During that period, “Puerto Rican commissioners,” comprised of

a faction of the elite, presented to President William McKinley their “Case for Puerto Rico,” which argued for an end to military rule. Puerto Ricans, unlike the Filipinos, they reasoned, had quietly acquiesced to the U.S. invasion, whereas Filipinos were engaged in a vicious rebellion against U.S. rule, “ignoring the cession which Spain made of their country.” Nonetheless, the United States offered the Philippines “civil government” while keeping Puerto Rico under military rule. “There are two standards of weight and measures, one to be used with the Filipinos and another with the Puerto Ricans,” they contended (Negron de Montilla 1971, 17).

Of course, Puerto Rico’s incorporation into the United States was prompted by U.S. commercial and strategic interests in Cuba (and the Caribbean) that disallowed the completion of the Cuban (and Puerto Rican) anticolonial struggle against Spain, like the Philippines’ (and Hawaii’s) absorption by the United States’ Pacific destiny, which discourse of trade and its defense required intervention in the Filipino struggle for liberation from Spanish colonialism (and in the movement for Hawaiian sovereignty). Indeed, from one point of view, the U.S. presence in the Caribbean was part and parcel of its imperial ambitions in the Pacific, whereby Puerto Rico anchored, economically and strategically, a “U.S. Mediterranean” against European encroachments in the hemisphere, evinced in the Monroe doctrine of 1823 and the Roosevelt corollary of 1904 that conferred upon the United States the “right” of hemispheric intervention in the interest of “collective civilization” (Lewis 1963, 69–70, 76–80; see also Williams 1970, 410–27). With its shipping passage in the Caribbean safeguarded, U.S. capitalism’s exports—its products and a moral democracy—gained easier entry to the Pacific ocean and Asia through the Panama canal, begun in 1904 and completed in 1913.¹

Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, however, were not mere stepping-stones for the U.S. rush toward Asia; they were intimately tied to the United States through trade and sugar production. The earliest commercial contact between Puerto Rico and the American colonies began during the mideighteenth century, when clandestine trade in Puerto Rican sugar and molasses and North American foodstuffs enriched New England

merchants. Puerto Rican and Cuban merchants later established themselves in New York City, where they formed the Cuban and Puerto Rican Benevolent Society in 1830. By the end of the nineteenth century, Puerto Rico's trade with the United States in sugar and molasses exceeded its commercial intercourse with Spain, the colony's metropole. For example, in 1870, 68.6 percent of Puerto Rican sugar went to the United States, while a mere 0.8 percent went to Spain (Sanchez-Korrol 1983, 11–12; History Task Force 1979, 70–71).

United States capital created a U.S. sugar kingdom in the Caribbean that by the first few decades of the twentieth century had eclipsed the British West Indian sugar industry and displaced small, independent producers like the *colono* or small cane farmer in Puerto Rico. The U.S. system installed the factory in the Caribbean field, and, according to Fernando Ortiz of Cuba, "all become mass, shapeless, collective and anonymous: the company, the sugar and the syndicate; mass of capitalists, mass of products, mass of workers" (Williams 1970, 128). U.S. capital generated great concentrations of land and capital from 1897 to 1930 in the Caribbean. These included the Cuban American Sugar Company, which consisted of six plantations and 500,000 acres, the Cuban Atlantic Sugar Company with nine plantations and 400,000 acres, and the United Fruit Company, a forerunner of late capitalism's transnational corporation, with 93,000 acres of sugar in Cuba, bolstered by properties in the Caribbean, Central and South America, the Canary Islands, Europe, and the United States, totaling in 1941 over three million acres. The company controlled 65 percent of the world's bananas, owned a tourist hotel in Jamaica and a fleet of cargo and passenger ships, and held 40 percent of the voting stock of the International Railways of Central America. In Puerto Rico, four U.S. firms dominated sugar production, controlling 7,600 farms totaling 500,000 acres or nearly 70 percent of all sugar farms on the island. Despite a 1900 law that prohibited corporations from owning plantations with more than 500 acres, Central Aguirre owned nearly 25,000 acres and leased 18,000, Eastern Sugar Associates controlled 51,000 acres, and Fajardo Sugar Company, 50,000 acres (Williams 1970, 428–30).

Before U.S. colonialism, however, Puerto Rico was a part of Caribbean culture and a regional economy that involved a complex of capital and labor concentrations and flows. During the 1870s, Puerto Rican workers migrated to Santo Domingo in such numbers that the colonial government stopped issuing passports in 1879. The workers, undeterred, continued migrancy to Cuba, Venezuela, Guatemala, and New York City. The government sought to control labor migration in 1882 by supervising the Santo Domingo traffic and encouraged migration to Cuba in 1887 and to Venezuela in the 1890s. Reported the *Diario de Puerto Rico*:

now that the emigration is taking other courses, it becomes more tempting and attractive. Not too long ago boats arrived chartered especially by Venezuelan enterprises or from other neighboring republics to take strong and healthy laborers from this country . . . and we have seen that the representative of a rich syndicate from Brazil has established agencies and information to prepare for and promote a major emigration current in that direction. (History Task Force 1979, 85–86)

Like Puerto Rico, the Philippines was not a mere U.S. base for the Asian trade.² Obviously, both Puerto Rico and the Philippines were U.S. colonies and thus their elites and urban dwellers, at least, were subject to the coerced and seductive draw of the metropole. Viewing the Philippine past from the vantage of the present, one might be tempted to agree with Filipino scholar Bonifacio S. Salamanca that nearly half a century of U.S. colonialism (and one might add the decades since under U.S. neocolonialism) had “profound consequences on Philippine history and civilization” (Salamanca 1968, 4). But the recent past must not distort our sense of historical proportion. Filipino society, as Salamanca well knows, long predated U.S. colonial rule, indeed the existence of the United States as a nation state. The precolonial economies and social formations, baranganic societies, Spanish colonization, and Chinese and Japanese immigration had more pervasive and lasting influences upon the people and the eventual political entity called “the Philippines.”

That recognition has prompted a scholar to call for a complete reassessment of the historical periodization that pivots on “the American period,” and to urge a refiguring of the Spanish period and the Filipino precolonial past (Owen 1971, 9).

Even the U.S. period has been subject to revision. According to revisionist historians, U.S. impact upon the Philippines was less than popularly imagined, either for good as contended by the Right or for ill, as by the Left. Earlier assessments, claims historian Peter W. Stanley, underestimated the persistence and resiliency of “Hispano-Philippine institutions and the social and economic rhythms of Philippine life,” and overestimated the power of U.S. hegemony. That magnification of U.S. influence, which was in reality neither large, nor systematic, nor lasting, argued Stanley, arose from the political and institutional biases of U.S. and Filipino scholars, who as diplomatic and nationalist historians, fastened upon imperialism—expansion, conquest, and exploitation—and its counter, nationalism and independence, as their central themes (Stanley 1984a). In addition, U.S. colonizers promoted the notion of a beneficent, uplifting mission that was unprecedented in world history (see, e.g., Karnow 1989) and Filipino elites, while cooperating with and profiting from the colonizers, waved the nationalist flag to rally and unify the masses behind their self-serving project. Beyond its inaccuracy, the historical mythology has pernicious consequences. “The ‘special relationship’ of the U.S. and Filipino people rests, therefore, upon a foundation of self-delusion,” Stanley concludes. “It has corrupted and vitiated Philippine political life, set back the cause of socio-economic equity in the islands, and misled three generations of Americans with a mythology of developmental benevolence.”

Yet historians, the Philippine revisionists among them, assuredly agree that U.S. imperialism was a central aspect of the U.S., Philippine, and Puerto Rican past, and that the immediate historical occasion for the convergence of those pasts was U.S. expansionism. There is no disagreement here. Hence the U.S. context of the late nineteenth century, its social formation, bears every relevance to a consideration of imperialism’s nature and colonialism’s impact in the Caribbean and Pacific. Historian

Walter LaFeber has shown that the “new imperialism” of the late nineteenth century was not an aberration in the flow of U.S. history, but was, in fact, a continuation of U.S. continental expansion. That westward drive was in large part impelled by the idea that global supremacy would result from control of Asia. Secretary of State William Henry Seward, a leading architect of America’s Manifest Destiny in the Pacific, urged in 1853:

Open up a highway through your country from New York to San Francisco. Put your domain under cultivation, and your ten thousand wheels of manufacture in motion. Multiply your ships, and send them forth to the East. The nation that draws most materials and provisions from the earth, and fabricates the most, and sells the most of productions and fabrics to foreign nations, must be, and will be, the great power of the earth. (LaFeber 1963, 26–27)³

Besides the growth of factories in the Northeast that fabricated, sold, and exported to foreign markets, domestic production, including industry and cultivation, sought out cheap, tractable, and efficient laborers to turn the “ten thousand wheels of manufacture.” Migrant workers from Puerto Rico and the Philippines, among many other places, were recruited and drawn to the metropole by that logic of capitalism. It is this character that distinguishes Puerto Ricans and Filipinos from European immigrants and belies the attempt to place them within the embrace of America’s “nation of immigrants.” Puerto Rico and the Philippines were conquered territories. They were incorporated by the force of U.S. arms. And much, although not all, of the movement of peoples within those colonies and between them and the metropole was charted by the concentrations and flows of capital and by a densely saturating culture that moved from metropole to colony in the form of goods and ideologies.

When U.S. General Nelson A. Miles and his troops landed at Guanica, Puerto Rico, on 25 July 1898, they effectively repulsed a revolutionary movement that had since the 1860s based itself among Puerto Rican and Cuban exiles in New York City and usurped a reform movement in Puerto Rico that had petitioned for and won greater autonomy from Spain during the 1890s.

Similarly, when U.S. Commodore George Dewey steamed into Manila Bay on 1 May 1898, he began the military campaign that defeated a mass anticolonial struggle that had evolved from a reformist movement and was on the verge of victory over Spain (Constantino 1975, 146–215).⁴ The respective “pacification” campaigns in Puerto Rico and the Philippines, however, were vastly different. Miles fought a nineteen-day war that was called a “picnic,” in which three U.S. soldiers were killed and the troops were allegedly “bombarded with cigars and bananas” (Carr 1984, 28).⁵ In the Philippines, successive commanders fought a guerrilla war, likened to America’s war in Vietnam, that ended when President Theodore Roosevelt unilaterally declared it over on 4 July 1902 and that involved 200,000 U.S. troops and resulted in 4,300 U.S. and more than 50,000 Filipino deaths.⁶

U.S. colonial rule imposed (and some might argue, adapted) itself over (and with) a Spanish colonial order that had largely failed to penetrate or fully exploit the countryside. In Puerto Rico, Spain’s inability to utilize efficiently its colony’s productive capacities might have been due to its domestic agricultural base that competed with and hence sought to limit the development of Puerto Rico’s agricultural exports. As a result, the land tenure pattern in Puerto Rico was fragmented and dominated by small, independent, subsistence producers, such that in 1899, 91 percent of the island’s cultivated lands were held by their occupants. From the increase of trade mainly with the United States in the early 1800s, and the founding of the first sugar refineries around 1870, there was a gradual consolidation of land resulting in the *hacienda* system and a small class of *hacendados*. The *hacendados*, in their opposition to the Spanish merchants (*peninsulares*) who controlled trade, were a progressive force in transforming the colonial relations of production and were among the leaders in the anticolonial struggle against Spain (History Task Force 1979, 73–77; see also Maldonado-Denis 1972, 22–51).

Whereas a small fraction of Puerto Rico’s total exports went to Spain (during the period 1893–1896, for instance, those exports totaled only about 28 percent), under U.S. rule nearly all of its exports went to the United States (84.7 percent in

1905–1906, 92 percent in 1930, and 94 percent in 1935). An infusion of U.S. capital into the island brought nearly all aspects of the economy under its sway, leading to a consolidation of landholding absentee ownership, an extension of lands under cultivation, a move toward a single, export commodity, a change from coffee to sugar production, the growth of urban manufacturing and trades, and the proletarianization of peasants and workers (History Task Force 1979, 93–99).⁷

One of the first books published in the United States after Puerto Rico's conquest was William Dinwiddie's, *Puerto Rico: Its Conditions and Possibilities* (1899). The book's purpose, explained Dinwiddie, was to present "as complete a presentation as possible of the industrial, commercial, political, and social conditions existing on that island today . . . to give those personally interested in the future development of the fertile isle a comprehensive grasp of the administrative problems which confront us, and the possibilities for the embarking of American business enterprises." Dinwiddie's Puerto Rico was a capitalist's dream—filled with ample workers who, despite their "wretchedness, dirt, and poverty" were contented, "docile, obliging, appreciative of favors," ready to absorb Americanism, and hence were eminently malleable. For capitalists with tender consciences, providing a small patch of land to peasants assured their grateful service to the plantation owner and, boasted an unapologetic Dinwiddie, "secures him the eclat of being apparently a philanthropist" (iii, 156–57, 166).

"The real American rule . . . was not so much the new form of government introduced by the American Congress," points out British scholar Gordon K. Lewis, "as the massive economic penetration that followed hard on its heels." After the publication of books like Dinwiddie's, the U.S. consul in San Juan reported receiving thousands of letters from North American businessmen seeking information about investment opportunities, in part, he noted, because they understood that Puerto Ricans were "not a class of people acquainted with strikes" (Lewis 1963, 87–92). The net result of that "massive economic penetration" was the transformation of Puerto Rico into a U.S. dependency and typical Caribbean sugar island. "The rise to dominance of capitalist

production in Puerto Rico created a society immensely distant from its Spanish past,” according to the economist James L. Dietz, “and even from its Caribbean and Latin American neighbors. Legally, perhaps, Puerto Rico was not a part of the United States, but only legally. Economically, politically, and culturally, the forces of U.S. capitalism weighed ever more heavily on the Puerto Rican social formation” (Dietz 1986, 133). *Colonos* were reduced to mere appendages of industrial capital. A Puerto Rican writer lamented the demise of the class: “the small *colono* is the romantic figure of individualism in an industry controlled by a handful of corporations. . . . While farming to the sugar-cane corporation is merely a manufacturing business, it is a way of living for most *colonos*” (quoted in Williams 1970, 432).⁸

Like Puerto Rico, Philippine foreign trade during the Spanish period went to the metropole, but also to other countries like India, China, Britain, and the United States, but as a U.S. colony, the economy was directed by and toward the metropole. Most of its exports went to the United States, some commodities being produced exclusively for the U.S. market, and total trade with the United States grew from \$34 million in 1899 to over \$251 million in 1940. The Philippines acquired a colonial economy in which agricultural raw materials were produced in the colony for manufacturing in the metropole, and from the United States came industrial goods, including foodstuffs like wheat and flour, because the Philippine economy no longer sustained a base of self-sufficiency (Jenkins 1954, 38; Sharma 1984, 343–45).

As in Puerto Rico under Spain, in the Philippines an educated professional class arose from among the colonized peoples, the *ilustrados*, some of whom had studied in Spain and who pursued their class interest through demands for reform during the nineteenth century by calling for relief from abuses and greater inclusion within the Spanish colonial order. The whites in the colony, both *peninsulares* (born in Spain) and *insulares* (born in the Philippines), however, along with notably the friars, in their race and class interests, resisted the demands of the *ilustrados* for greater access to power. The more radical group of *ilustrados*, accordingly, attempted to mobilize the masses, and by 1898, with the defeat of the Spanish colonizers imminent,

ilustrados as a class joined in the revolution. Thus, wrote Bonifacio Salamanca, on the eve of the U.S. occupation, “there was already an articulate and cohesive group of conservative-nationalists who knew what they wanted and who were experts in the techniques of safeguarding their vested interests” (Salamanca 1968, 12–19; see also Constantino 1975, 146–53, 167–97).

It was by way of a conjoining of those class interests with those of the U.S. colonizers that the United States coopted the social revolution of the Filipino masses. The U.S. program of liberalization, secularization, and modernization, according to Peter Stanley, overlapped with the goals of the Philippine “revolution” (as defined by the *ilustrado* elites), thereby forming an alliance of interests, suppressing the revolution, and establishing a Filipino dependency that later split over the question of independence. By the early 1930s, the proindependence faction gained dominance when the United States recognized the Philippines as a military asset but only marginally profitable, when U.S. businesses saw the colony as an economic competitor, and when racists sought to stem the flow of Filipino migrants into the United States. Thus Tydings-McDuffie, an act passed by Congress in 1934 that promised independence for the Philippines, was not an example of U.S. beneficence in grooming a people and colony for independence and membership in the modern world community (Stanley 1974).

The consequences of that Filipino and U.S. class alliance and the dependency it spawned, the “special relationship” between the United States and the Philippines, was scored several decades later by Benigno S. Aquino Jr., an emerging critic in the late 1960s of the elitist and repressive presidency of Ferdinand Marcos. Reflecting on the ills of the Philippines, Aquino noted that growing numbers of Filipinos believed that “the independence granted by the United States in 1946 had built-in strings designed to perpetuate American economic dominance,” and he called for “bold efforts to break away from the fetters of the past” and for an end to “U.S. puppetry.” Part of that breaking away from the bonds of the past included the demise of the entrenched Filipino ruling class, whose very privileges were the

gifts of dependency. “Clearly,” wrote Aquino, “the Filipino elite—the corrupt and corrupting, the irresponsible and unresponsive old leadership—must face up to the need for reform or be swept away” (Aquino 1968).

That colonial legacy bore scant resemblance to the U.S. mission outlined for the Philippines by President William McKinley on 21 December 1898. “Finally,” declared the president in his “benevolent assimilation” proclamation, “it should be the earnest and paramount aim of the military administration to win the confidence, respect, and affection of the inhabitants of the Philippines by assuring them in every possible way that full measure of individual rights and liberties which is the heritage of a free people, and by proving to them that the mission of the United States is one of benevolent assimilation, substituting the mild sway of justice and right for arbitrary rule” (Miller 1982, frontispiece). William Howard Taft, on the ground in the Philippines, was blunter. The promotion of Filipino material and intellectual welfare, he observed, “will necessarily develop wants on their part for things which in times of poverty they regard as luxuries, but which, as they grow more educated and as they grow wealthier, become necessities.” Those wants would create markets for U.S. goods, he concluded, “that will make the relation of the United States to the Philippines a profitable one for our merchants and manufacturers” (quoted in Constantino 1975, 292).

Americanization—the creation of wants and needs—involved a whole range of impositions, including the projection of a mythological America upon the Philippines whereby the U.S. “Far West” was transplanted in the “Far East.” To promote the supposed U.S. “frontier” values of rugged individualism, egalitarianism, and the entrepreneurial spirit, colonial administrators like Dean C. Worcester sought to replicate their imagined idea of the American West on the wide open spaces, rolling grasslands of “virgin soil,” and native “tribal” peoples of north central Mindanao. There, in the Bukidnon uplands, U.S. ranchers built a cattle frontier complete with ranches, cowboys, and cattle drives. Not surprisingly, until the 1920s, Worcester and his friends came to dominate the business, wherein absentee landlords hired

overseers to manage the typically poor, landless, and indebted Filipino cowboys, who were largely from the displaced peasantry. Worcester's ranch, "Nellore," spread out over 7,000 hectares and boasted a herd of 2,500 cattle (Edgerton 1984).

Education played a pivotal role in soaking U.S. hegemony into the fabric of both Filipino and Puerto Rican culture (see Negron de Montilla 1971 and Salamanca 1968, 76–95). And education revealed a relationship between colonialism and migration. On the one hand, U.S. migrant teachers were transported to the Philippines (and Puerto Rico) to accomplish "social pacification," in the memorable words of Filipino writer Renato Constantino; and on the other hand, Filipino (and Puerto Rican) students, selected from among the elite classes, were sent by the colonial administration to study in U.S. colleges and universities. The *pensionado* program brought some of the first Filipinos to the United States when, in November 1903, a group of 103 Filipino students, most of whom were men, arrived in California with their superintendent. By 1912, 209 Filipinos had obtained their degrees or advanced training in the United States, and many of them returned to the Philippines to take their place among the elite classes. Accompanying that migration of scholarship students were self-supporting students who, between 1910 and 1938, numbered 13,916. Nearly all of these began their careers working (substantial numbers never ceased working) instead of going to school, and many remained and settled permanently in the United States (Salamanca 1968, 91–92; Catapusan 1941).

Cornell's president, Jacob Gould Schurman, who headed the First Philippine Commission in 1899, joined his Harvard counterpart in extending to the Puerto Rican colonial administration the use of their universities' facilities free of charge during the summer of 1904. The session was devoted mainly to teaching English to Puerto Rican teachers, 250 of whom studied at Harvard and 150 at Cornell, and was preliminary to the colonizer's attempt to impose English as the language of instruction in Puerto Rico's schools. The following year and until 1916, English was no longer taught as a mere subject but became the medium of instruction (and means of instituting cultural hegemony), prompting fierce and determined resistance from students

and teachers alike (Negron de Montilla 1971, 65, 67–68, 97, 105; see also Carr 1984, 279–82, 284–85).

The colonial nature of Puerto Rico and the Philippines was crucial to their selection as labor pools for capital in the United States (and Hawaii). Their conquest came at a time when U.S. industries not only sought new markets for their goods, but also when they required places to export capital and attract workers to build and turn their industries in the tropical zone and at home. Although capitalism might not have “forced” peasants to migrate, wrote Puerto Rican scholar Manuel Maldonado-Denis, it created the “necessity” for migration through “displacement and underdevelopment, unemployment and underemployment.” Their “freedom” to choose, thus, was spurious. Building upon Puerto Rican labor migration of the nineteenth century to other islands in the Caribbean and to South America, U.S. capitalists imported about 90,000 Puerto Ricans between 1898 and 1944 (1980, 39, 47).⁹ Clara E. Rodriguez calls Puerto Ricans, accordingly, “colonial immigrants” who were incorporated through conquest, entered as citizens (after the Jones Act of 1917) with some of its obligations (like military service) and few of its rights, were subject to cultural interventions and thus developed “colonial mentalities” and “oppositional mentalities,” and shared the profile of other colonial migrants within the metropole, including work and residential segregation and concentrations, racial and ethnic visibility, inferior education, and poverty (1989, 13–19).

Exemplary of “colonial migration” was the recruitment of Puerto Rican workers by the sugar planters of Hawaii. In the midst of a campaign to “Europeanize” the workforce, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association (HSPA) organized eleven shipments of Puerto Rican men, women, and children, totaling 5,303, from December 1900 to October 1901. Hawaii’s annexation in 1898 and its Organic Act of 1900 invalidated contract labor in the islands, prompting a rash of strikes and work actions among laborers, nearly all of whom had been shipped to Hawaii under contracts, throughout the sugar industry. In 1900 alone, the government reported twenty strikes involving 7,806 field hands, cane cutters, and mill workers (Okihiro 1991, 42–43). The

planters' attempt to "Europeanize" the workforce was in response to political concerns over the importation of Asians to a U.S. territory and by an economic strategy to divide sugar workers, over 73 percent of whom were Japanese in 1902, and thereby depress wages. Hawaii's commissioner of labor explained in 1903 that the Japanese had fancied themselves as "complete masters of the labour situation in Hawaii," and that their strikes had forced wage increases of over 25 percent among field hands during the first year after annexation. "The regular arrival of monthly expeditions of Puerto Rican labouring people throughout an entire year," observed the commissioner, "largely disabused them of this sense of monopoly and made them much more reasonable in their relations with their employers" (cited in Mintz 1955, 321).

Assembled by recruiters in Puerto Rico, like Alberto E. Minville, the son of a Puerto Rican mother and U.S. father, the workers and their families were shipped to New Orleans, where they were placed in what was apparently a "sealed train," resulting in U.S. newspaper outcries over alleged kidnapping, slave-like conditions, and abuse. There were 114 migrants in that first group, consisting of 71 men, 18 women, and 25 children, who left Puerto Rico on 22 November 1900. During the overland journey from New Orleans to San Francisco, several of the migrant laborers sought to escape, two succeeding in Ontario, California, but the others were forcibly secured by armed guards hired by the HSPA agent. Puerto Rican leaders like Ramon Romero Rosa, José Ferrer y Ferrer, and Eduardo Conde called labor migration "a crime that denigrates and vilifies us" and "a vile commercial traffic" (Maldonado-Denis. 1972, 61–62), while colonial administrators like Governor Charles H. Allen saw labor migration as a way to skim off the refuse of Puerto Rican society: "Porto Rico has plenty of laborers and poor people generally," the governor noted. "What the island needs is men with capital, energy and enterprise to develop its latent industries and to reclaim its sugar estates, to build factories and railroads and make this country hum with the busy sound of commerce. If these native emigrants should not return when they are needed

other persons will flock in to fill their places” (quoted in Camacho Souza 1984, 159, 166).

In Honolulu, among the first group of migrants, there were “frequent desertions and refusals to accept work in sugar,” and within a few months, Puerto Rican workers “were shifting around and seeking more congenial plantations or other lines of work.” Sebastiana Melendes, a 1901 recruit, explained simply: “They [Puerto Rican workers] were always looking for a ‘better condition,’ maybe one plantation would give 10 minutes for the small breakfast and the other did not.” In 1901, the HSPA set wages for Puerto Rican men at \$15 per month the first year of a three-year contract, \$16 the second year, and \$17 the third year, and for women eighteen to forty years of age, forty cents per day or ten cents less than the wages for boys fifteen to eighteen years old and five cents more than the wages for girls fifteen to eighteen years old. Seeking to stem the early outflow of workers, the HSPA required all employers to secure HSPA clearance before hiring a Puerto Rican laborer. In October 1901, the HSPA contacted its agents in Puerto Rico and suspended further recruitment, ostensibly because of “the exorbitant cost of the movement and the small success that was attending their efforts at recruiting.” There were 2,095 Puerto Ricans on Hawaii’s sugar plantations in 1920, and a total of 5,602 in the islands (Beechert 1985, 129–31; Camacho Souza 1984, 162, 169; Mintz 1955, 321).

Like Hawaii’s sugar planters, Arizona’s cotton growers saw Puerto Rico as a likely pool of cheap labor. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, Arizona moved from an economy of small farms that included cattle ranching and fruits and vegetables to a large-scale, absentee, industrial agriculture that involved mainly cotton. Those factories in the field recruited and employed thousands of Mexican workers, many of whom came from across the border under contracts. In the summer of 1920, some 4,000 Mexicans called for “a living wage and a full compliance with the contracts,” complaining of unpaid wages, excessive transportation charges, exorbitant prices in company stores, and poor housing and living conditions. Calling the demand a “strike,” the growers jailed and deported the leaders, and turned

to employing the region's Indians—Papagos, Pimas, Maricopas—using them and their reservations, like Mexicans and Mexico, as labor reserves from which to draw on and to which to return “excess” labor during the off-season (McWilliams 1941, 72–81).

In 1926, the Arizona Cotton Growers Association cited a “labor shortage” for arranging with the U.S. Interior Department a plan to import 1,500 Puerto Rican workers. “An expedition of families of workers is being organized for the state of Arizona,” the growers announced in Puerto Rico.

Spanish is spoken there; the Catholic religion is predominant; the climate is the same as Puerto Rico's and education is free and compulsory; the work will be permanent, general agriculture in character. . . . We have a workers compensation law. There will be adequate work for women. . . . The minimum [wage] will be \$2.00 daily. . . . A house will be given free of charge. Each employer will be responsible for providing medical assistance. (Maldonado-Denis 1972, 63)

The advertisement drew 6,000 applications from building mechanics, cigar makers, and coffee, sugar, and tobacco workers. When the 1,500 workers, selected from among the crush of applicants, arrived in Arizona, they discovered that recruiters had made exaggerated claims, and less than half remained in the fields. Others rebelled. The 25 September 1926 *Arizona Labor Journal* reported that ninety men, women, and children had camped in front of the offices of the Arizona Cotton Growers Association in Phoenix to protest wage and living conditions. Migrant worker Angel Hernandez Lopez wrote to his mother:

Here there aren't any such cotton companies like they told us there'd be in Puerto Rico before we left. We've been sold. When we arrived, there were more than a hundred cars waiting for us. To send us different places. Each American grabbed several families for his farm. Those of us who have come here will die of old age and won't see one another again. (65)

By the summer of 1927, nearly all of the Puerto Rican migrants had disappeared. "No one knows just where they went or what happened to them; but they were not returned to Puerto Rico," reported writer Carey McWilliams (1961, 80).

Like Puerto Rican "colonial migrants," Filipino workers were recruited to displace "intractable" Japanese laborers in Hawaii's sugar fields.¹⁰ As early as 1901, Hawaii's sugar planters sought permission to recruit workers from the Philippines from the War Department and Bureau of Insular Affairs in Washington, D.C., and in 1906, Albert F. Judd, sent by the HSPA, recruited fifteen Ilocano men after six months of effort in the Philippines. The next year, Judd succeeded in sending to Hawaii 150 Filipino migrants, but in November the HSPA called an end to the experiment because of Filipino opposition to migration and the small number of recruits (Dorita 1975, 3–4, 6–8). The Japanese strike of 1909, a strike that affected all of the major plantations on the island of Oahu, involved about 7,000 workers, lasted four months, and cost the planters an estimated \$2 million (Okihiro 1991, 45–57), prompted a renewed determination among the planters to secure their ideal worker, whom they described as "laborers, who are accustomed to subordination, to permanency of abode, and who have modest expectations in regard to a livelihood" (Beechert 1985, 183; Sharma 1984, 583).

The HSPA sought those workers in the Philippines, because unlike Chinese and Japanese who were subject to exclusion laws and restrictions, Filipinos were U.S. "nationals" who, like Puerto Ricans, had all the obligations of citizenship but few of the rights and they had been "seasoned" by colonization and cultural hegemony. As a July 1909 HSPA bulletin to its member plantations explained, Filipinos "are available and there are no legal obstacles in the way of bringing them here." The planters overcame opposition to recruitment among the Filipino elites with their economic and political clout in the Philippine assembly, despite the fact that in every session of the legislature from 1909, bills were introduced to restrict or prohibit labor recruiting (Beechert 1985, 183–86).¹¹ By June 1909, HSPA agents had recruited 230 Visayans and Tagalogs, and thereafter they sent on

average two shiploads of workers each month until January 1910, when the numbers increased dramatically to 889 in January alone and an average of three shiploads per month throughout 1910. Although mainly men, Filipino migrants included women and entire families, who were seen by the planters as “steadying” influences upon otherwise “deviant” bachelor communities (Dorita 1975, 16–19; Beechert 1985, 186).¹²

Prudencio A. Remegio, a member of the Philippine legislature, investigated the condition of Filipino workers on Hawaii’s sugar plantations in 1919. He found breach of contracts, poor housing conditions and medical care, and harassment and abuse of workers by plantation police. He also discovered unemployment among Filipinos who had been recruited to create labor pools that served to dampen wages and strikes. Upon his return to the Philippines, Remegio introduced legislation to halt “agrarian depopulation,” and the Philippine Bureau of Labor likened Hawaii to “a prison” for workers. The HSPA held little regard for those reformist stirrings, and its office in Manila predicted: “We still have some very powerful friends among those in authority here who can, I believe, be relied on in case of need.” Those “very powerful friends,” indeed, kept the Philippines open to HSPA and U.S. capital and labor recruiting (Beechert 1985, 189–91).

The presence and social position of Puerto Rican “citizens” and Filipino “nationals” in Hawaii were not, I believe, mere coincidences. They arise out of the logic of capitalism, the advancement of U.S. industrial capital, the republic’s originating and persistent Pacific destiny, and the colonialisms of Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Hawaii. But they also reveal expansionism’s reciprocal—raw materials, goods, and labor that flowed from the periphery to the core. Migrations moved on colonialisms’ currents. And the “colonial migrations” of Puerto Ricans and Filipinos were impelled by the U.S. racial and ethnic division of labor that thrived on a racial hierarchy that divided the working class, thereby connecting those migrations to the position of laborers within the U.S. social formation, many of whom had grown restive in their demands for dignity and a “living wage.” The fates of Arizona’s Mexican and Native

American workers were linked to those of Puerto Rican migrants, and the fates of Hawaii's Japanese, to those of Puerto Ricans and Filipinos.

What those connections suggest to me is the necessity for approaching our subject matters as "historical formations," which, like social formations, assuredly delineate discrete, limited units of study—times, places, social relations that offer parallels or are connected in significant ways—but also exceed the boundedness of linearity, chronology, and geography, of teleology, time, and space. Both Puerto Rican and Asian American studies have begun to extend their borders through reassessments of their fields, radiating from their locations as U.S. or diasporic or transnational studies (see, e.g., Falcon 1984; Maldonado-Denis 1972, 3–10, 302–24; Hune 1991). Although promising, those movements are insufficiently recuperative if they neglect to engage each other, along with their allied fields—African, American Indian, Chicano/Latino, women's, and gay/lesbian/bisexual studies.

In truth, the failures of this essay are the failures of the fields upon whose secondary sources I have depended. Women are marginal to this text, when we know colonialism's profound impact upon gender relations, and we know migrant labor's gendered (and raced and aged) nature(s) (see, e.g., Acosta-Belen 1986). Native Americans and Hawaiians appear precariously perched along the edges of this narrative, when we know their foundational and pervasive presence in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Southwest, and Hawaii; and African Americans and their diffident and resistant reactions to U.S. imperialism and the freedom struggles of Caribbean peoples and Filipinos are not found in this historical formation (see, e.g., Gatewood 1971). And the uninterrogated readings of "bachelor societies" as sites of "deviance" and "unnatural" desires and of Filipinos as a people with "harem habits" suggest a privileging of a dense sexism and heterosexism (if not homophobia).

Making those connections, including them within the historical formation, will merely mark a beginning. Historical formations must inevitably rub against the grain, transgressing imposed borders of disciplines, times, and spaces, and the

contrived binaries and insularities of race, gender, sexuality, and class. In truth, the inspiration for this volume—Herbert Aptheker’s life and work—exemplifies both the efficacy and necessity of such defiance of conventions. Resistance, Aptheker taught us, arose because of oppression, of hegemonic discourses and social relations, and was not merely a corrective but was a transformative, indeed revolutionary, act. I herewith attest to the power of Aptheker’s ideas and labors. And although reason suggests that there must be an end to comparisons and connections, as Terence Ranger once suggested to me, the historical formations of Asian American and ethnic studies shoulder an additional burden. I am convinced that we in Asian American and ethnic studies will never sweep the academy, much less get our own houses in order, if we (and the task remains ours) fail to demonstrate the centrality (and not the mere linkages) of our projects to U.S. and world history.

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NOTES

45. Likewise, Secretary of State William Henry Seward’s purchase of Alaska in 1867 was stimulated by his (and others’) desire to capture for the United States the markets of Asia and its cheap labor (LaFeber 1963, 24–32, 408–9).

46. See Miller 1982 for his thesis that U.S. imperialism in the Pacific was impelled by the lure of China.

47. Cf. May 1968 for a cautionary critique of LaFeber (and others) and Osborne 1981 for a close reading of the anti-imperialists.

48. Cf. May 1984, in which the motives of a Filipino soldier in the war might lead to a questioning of the “mass” nature of the anticolonial struggle.

49. See Santiago-Valles 1994 for Puerto Rican resistance efforts and their multiple representations following the U.S. occupation.

50. Estimates of Filipino losses vary widely, including figures as high as 200,000 and over 600,000 (Sharma 1984, 342–43). On the war, see Gates 1973, Roth 1981, and Miller 1982.

51. For a parallel development in the Philippines, see Kerkvliet 1992.

52. Cf. Carr 1984, 296–304, for a critique of “radicals” and the romanticized past. For capitalism’s impact upon Puerto Rican women, see Amott and Matthaei 1991, 262–67.

53. Cf. also Chenault 1938 and Handlin 1959, who postulate that Puerto Rico's "excess" population pushed migrants; and Mills, Senior, and Kohn Goldsen, who argue that "the economic pull of the city" was the crucial motivating factor for migration.

54. Cf. Lasker 1931 for a "push-pull" account of Filipino migration.

55. On Hawaiian investments in the Philippines, see Sharma 1984, 347–48; Beechert 1985, 185.

56. The ratio of men to women among Filipinos in Hawaii was 10:1 in 1910, and dropped to its lowest pre-World War II level of 3.5:1 in 1940 (Sharma 1984, 583).

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Through the Traveler's Eye: Anglo-Saxon Representation of Afro-Cuban Identity from 1850 to 1950

Barbara Bush

A considerable amount of research has been generated about Cuban slavery and Afro-Cuban culture, but relatively little exists on how Cuban identities were constructed by representatives of the imperial powers. Yet such constructions arguably justified the expanding U.S. and British involvement in Cuba in the period covered here. The involvement of the United States in Cuba is well documented, but my visit to Cuba in 1994 opened my mind to an aspect of Caribbean history that I had never considered before: the long and complex relationship between England and Cuba (particularly over slavery and the slave trade), an area that impinged directly on black and white Cuban identities. The very fact that such history is relatively unrecognized in Britain reflects ongoing problems of cultural perceptions and reference points. Cuba was never part of Britain's formal empire, and contemporary research tends to mirror former imperial links and is centered on the Anglophone world. Moreover, the English acquiesced or even colluded with the U.S. takeover of Cuba, from which point it appeared that Cuba was no longer of any importance to English interests. Developments in Cuba since 1989, however, have raised new issues about the way Cuba is represented in the rich "West," including England. Thus a critical analysis of the historical development of Cuba through the Anglo-Saxon eye is timely, considering especially, for instance, the increasing attractions of sex tourism that echo earlier negative constructions of Cuban identity.

What can travelogues written from a position of cultural and ethnic superiority tell us about Afro-Cuban identities? Literary deconstructions have emphasized that such writings reveal more about the writers than the subject of their accounts (Youngs 1994). This is certainly evident in the travelogues I refer to here. They confirm a confident sense of Anglo-Saxon identity shaped in reference to the negative traits of the colonial “other” and “white mythologies” inherent in the West’s writings on the “non-Western” world (Said 1993; Young 1990). Yet representations of blacks are often contradictory, diverse, and conflicting, and the internal “logic” of the writer so inconsistent, that it is possible to piece together “oppositional identities” to the dominant stereotypes, thus giving such texts historical value. As Mary Louise Pratt emphasizes, travel writing involving “colonial contact” is heterogeneous and cannot be circumscribed as a single genre (1994). Impressions of travelers to Cuba, influenced by gender and class backgrounds, offer valuable insight into the writer as well as the subject. The discourses embedded in these travelogues also mirror internal developments in Cuban society and changing relationships between Cuba and Western imperialism.

The accounts selected here range from English and U.S. critics of slavery to those who strongly endorsed the “Cuban way of slavery.” Accounts pre-1880 are preoccupied with “two Cubas,” black and white, whereas after 1890 travelogues address Cuban nationalism and United States–Cuban relations, depicting a “melting-pot Cuba” framed in an underlying discourse of racial degeneracy. While a conflict of interests between the United States and England is evident in writings before 1860, after that date there is closer identification on the “Negro problem,” and by the end of the century a common “Anglo-Saxon” front on Cuba is confirmed. Earlier commentators were “investigating” slave conditions or were “gentlemen tourists”; the later writers were more likely to be working journalists covering events in Cuba or writers of popular accounts designed for potential tourists.

The nature of the travelogue changed with the growth of tourism and a popular commercial market for travel information. By the 1930s travel writing had become a lucrative occupation.

Later accounts were often written with a specific purpose; Clark (1899) was essentially compiling an early "Rough Guide" for businesspeople, whereas Richard Harding Davis's book (1898) is clear propaganda for U.S. intervention. Wright (1910), a U.S. female journalist, is an advocate of "white" colonization through migration from Canada and the United States. Some works are a mixture of travelogue and histories of Cuba (Strode 1935, Robinson 1916). Later travelogues include another valuable source of white representations of colonized "others," the photograph. This arguably had a "panoptic power" to "construct and solidify" images of "degenerate" peoples reflecting the racial and cultural hierarchies established by the "advanced" West (McClintock 1995).

Common to all accounts is a complex dialogue around the meaning of *Afro-Cuba*. Although white Cubans were inferiorized, they remained part of modernity, capable of progress through liberal capitalism. In contrast, black Cubans represented a space outside Western modernity associated with barbarism and regression. They constituted a people without history or valid culture. In liberal humanitarian white discourse, Afro-Cubans could be redeemed through a "civilizing mission," but in the discourse of scientific racism Afro-Cuba was an irredeemable degenerate element threatening to "mongrelize" Cuba. This "touch of the tar brush" also became clearly linked in the Anglo-Saxon mind to pollution of the Cuban cities through poverty, degeneracy, disease, and vice (cf. Goldberg 1992, 185–222). Such views reflect the attitudes of the white Cuban bourgeoisie for whom "Africa" became "a kind of Babylon whose name evoked lust," which necessitated the obliteration of the once considerable knowledge of Africa shared by slaveowners and slaves alike (Walterio Carbonell, "Birth of a National Culture," cited in Sarduy and Stubbs 1993, 195–96).

To further the analysis it is thus important to define *Afro-Cuban identities* and *Afro-Cuban culture*. Here Afro-Cuban culture is defined as influenced by slavery and having a shared historical and cultural identification with Africa and other African Diaspora societies that can be channeled into resistance against racism and oppression. Afro-Cuban identities, however,

are by no means monolithic or static and have been shaped within a dynamic relationship with Hispanic culture. The term *Afro-Cuba* was first popularized by the ethnographer Fernando Ortiz in his book on Afro-Cuban religion published in 1902. Ortiz rejected the concept of acculturation that implied absorption into white culture through the “civilizing mission.” His “reciprocal transculturation” of the races revived a dynamic role for Afro-Cuban culture in interacting with Hispanic culture to produce a unique new Cuban culture (Ortiz, “For a Cuban Integration of Whites and Blacks,” in Sarduy and Stubbs 1993, 28). This prioritized the harmonizing of the races in building a nation, a “melting pot Cuba” represented by cultural syncretism, a positive concept that contrasted sharply with Anglo-American perceptions of Cuban racial degeneracy.

New debates between “integrationist” and “autochthonous” conceptions of Afro-Cuban culture emerged in the interwar years when Alejo Carpentier’s *Ecue-Yamba-O! An Afro-Cuban Story* (1933) articulated black nationalism rooted in a separate black culture. Carpentier’s *Negrismo* reflected a revived interest in African culture among young intellectuals. Blacks were now depicted as the essence of Cuban nationhood, representing cultural autonomy against a creeping U.S. imperialism (Sarduy and Stubbs 1993, 20). These contrasting conceptualizations of Afro-Cuba are reflected in the travelogues analyzed here, and, in recognition of the changing and fluid nature of Afro-Cuban identities in the period covered, I have linked the analysis to the major developments in Cuban politics and society that contextualized the travelers’ impressions—slavery, abolition and independence struggles, “independence,” and U.S. imperialism.

The period before 1870 was marked by England’s strong interest and involvement in “Afro-Cuba” over the eradication of the illegal slave trade but also by the image of Cuba as the richest colony in the world, the “Pearl of the Antilles” that attracted many foreign visitors to the *Ingenio*—the essence of Afro-Cuba. The abolition of the slave trade throughout the British Empire in 1838, industrialization, and naval supremacy confirmed England as the premier global power. Britain became the “champion of the oppressed,” the most advanced humanitarian nation whose

global role was to defend the rights of weaker races and lead the struggle for universal abolition of slavery. In 1817 and 1835 England signed treaties with Spain to police the illegal slave trade to Cuba and a Mixed Court of Justice was set up in Havana with permanent English representation to adjudicate over the emancipation of newly imported slaves.

In line with abolitionist visions for the freed slaves of the English Caribbean, the English wanted to steer Cuba from slave to free labor, a process that would involve the “civilizing” of African slaves. Ships suspected of carrying slaves were intercepted by the British navy, and the Spanish were exhorted to ensure that the emancipated slaves acquired “good treatment . . . Christian religion [and] advancement in morality and civilisation.”¹ English visitors and residents regularly visited (or tried to visit, as there was considerable resentment to this interference) the “barracoons” in Havana to check on the condition of newly imported slaves (Gurney 1841 in Perez 1992, 106).² Ships from the United States were heavily involved in the illegal trade to Cuba, and thus, before 1860, England and the United States had clearly divergent interests. In the United States, J. S. Thrasher attacked England’s “misguided philanthropy” and advocated U.S. annexation of Cuba to protect it from the threatened “horrors” of a “free black peasantry” advocated by English “social investigators” like Richard Madden, who were critical of conditions on Cuban slave plantations (Thrasher in Humboldt 1856, 93; Madden 1849, 158).

However, the apparent failure of utopian abolitionist visions of an industrious, “civilized” black peasantry in the English Caribbean led to a greater harmonizing of English and U.S. sympathies with Cuban slaveowners. With the abolition of the British West Indian sugar monopoly, cheaper Cuban sugar could be imported, undercutting that produced by “free labor” (Sewell 1862, 54–55). Business prevailed over morality and this was reflected in the important debates on the “sugar question” in the British Parliament. The material prosperity of Cuba, now the richest sugar colony, was contrasted with the economic decline of Jamaica, precipitated by the “degeneracy,” “laziness,” “animal enjoyment” and “heathenism” of blacks (1852 Report of the

Central Board of Health of Jamaica, cited by Thrasher in Humboldt 1856, 56).

The English novelist Anthony Trollope, who toured the West Indies in the 1850s, found Cuban sugar estates were on a “much larger scale, in much better order” and benefited from greater capital input than Jamaican estates. With the end of the sugar monopoly, he argued, Jamaica had become so “backward” and poor that the British wished it would “disappear” and Trollope suggests that it should be sold to the United States or Spain as “an appendage of Cuba” (Trollope 1860, 102). Here we have evidence of a developing U.S.-British “Anglo-Saxonism.” Trollope admired the United States and believed that it should “fulfil its destiny in the West” while Britain continued to do so “in the East” (85, 145). This imperialist carving up of the world was justified by a strong sense of Anglo-Saxon superiority: “The World is wide enough for us and our offspring and we may be content that we have nearly all of it between us” (389). He thus endorsed U.S. desires to annex Cuba as it would be “infinitely for [Britain’s] benefit” (143).

White Cuba was increasingly seen in both England and the United States as an important buffer against the black tide of barbarism generated by the “unsuccessful social experiments” in Haiti, Jamaica, and other islands. The 1867 Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica confirmed the growing tide of opinion in England that the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies had been premature. If slavery was necessary to prevent blacks from lapsing into the “state of barbarism [represented by] . . . the dark practices of fetish worship and heathenism,” then it should be reconsidered as a civilizing influence (Marquis of Lorne 1867, 37). There was thus a growing English-U.S. consensus on the “mildness” of Cuban slavery underpinned by lax laws on emancipation and “race mixing” and the comfortable position of the “pampered, petted, well-fed, idle slaves” of the “Dons” of Havana (Sala 1872, cited in Perez 1992, 25). Trollope commented on the “sleek . . . fat and large” Negroes on Cuban plantations that he visited. He likened them to “well-preserved brewers’ horses,” found “no signs of coercion,” and concluded that planters treated their slaves with skill and “prudence”

(134–36). U.S. critics like William Sewell who were in favor of “free labor” and saw Cuban slavery as “brutal” were now in the minority (Sewell 1862, 44).

By the late 1850s there thus had been a sharp “sea change” in English attitudes on both race and imperialism, and the “philanthropists” were increasingly marginalized. Cuba was becoming attractive to foreign capital. Trollope noted that Cuban slaveowners were not “as a rule” very rich and “were but go-betweens” who secured the profits of slavery for the merchants—generally “Americans, Englishmen, Germans [and] Spaniards from the American republics” (Trollope 1860, 136). The “Pearl of the Antilles” became a popular destination for wealthy English and U.S. travelers and a visit to a modern, profitable sugar plantation *de rigeur*. One traveler declared, “A visit to a sugar plantation is one of the best parts of coming to Cuba, and no Northern visitor should come here without seeing one” (William Drysdale 1885 in Perez 1992, 90). The *Ingenio* became the essence of Afro-Cuba and travelogues point to an Afro-Cuban identity similar to that which emerges in white narratives of other Caribbean slave societies (Bush 1990).

Conflicting identities of slaves were constructed, but all were framed in the racist or Eurocentric discourses of the nineteenth century. They were also predominantly masculine constructions, although female slaves shared the harsh tasks and conditions experienced by their male counterparts by the midnineteenth century (Casteneda 1995). Cuban slaves were of “a light and cheerful, grinning race,” slaves by nature who benefited from the “benign” Spanish laws on manumission, and the large free colored population (Marquis of Lorne 1867, 79; Gallenga 1873 in Perez 1992, 128). But slaves were also depicted as a dark threat. Expressing such white fears of the barbaric “outcasts of civilization,” the American Julia Louisa M. Woodruff wrote in 1871, while staying on a plantation:

The negroes are said to be, in gross, course [sic] and brutal . . . if it were not for those . . . locks, pistols and other safeguards, I can well understand that my first night in Santa Sofia might have been memorable for worse horrors

than the lurid phantasmagoria of my dreams. (Jay 1879, 221–22, 227)

The image of the rebellious black was enhanced by the existence of runaways “beyond the pale” in the mountainous palenques who were “armed with spears” and put up a “formidable” resistance to those who tried to track them down (Granville Taylor 1851 in Perez 1992, 114). Thus the subtext of these accounts reveals the link between the persistence of African cultural forms and black resistance. African-born slaves were identified by their tribe of origin and tattoos and reported as speaking in barbarous tongues and singing “clamorous and tuneless” chants; creole slaves were regarded as “more intelligent,” having mixed with civilization (Dana Jr. 1859; Ballou 1854 in Perez 1992, 62, 119).

With the increase in indentured labor coming into Cuba, Afro-Cuban identities were increasingly defined in contrast with the “Chinese coolie labor.” While black slaves were portrayed as childlike and dependent or barbaric and rebellious, the Chinese were “sly and cruel,” showing a strong hatred and resentment toward their “owners.” These strongly asserted identities were contrasted with the more ambivalent African identities (Jay 1871, 21–22; Marquis of Lorne 1867, 163). The introduction of the Chinese thus renewed concern over the “abject conditions” of both Cuban slaves and Chinese “coolies” despite the increasingly strident racist discourse reflected in travelers’ accounts. It also revived Britain’s role as “champion of the oppressed,” this time aligned with a humanitarian United States that had just liberated its own slaves (see, e.g., U.K. House of Commons 1875; Helly 1993). Despite this assertion of humanitarian concerns, however, these were now firmly secondary to Britain’s expanding commercial interests in Cuba. Cuba was still supplying one-fifth of the world market in sugar despite civil war, and there were lucrative markets for British textiles, beer, and technological expertise. United States interests in Cuba were also rapidly expanding (Clark 1910, 369–70, 450).

But the image of Afro-Cuba as firmly linked to the *Ingenio* began to shift dramatically with the intensification of Cuban

nationalism and as concern over black labor conditions faded. The Ten Years War, 1869–1879, was represented in travelogues as an era of both white and black rebellion, complicated by the disintegration of slavery. Fears were expressed that the immediate emancipation of slaves, advocated by the nationalist leaders, would “bring the whole black race back to the instincts of native African savagery” (Gallenga 1873 in Perez 1992, 85). The specter was raised once again of the “black republic” epitomized in the “niggerdom” of Haiti, and foreign travelers increasingly distinguished between “black” Oriente, the center of rebellion, and Hispanic Havana.

With the emergence of nationalism, Cuba was initially redefined in travelers’ accounts as a “white settler” society desiring greater autonomy from its colonial metropole. This was associated with a fusing of Anglo-American identification on Cuban issues (Sala 1872 in Perez 1992, 71). Afro-Cuba was increasingly erased from this developing vision of Cuban culture except as a faceless army of “determined and efficient combatants” behind the nationalist insurrection. The “evils of insurrection” were thus intensified by the fact that nationalist leaders relied on such “Negro sympathies” (Gallenga 1873 in Perez 1992, 85). The submerging of Afro-Cuban identities into the nationalist struggle was also facilitated by the discourse of Cuban nationalism that stressed black and white unity in shaping a new national consciousness. This was reiterated in the Second War of Independence, 1895–1898, in José Martí’s definition of Cuban culture as “more than white, more than black, Cuban.” Such conceptualizations of Cuban identity blurred racial borders and challenged Anglo-Saxon racist hierarchies. But the Anglo-Saxon eye viewed this progressive concept of racial integration through a warped racist lens, transforming it into racial degeneracy. As the black and white certainties of slavery were undermined, visitors’ Cuban narratives reflect an obsession with defining “whiteness,” and a new trope of the racially dubious “native Cuban” emerges.

Travelers’ accounts erase “Afro-Cuba,” either by focusing on white settler/Spanish metropole conflicts (Clark 1899; Harding Davis 1898) or alleging that Cuba was a racial “melting pot” (Wright 1910). These conflicting representations focalize

problems of defining “whiteness.” This was complicated by the progressive “whitening” of Cuba in official statistics, from two-thirds black before 1850 to one-third black at the end of the century, a factor noted in several contemporary accounts (Wright 1910; Clark 1899). The “melting-pot” view of Cuba was, however, reinforced by the increase in tourism in Cuba. As early as 1887, the English writer Anthony James Froude alluded to the “seduction of Cuban life” (cited in Strode 1935, 117) and by 1910 Havana was increasingly besieged by “aliens,” “Ducks of Florida” with their cry of “Do you speak English?” (Wright 1910, 23–24).

What emerges strongly in travelogues after 1890, then, is a confident assertion of Anglo-Saxon identity shaped in relation to shifting and conflicting Cuban identities. The bombastic and expansive imperialism of the late nineteenth century was premised on social Darwinism, eugenics, and the “civilizing mission” of the white race. As early as 1860, Trollope had decreed that Spain would “go to the wall” as she was no longer a “first-class power” and “like the other weak ones of the earth” must either “perish” or live under the protection of a stronger state. However, she was too “ignoble and proud” to obey “those who will protect her” and Trollope’s “best wish” for Cuba was that it would be “speedily reckoned among the annexations of the United States” (Trollope 1860, 137–38, 155).

Within these strident discourses, English and emergent U.S. imperialism converged. As Cuba plummeted into political and economic chaos in the 1890s, there were increasing calls for U.S. “humanitarian intervention” in Cuba, and England, although a neutral power in the Spanish-American War, tacitly supported the United States to protect and extend her not inconsiderable commercial interests in Cuba. Such “English unselfishness” was, in the German view, a “ruse” to trick the naive Americans and get a “share in the spoils” (*Cologne Gazette*, cited in the *Times*, London, 4 July 1898). This is supported by the declaration in the *Times*, 4 July 1898, that U.S. and English interests were “identical” and bound by “race, commercial and dynastic interests.”

Anglo-Saxon racist discourse was directed toward the mass of “colored” Cubans and “inferior” Hispanics alike. Cuban culture was declared “degenerate,” and the fetish of cleanliness depicting civilization (McClintock 1995, chap. 5) was used to evoke this. Anglo-Saxon cleanliness was compared to the Spanish lack of it, with the bathtub representing the “dividing line between savages and civilized beings” (Davis 1898, 98–99). The expanded expatriate community now had a common identification as “white men” and the Anglo-American club in Santiago was described as the “most clean, comfortable and hospitable place . . . for one of Anglo-Saxon blood” (Clark 1899, 426). Expatriate ghettos like the Havana suburb of Vedado and the Isle of Pines were likewise represented as havens of civilization. These superior visions of Western civilization were reinforced by changed perceptions of the Cuban economy: the “Pearl of the Antilles” was now a basket case racked by backwardness and indebtedness and strangled by the strictures of Spanish protectionism, although the Spanish were still ranked higher in business acumen than the Cubans (Wright 1910, 35). Racial degeneracy was equated with the economic decline, political corruption, and backwardness of Cuba; it was also seen as the source of the inner decay of the Spanish empire and its failure to compete with the more “racially pure” British and U.S. empires. Such developments justified the further penetration of U.S., British, German, and French capital.

Spanish tactics against the insurgents in the second war of independence also reinforced images of Spanish barbarity. U.S. sympathies for the innocent civilian “*reconcentrados*” led U.S. travelers to depict the “Catholic” Spaniards as “savage, brutal and uncivilized,” providing valuable propaganda in favor of U.S. intervention (Davis 1898, 112). This echoed a long-held view, linked to the predatory aims of British imperialism, that the Spanish were “orientalized” through a “Moorish taint” (Thrasher in Humboldt 1856, 36) and “alien in blood and creed” (Froude 1886 cited in Strode 1935, 118). Spain, as the colonizing power, had also contributed to the racial degeneracy of Cuba by failing to police the racial borders that upheld the imperial order in the

British Empire. In consequence too many Cubans had a “touch of the tar brush” described by Froude as a “dusky flood which runs too full among them” (Froude 1886 cited in Strode 1935, 118). Irene Wright, who openly admits that she brought to Cuba U.S. color prejudices, saw all Cubans as “mixed breeds,” “mongrel” descendants of Spanish workers and slaves (Wright 1910, 89).

Although subsumed into this racial melange, Afro-Cuba remained a reference point for defining white identities, Cuban or expatriate. According to Wright, “passing for white” was common, but give-away signs of “black blood” included a “certain voluptuousness of build” and “a cheerful disposition.” She is preoccupied by the confusion over race identities: “Here black is not necessarily black, but may carry a legal document to prove its colour white: white is not surely white, but may only pass for such” (Wright 1910, 33, 38).

Is the premium on “whiteness” the reason “rice powder” or Cascarilla, a cosmetic powder prepared from eggshells was “a favourite with Cuban ladies”? As a cosmetic it was “abundantly and generously applied” the darker the complexion; since “color” was not desirable, it provided “an additional whiteness” (Wallace 1899 in Perez 1992, 244). More than 100,000 pounds was consumed annually (Wright 1910, 16; Hazard 1871 in Perez 1992, 210).

In their preoccupation with defining whiteness and reworking Cuban identities, self-assured white narratives also reveal deep contradictions. In one breath Wright declares that all Cubans are “negroid”; in another she discusses the color bar, citing specific examples of discrimination against black Cubans (Wright 1910, 91, 31). In contrast, Clark, an advocate for the growth of U.S. business in Cuba, was keen to emphasize the importance of a “white majority” in Cuba that ensured that there was no danger from the “bugaboo” of a Black Republic (Clark 1899, 23). Writing from a more liberal viewpoint, Robinson defines the “real Cuban” as rural, the “Pueblo Cubana” as a “man of the fields,” reviving a sense of Hispanic identity (Robinson 1916, 23).

What then can these conflicting outsider accounts tell us about Afro-Cuba? With the Cuban independence movement and

the associated shifting Cuban identities, Afro-Cuba, strongly identified during slavery, became subsumed into these different visions of the Cuban people, and the contribution of African labor to the profitable slave era was increasingly ignored. Irene Wright reduces Afro-Cuba to a rump of “pure Africans,” mostly surviving slaves, estimated at 7,948 in 1910, as compared with 6,713 U.S. residents (Wright 1910, 150). For her, this “Afro-Cuba” is associated primarily with an “astounding confusion of heathenish and Catholic worship” involving dances that “must have originated about the African camp fires.” Visiting an African *cabildo* in the Havana suburb of Cerro she recalls:

Before we reached the house we heard the nervous beat of the drum which takes the place of the tomtom, forbidden by law, and the accompanying rattle of gourds shaken up and down inside a beaded net. Three young negroes standing on a bench manipulated the gourd; another seated below them pounded the drum in maddening rhythm. The music was unquestionably African. . . . members . . . danced . . . singly, jerking and gesticulating in a circle, round and round. They sang in an African dialect. (Wright 1910, 146–47)

She was “informed” that the *cabildo* “was all the law allowed . . . of the old nanigo clans” as the threshold beyond which lay “their nefarious mysteries and the trickeries of witchcraft” (Wright 1910, 148). For Wright the performance was a “demonstration of fanaticism and ignorance it would be hard to equal anywhere” and the fact that they “sang in a barbarous tongue” to Christian saints and sacrificed “a white cock” appeared sacrilegious. But the wider social context of these activities is also hinted at. The *cabildo* was a “social religious organisation” licensed by the municipality under a name in which figured that of a Catholic saint, and Wright was introduced to the sect by one of its members, a mulatto orchestra leader “well known in Havana.” This indicates a wider appeal for syncretic Afro-Cuban religion as well as the persistence of strong Afro-Cuban identities through *cabildos* (recorded in Cuba as far back as 1568), mutual-aid societies, “schools” of language

and tradition, and centers of African religious practices only legalized in 1870 (Natalia Bolivar "The Orishas in Cuba" in Sarduy and Stubbs 1992, 138).

Wright's visit is also interesting as it exemplifies an important facet of Western tourism, "ethnological voyeurism," an obsession with observing the "exotic" purportedly as an object of intellectual interest. This development tallied with the increasing interest among Cuban intellectuals in Afro-Cuba. Ortiz confesses that he was criticized for being "a tourist from home, a friend amused by things exotic, something of the same kind as those fair Northerners passing through Cuba who paid for the rumba to be danced to their obscene taste" (Ortiz ca. 1940s in Sarduy and Stubbs 1993, 29).

Even today one of the most researched areas of Cuban culture and key attractions for the "cultured" Western tourist is Afro-Cuban religion. But Ortiz also hints at a more sinister form of Western exoticism that perpetuates damaging adverse myths and stereotypes about black culture. With the advent of popular tourism in the twentieth century, blacks became prominent in "folklore for the tourists" and with the problems faced in Cuba since 1989, they are once again associated with "tourist hustling" (Sarduy and Stubbs 1992, 11). Afro-Cuba thus regained identity, but at what cost?

Despite this lure of the exotic, however, Anglo-Saxon travelers continued to associate the black in Cuban society with an atavistic, barbaric underculture. This evoked images of "racial pollution" at the root of the "vice, poverty, disease . . . vagrancy and begging" that marred Cuba's potential to develop as a "white" nation. Such "pollution" was particularly marked in Havana, where lanes were thronged with "sallow Spanish creoles" in white linen and panamas, and "negroes and negresses, gaudy, gaping and grinning" (Sala 1872 in Perez 1992, 20). The "smell of Havana" was a combination in descending importance of "Smoke of tobacco . . . steam of garlic . . . aroma of negro [and] miscellaneous garbage" (Jay 1871, 74). The strong smell of garlic "constantly met among the working classes" was seen as particularly "offensive" to the Anglo-Saxon (e.g., Mark 1885 in Perez 1992, 71) and provided another strong

measure by which to define superior identities. Summarizing these views, Irene Wright wrote of what was increasingly becoming the tourists' Havana:

The city is not really wicked . . . Its population is diseased, physically and morally, and also mentally. Havana is rotten and rotting, and those who note intelligently even the surface signs of existing conditions here, see all her undeniable beauties through a thick miasma. (Wright 1910, 97)

The depravity associated with "too free commingling of black blood with white" (Wright 1910, 95) persisted up to the revolution that marked Cuba with a new "political depravity" in Western eyes. As tourism expanded, Cuba became a "fleshpot" of pleasure, and this "exotic" Cuba was firmly linked to the decadence deriving from racial degeneracy. Cuban degeneracy could be pointedly contrasted with Anglo-Saxon, Protestant morality. In the 1930s, Hudson Strode, an anti-Communist, pro-Batista journalist, depicted Cubans as "romantic, oversexed, dance loving . . . untrustworthy . . . with a touch of the tar brush." For him, Cuba was for "those who yearn for the stimulation of the different [and] distinctly foreign" (Strode 1935, 14, 15). Arguably, by the 1930s the "Spain" in Cuba had been "Africanized" through "Afro-Catholicism" and the adoption of black music by the bourgeoisie (Sarduy and Stubbs 1992, 199).

It was this "Africanized" Cuba that was the main attraction for Northern tourists who now enthusiastically embraced black music, hence the popularity of a bowdlerized form of the "Conga" in England even today. An English traveler, Helen Cameron Gordon, author of many popular travelogues, even described Cuba as a "Black Republic" like Haiti (Gordon 1942, 84) reiterating the association of blackness with tropical chaos, poverty and backwardness and underscoring the status of Haiti and Cuba as the two "pariahs" of the Caribbean. On the eve of the revolution, decadent Cuba was still there in the novelist Graham Greene's predatory Latin males and cruel torturers, in his descriptions of clubs like the Mamba and the Tropicana, and in the "surfeit of beautiful women" all "brown eyes, dark hair,

Spanish and high yellow in bright bars of Havana” (Greene 1958, 108), all of which enhanced the sense of alienation of Greene’s expatriates and a yearning for England.

The one aspect of Afro-Cuba that is barely touched on in any of the travelers’ accounts from the postslavery era is the economic position of black Cubans. As Sarduy and Stubbs point out, the black in Cuba continued to be “sedimented at the bottom of the melting pot” (1992, 14). The “melting pot” also assumed “assimilation to white” and hence more invisibility. Fleeting glimpses of the oppressed condition of black Cubans emerge, however. Afro-Cubans were the “negro scavengers” who swept the streets of Havana at night and the “negro vagrants” who fought with “wild dogs” over garbage (Mark 1884 in Perez 1992, 37; Wright 1910, 6). They are also evident in photographic representations as plantation laborers, male and female. Clark, pushing business prospects in Cuba, states that black labor in the West was “good and industrious” and the women furnished “excellent domestic service” (Clark 1899, 337–38). The blacks in Oriente were “not so good” and the migrants “worthless,” perhaps an allusion to the rebellious reputation of “black” Oriente.

Black resistance, as would be expected, is almost never dealt with positively. The travelogues contain very little about the contribution black Cuba made to the ending of slavery, the nationalist struggle, and the deep vein of resistance to oppression. The “race war” of 1912, in which three thousand blacks were brutally massacred by the Republican army, is linked by Strode to “black discontent” but is assessed as “unnecessary bitterness.” Blacks were carried “beyond themselves by the savage excitement of burning and yelling.” He blamed the chaotic and corrupt nature of postindependent politics on “illiterate blacks having the vote” and warned against the “threat” of blacks being “seduced” by Communists who wanted to revive the “race war” (Strode 1935, 78). Strode was articulating a reworked “black threat” of the nineteenth century. This time it was manifest in the labor disturbances of the 1930s, particularly Caribbean migrant labor mobilization. Afro-Cubans were once more central to the “decadence of Cuba,” but this time in a new and dangerous form

as dupes of Communism. Yet again, the travelogues reflect events in Cuba through a distorted prism.

In the main, however, English Caribbean travelogues from the 1920s onwards are much less focused on Cuba, arguably a result of its economic decline and acceptance of U.S. "ownership" of the island. Africa had become a more popular destination for travelers in search of the "exotic" as it became more central to British imperial interests. In contrast, the British Caribbean had become an insignificant and neglected "outpost" of empire, increasingly abandoned to what many English saw as a benevolent U.S. "civilizing" influence (Waugh 1958, 126). For those who did travel outside the British islands, Haiti now epitomized the exotic lure of the African Caribbean (Gordon 1942; Waugh 1958). The strong interest in Cuban society, black and white, manifest in the nineteenth century thus dwindled, only to be resuscitated by Cold War ideology as Cuba moved toward its revolution.

During the 1940s and 1950s the Communist Party stepped up its struggle for black peoples' rights as part of the class struggle; as a result communist prestige grew among blacks (Pedro Serviat, "Solutions to the Black Problem" in Sarduy and Stubbs 1992, 77). These were important developments in the black struggle for greater equality. But in the Western eye, the enduring stereotypes of black Cubans, from slavery to revolution, were the dangerous rebels associated with tropical chaos and, later, communism or the passive underworkers, from slaves to the waiters of Graham Greene's 1950s Havana.

Framed by the rich backdrop of Cuban history, travelers' accounts over the period surveyed here reveal insight into Anglo-Saxon perceptions of Cuban society that are mirrored in other contemporary sources. But they also suggest confusion over Cuban identities and problems of defining whiteness and blackness. After the end of slavery, Cuba is on the one hand "whitened" (as reflected in official statistics and twentieth century European migration into Cuba), yet simultaneously mongrelized to explain its underdevelopment and justify continued U.S. penetration. But this whitening or "assimilation,"

depending on different interpretations, also erased the African slave experience and black Cubans' diasporic history and culture from the new Cuban national identity.

With the revolution, however, the "two Cubas" resurfaced when eighty-four percent of émigrés to the United States claimed to be of the white race. After this exodus the black population increased to an estimated fifty percent in contrast to the 1943 census that recorded the highest percentage of whites (de la Fuente 1995, 131, 144). The revolution created new definitions of Cuban identity that reiterated Martí's "not black not white but Cuban," but tensions between "Afro-Cuba" and national culture persist. There is arguably greater race equality in Cuba than anywhere else in the world, but the stigma associated with African origins—"mulatez" or "brown-ness" that became a defining characteristic in racist Anglo-Saxon eyes—has persisted, according to some analysts (Reynaldo Gonzales, "A White Problem," in Sarduy and Stubbs 1992, 206). Young blacks allegedly describe themselves as "negroes in their own country" (de la Fuente 1995, 162). They increasingly identify with African Diaspora music, culture, and resistance movements like Rastafarianism and clearly differentiate themselves from young Hispanic Cubans who "prefer rock music" and have "long hair" to wave about (Vincente 1993).

What, then, can an analysis of Anglo-Saxon perceptions of Cuba in the historical context offer in interpreting these contemporary developments? Representations of Cuba framed in the confident imperialist and racial ideologies of the nineteenth and early twentieth century can provide insight into power relations among Cuba, Britain, and the United States, as well as the complex development of Cuban society and identity. The confusion and contradictions in definitions of black and white raise issues that are still of relevance to contemporary Cuba. Cuba's history has been intertwined with major global developments through slavery and abolition, Latin American independence movements, Western imperialism, and the ideological war between Communism and liberal democracy, but this complex history has also been linked to racism and resistance struggles within the African Diaspora.

Cuba contributed to the reassertion of the new “scientific” racism over the liberal humanitarianism of abolitionism. The prosperity of Cuba through slave labor under firm white rule could be contrasted with the “failure” of free labor in the British Caribbean and the dreadful example of “niggerdom” Haiti. Later, when Britain and the United States had expanding business interests in Cuba, U.S. intervention could be justified on the basis of “racial degeneracy” and Cuba used as an example of the consequences of too free race-mixing. After the revolution a new demonization of Cuba emerged as a Communist state that represented a threat as a model to other third world countries. The extreme example of this in Western eyes was Cuban “imperialism” in Angola, when western analysts failed to recognize the historic and cultural links between the two socialist states through “Afro-Cuba.”

Today Western representations may have turned full circle as the vicious U.S. blockade has led to deteriorating conditions and increasing dependence on tourism. Cuban identities have once more begun to shift, as have Western representations. Once more “exotic” Cuba is opening up and replacing images of the “pariah” Communist Cuba in the Western traveler’s eye. Will it be the “black” in Cuban society that again evokes images of vice, crime, poverty, and disease associated with other exotic holiday locations like Jamaica and the Dominican Republic? Western racism remains a major global force (cf. Goldberg 1993) and the contemporary “traveler’s eye” is increasingly disposed to see Cuba through a lens that filters out the laudable collective efforts of the Cuban people to survive the U.S. government’s “politics of vindictiveness.”

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NOTES

1. See U.K. Parliament 1844a; 1844b. Interception of slave ships was not very successful, as contemporary accounts stress. See Tudor 1834 (in Perez 1992). William Henry Hurlbert in 1854 comments on the large numbers of

African “muzzled ones” entitled to be free under English law (Perez 1992, 111).

2. I am indebted to Louis Perez’s edited collection, *Slaves, Sugar and Colonial Society: Travel Accounts of Cuba, 1801–1899*, for providing the original idea for this article (Perez 1992). Bibliographic details in the Reference List for travel accounts in my text that were cited by him are taken from his edited versions.

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Truman's Cold War: From FDR to Hiroshima

Otto H. Olsen and Ephraim Schulman

The use of the atomic bomb twice against the Japanese carried with it no chance of retaliation, was aimed "only" at colored peoples, and had in it the aspect of an anti-Soviet demonstration.

—Aptheker, *The World of C. Wright Mills*

Favorable assessments of President Harry S. Truman's foreign policy largely represent, as did Truman himself, the anti-Communist sentiments that have dominated U.S. thought and foreign policy since Roosevelt's death. Correspondingly, the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union is easily offered as a final vindication of policies initiated by Truman. Few would claim, however, that fifty years of Cold War have been a blessing, and a substantial amount of recent scholarship invites a reconsideration of Truman's wisdom and role in abandoning a different path sought by Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The context of relationships between the Soviet Union and the West was long-standing hostility. Since its founding in 1917, the Soviet Union had been invaded, stripped of territory, ostracized, excluded from the family of nations, and generally denounced by the developed nations of the West. During the 1930s, the West repulsed Soviet offers of cooperation against fascism and appeared at Munich to be directing Hitler's aggression against the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union responded with the Nazi-Soviet pact and a defensive war against Finland that

further infuriated the West. Only Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union initiated a crucial challenge to this pattern.

During World War II, Roosevelt's policies revealed a desire to treat the Soviet Union fairly in pursuit of both an effective military alliance and cooperation in the postwar world. Even before the war, FDR broke tradition by extending recognition to the Soviet Union and envisaging the gradual liberalization of the regime. Favorably impressed by the Soviet Union's decisive contributions to the war against Hitler and by his own personal relationship with Stalin, Roosevelt increasingly opposed past policies of condemnation and isolation and "regarded the Soviet Union as a power to be dealt with in a traditional way rather than as an evil, ideologically driven empire bent on world domination with which negotiations were futile and perhaps dangerous" (Pemberton 1989, 44). Soviet leaders, he concluded, unlike the Nazis, "haven't got any crazy ideas of conquest" and "aren't trying to gobble up all the rest of Europe or the world" by military conquest. They had more than enough "to keep them busy for a great many years to come without taking on any more headaches." Their only external weapon was "Communist propaganda," and although Roosevelt rejected Communist ideology, he did not fear to face that ideological challenge (Greer 1958, 193, 203–4). In his mind ideologies were abstracts while the historical reality was that the United States and the Soviet Union would move toward a middle ground. Stalin expressed a similar view (Roosevelt and Brough 1975, 394–95). The Depression and New Deal experience so impressed Roosevelt with the faults of his own society and the related concerns of Soviet society that he could envisage each learning from the other as they moved together toward more common practices and beliefs in a cooperative postwar world. Eleanor Roosevelt, the two sons Elliot and James, and a number of the president's advisers testified to the strength of these beliefs.

Roosevelt's plans for the postwar world included expanding the Big Three (Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union) to a Big Four by the addition of China, a hope that was undermined by the divided and underdeveloped condition of China. Roosevelt was also anxious to bring an end to white colonialism.

“When we’ve won the war,” he said to his son Elliot, “I will work with all my might and main to see to it that the United States is not wheedled into the position of accepting any plan that will further France’s imperialistic ambitions, or that will aid or abet the British Empire in *its* imperial ambitions” (Roosevelt 1946, 115–16). He was particularly determined that Indochina not be returned to French rule. Such hopes were challenged at Yalta by the furious opposition of Churchill to any interference with colonial privileges, and, for the sake of Big Three unity, Roosevelt agreed at Yalta to a postwar system of voluntary trusteeships. He still hoped, however, that a satisfactory definition of such trusteeships could be established at the founding convention of the United Nations. An adviser reported the following conversation with Roosevelt a month before his death:

He said . . . that French Indo-China and New Caledonia should be taken from France and put under a trusteeship. The President hesitated a moment and then said—well if we can get the proper pledge from France to assume for herself the obligations of a trustee, then I would agree to France retaining these colonies with the proviso that independence was the ultimate goal.” (U.S. 1967–1968, 1:124)

Asked if he would settle for self-government or dominion status, Roosevelt “said no—it must be independence. He said that is to be the policy and you can quote me in the State Department.” So impressed by the strength of national movements for independence as to feel he eventually could persuade Churchill to accept that reality, Roosevelt already had won related concessions from Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands (Roosevelt 1946, 224).

In the context of imperialism, rather than viewing the Soviet Union as a threat, Roosevelt saw it as an ally working through the UN to bring an end to the domination of “1,100,000,000 brown people . . . by a handful of whites” (U.S. 1967–1968, 1:124). Such an effort, with the support of China, would in turn encourage the kind of cooperation between the United States and the Soviet Union that was essential to the real success of the UN. Obviously such a program challenged the persisting colonial ambitions of other allies, particularly Britain and France, as well

as the still pervasive power of anti-Communism, both at home and abroad, and Roosevelt recognized the difficulties he faced. Distrust and hatred of the Soviet experiment had remained strong in Congress, the State Department, and the nation, and “as the day of victory approached, it became the predominant theme in Washington” (McCullough 1992, 371). It would not be easy to maintain the friendly attitude toward the Soviet Union that had grown during the war, Roosevelt counseled his son Elliot. “The unity we have made for war is nothing to the unity we will have to build for peace. After the war—that’s when the cry will come that our unity is no longer necessary. *That’s* when the job will begin in earnest” (Roosevelt 1946, 109).

Roosevelt’s most apparent concern respecting the long-maligned Soviet Union was gaining their trust. Mutual enmity had intensified just prior to Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union, and distrust persisted and was encouraged by a variety of war-time disputes, including the West’s twice renegeing on a promised second front, leaving the Soviet Union to bear the brunt of the war until victory was essentially assured. Roosevelt encouraged Stalin’s trust by championing an early second front, facilitating military support and \$11 billion in lend-lease aid, avoiding signs of any cabal with Churchill, and extending a variety of practical cooperative gestures, including “a recognition of the legitimacy of a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, in return for Soviet recognition of United States interests elsewhere” (Pemberton 1989, 44). The Yalta or Crimea agreements of the Big Three in February 1945 included a variety of specifics, but their gist was a general recognition of the realities that the war had created, including the presence and predominant interests of the Soviet Union in the areas it occupied at the end of the war. Roosevelt accepted that reality and expected that existing differences would be overcome through patience and time. The ultimate outcome, he then reported to Congress, “lies to a great extent in your hands, for unless you here in the halls of the American Congress—with the support of the American people—concur in the general decisions reached at Yalta, and give them your active support, the meeting will not have produced lasting results” (Sherwood 1950, 875).

Also central to Roosevelt's cooperative approach to the Soviet Union was his policy of unconditional lend-lease aid during the war and cultivation of mutually beneficial postwar trade relationships. While wartime lend-lease involved vast federal expenditures that troubled conservatives, the proposed postwar program was based firmly upon mutual economic interests as well as a desire to help the Soviet Union recover from the impact of 20 million dead, 1700 towns and 70,000 villages destroyed, and 25 million homeless. The Soviet Union would obtain credit to purchase desperately needed goods, while the United States would obtain interest payments on loans and profitable markets (Carr 1950, 13–26). Once the defeat of Hitler seemed assured, however, anti-Communism generated growing resistance to any, let alone unconditional, aid to the Soviet Union. By April 1945, such resistance had partially checked Roosevelt's attempts to allow Soviet purchase of already ordered lend-lease goods in the postwar period, and it persuaded him to defer temporarily the entire question of postwar trade credit (Herring 1973, 151–52, 164–78).

This strategic retreat and two disputes with Stalin in 1945 have encouraged claims that by then Roosevelt had become less friendly to the Soviet Union, a claim easily utilized in defense of Truman's anti-Soviet posture. There is, however, no substantial evidence of a basic shift in Roosevelt's long-standing policy, and no such shift was detected by members of his own family or by his major advisers. In February, two months before his death, Roosevelt promised Stalin that "the United States will never lend its support in any way to any provisional government in Poland that would be inimical to your interests" (USSR 1965, 2:189). In April he countered Stalin's suspicious accusations by noting that "it would be one of the great tragedies of history if at the very moment of the victory, now within our grasp, distrust and a lack of faith should prejudice the entire undertaking after the colossal losses of life, material, and treasure involved" (USSR 1965, 2:208).

During the weeks just before his death, Roosevelt resisted Churchill's calls for a joint protest to Stalin and a military drive on Berlin. "I consider it essential," he wrote, "to base ourselves

squarely on the Crimea decisions themselves and not allow any other considerations, no matter how important, to cloud the issue at this time. I have this particularly in mind with respect to the Polish negotiations” (Kimball 1984, 3:593, 617). The day before he died Roosevelt reiterated his stance to Churchill:

I would minimize the general Soviet problem as much as possible because these problems, in one form or another, seem to arise every day and most of them straighten out as in the case of the Bern meeting. We must be firm, however, and our course thus far is correct. (Kimball 1984, 3:630)

That same day he dictated a Jefferson Day speech including the words, “Today we are faced with the preeminent fact that, if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships—the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together and work together, in the same world, at peace” (Burns 1970, 597). The day after Roosevelt’s death, Harry Hopkins telegraphed Stalin, “I want you to know that I feel that the Soviet Union has lost her greatest friend in America” (U.S. 1967–1968, 5:829). Perhaps the leading authority on this entire question concludes that “Roosevelt did not move to challenge the Soviet Union before his death, nor is there any evidence that he would have done so, without provocation, had he lived” (Kimball 1997, 335).

Franklin D. Roosevelt was a leader of unusual power and vision. Fate and the electoral system decreed that his successor, like Abraham Lincoln’s eighty years earlier, would be a lesser man who typified the prejudices and limitations of his age. Harry S. Truman was chosen vice president as a concession to conservatives and to help the president with an unfriendly Senate. Never close to Roosevelt and not really a New Deal leader, he “disliked the very words ‘progressive’ and ‘liberal,’” knew little and had been told nothing of foreign affairs, was contemptuous of Roosevelt’s cabinet, and reflected a background of small towns, small business, corrupt machine politics, cronyism, and common prejudice (Leuchtenburg 1983, 14–15). Limitations in knowledge, wisdom, and personal skills would seriously limit his

effectiveness on matters of foreign policy. Samuel Lubell has suggested that he had “an inner sense of inferiority,” and that his “usual instinct appeared to be to play things close to his vest, but periodically he had to unbutton his vest and thump his chest” (Herring 1973, 197). While Roosevelt had sought to restrain the growing anti-Soviet pressures of that day, Truman had neither the inclination nor the ability for such a task. Part of his own heritage was a deep hostility toward Communism and the Soviet Union that was undoubtedly bolstered by his service in the Senate. In response to Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, Truman made his oft-quoted statement: “If we see that Germany is winning the war we ought to help Russia, and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany, and that way let them kill as many as possible.” Such callousness can be associated with dropping an atomic bomb but certainly not with Roosevelt’s approach to the Soviet Union.

A recent biographer concludes that “Truman did not think deeply or critically about American policy,” that his simplistic historical conceptions “taught him that there was no difference between fascism and communism, between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union,” and that he mistakenly accepted relationships with Nazi Germany in the 1930s as a proper guide to treating the Soviet Union. He dismissed the Soviet people as “basically peasants,” and “he was convinced of the moral superiority of the United States and assumed that right thinking people everywhere would support an American imposed world order” (Pemberton 1989, 43–44). The initial self-righteous and simplistic Cold War mentality of Truman stood in stark contrast to his predecessor’s astute grasp of world affairs and provided little basis for the continuation of Roosevelt’s policies of cooperation with the Soviet Union.

What follows will attempt to illustrate how Truman departed from Roosevelt’s policies during his first four months in office by: (1) antagonizing and isolating the Soviet Union; (2) encouraging an anti-Soviet Western alliance; (3) supporting the colonial ambitions of Great Britain and France; (4) utilizing the United Nations against the Soviet Union; (5) undermining the search for cooperative economic relationships with the Soviet

Union; (6) acquiring territorial rights in the Pacific and betraying the trusteeship system; and (7) using the atomic bomb as an instrument of anti-Soviet foreign policy.

On the day of Roosevelt's death, Truman impressed his anti-Soviet sentiments upon the nation's chief foreign policy officer, Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, telling him "that we must stand up to the Russians at this point and that we must not be easy with them. He gave me the impression that he thought we had been too easy with them" (Campbell and Herring 1975, 318). The following day, initiating a policy rejected two weeks earlier by Roosevelt, Truman proposed that he and Churchill present a joint stand against Stalin on the Polish question (U.S. 1967–1968, 5:211–12). Such an action abruptly departed from Roosevelt's long-standing determination to avoid any signs of a Western bloc directed against the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Roosevelt had considered Churchill not only an obstacle to peace and progress where colonial issues were concerned, but "excitable and dangerous" where the Soviet Union was concerned (Thorne 1978, 507). At his last cabinet meeting, in "a semi-jocular manner of speaking," Roosevelt had "stated that the British were perfectly willing for the United States to have a war with Russia at any time and that in his opinion, to follow the British would be to proceed toward that end" (Forrestal 1951, 36–37). At least as early as May, Churchill was in fact ordering British forces to prepare for possible war with the Soviet Union (Churchill 1953, 757–78). Stettinius, whose very appointment as secretary of state was accepted as a sign of Roosevelt's intention to run foreign affairs himself, was a weak reed who bent quickly to anti-Soviet pressures, which were also coming from within the State Department. He welcomed Truman's shift in policy and pushed it even further from Roosevelt by advising "that every effort be made by this Government to assist France, morally as well as physically, to retain her strength and influence" (Kimball 1984, 633). A new anti-Soviet alliance supportive of colonial empires, including Indochina, and of U.S. expansionism was well underway within two days of Roosevelt's death.

The major immediate issue was Poland, where the Soviet Union upheld a new government that the West considered

inadequately representative of non-Communist Poles. Both Britain and the United States supported the interests of certain exile groups and of non-Communists within Poland, many of whom were anti-Soviet and opposed the Yalta agreements, especially for restoring territory to the Soviet Union that had been wrested away by Poland in 1920. Such considerations and a long history of Polish-Russian conflict presented a difficult problem to the Soviet Union, which saw Poland, a repeated invasion route into the Soviet Union, as vital to its own security. A stalemate was caused by Soviet refusal to accept into the Polish government Poles who opposed the Yalta agreement or who were accused of aiding the Nazis by engaging in sabotage behind Soviet lines. Truman and Churchill then insisted that a completely new Polish government be formed, while Stalin responded that according to the Yalta agreements the existing government was simply to be reorganized. Not only was Stalin's interpretation correct, which Roosevelt had pointed out to Churchill (Kimball 1984, 3:593), but the predominance of Soviet security interests was crystal clear to Stalin, and he would not accept the legitimacy of Western interference, pointing out that the Soviet Union had not challenged Britain's brutal imposition of an anti-Communist government in Greece nor the unilateral political actions taken by the West in Belgium and Italy. But "Truman could not see the subtly varying legitimate interpretations [involved], and on his first day in office he concluded that the Soviets had broken the Yalta agreements" (Pemberton 1989, 45). Lurking behind the stance of the West was the conviction that the Soviet Union intended to encourage Communist values in the areas it controlled.

While it would have been unseemly for the West to challenge directly the legitimacy of the Communist government of the USSR itself, its major ally in the war against Hitler, time would reveal the extent to which the West was, indeed, unwilling to accept the legitimacy of any suspected Communist government in any part of the world no matter how popular or indigenous it might be.

Stettinius was but one of a number of anti-Soviet hard-liners prompting an all-too-eager Truman. Another was James F.

Byrnes, a former Senate crony and Truman's immediate choice to become secretary of state, and who appears to have been Truman's major guide on the utilization of the atomic bomb. Also a major influence was the ambassador to the Soviet Union, Averell Harriman, who was paranoid about the Soviet Union, dismissive of its economic and security concerns, and a strong advocate of united action with the British against the Soviet Union. Unmoved by the Soviet Union's contributions to the war, Harriman viewed the Soviet Union as a dangerous enemy, but one susceptible to pressure because it "needed our help in order to reduce the burden of reconstruction." Harriman's latest dispatches advocated building an anti-Soviet alliance by redirecting economic aid primarily to those countries that shared "our broad political ideals" (U.S. 1967–1968, 5:817–24). Harriman's recent efforts to return home to promote such doctrines had been blocked by Roosevelt, but he was now welcomed back to brief the new president. The movement away from Roosevelt was also applauded by Arthur H. Vandenberg, a leading Republican senator who detested the Yalta agreements, was delighted with Truman, and expressed great satisfaction at having the slate wiped clean by Roosevelt's death (Vandenberg 1952, 167). Encouraged by such advisers and admirers, at a meeting a few days later Truman "banged the table with his fist and proclaimed: 'We have got to get tough with the Russians. . . . We've got to teach them how to behave.' Truman never swayed from this fundamental belief" (Pemberton 1989, 44). This hard-line approach was quickly implemented in respect to Poland and the founding of the United Nations.

Just prior to Roosevelt's death, Stalin had turned down his request that Foreign Minister Molotov be sent to the founding convention of the UN in San Francisco to avoid any appearance of slighting that effort. Following Roosevelt's death, when Harriman assured Stalin that Truman was determined to continue Roosevelt's policies, Stalin responded, "We shall support President Truman with all our forces and all our will," because Roosevelt's "cause must live on" (U.S. 1967–1968, 5:828). He then asked Harriman how best to indicate this desire for continued cooperation, and Harriman replied "that the thing the

American people would appreciate most would be to send Molotov to the San Francisco Conference” (Sherwood 1950, 883–84). This was agreed to and Molotov was to stop en route to see Truman in Washington, D.C., where it was already apparent that neither Harriman or Truman intended to continue Roosevelt’s policies.

Preparing for Molotov’s arrival, Harriman found Truman receptive to his warnings of a threatened “barbarian invasion of Europe” by the Soviet Union. Truman responded “that he intended to be firm but fair since in his opinion the Soviet Union needed us more than we needed them,” and he concluded that “we could not, of course, expect to get 100 percent of what we wanted but that on important matters he felt that we should be able to get 85 percent” (U.S. 1967–1968, 5:232–33). On 23 April, just prior to meeting with Molotov, Truman informed a meeting of key advisers “that he felt our agreements with the Soviet Union so far had been a one way street and that could not continue; it was now or never. He intended to go on with the plans for San Francisco and if the Russians did not wish to join us they could go to hell” (U.S. 1967–1968, 5:253). He also stated that if the Soviet Union breached any part of the Yalta understandings he would consider the entire agreement “no longer binding.” Within a few weeks Harriman was pushing for a reconsideration of Yalta and other specifics of Roosevelt’s policies (Forrestal 1951, 50, 56).

Some at this 23 April meeting urged caution. Secretary of War Stimson noted that “in the big military matters the Soviet Government had kept their word. . . . In fact he said that they had often been better than their promise,” and “that the Russians perhaps were being more realistic than we were in regard to their own security.” He also felt that except for the United States and Great Britain “there was no country that understood free elections; that the party in power always ran the election as he well knew from his experience in Nicaragua” (U.S. 1967–1968, 5:253–54). William D. Leahy, chief of staff, who had been at Yalta, pointed out that the agreements made there were open to the Soviet interpretation. Ignoring such considerations, Truman responded to Stalin’s gesture of good will by berating and

insulting Molotov, threatening not to provide postwar loans to a war-ravaged Soviet Union, and accusing the Soviet Union of violating the Yalta agreements by its actions in Poland—which, as Leahy had pointed out, simply was not true. Even Harriman later claimed that he was surprised at the vigor of Truman’s attack and regretted “that Truman went at it so hard because his behavior gave Molotov an excuse to tell Stalin that the Roosevelt policy was being abandoned” (Kimball 1984, 632). Apparently it was not the new policy itself, but its exposure that worried Harriman.

As Truman indignantly condemned Soviet influence in Poland, he simultaneously promoted the white colonialism of the West. On 18 April he endorsed what was essentially the U.S. annexation of islands in the Pacific, an action Roosevelt had opposed (Louis 1978, 488–96; Kimball 1997, 382, note 21). During April and May, despite having been fully informed of Roosevelt’s policies to the contrary (U.S. 1960, 1:920), Truman endorsed the restoration of Indochina to France and, in support of that policy, welcomed France into the war in Asia. In July Truman connived with the British to introduce French troops, aided by lend-lease supplies, directly into Indochina. When informing the French of this, the British commander Lord Mountbatten remarked that “if Roosevelt were still alive you wouldn’t stand a chance of getting back into Indochina, but maybe it can be fixed now” (Werth 1956, 330). Of course the French soon encountered Ho Chi Minh, whose nationalist movement, with some U.S. assistance, had been fighting the Japanese for years and was not about to accept the reimposition of French colonial rule. Truman thus had taken steps initiating a deadly and tragic imperialist war.

At the founding conference of the UN, which began on 25 April, the Truman administration’s anti-Soviet stance more clearly reflected a combination of economic and political concerns. The United States had reached a level of economic development intensifying a demand for further economic expansion, which was both encouraged and facilitated by the war’s devastation elsewhere. Roosevelt’s interest in ending colonial privileges accorded with such desires, but while opportunities for markets

and loans were abundant in the Soviet Union, socialism did present barriers to investments and to complete freedom of trade. Roosevelt appeared ready to accept some such limitations in pursuit of postwar cooperation, but other powerful economic and political forces in the United States would not. Not only were they opposed to any exclusion from the Soviet sphere, they were even more worried about nationalist and Marxist movements throughout the underdeveloped world that threatened existing privileges and future economic penetration. Signs of internal Soviet success or of Soviet encouragement to leftist movements in the underdeveloped world were seen as a major threat to U.S. economic expansion. In this respect, Truman's willingness to let the "Russians . . . go to hell" and proceed without them suggested that a new *cordon sanitaire* would become the pattern of the future. As Stalin had feared, the Soviet Union was to be isolated in its own sphere, while the United States, sometimes under the mantle of the UN, would attempt to dominate the rest of the world, curtailing, by force and subversion when necessary, the principles of socialism and the Soviet Union.

The founding convention of the UN was marked by a variety of related clashes that began when the United States engineered the admission of the recently pro-Nazi Argentina. This was the first outright betrayal of a specific pledge made at Yalta, and Cordell Hull considered it inconceivable that Roosevelt "would have reversed himself on this matter" (Hull 1948, 2:1408). Adding insult to injury, the convention denied Molotov's simple request for a few days to study the matter. The Truman administration's stance on trusteeships also marked an important change. As stated by Harold Stassen in speaking for the U.S. delegation, "China and the Soviet Union wished to introduce the word 'independence' as an object of the trusteeship. We, on the other hand, with the French and British, favored the phrase 'progressive development toward self-government'" (U.S. 1967-1968, 1:792). This was precisely the kind of pussyfooting that Roosevelt had denounced, and it was opposed by a minority of the U.S. delegation still loyal to his policies as "spearheading for the British, Dutch, and Belgian colonial empires." In response, an administration supporter suggested that "the basic

problem was who was going to be masters of the world.” Asked another, “When perhaps the inevitable struggle came between Russia and ourselves . . . would we have the support of Great Britain if we had undermined her position?” Supporters of this policy shift also doubted the abilities of “backward people,” opposed “butting in on colonial affairs,” believed “‘interdependence’ rather than ‘independence’ was the word of the future,” and feared that “if the word ‘independence’ was put in [the UN Charter] there would be a good deal of stirring up of a desire for independence” (U.S. 1967–1968, 1:792–98). To Roosevelt’s followers, this all clearly marked “no less than an abandonment of colonial independence as the historic goal of American policy” (Louis 1978, 535). It would appear that Jefferson as well as Roosevelt was being abandoned by the Truman administration and that the West claimed rights in those areas of the world it dominated that were being denied the Soviet Union.

Former Secretary of State Cordell Hull considered the admission of Argentina to the UN “the most colossal injury done to the Pan American movement in all its history” and something that had done “irreparable harm” and cast doubt on the value of the nation’s pledged word (Hull 1948, 2:1407–8, 1722; Gellman 1995, 383). He particularly blamed Nelson Rockefeller for this action; accusing him of having lied about Roosevelt’s intentions, Hull refused to speak to Rockefeller ever again, even from his deathbed. Rockefeller also had been busy with Senator Vandenberg formulating Article 51 of the UN Charter so as to leave the United States free to dominate North and South America. When they had finished, “they thought they had obtained the best of both worlds: exclusive American power in the New and the right to exert American power in the Old.” Although Secretary of War Stimson resisted this trend, criticizing those “anxious to hang on to exaggerated views of the Monroe Doctrine and at the same time butt into every question that comes up in Central Europe,” he stood almost alone in seeking continued bilateral agreements to preserve the unity of the Big Three (LaFeber 1993, 22–23). Little wonder that Joseph E. Davies soon noted that the Soviet Union objected that the United States claimed

privileges for its own security needs that were being denied to the Soviet Union (Paterson 1979, 50).

The Soviet Union was now also antagonized on the economic front. Despite the ongoing war in Europe and the anticipated crucial entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Japan, Harriman had been urging “a more positive policy of using our economic influence to further our broad political ideals” by directing assistance to “our Western Allies and other areas under our responsibility first,” and tying any aid to the Soviet Union “directly into our political problems with the Soviet Union” (U.S. 1967–1968, 5:818–20). Others in the State Department also began questioning Roosevelt’s special encouragement of lend-lease aid to the Soviet Union, and on 24 April the State Department formally recommended that hereafter the Soviet Union be provided only the “absolute minimum requirements” (Herring 1973, 201).

Since Congress had provided that lend-lease was to end when the war ended, VE Day provided a logical occasion for related action. On 11 May, four days after VE Day, Truman ordered supplies on order for the Soviet Union not directly related to Far Eastern operations “cut off immediately as far as physically practical.” This was implemented the following day to the point of recalling ships already en route. “This sudden, drastic, even rude, stoppage of shipments on May 12—without warning and without consultation—needlessly antagonized the Russians at a critical juncture in Soviet-American relations” (Herring 1973, 203, 206). Harriman and other more adroit originators of this new policy had not intended such bluntness. This was a political and diplomatic blunder, and although lend-lease policy was quickly reversed and again liberalized, the furor already aroused contributed to a marked shift in the Truman administration’s behavior.

An easing of conduct at this time has been attributed to Truman’s vacillation and a resurgence of pro-Soviet influence highlighted by the sending of Harry Hopkins to the Soviet Union. But Hopkins, who had been Roosevelt’s trusted adviser and main link to Stalin, had been ignored by the Truman administration, and this mission originated with the anti-Soviets

Harriman and Bohlen not as a shift in basic policy but as a recognition that Truman had proceeded too far too fast. Recognizing Roosevelt's popularity, the hard-liners had feared giving any indication of a departure from his policies (Harriman 1975, 460). His policy of friendship toward the Soviet Union had not rested upon sand but upon practical concerns, an admiration for Russia's achievements, and a degree of popularity and public confidence in a president that may be difficult to imagine in our own day. In return the Soviet Union had cooperated by opposing revolutionary movements, encouraging moderate regimes, and supporting the UN. It had no desire to antagonize the United States and was anxious for credit and trade. Truman's overt hostility therefore had aroused doubts within his cabinet and widespread opposition in the nation. Such concern was well represented by Sumner Welles's speech of 22 May, which warned against "many powerful and some sinister forces in this country" that were cultivating "hostility toward the Soviet Union," and which concluded that

in five short weeks since the death of President Roosevelt the policy which he has so painstakingly carried on has been changed. Our government now appears to the Russians as the spearhead of an apparent bloc of western nations opposed to the Soviet Union. (Siracusa 1977, 88)

The Soviet Union's refusal to be intimidated also left Truman with some serious problems. Alienated by U.S. actions at San Francisco and determined not to allow a repetition of the ostracism it had endured in the League of Nations, the Soviet Union responded by insisting upon a veto on procedural matters in the UN. Less than a week after VE Day, an effective UN was seriously in doubt and Molotov was on his way back to the Soviet Union. The ongoing war against Japan also was a matter of vital concern. No atomic bomb yet existed, and it could be harmful to the nation and Truman's political future to undermine Stalin's earlier promise to enter that war. It was at this juncture that Harriman and Charles E. Bohlen, "with a sense of despair in their hearts" and anxious for "any conceivable way to save the situation," devised the plan to send Hopkins to Moscow to

smooth the waters (Sherwood 1950, 885–87). Anti-Soviet plans remained on the back burner, however, and an open return to a hard line was now tied to the anticipated promise of the atomic bomb. Subsequent events raise serious questions about the claim that Truman's main motivation for the use of this bomb was a desire to save U.S. lives (Walker 1997, 92–93).

Policy respecting the atomic bomb was shrouded in secrecy, and documents revealed in recent years demolish fifty years of popular belief respecting Truman and the atomic bomb. These documents also reveal a disturbing pattern of duplicity and historical falsification within his administration. Truman was first informed of the atomic bomb by James F. Byrnes, the man he planned to make his secretary of state, who told Truman that “the bomb might well put us in a position to dictate our own terms at the end of the war.” It was also Byrnes who, on 17 April, “told the President how he should speak to Molotov when he arrived” (Alperovitz 1996, 134, 209). It was in response to Truman's berating of Molotov on 23 April that Stimson then arranged for Truman to receive his first full briefing on the bomb because, said Stimson, it “has such a bearing on our present foreign relations.” At this briefing “a great deal of emphasis was placed on foreign relations and particularly on the Russian situation” (Alperovitz 1996, 130, 132). Also discussed were plans to maintain a lead in the atomic field and to monopolize the world's supply of related raw materials” (Alperovitz 1996, 134, 209). Anticipated possession of the atomic bomb must have encouraged Truman's initial hard line with the Soviet Union, and that hoped-for advantage was never forgotten. Secretary of War Stimson stated on 14 May that

the method now to deal with Russia was to keep our mouths shut, . . . We really hold all the cards. . . . They can't get along without our help and industries and we have coming into action a weapon which will be unique. Now the thing is not to get into unnecessary quarrels . . . and not to indicate any weakness by talking too much. (Alperovitz 1996, 143–44)

Two weeks later Byrnes met with three atomic scientists, one of whom recalled that Byrnes “did not argue that it was necessary to use the bomb against the cities of Japan in order to win the war . . . but that our possessing and demonstrating the bomb would make Russia more manageable in Europe” (Alperovitz 1996, 147). Byrnes at this time was Truman’s personal representative on the interim committee established to deal with issues relating to the atomic bomb. That committee seems never to have discussed whether or not the bomb should be used, an apparent given, but on 1 June it endorsed a statement submitted by Byrnes, the president’s representative, recommending “that the bomb should be used against Japan as soon as possible; that it be used on a war plant surrounded by workers’ homes; and that it be used without prior warning” (Alperovitz 1996, 171).

It would appear that the fate of Hiroshima had been set and that this use of the atomic bomb was as closely linked to impressing the Soviet Union as to defeating the Japanese. The bomb was still only a promise, however, and should the scheduled test fail, Soviet entry into the war against Japan might still be desired. Although U.S. domination of the sea and air had by now made Soviet entry less significant, it was still recognized, as noted by General Marshall, that “the impact of Russian entry on the already hopeless Japanese may well be the decisive action levering them into capitulation at the time or shortly thereafter if we land in Japan” (U.S. 1960, 1:905). Or as Truman later put it, “if the [atomic] test should fail, then it would be even more important to us to bring about a surrender before we had to make a physical conquest of Japan” (Truman 1955, 417). This suggests an anticipation that Soviet entry alone might bring about an early end to the war without an invasion of Japan at a cost of hundreds of thousands of lives so often cited, especially by Truman himself, as the reason for dropping the atomic bomb.

As policy toward the Soviet Union was being pondered, Harry Hopkins was on his mission of reconciliation and in daily communication with Truman. Stalin’s frank complaint was that “the American attitude toward the Soviet Union had perceptibly cooled once it became obvious that Germany was defeated, and

that it was as though the Americans were saying that the Russians were no longer needed." He could overlook the conflict over Argentina as simply a symbol, although the episode "raised the question of the value of agreements between the three major powers if their decisions could be overturned by the votes of such countries as Honduras and Porto Rico." Stalin also noted that the U.S. had abandoned the Yalta understanding on Poland and on the composition of the Reparations Commission, although he would accept the addition of France to the latter, and the West had failed to provide the Soviet Union a share of the German fleet. Stalin also assumed "that Poland would live under the parliamentary system which is like Czechoslovakia, Belgium, and Holland and that any talk of an intention to Sovietize Poland was stupid." On 6 June the United States agreed to accept the Soviet position, and the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan was confirmed, subject to China's acceptance of the Yalta agreements and expected Soviet participation in the occupation of Japan. In turn, the Soviet Union accepted the U.S. position on voting procedures in the UN. Finally, arrangements were made for a meeting of the Big Three at Potsdam on 15 July. Hopkins returned to a relieved nation and "was even for a few days, something of a national hero" (Sherwood 1950, 887–916).

The date fixed for the Potsdam conference was of special significance. Since mid-May Truman had been resisting the urgings of his advisers and Churchill for an earlier meeting while Allied forces in Europe were still strong. But Truman wanted a demonstration of the atomic bomb before the meeting, and the scheduled time for the initial test was early in July. As he explained to Stimson and to Joseph E. Davies, "he had postponed that [Potsdam] until the 15th of July on purpose to give us more time" (Alperovitz 1996, 145, 148). Davies was to travel to London to explain this to Churchill while a manufactured excuse for the delay was presented to Stalin (Alperovitz 1966, 145, 148, 153). "If the bomb was a success," wrote Margaret Truman of her father's thinking, "there would probably be no need to make any more concessions to the Soviets" in Europe or Asia (Truman 1973, 260). Although German work on such a bomb had been

the initial motivation for the atomic project, Germany was now defeated and Japan presented no such threat. Work on the atomic bomb was nevertheless now accelerated as never before, and those involved “were under incredible pressure to get it done before the Potsdam meeting” (Alperovitz 1996, 148). There was no indication that this acceleration was motivated by a desire to save lives by ending the war more quickly. Should the Japanese surrender too soon, however, the opportunity to demonstrate the power of the new weapon would be lost.

If, in truth, Truman was above all anxious to save U.S. lives, it is surprising that he did not take several strongly recommended steps that might have brought an earlier end to the war with Japan. There was, of course, no guarantee that such steps would have been effective, but the ongoing refusal even to make the attempt is disturbing. As early as September 1944, Churchill suggested that merely an announcement of the Soviet Union’s intended entry into the war might precipitate surrender (USSR 1965, 1:257). At that time, however, the Soviet Union itself would hardly risk such action because of the raging war in Europe. But by April, as the war in Europe ended, the Joint Intelligence Committee concluded that “the entry of the U.S.S.R. into the war would . . . convince most Japanese at once of the inevitability of complete defeat” (Alperovitz 1996, 113). General Marshall’s chief intelligence office advised using that threat in May, and on 19 June Marshall urged making the threat of Soviet entry part of a broader statement to be presented to Japan following the fall of Okinawa. Simple notification of the threat of a powerful new atomic weapon was also suggested, but none of these proposed steps were ever taken (Alperovitz 1996, 115, 124, 225–27).

Even more crucial was a refusal to clarify the meaning of unconditional surrender. On 28 May, Joseph C. Grew, acting secretary of state and former ambassador to Japan, pointed out to Truman that “the greatest obstacle to unconditional surrender by the Japanese is their belief that this would entail the destruction or permanent removal of the Emperor.” Grew wanted the Japanese informed that unconditional surrender did not necessitate the elimination of the monarchy. Truman responded that “his

own thoughts had been following the same line,” and asked Grew to arrange a high-level meeting to discuss the matter. At that meeting, held the following day, Stimson, Forrestal, Marshall and others involved endorsed the wisdom of such a step, “but for certain military reasons, not divulged, it was considered inadvisable for the President to make such a statement just now” (U.S. 1967–1968, 5:547–48). After the war Grew persisted in the belief that if by such an offer “surrender could have been brought about in May, 1945, or even in June or July, before the entrance of Soviet Russia into the war and the use of the atomic bomb, the world would have been the gainer” (Grew 1952, 2:1425–26, 1428–29).

The Japanese emperor was a revered religious as well as political figure, and fear for his safety would encourage last-ditch resistance by the Japanese in the face of obvious defeat. Truman’s advisers also noted that the emperor alone carried the prestige that could easily bring about an effective surrender of all the widely scattered Japanese troops. These considerations were well recognized in the United States, and proposed guarantees for the emperor had strong support in the military, the press, both political parties, the British leadership, and the Truman administration. During May and June almost every important political and military adviser to Truman supported such a step (notable exceptions were Byrnes, Cordell Hull, and Dean Acheson), and “no close presidential adviser believed that providing Japan assurances on this matter presented insuperable political problems” (Alperovitz 1996, 34).

Such assurances were, in fact, included in the proposed warning being prepared to present to Japan following the fall of Okinawa, and Admiral Leahy was confident that a satisfactory surrender could be achieved at that time. Truman himself registered no strong objection to the retention of the emperor and, of course, when Japan finally did surrender it was allowed to retain the emperor. Nevertheless, Truman refused to take any steps in this direction and ordered the entire question deferred until the Potsdam meeting in July. An apparently irritated Grew protested that he “was not convinced that there is any good reason to defer such action until the meeting of the Big Three, and in my

opinion the sooner we can get the Japanese thinking about surrender the better it will be and the more lives of Americans may ultimately be saved" (Alperovitz 1996, 53). It is difficult not to suspect that the perceived disadvantage in making this offer to the Japanese was that if it did bring an early surrender, the opportunity to display the atomic bomb effectively would be lost. Perhaps it should be noted here that proposals to make a harmless demonstration of the awesome power of the bomb as a means of impressing Japan and the world had been rejected in part as insufficiently shocking.

Despite the intense acceleration of the atomic project, Truman arrived at Potsdam on 15 July still anxious to ensure Soviet entry into the war because the bomb had not yet been tested. He met with Churchill on the 16th and with Stalin the following day. Stalin immediately confirmed Soviet entry into the war as agreed to at Yalta. "Fini Japs when that comes about," wrote Truman. "I've gotten what I came for—Stalin goes to war 15 August with no strings on it. He wanted a Chinese settlement—and it is practically made—in a better form than I expected" (Alperovitz 1996, 242). Truman had achieved his major purpose before the first official meeting of the conference and already felt that he could go home. At this juncture, the entire scenario decisively changed.

At Stalin's suggestion, Truman presided at the opening meeting at Potsdam. Having already achieved his main goal and having just learned that the test of the atomic bomb had succeeded, he expected little else from the meeting and seemed brusque and dogmatic. Controversial issues were shuttled off elsewhere, prompting Stalin to remark, "As all questions are to be discussed by the foreign ministers, we shall have nothing to do" (McCullough 1992, 423). Having conceded on Poland at the recent Moscow meeting, Truman now simply refused to recognize the existing governments in Eastern Europe, thus resuming a policy that Melvyn Leffler characterized as intent upon "reversing the real meaning of the Churchill-Stalin agreement, the armistice accords, and the Yalta compromises" (Leffler 1986, 100).

Most of the achievements of the Potsdam meeting were uncontroversial or were hammered out by the foreign ministers.

Deadlocks over reparations to the Soviet Union and over Poland's western border continued until 30 July when Byrnes offered de facto recognition of the new boundary in return for Soviet agreement to take the bulk of their reparations from their own, essentially agricultural, zone of occupation. Specified percentages of industrial material were also to be sent to the Soviet Union from the Western zone, the precise amount of which was to "be determined within six months from now at the latest," a deadline that would come and go without action. The compromise on reparations again reflected Western reluctance to compensate the Soviet Union for its sacrifices in the war and constituted another step toward separating it from the West by dividing Germany (LaFeber 1993, 25). While the West saw no alternative to accepting Soviet hegemony in those areas occupied by the Soviet Union, it would continue to isolate and deny the legitimacy of the political structures in those areas. Everything was moving toward a new *cordon sanitaire*.

Truman's behavior at Potsdam was decisively influenced by the success of the bomb test. News of this first reached him on 16 July, but a full report prepared by Leslie R. Groves, director of the project, did not arrive until the 21st. It was a detailed, frightening account that delighted Truman and Byrnes. Groves proclaimed the test "successful beyond the most optimistic expectations of anyone," and, suggesting an eagerness for actual use, he concluded that "we are all fully conscious that our real goal is still before us. The battle test is what counts" (Sherwin 1987, 308, 314). Stimson was so carried away that "he advised Truman the weapon might enable the United States to force the Soviet Union to abandon or radically alter its entire system of government" (Alperovitz 1996, 252). This was certainly a far cry from Roosevelt's faith in cooperation and mutual change over time.

Now "tremendously pepped up," Truman went directly from the reading of Groves's report to the conference. Churchill reported that when Truman arrived "after having read this report he was a changed man. He told the Russians just where they got on and off and generally bossed the whole meeting." Churchill was shown the report that evening, and John J. McCloy recorded

that both Truman and Churchill “went to the next meeting like little boys with a big red apple secreted on their persons.” The chief of the British imperial staff considered Churchill “completely carried away. It was now no longer necessary for the Russians to come into the Japanese war; the new explosive alone was sufficient to settle the matter. Furthermore, we now had something in our hands which would redress the balance with the Russians” (Alperovitz 1996, 259–60). There was little reason for continued discussion at Potsdam. The thing to do now was to get home and let negotiations wait until the “ace in the hole” had been played. In none of the record of this period is there any indication that a major policy consideration was a desire to save servicemen’s lives.

Meanwhile, several decisions concerning the atomic bomb were secretly made at Potsdam by Britain and the United States. Proposed targets were approved on the 22nd, with Hiroshima, the most populous of the proposed targets, first on the list. Perhaps Truman’s conclusion that “the Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless and fanatic” eased this decision. On the 24th the British endorsed use of the bomb. The wisdom of informing Stalin, something that was urged by many atomic scientists, was discussed and opposed by Byrnes lest it speed up Soviet entry into the war. Also on the 24th, without hinting what kind of weapon was involved, trying “to be as informal and casual as possible,” and anxious not to “indicate that there was anything particularly momentous about the development,” Truman did mention to Stalin “that we had a new weapon of unusual destructive force” (McCullough 1992, 436, 442). Stalin was not unaware of the bomb project and may have suspected the truth, although Byrnes stated that “I tried my best to have him informed in such a manner that the importance of the information would not impress him” (Alperovitz 1996, 388). Since the total exclusion of the Soviet Union on all these matters would soon be known and could serve only to increase future distrust, it was clear that reliance upon the atomic bomb and opposition to Soviet entry into the war was now policy. How ironic that a few days earlier Truman had declared that securing Soviet entry into the war was his major reason for going to Potsdam and his major triumph there.

At this juncture a Machiavellian attempt was made to check Soviet entry into the war by blocking the requisite Soviet agreement with the Chinese. On 23 July Churchill reported that “Mr. Byrnes told me this morning that he had cabled to T.V. Soong advising him not to give way on any point to the Russians, but to return to Moscow and keep on negotiating. . . . It is quite clear that the United States do not at the present time desire Russian participation in the war against Japan” (Alperovitz 1996, 270–71). Byrnes wanted to keep the Soviet Union out of Port Arthur and Dairen, another betrayal of the Yalta agreements, and Truman, contrary to the Moscow understanding, was determined to deny them “any part in the control of Japan” (Truman 1955, 412). It was also at Potsdam that Truman and Churchill reached their agreement allowing French troops and French authority back into Indochina. Altogether, in both content and procedure, Truman’s policies were totally at odds with Roosevelt’s approach to the postwar world.

The Potsdam Proclamation or warning to Japan before the atom bomb was dropped was also secretly prepared without Soviet participation. Stimson proposed a “draft prepared by the War Department and now approved, I understand by both the State and Navy Department,” and which again would allow Japan to retain “a constitutional monarchy if the peace-loving nations can be convinced of the general determination of such a government to follow policies of peace” (Alperovitz 1996, 235). Intercepts revealing that peace proposals were being initiated by the emperor himself encouraged Stimson to believe that the war might be ended without either the bomb or Soviet entry, and he strongly supported this approach. The joint chiefs of staff agreed and even convinced Churchill to also push the president in that direction. Allen Dulles of the Office of Strategic Services recalled that he went to Potsdam on 30 July to inform Stimson that sources in Tokyo reported the Japanese ready “to surrender if they could retain the Emperor and the constitution as a basis for maintaining discipline and order” in Japan (Alperovitz 1996, 292). Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal traveled to Potsdam on his own to urge that same policy, and on the 24th Stimson urged that assurances for the emperor in the final terms

being offered the Japanese “might be just the thing that would make or mar their acceptance” (Alperovitz 1996, 302). But once again, Truman refused to include such assurances in the warning issued from Potsdam. Lewis E. Strauss continued to believe that this omission “was the only reason why it was not immediately accepted by the Japanese who were beaten and knew it before the first atomic bomb was dropped” (Alperovitz 1996, 393).

The so-called warning to the Japanese issued from Potsdam also omitted any indication of Soviet support, of imminent Soviet entry into the war, or even of the atomic bomb itself. Simply the added signature of the Soviet Union would have a tremendous impact. A year earlier, in proposing precisely such a united action to Stalin, Churchill had written, “Of course we must go into all these plans together” (USSR 1945, 1:257). Instead, as part of the exclusion of the Soviet Union, the desire to check its entry into the war, and what increasingly looked like an actual eagerness to drop the bomb in a gruesome act of shock, all these options were excluded. Following the deadly success of the recent fire bombings of Japan, the air force had initiated a practice of extending seventy-two-hour warnings of imminent destruction to targeted cities, but no such notice was provided the citizens of Hiroshima or Nagasaki in the Potsdam warning. Mention of the nuclear device itself was not included because that itself would lessen the shock value of the bomb and perhaps speed up Soviet entry into the war. Stalin was not even notified of the warning proclamation, which was simply issued from the site on 26 July, eleven days prior to Hiroshima. There does appear to have been something ominous in Truman’s words a few days earlier that the atomic bomb “seems to be the most terrible thing ever discovered, but it can be made the most useful” (Ferrell 1980, 56).

Neither the time allowed nor the content of this Potsdam warning represented a serious effort to obtain a surrender, nor was one expected. Anxious to use the bomb since April and leaving no record whatever of the kind of “mature consideration” promised by Roosevelt before taking any such action,³ on the day before the Potsdam warning was sent, Truman issued a specific order to drop the atomic bomb “after about 3 August 1945”

(Craven and Cate 1953, facing 697). "This weapon is to be used against Japan between now and August 10th," Truman wrote in his diary, and although they will have been given a chance to surrender, "I'm sure they will not do that" (Ferrell 1980, 55–56). David McCullough errs in claiming a final confirmation by Truman on 31 July. What Truman confirmed on that date was simply a statement to be issued after the bomb was dropped. He then hurriedly left Potsdam so "he would not have to deal further with the Russians or explain to Stalin why he had not been kept fully informed" (Alperovitz 1996, 389).

On 6 August Hiroshima was destroyed. This was hardly the purely military target Truman claimed to have chosen to avoid killing women and children, but a heavily populated city intended to demonstrate the awesome power of the bomb. An estimated 80,000 to 100,000 were immediately killed, and 50,000 to 60,000 more died over the next several months. Among them were perhaps 10,000 Japanese soldiers, over 3,000 U.S. citizens trapped by the war, and a small number of American prisoners of war. Two days later the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. On 9 August, having allowed no time for a meaningful reaction to the first bomb, 70,000 more were killed at Nagasaki, which one scholar characterizes as "an act thoroughly at odds with those high principles of international morality that had been proclaimed by the United States itself from Pearl Harbor onwards" (Thorne 1978, 119). On 10 August the Japanese offered to surrender if they could retain the emperor. Although anxious to accept this offer ending the war and shortening Soviet involvement, Truman was embarrassed by his earlier stance respecting the emperor and hesitated to accept. The dilemma was ended when Forrestal suggested the simple expedient of accepting the surrender with a declaration that it fully met the demands of the Potsdam warning (Moskin 1996, 313).

The news of Hiroshima reached Truman aboard ship en route to the United States. "This is the greatest thing in history," the jubilant president proclaimed. "Mr. Truman almost ran as he walked about the ship spreading the news. He was not actually laughing, but there was a broad, proud smile on his face" (Smith 1946, 257–58). Truman's apparent joy has been attributed to the

anticipated saving of U.S. lives, but much of what has been noted in this essay suggests that a great deal more was involved. In fact, consultation or advice from the military appears to have had little to do with the decision to drop the atomic bomb. A wide array of the most prominent military leaders of the war questioned both the wisdom and necessity of that action, including Generals MacArthur (who had never been consulted), Eisenhower, Arnold, and LeMay and Admirals Leahy, King, Nimitz, and Halsey (Alperovitz 1996, 329–31, 334–35, 351, 355). Furthermore, the still widespread belief that the lives of possibly over a million U.S. servicemen were at stake has been thoroughly discredited. Not only was the estimated death count for the invasion of Japan deliberately inflated into the millions by Truman and others at a later date to justify these policy decisions, but there is much to indicate that a full-scale invasion might never have been needed. Some leading army, navy, and air force commanders believed that continued pounding by air and sea would bring surrender within weeks, or a few months at most, even without Soviet entry. The only estimated casualty figures known to have been presented to Truman himself totalled 31,000, including 7,000 to 8,000 dead for the planned invasion of Kyushu (Alperovitz 1996, 518–19). That invasion was not scheduled until November, could easily have been delayed, and might never have been necessary even without the bomb. A more costly invasion with an estimated 46,000 deaths was scheduled for the spring of 1946, but it is difficult to believe that the U.S. leadership expected the war to last that long, especially if the Soviet Union became involved and the peace terms were properly clarified.⁴

As Truman was returning from Potsdam, the issue of economic aid to the Soviet Union arose again in response to a Soviet request for relief funds from the newly established United Nations Relief and Reconstruction Agency (UNRRA). The influential Harriman vigorously opposed such assistance. He even denied its need, although Dean Acheson pointed out that the Soviet Union had made “greater physical sacrifices, suffered more devastation, and lowered her low standard of living below that of any *repeat any* European nation” (Herring 1973, 243,

245). To save UNRRA itself, a compromise was arranged which granted the Soviet Union 36 percent of its request in return for several concessions on UNRRA policy matters. Perhaps more significant during this time was the final undermining of Roosevelt's plans for cooperative trade relationships. In January 1945, the Soviet Union requested a \$6 billion credit from the United States as a basis for postwar trade. This request was left unanswered for four months when, in response to Molotov's reminder, the Truman administration pointed to its need for enabling legislation. Congress responded by approving a general bill of that nature knowing that \$1 billion was earmarked for the Soviet Union.

During August this reduced credit was formally approved by Truman, the Export Import Bank, and various government offices, with final approval to come from the State Department. There it "had long since been determined that reconstruction loans would be used to extract political and economic concessions from recipient nations" (Herring 1973, 249). While a loan to Britain moved quickly forward, the Soviet request was "lost" for another four months and would never be granted. The leading student of this topic concludes that the initial handling of this request "was clumsy and unnecessarily offensive," and that the subsequent "attempt to make the \$1 billion credit conditional on sweeping economic and political concessions rested on a gross exaggeration of American economic power and on an underestimation of Russian pride and sensitivity to alien influence" (Herring 1973, 274).

In his first four months in office, Truman, urged on by advisers and by Churchill, had moved consistently, but not always openly, on an anti-Soviet course. While Truman was still at Potsdam, Senator Vandenberg was rejoicing over a new unified foreign policy. "The price of that unity," he wrote, "was a complete reversal of the Administration's appeasement and surrender attitudes at Yalta" (Vandenberg 1952, 314). This was not the unity that Roosevelt had sought. Rather than heeding Roosevelt's call for the nation to support Yalta, Truman had abandoned its essence, and the success of the atomic bomb encouraged a renewed belligerence. On the day Nagasaki was

incinerated, Truman's radio address challenged Soviet predominance in the areas it controlled. A week later Secretary of State Byrnes denounced the Bulgarian elections and initiated an ongoing campaign, supported by the British, to end Soviet influence in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The following week, Truman told Charles de Gaulle that he "had abandoned the plan of a world harmony and admitted that the rivalry between the free world and the Soviet bloc now dominated every other international consideration"; his goal now was to stop the spread of Communism (de Gaulle 1960, 3:238). The lines of the Cold War had been drawn. The now-rejected Harry Hopkins would soon complain to Eleanor Roosevelt that "I think we are doing everything we can to break with Russia" (Lash 1972, 83).

It must still be said that in accepting realities created by the war, Roosevelt's Yalta agreements established the basis for fifty years of peace between the Soviet Union and the West. But these were not to be the fifty years that Roosevelt had envisioned and worked for. These were not years of trust, cooperation, and rational progress. These were years of hostility and confrontation, of militarization and nuclear proliferation, of lying by government as a way of life, and of tensions that drove both sides in directions that contradicted professed aims. Eventually the demands of Cold War confrontation appear to have brought an end to the experiment that was the Soviet Union, though hardly with very admirable results. The demands of the Cold War also encouraged incredible waste and ongoing social and economic dilemmas in the West. In the name of containment, the United States became the most expansionist presence of all time. With its 450 military bases in 36 countries, between 1946 and 1965 the United States engaged in armed intervention in other areas 168 times while the Soviet Union engaged in such interventions 10 times (Lundestad 1990, 53, 65). In the name of democracy and self-rule, the United States crushed internal critics, carried on aggressive wars, subverted popular governments, and aided and established dictatorships.

In his recent analysis of the Cold War, John Lewis Gaddis ingenuously asserts that "for all their importance, one could have removed Roosevelt, Churchill, Truman, Bevin, Marshall or

Acheson, and a cold war would still have probably followed the world war” (1997, 294). The inclusion of Roosevelt in that list is exceedingly misleading, because he had in fact been removed, he was not a cold warrior, and his legacy had been betrayed. Gaddis goes on to conclude that “authoritarianism in general, and Stalin in particular” were “responsible” for the Cold War.

We argue instead that it was the Truman administration’s betrayal of the Roosevelt legacy by its reversion to the prewar principles of colonialism and anti-Communism and its deliberately hostile confrontation with “Communism” in general and the Soviet Union and Stalin in particular that preordained the Cold War and its many lamentable results. Largely because Truman represented powerful forces in U.S. life and epitomized anti-Communist convictions that are still very much with us, history often has treated him kindly.

One wonders, however, if things could not and should not have gone better. Contrary to the rhetoric of the Cold War, the Soviet Union was not an expansionist threat. It was not responsible for Communism in Indochina, China, or Cuba, or for the Korean war, or for left-wing movements elsewhere. In recent years we also have learned that the Soviet Union was sufficiently flexible to do something seldom if ever done by any nation—to carry out peaceful revolutionary change. To the extent that Roosevelt’s postwar approach was a more promising one, Truman might still be judged a failure whose belligerent policies were unnecessary and carried too high a price. Many in the United States may be oblivious to the slaughter Truman’s confrontational policies brought to millions of people in Asia, but there were also more than 96,000 U.S. troops killed fighting not Soviet expansion but Korean and Indochinese independence. Furthermore, Truman’s use of the atomic bomb, twice, on areas heavily populated by civilians to maximize the shock value of its power in behalf of an anti-Soviet policy,⁵ will forever hang heavy over his memory.

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NOTES

1. For Roosevelt's doubts about using the atomic bomb and Albert Einstein's conviction that he would not have used it, see Alperovitz 1996, 127, 661–63. Roosevelt had previously rejected on moral grounds the use of poison gas at Iwo Jima (Kimball 1997, 281).

2. The prominent British expert on Japanese history, R. John Pritchard, recently concluded that “the atomic bomb did NOT end the war” that “the decisive event was the effect of the Soviet entry into the war” together with the modification of surrender terms; and that “these were terms that might well have been sufficient to have produced the basis for a negotiated end to the conflict as much as six months earlier without the intervention of either the Soviet Union or the atomic bomb” (1998).

3. There are other indications among those prominently involved of the centrality of diplomatic motives in the utilization of the atomic bomb. As early as March 1943, James B. Conant told Vannevar Bush that “the major consideration [respecting the proposed atomic weapon] must be that of national security and postwar strategic significance” (Hershberg 1993, 187). At his security hearings in 1954, J. Robert Oppenheimer, speaking of the project speedup in 1945, noted that “we wanted to have it done before the war was over” (U.S. 1971, 32), suggesting that the priority was to complete, even use, the bomb before the war ended rather than to have it available to bring an end to the war. This was hardly a topic, however, that this inquisitorial hearing cared to pursue. At these same hearings, Vannevar Bush, after endorsing inflated figures of the number of lives saved, stated that the bomb “was also delivered on time so that there was no necessity for any concessions to the Soviet Union at the end of the war. It was on time in the sense that after the war we had the principal deterrent that prevented Russia from sweeping over Europe after we demobilized” (Zachary 1997, 455). There was, of course, no such threat except in the minds of the Russophobes, who also believed that to make the threat of the bomb truly effective it had to be demonstrated in actual “battle.”

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Rethinking the Lumpen: Gangsters and the Political Economy of Capitalism

Gerald Horne

In his classic *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Karl Marx provides a vivid description of what he calls the lumpen proletariat: “vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, lazzaroni, pick-pockets, tricksters, gamblers, maquereaus [procurers], brothel keepers, porters, literati, organ-grinders, knife grinders, tinkers, beggars” (1979, 149; see also Engels 1975 and Winston 1973, 75).

This class—or stratum—is not to be confused with the unemployed, or with the proletariat itself; indeed, this grouping tends to prey on the working class. They are the detritus of capitalism and, in some ways, form a mirror image of the parasitical and exploitative practices of the bourgeoisie itself.

Class analysis is a staple of the Marxist method, and volumes have been devoted to various classes, ranging from the bourgeoisie to the petit bourgeoisie to the working class to the peasantry. Herbert Aptheker’s work on slavery can also be seen in this context in that it focuses on the irreconcilable antagonism between one class, slaves, and another class, slaveholders.

The lumpen proletariat, however, has not received the kind of sustained attention it deserves in the analysis of capitalism. This is unfortunate, for the lumpen over time have come to play an increasingly outsized role in the evolution of exploitative societies. Indeed, as one examines the fate of the former Soviet Union, it is apparent that what has transpired over the past decade is the decline of working-class organization and ideology

and the rise of the lumpen (Sterling 1994; Handelman 1995).

In the United States, the lumpen historically have played a large role. Just as England dumped lumpen elements in its colony of Australia, it did the same thing in Georgia and other colonies (Salgado 1982; Hughes 1987; Wood 1984; Galenson 1991; Asbury 1928). This served multiple purposes: it provided a safety valve for England itself, allowing the nation to rid itself of elements that might be disruptive and that were viewed as undesirable. Moreover, the kind of violence and subterfuge necessary to subdue indigenous peoples, whether they were in Australia or North America, was a particular specialty of “mountebanks, . . . tricksters, . . . brothel keepers” and the like, acting at the behest of powerful elites.

What needs to be considered more carefully is that over time not only did lumpen elements, particularly in the United States, develop powerful syndicates—or organized crime families—but some lumpen elements also, like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly, became part of the bourgeoisie itself and came to influence the already degraded culture of the bourgeoisie. Indeed, scholars and activists need to pay more attention to the role that organized crime has played in the evolution of the vaunted U.S. economy (Johnson 1995a; Browning and Gerassi 1980). Seeing imperialism itself as a form of organized crime tells us quite a bit, but not enough.

In the United States, the lumpen have come to dominate entire sectors of the economy and have attained particular influence within an industry that garners enormous profits while shaping consciousness—the entertainment industry. The images flowing from this industry have blanketed the planet and helped to inject the culture of U.S. imperialism into the four corners of the globe. Again, the import of this development needs to be considered more carefully, if we are ever to understand and subvert imperialism itself.

* * *

Of all of the crimes perpetrated by colonialism and imperialism in Africa, one of the most dastardly has been the dumping of

lumpen elements in colonized lands. In 1961, the Bureau of African Affairs in Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana, quoting Sir Cornwall Lewis, sadly reflected on the social costs of this practice: "The scum of England is poured into the colonies, briefless barristers, broken-down merchants, ruined debauchees, the offal of every calling and profession are crammed into colonial places." Citing the author Mabel Jackson, the report continued, "Each year a shipload of human flotsam and jetsam is sent to Angola and Mozambique from Portugal. Beggars embittered by hardship, thieves, assassins, incorrigible soldiers and sailors, together with a sprinkling of political exiles are dumped into the colonies. She tells us that sometimes these men are called *degradados*—[and] are accompanied by their wives who are girls from orphanages or reformatory schools whom they marry at the moment of embarkation from Europe" (*Voice of Africa* 1961).

These declassed elements took quite quickly to the reigning philosophy of white supremacy, as this new racial status of "whiteness" rescued them from their declining class status (see, for example, Roediger 1991, Ignatiev 1995, and Saxton 1991). Over time they helped to introduce and fortify a lumpen culture that is bedeviling independent Africa to this day.

Lumpen elements also have played a key role in another phenomenon that has plagued Africa over the years: mercenaries. Of course, the deployment of European mercenaries was not unique to Africa. For years the Swiss developed a notorious reputation as suppliers of mercenary forces to various regimes in Europe; these regiments were heavily lumpen (McCormack 1993, 80; see also Langley and Schoonover 1995). The promiscuous use of mercenaries was a close cousin to the deployment of pirates, buccaneers, and soldiers of fortune, whose bloodthirsty escapades often were the basis of the primitive accumulation of capital itself. One scholar has observed that the concept of "plausible deniability," which has served imperialism so well in episodes ranging from Watergate to the Iran-Contra scandal, was actually invented by rulers in the early seventeenth century as a spur to mercenarism and piracy: thus, if these bandits obtained the necessary booty—fine—and if they did not or were apprehended, then

responsibility for their activity could be denied (Thomson 1994; Tilly 1990).

These freebooters were a useful adjunct to U.S. foreign policy, as this young nation in the nineteenth century sought to seize territory throughout the hemisphere and beyond and to circumvent the ban on the slave trade (Brown 1980; Smith 1978; Krasner 1978). When the Civil War began, many of these forces joined with the Confederacy and terrorized entire states, particularly Kansas. A noteworthy band of thugs, Quantrill's Raiders, spawned the notorious outlaws Jesse and Frank James, Cole Younger, and a generation of cutthroats, providing a vivid example of the connections between the lumpen, racism, and war (Schultz 1996).

Nevertheless, the impact of what the Portuguese call the *degradados* has been most dramatic in the continent that Western Europe has specialized in degrading—Africa. The dumping of these forces in Africa continues to resonate, even though European colonialism has been uprooted. For example, in South Africa, the apartheid authorities concentrated more on fighting political dissent than crime. As a result, independent South Africa is faced with a staggering crime problem, fueled by what one newspaper there has called “state sponsored gangs who used government patronage to build criminal business empires.” In the province of Mpumalanga they are called “businessmen’s gangs” and were known to have worked with the Zulu chauvinist Inkatha Freedom Party; one gang was “run by five heavyweight black businessmen” (*Weekly Mail and Guardian*, 6–12 September 1996). An estimated 278 organized crime syndicates in South Africa are involved in drug-dealing, car-jacking, and worse (*Zimbabwe Herald*, 15 February 1996). Then there are the firms of mercenaries, such as Executive Outcomes, that sell their services to governments in exchange for diamond concessions (Horne 1995a).

Of course, the lumpen are far from being unique to Africa. In Japan, the highly influential Yakuza—gangsters known for their tattooed bodies and amputated fingers—are quite close to certain financial elites. They pioneered in running movie houses, strip shows, prostitution, and gambling (Saga 1991, 195). In China,

before the advent of Communist Party rule, the nationalist forces under Chiang Kai-shek collaborated with racketeers like Du Yuesheng of the notorious Green Gang; these thugs acted as labor bosses and plant managers and helped the nationalists break workers' power in 1927 (Wakeman 1994; see also Emsley and Knafla 1996).

Even today, according to the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (1 May 1997), it is estimated conservatively that about 10 percent of the elected officials in the legislature and National Assembly of Taiwan had gang affiliations. Taiwan's most well-known gang-affiliated politician, Luo Fu-tsu, "has identified himself as the 'spiritual leader' of one of Taiwan's largest gangs, the Heavenly Way Alliance." He is also "chairman of the legislature's judiciary committee," which formulates the basic laws of this rebel province of China.

Ascertaining the influence of this pervasive lumpen culture on the political culture of China—including the culture of the Communist Party—is a task worthy of consideration. In any event, these racketeers flourish during times of unrest and war, when normal channels of production are disrupted, as was the case, for example, in London during World War II (Murphy 1993, 81).

It is clear that the lumpen have not always had an entirely baneful impact. The role of "social bandits" is well known (Perez 1989; Schwartz 1989). Just as one distinguishes between big and small peasants and between workers who make \$1 million a year and those who earn less than \$10,000, one must make distinctions among various types of lumpen in their sociopolitical impact and potential. Still, as Alisse Waterston has pointed out, what must be carefully scrutinized is the rampant notion that gangsters represent some sort of culture of resistance to capitalism. There may be a scintilla of evidence imbedded in this idea but often ignored is the salient point that gangsters in the United States most notably have been highly accommodating to larger cultural norms and to the requisites of social production. Ultimately their defiance is limited to symbolic suggestion and often remains on the level of appearance. Indeed, the experience of most gangsters in this nation suggests that their goals are

congruent with and help to sustain the goals of capitalism itself. The heralding of the alleged resistance represented by gangsters obscures their true role in social reproduction, subverts actual resistance, and helps to suppress alternatives—particularly those of the working-class variety (Waterston 1994).

* * *

In the United States, organized crime is reported to have significant influence in the construction industry, the vending-machine industry, waste removal, and the usual staples of gambling, drugs, prostitution, and the like. Gangsters also have influence in areas where their presence has not attracted attention. For example, much attention is devoted to the pornography industry, particularly the issue of whether it is misogynist and should be restrained or, as some would have it, not to be tampered with because it is the truest expression of free speech (Kipnis 1996; Hunt 1991; Dworkin 1989). What is rarely mentioned—though highly relevant—is that this is one of many industries where racketeers wield hegemony; similarly, at least before the 1960s, the same could be said about so-called “adult bookstores” and gay clubs (Potter 1986; *Washington Post*, 12 April 1979).

The failure to divine the role of organized crime makes it difficult to analyze complex phenomena fully. For example, the music industry is one of the few industries where African Americans have played a central role. Here they have encountered the pervasive role of mobsters, some of whom were Jewish and Italian-Americans. Because of a failure to examine a particularly vile form of class exploitation, this antagonism has often been expressed in racial and ethnoreligious terms.

Thus, legendary music critic and producer John Hammond estimated that at one time “no fewer than three in every four jazz clubs and cabarets . . . were either fronted, backed, or in some way managed by Jewish and Sicilian mobsters” (Morris 1980, 4). Morris Levy, who owned the famous club Birdland, “never made any secret of his connections with the New York Mafia. . . . Many have speculated that it was the Mob who put

Levy in business and that he is beholden to gangsters to this day” (Picardie and Wade 1990, 53, 57). Crass exploitation of musicians—particularly African-American musicians—is widespread. Sadly, when objection was made to those of Levy’s ilk, more attention was at times paid to his ethnoreligious, rather than class, background.

Unfortunately, U.S. popular culture—and not just “gangsta rap”—is suffused with the influence of lumpen elements, which is one reason why it has been so stiffly resisted worldwide. This has not only been true of music and, as will be shown shortly, film, but literature as well. Herbert Huncke, described by the *New York Times* (9 August 1996) as a prostitute, “street hustler, petty thief and perennial drug addict,” was better known as the man “who enthralled and inspired a galaxy of acclaimed writers and gave the Beat Generation its name”; he was a former “runner for the Capone” gang and spent eleven years in prison, “including almost all of the 1950s.” He was featured in works by writers ranging from William Burroughs (1966) to Allan Ginsberg (1956) to Jack Kerouac (1957). This beat generation played a major role in shaping a U.S. youth culture of the 1960s that has had global influence.

* * *

What is most revealing about the role of gangsters in the political economy is their historic function as a disruptive force within the trade-union movement. Here their role as accomplice of the bourgeoisie and parasite is exposed crudely. In his analysis of the Fur and Leather Workers Union, Philip S. Foner limned “the vast chain that connected anti-labor employers, right-wing Socialist union chiefs and the most notorious of all gangs of underworld criminals,” referring to Louis (Lepke) Buchalter and Jacob (Gurrah) Shapiro (1950, 396). Sidney Lens reported that “Lepke and Gurrah at one time had two hundred and fifty thugs on their payroll to help run the New York painter’s union” (1949, 68). Congressional hearings during the 1930s investigated what Leo Huberman termed the “labor spy racket,” an entire industry that did the dirty work of disrupting unions on behalf of corporate elites (Huberman 1937; Howard 1924).

In his analysis of Ford Motor Company's use of mobsters, Stephen Norwood has observed that the United States is "the only advanced industrial country where business corporations wielded coercive military power." Harry Bennett, Henry Ford's top aide, was close to "Detroit's underworld," which was pivotal in the "violence and espionage" that animated "management's campaign to disrupt union organizing and break strikes" (1996, 367, 391). Indeed, in comprehending the weakness of the Left and the ascendancy of the Right in the United States, progressive forces have paid insufficient attention to the totality of the opposition faced by the working class.

The Teamsters, for decades one of the largest unions in the capitalist world, has been known as a union where mobsters held great influence. Union officials who opposed their rule were killed, and business at times was complicit in this effort (Witwer 1994, 175, 233). In Las Vegas, where mob-dominated unions have been prevalent, financiers like George Wingfield—a patron of the Republican Party—employed unsavory characters to keep unions out of the state and keep quiescent those who were not chased away (Raymond 1993, 79).

Organized crime—the "big lumpen"—historically has been one of the bourgeoisie's chief allies in this nation in maintaining its hegemony. In return, gangsters have been allowed, in some instances, to evolve "respectably" to bourgeois status themselves. In any case, mobsters in this nation have enjoyed a form of enrichment that the bourgeoisie in many nations will never see. This has added a level of coarseness and lack of principle to the otherwise crude and unprincipled rule of the bourgeoisie.

* * *

An examination of the memoirs and biographies of top U.S. mobsters is quite instructive in revealing their close ties with the state and the bourgeoisie, their ethnocentrism, and their ties to the entertainment industry. Arnold Rothstein, for example, has been given credit for bribing members of the Chicago White Sox to lose intentionally in the 1919 "World Series" of baseball. In his hometown of New York City there was an "alliance between [the] political machine [Tammany] and crime"; moreover,

“much of Rothstein’s bankroll came from Wall Street.” In fact, Rothstein was one of the earliest investors in “Loew’s Inc., parent company of MGM,” the film company. Rothstein acted as “middle man in the deal whereby [Horace] Stoneham, John McGraw and Judge McQuade purchased the New York Giants baseball team” (Katcher 1994, 73, 165, 192).

Meyer Lansky, a top mobster for decades, had business relationships with the Bronfman family, who started Seagram’s, and with Lewis Rosensteil of Schenley’s, who was close to FBI head J. Edgar Hoover. Lansky discussed international politics constantly and sensed earlier than most the triumph of the Cuban revolution, an event that led to substantial business losses for him and other mobsters; this event helped to spur an alliance between mobsters and the U.S. government to oust the Castro regime. Early on, Lansky contributed heavily to Zionist causes and later in life, because of perceived anti-Semitism on the part of his Italian-American colleagues—and in a transparent attempt to escape the long arm of the law—went to live in Israel; his effort to avoid deportation was backed by the Ultraright there. Lansky invested heavily in Las Vegas and felt that “the WASPS couldn’t have it . . . that a bunch of Jewish and Italian street boys could make so much money in Vegas and other places. They wanted to drive us out—and finally they succeeded” (Lacey 1991, 55, 80, 255, 291, 337).

Sam Giancana, who shared a mistress with John F. Kennedy, bragged that organized crime sponsored stars, including “the Marx brothers, George Raft, Jimmy Durante, Marie McDonald, Clark Gable, Gary Cooper, Jean Harlow, Cary Grant and Wendy Barrie.” He said that then President Harry Truman was “their boy” and added that the mob in “Chicago used its money and influence to try and get close to everybody from Ronald Reagan to Ed Sullivan.” Mobster Diamond Joe Esposito “routinely boasted of meeting with Calvin Coolidge and dispensing votes and favors at the President’s request.” Giancana “often conducted business with producer Harry Cohn” of Hollywood and proved helpful to him in his conflicts with unions. Indeed, the mob wanted a “takeover of unions, coast to coast. . . . By threatening union members with loss of work, the gangsters could

marshal the efforts of husbands, wives, sons, and daughters in support of virtually any scam the gang could dream up, including swinging an election" (Giancana 1992, 34, 105, 107, 158, 409).

Mickey Cohen, the top mobster in Los Angeles during the 1940s and 1950s, raised large sums for the Irgun in Israel. He was not alone in exploiting consciousness; Jack Dragna, another top mobster in Los Angeles, also was the head of a leading Italian-American civil rights organization in the city of stars. Like Lansky, Cohen was quite sensitive to real and imagined anti-Semitism at the hands of his Italian-American colleagues and others. Cohen also was close to studio boss Harry Cohn, but refused his request to murder Sammy Davis Jr. after the African-American star created a controversy because of his intimate relationship with actress Kim Novak. Like many other top mobsters, Cohen was close to Frank Sinatra, who once aligned with the Left but later became a top supporter of the Republican Party. Cohen too had political connections, claiming that "at one point during the 1940s and 1950s I had the police commission in Los Angeles going for me. A lot of the commissioners didn't have any choice. Either they would go along with the program, or they would be pushed out of sight." He funneled money to the political campaigns of Mayor Fletcher Bowron and added, "I had the private number in his office and the private number in his home." He also raised funds for the early political campaigns of Richard M. Nixon. He was grateful to the press controlled by William Randolph Hearst, which portrayed him as "sort of like a Robin Hood" and ordered his press organs to refer to the mobster as a "gambler" not a "hoodlum" (Cohen 1975, 43, 83, 91, 95, 106, 232; see also Reid 1973, 110, 171).

Abner "Longy" Zillman, a top hoodlum from New Jersey, also felt that "most of the Italian gangsters in New York were anti-Semites"; he too was close to Harry Cohn of Columbia Pictures and the Schenck Brothers of MGM, not to mention Dore Schary, "a boyhood friend" and yet another key movie executive. He too took a decided interest in unions though "this stemmed . . . from a need to find jobs for his army of relatives." Like Cohen and Lanksy, he had widespread interests, including steel mills, Kinney Parking Systems (eventually absorbed by

Time-Warner), jukeboxes, hotels, clubs, etc. (Stuart 1985, 50, 188, 88–89, 97).¹

An examination of the lives of mobsters raises intriguing questions worthy of investigation, even if one does not accept every aspect of their stories. If one examines “ethnic cleansing” in the Balkans, for example, it is apparent that organized crime figures like Arkan, who happen to be ultranationalists, basically plunder and loot other nationalities and hand over the booty to their “blood brothers” who join them; lumpen activity makes use of ethnicity for its own purposes (Rieff 1995; CNN 1997). Organized crime “families” have operated on a similar principle, insofar as they have tended toward ethnocentrism and have spread their plunder among members of the “family.” This raises the question of the extent to which the resurgence of nationalism nowadays has a distinctly lumpen flavor. As noted, the construction of “white” identity in colonized Africa was based predominantly on a shared melanin deficiency and the sharing of booty looted from the Africans.

Then there is the mobsters’ distinct view of “sex.” Homosexual rape has been a staple of punishment preferred by gangsters and, unfortunately, has become part of the culture of some prisons where they enjoy hegemony. Like its heterosexual counterpart, homosexual rape is more a crime of violence and subordination than a sexual act. Thus, a favored tactic of punishment by Giancana was shoving a poker “right up [the] ass of opponents”; Giancana once threatened to put a gun “up [the] ass” of an opponent and pull the trigger. When William Jackson was murdered by the mob, they “rammed an electric prod up his rectum” (Giancana 1992, 100, 148, 397).

The mob in pre-1959 Cuba specialized in holding sex shows, featuring live sex acts, particularly “lesbian acts” (Ragano and Raab, 1994, 46). Cohen bragged about owning “gay places,” though he quickly added, “I never had to go into them” (1975, 223). It is recorded that pirates, the precursors of organized crime, at times tended toward similar views of sexuality (Burg 1982). What needs to be interrogated more systematically is the influence of the lumpen—beyond male and female prostitution—on the sexual culture of the United States, particularly the

linkages between sex and violence (Chauncy 1994; Faderman 1991; Duberman 1991).

* * *

Such interrogations are necessary, for it is apparent that progressive forces may have underestimated the pervasive influence of organized crime on U.S. culture, despite its obvious role in assassination plots here and abroad. This is a shame, for as the United States spreads its tentacles of influence to Russia, the Balkans, and other parts of the globe, there has been an inevitable and not coincidental rise in organized crime. The influence of the mob has been hidden in plain view—its very prominence in the headlines and on the silver screen has dulled our sensitivity to its impact. *New York Times* investigative journalist Jeff Gerth is not far from the mark when he suggests that

organized crime has quietly entrenched itself within all levels of the social structure, leading Donald Cressey, consultant to the President's Commission on Violence, to conclude: "The penetration of business and government by organized crime has been so complete that it is no longer possible to differentiate 'underworld' gangsters from 'upperworld' businessmen and government officials." (1976, 132).²

These connections have been particularly evident in California and most notable in the careers of two of this state's favorite sons, Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. California, the "last frontier," within the past century was involved in an event that called for the bloodthirsty tactics that the lumpen have specialized in—the expropriation of the Native Americans. Here on the frontier, as Mickey Cohen has detailed, mobsters openly consorted with elected officials and otherwise "respectable" business figures. To cite one instance: Guy McAfee, chief of the vice squad of the Los Angeles Police Department in the 1930s, built a career in bookmaking and casino operations in league with mob figures; he helped build the Golden Nugget in Las Vegas, for example (Johnson 1975b, 55).

What is fascinating is that few of these relationships were shrouded in secrecy. Michael Denning has noted that “the pulp magazines were full of gangster stories; by the early 1930s, there were entire magazines devoted to ‘Gangster Stories,’ ‘Racketeer Stories,’ and ‘Gangland Detective Stories’” (1997, 254). Strikingly, the narrative that focused on the expropriation of the land of the Native Americans—the “western”—was supplanted in Hollywood by the gangster movie, which simply updated the story of plunder and politics (Dargis 1996).

Those who played gangsters on the silver screen, like George Raft, were close to real-life gangsters like Bugsy Siegel and Owney Madden. Howard Hughes, the industrialist, was a partner with Siegel in the Flamingo of Las Vegas. The director Howard Hawks was buddy-buddy with Al Capone. The movie *Scarface* included scenes from gangster life, such as Raft and Paul Muni bringing flowers to a rival gangster in a hospital, then pulling a gun out of the flowers and shooting him (Munn 1993, 32, 89, 204). Indeed, Meyer Lansky suggests, real mobsters learned from Raft styles of dress and mannerisms that came to define the gangster mode (Lacey 1991, 148).

Los Angeles and its primary industry, Hollywood, became an enormous source of profit for gangsters and, in turn, a massive recruiting broadside and image polisher for the gangster life. F. Scott Fitzgerald hinted at this dark alliance in his novel about Hollywood, *The Last Tycoon* (1969). This alliance deepened during the Depression of the 1930s when, according to one analyst, the studios were strapped for cash and mobsters like Longy Zwillman, who had preexisting relationships with Hollywood executives, provided an infusion of capital. This analyst, Hank Messick, has charged further that as a result of this alliance and “under the pressure of gangsters, art was being abandoned in favor of fast-buck productions designed to appeal to the largest common denominator of society” (1973, ix, 51–52).³

Still, the major import of this alliance was not solely relevant to the state of cinema art. No, this alliance aided mobsters in spreading their influence among unions, particularly unions in Hollywood—Teamsters, painters, and the like—and increased their influence in society at large. Again, this relationship was no

secret. Early on, Orson Welles sensed the deeper implications of this when he observed,

A group of industrialists finance a group of gangsters to break trade unionism, to check the threat of socialism, the menace of socialism or the possibility of democracy. . . . When the gangsters succeed at what they were paid to do, they turn on the men who paid them. . . . The puppet masters find their creatures taking on a terrible life of their own. (Denning 1997, 375)

Whether one accepts the analysis of Messick or Welles, the point is that there was a clear and open relationship between mobsters and one of the most profitable industries in the nation.

Thus the *Washington Times-Herald* complained on 26 September 1947 that most of the “California gangsters . . . either have social entree among the parvenus or themselves rank as the Astors and Vanderbilts of their time and place.” It was not accidental that this comment was made during a year when the post-war upsurge of strikes presented a direct and perceived threat to the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, which looked to the muscle of the mob to crush this insurgency. At the same time the infamous Merchants and Manufacturers Association of Los Angeles formed a Citizens Law and Order Committee to back up the Los Angeles Police Department in confronting strikers (*Labor Herald*, 15 February 1946).

Hollywood itself was being confronted with militant strikers in the wake of the dislodging of mob-dominated union leadership of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) and the rise of a militant Left-led Conference of Studio Unions.

The story actually begins in the 1930s when the studios became heavily dependent on mob money. At this juncture, Al Capone managed to install two of his cronies, Willie Bioff and George Browne, as leaders of the key film union, IATSE. The two quickly became comfortable with the allures of Southern California. Bioff, a convicted pimp who boasted of drinking one hundred bottles of beer in one sitting, came to own stock in Fox and became friendly with Harry Warner. He owned eighty lush

acres in the San Fernando Valley “hard by the estates of Tyrone Power and Annabella, Clark Gable and Carole Lombard”; his estate included “\$600 olive trees, . . . the biggest and oldest in California” (Muir 1940, 11; *Chicago Daily News*, 19 July 1935; *Chicago Tribune*, 12 June 1935).

As World War II approached, however, the enthusiasm for the mobsters, many of whom were sympathetic to Mussolini, began to crumble. The studios admittedly had been paying Bioff and Browne handsomely to maintain labor peace; however, an indictment of the labor leaders charged that this was not bribery but extortion. Capone’s chief lieutenant, Frank Nitti, committed suicide after his indictment—at least he was found with a bullet in his skull (*New York Times*, 20 March 1943; 5 November 1943; 28 October 1941).

Bioff and Browne wound up turning on their mob partners and testifying against them. Among those convicted as a result was Johnny Roselli, the mob’s key operative in Southern California. Born Filippo Sacco in Esteria, Italy, in 1905, he came to the United States in 1911 and quickly became involved in criminal activity. He rose to a position of authority among mobsters, became the “mafia’s bridge” to Mayor Frank Shaw of Los Angeles, and was the chief “labor enforcer” for the film industry. As his biographers put it,

The sudden and enormous success of the movies spawned an orgy of vice that threatened to shatter the industry. Drug use was widespread, including cocaine, heroin and illegal alcohol. Sexual favors were demanded by casting directors and became a sort of alternative currency. Mack Sennett’s Keystone Studios had to be tented and fumigated of venereal crabs.

Gambling was rife and controlled by the mob, with studio executives dropping as much as \$15,000 in one evening. Roselli was “instrumental” in the success of Harry Cohn and Columbia Studios; they lived in the same apartment building and exchanged rings. The “closest friend” of MGM’s Louis B. Mayer was Roselli’s mob comrade, Frank Orsatti (Rapple and Becker 1991, 75, 54, 60, 62).

But all of his elevated connections did not prevent Roselli from being convicted and sentenced in 1944. In 1945 the Conference of Studio Unions (CSU) led a bitter and acrimonious eight-month strike. When the studio retaliated by locking them out in 1946, picket lines were once more punctuated with regular scenes of violence. In 1947 Roselli was surprisingly released from prison, with some suggesting that his studio friends required the muscle he could muster in order to squash the CSU once and for all. His parole caused a “national scandal”; his attorney, Paul Dillon, had served as Harry S. Truman’s senatorial campaign manager, and these connections were seen as important in gaining his premature release (Johnson 1950, 30; *Los Angeles Times*, 5 July 1987).

The CSU was squashed, and Roselli reentered the film industry, this time as a producer. Among his works were *T-Men*, *Canon City*, and *He Walked by Night*. These films were “popular with critics and fans, and became a major influence on early radio and television shows such as *Dragnet*.” He also became involved in business dealings with the Guatemalan military in the early 1950s, reputedly participating in the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz in 1954, and he developed close ties to the Teamsters, Joseph Kennedy, and Las Vegas casinos. He was recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency to murder Fidel Castro. In the mid-1970s his torso was found in an oil drum floating off Miami Bay as a congressional committee called him as a witness in an investigation of his more nefarious activities. Bioff changed his name and moved to Phoenix, where he became friendly with Senator Barry Goldwater; his luck ran out in the midfifties when he was killed by a car bomb (Rapple 1991, 155, 202; Clarens 1980, 167; *Los Angeles Times*, 28 July 1948; *Los Angeles Examiner*, 26 August 1948).

Meanwhile, as they were going down to defeat, the CSU proclaimed that the “gangsters are coming. . . . The pay-off boys, slot machine kings, brothel keepers and underworld characters kicked out of town when the people recalled Mayor Frank Shaw” are back; “the movie magnates have allied themselves in the underworld . . . as they did in the days of Shaw” (CSU ca. 1945/1946).

* * *

The odyssey of Johnny Roselli was not the only intriguing aspect of the aftermath of the crushing of the CSU. Ronald Reagan, the former liberal leader of the Screen Actors Guild, aligned with the studios during this labor unrest; as a result he developed relationships with corporate leaders that were to prove essential in his subsequent races for elective office.

Sidney Korshak, a lawyer during Roselli's trial who had once served as counsel to Capone, went on to become, in the words of one FBI official, the "primary link between big business and organized crime." Lew Wasserman, formerly Reagan's agent, called Korshak "a very good personal friend." Korshak also had Hilton Hotels, MGM Hotel, Paramount, and General Dynamics as clients; he was friendly with J. Edgar Hoover. Wasserman had reason to be grateful to Reagan, since Reagan (when head of the Screen Actors Guild) allowed Wasserman to serve as both agent for actors and as their employer (Wasserman was head of MCA-Universal studio). This circumvented antitrust guidelines. Wasserman also was a major donor to the Democratic Party. Korshak was also quite close to the producer of the *Godfather* saga, Robert Evans, illustrating once again the close link between screen representations and reality (*New York Times*, 22 January 1996; *Hollywood Reporter*, 19 August 1994; Moldea 1986; U.S. Congress 1951).

* * *

The crushing of the Conference of Studio Unions after World War II was an essential element in cementing the ongoing trend of the increasingly pervasive influence on unions of organized crime—in other words, the ascendancy of lumpen organization and the decline of working-class organization in the United States. Despite the change in leadership in the AFL-CIO in October 1995 and subsequent reforms in the associated unions, including the Teamsters, this tendency persists (*New York Times*, 24 January 1992, 22 June 1990, 9 April 1989, 21 February 1984, 28 April 1983, 12 December 1980, 9 February 1980; *Los Angeles Times*, 9 February 1984; *Business Week*, 14 February 1983; *Wall Street Journal*, 5 October 1982; *U.S. News and World*

Report, 8 September 1980; *National Law Journal*, 29 February 1988). For example, Teamsters Local 817 in New York City, which represents many theater workers, is heavily influenced by the gang known as the Westies (English 1990, 155).

The movies and television, with their glamorizing of *Goodfellas* and *The Last Don* and *The Krays*, and the “Teflon Don” and “Sammy the Bull,” continue to play a substantial role in sanitizing their partners, the mobsters. Of late, this trend has afflicted newspapers as well; the *New York Times* recently lauded pirates as true democrats—sure, they looted treasures from Africa and kidnapped Africans for slavery but, after all, they shared the booty among themselves (11 March 1997).

The projecting of glamorous images of gun-toting thugs has not only been instrumental in providing legitimacy to them at home, it has also served to spread lumpen organization and culture abroad, lubricating the path for U.S. imperialism by undermining domestic working-class oppositional culture. Jamaican gangsters, for example, “worshipped the gunfighters in Hollywood westerns”; in Kingston there was a “time honored tradition of gunmen modeling themselves on Hollywood desperadoes.” There was a “secret symbiosis” between these Caribbean gunfighters cum “mercenaries” and “politicians”; this worked to the detriment of the working-class opposition led in the 1980s by the social democratic leader Michael Manley (Gunst 1995, xiv, 9, 74, 81).

As the example of Jamaica suggests, it did not escape the attention of many Blacks that others had amassed enormous wealth and improved their status as a group under capitalism by taking the route of the lumpen. Blacks in the United States—perhaps most notably in South Los Angeles—have not been blind to developments in the neighboring area of Hollywood. This led to the creation of “gangsta rap” and music moguls with plans as audacious as their lumpen brethren of the 1930s; yet somehow, in typical U.S. fashion, the discourse on this latter-day phenomenon has avoided making this obvious connection.

As early as the 1970s, African Americans had organized the Fairplay Committee—comprised of “an intimidating group of

people”—to improve their status in the music industry. They were trying to form a “black ‘family’ who would oppose the ‘families’” that controlled the business. In response, music impresario Morris Levy hired an African-American, Nat McCalla, “one of the first blacks ever to be admitted to the ranks of the Italian Mafia.” But this entente did not calm racial tensions; one mobster was irate about the rise of Black-owned Stax Records: “We just took over their publishing company and we are going to take over the record company, put all those niggers out, and put that head nigger in jail.” All of these racist dreams were not realized; however, in 1980 McCalla was “shot in the back of the head” in Fort Lauderdale and this early attempt of Blacks to take the lumpen route in the music industry was derailed (Picardie 1990, 173, 177, 192–93; 253).

* * *

Years ago Max Weber defined the state as the agency which held a monopoly of legitimate violence in the area under its control. However, even in the days of Weber, this was rarely true in the absolute sense, as various lumpen—from mercenaries to pirates to mobsters—regularly used violence, particularly against enemies of elites, such as the unions. The ability of these lumpen to deploy violence is just another example of a traditional goal of right-wing elites—diminishing the role of the state and increasing the role of nonstate actors. One would think that creating two, three, or many Somalias, where the state was eviscerated and the ability to survive was often dependent on the protection to be received by families—organized crime or otherwise—is the ultimate goal of these elites.

The *Economist*, in the same story in which it cited Weber’s familiar aphorism, noted the proliferation of private police forces in recent days.

Since 1970 a transformation has been under way. In that year, there were still more public policemen than private guards in America. The ratio of public to private was 14:1. Now there are three times as many private policemen as public ones; in California, four times as many. General

Motors alone had a private police force of 4200—more than all but five American cities. (19 April 1997)

In Northern Ireland “punishment squads” have arisen, “gangs who beat up their victims with baseball bats to suppress crimes in Loyalist or Catholic areas.” These squads have assumed the role that police departments have played (Johnson 1992; McKenzie 1994). Such developments are made to order for exploitation by organized crime factions, who are best able to fill the breach when the state withdraws (see, e.g., Horne 1995b). Such developments also provide unique career opportunities for those with a violent bent; Timothy McVeigh, convicted of blowing up the federal building in Oklahoma City in April 1995, is a former private security guard (Zielinski 1995, 50).

Meanwhile, the assault on the state and the decline of the Left, has opened rare and extraordinary opportunities for the lumpen. Often in conjunction with “legitimate” business, organized crime gangs have caused money laundering and drug dealing to expand exponentially (Chossudovsky 1996). It is almost as if the United States, which began as a nation with an enormous boost from England’s deported lumpen, now, two hundred years later, is not only still the land of opportunity for gangsters, but is exporting its model abroad and in the process is helping to create various “gangster republics.”⁴

In any event, as we confront the new millennium, a few points are obvious: certainly an acceleration of working-class ideology and organization is a must, but a condition precedent to this development is a better understanding—and subverting—of the lumpen ideology and organization that have become staples of U.S. imperialism.

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NOTES

1. Zwillman claimed that the conflict between Robert Kennedy and organized crime stemmed from disputes concerning the liquor business, a particular interest of Kennedy’s father, going back to the 1930s.

2. See also “Nixon, the Teamsters and the Mafia” (*Los Angeles Times*, 1 June 1973).

3. The mobster Lucky Luciano also objected to the images projected on television and the movies:

Many people put the blame for crime on parents and schools. . . . Not me. I put all the blame on movies and TV. Well, perhaps not all but most of it. Movies and TV make money out of glorifying brutal crime. I know that people in that business sweeten everything they do with a moral lesson, but they don't even believe it themselves. They present murders and robberies . . . and the real hero, the one who gets all the attention, is the biggest criminal. It's been like that for years and it's getting worse. I've seen hundreds, maybe thousands of kids turning bad. I'd bet anything that the majority of them learned their criminal ideas from movie and television shows. (*Granma Weekly*, 4 December 1996, quoting remarks made by him in 1957).

4. Giulio Andreotti, former Italian prime minister and a prime ally of Washington during the Cold War years, went on trial for, among other charges, alleged ties to organized crime (*New York Times*, 27 March 1997).

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“Political Correctness” and the U.S. Historical Profession

Herbert Shapiro

During the course of modern history, what is now termed “political correctness” has extensively affected academic life in the United States. Those insistent on economic and political orthodoxy have repeatedly sought to eliminate dissent from discourse within the university. Academic freedom has often led an imperiled existence as professors and students have only with difficulty been able to question seriously the status quo. The dominant institutions of U.S. society have worked to exclude from the marketplace of ideas critics desiring some reordering of the distribution of power within the nation’s social order. Within academe, influential segments of the professoriat have collaborated in enforcing repressive policies in the interest of preserving some slight degree of autonomy.

In so doing, the academic profession has, according to historian Ellen Schrecker, “sanitized its own teaching and research . . . [and] essentially eliminated the advocacy of controversial issues from acceptable academic discourse.” Schrecker further observes that “the academic profession never has protected and is unlikely to protect the jobs of its most outspoken radicals.” At its inception the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) cautioned professors to balance avowal of their own views with communicating the divergent views of other scholars.¹

Already in the 1890s economist Richard T. Ely was charged by a regent of the University of Wisconsin with writing “utopian, impractical and pernicious books,” consorting with union

organizers, and supporting strikes. Ely retained his position only by charging that the allegations were false. Whereas Ely fought off the attacks, Edward Bemis of the University of Chicago was dismissed for advocating such a measure as public ownership of railroads and utilities. In 1915 the dismissal of economist Scott Nearing by the University of Pennsylvania was related to his public agitation against child labor. His student, the distinguished New Deal economist Rexford Tugwell, wrote in his autobiography that Nearing “was causing the widespread disapproval of reactionary Philadelphians, for if one establishment attitude was more marked than any other, it was the desire to escape from unpleasant reality. All the less defensible results of free enterprise had to be concealed or ignored” (quoted in Saltmarsh 1991, 82).² Nearing later recalled: “Of course my activities contributed to my dismissal. The Pennsylvania State Manufacturers Association was opposed to child labor legislation or any other form of industrial legislation.” The association influenced the state legislature that appropriated funds for the university (Kaplan and Schrecker 1983, 27–29, 245). “Political correctness” as it actually existed in the U.S. past was not merely a matter of ideological argument but was translated into the destruction of careers.

Repressive policies have flourished in times of national crisis. World War I unleashed a storm of repression and demands for conformity. At Columbia University, President Nicholas Murray Butler told the 1917 graduating class there would be no room for “any among us who are not with whole heart and mind and strength committed to fight with us to make the world safe for democracy.” Butler made his meaning plain when he fired the dissenters James McKeen Cattell and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana. Other professors at a number of universities also lost jobs, among them William A. Schaper (Minnesota), Scott Nearing (Toledo), and Emily Balch (Wellesley) (Gruber 1975, 175). The extent of repression is not simply to be measured in the number of academics terminated outright, although it should be remembered, as Carol S. Gruber writes, “that there were more cases of persons losing their jobs because of attitudes or

activities relating to the war than previously have been accounted for” (174).

Support for the war, even support that compromised the scholarly integrity of academics, was also mandated by a variety of other means. At the war’s beginning, a meeting of college and university representatives adopted a resolution whose preamble stated: “In the supreme crisis that confronts the Nation the colleges and universities of America have the single-minded thought and desire to summon to the country’s service every resource at their command, to offer to the Nation their full strength without reservation” (99). Gruber observes that the overall picture seen was one of reorganizing college work “to serve the interests of government at war” (102). The AAUP formed a committee to determine how professors might provide active engagement in the war effort and thereby became ensnared with the compromises needed to mobilize a monolithic public opinion (116). Scholars found themselves drawn into the wartime propaganda apparatus maintained by the Wilson administration. Late in the war, college campuses were largely turned over to the Students’ Army Training Corps, which funded educational programs suffused with the militaristic spirit. A major place in social-science instruction was taken by “War Aims” courses seeking to portray the Allied cause as just (Kaplan and Schrecker 1983, 30; also see Levine 1996, 55–60).³

Among academics, historians were particularly active in the war effort, placing their skills at the service of the government. Historians organized the National Board for Historical Service (NBHS) and furnished much of the personnel for the publications division of the Committee on Public Information. Historians were unique in establishing a special professional organization to assist the war effort. The managing editor of the *American Historical Review* wrote of his interest in publishing articles promoting fuller knowledge of the British point of view. The secretary of the American Historical Association (AHA) affirmed the need in meetings of the profession to encourage “right patriotic feeling” (Gruber 1975, 120, 122).

The especially active role taken by historians in offering scholarly justification for the war may well have had its source

in the desire to prove that concern with the past was “useful” rather than antiquarian. A society that usually thought of history as marginally significant was to be shown the importance of knowing the past. The ambitions of historians would be served by responding to the government’s call to join the crusade. Historians played their part in generating a public atmosphere in which the Allied cause was to be viewed as noble and that of the Central Powers defined as evil. Historians, more than most academics, had long been entwined with questions of public policy, and it was unlikely that the government would accept indifference as the response of the profession to the war.

Adherence to a political line was reflected in the NBHS’s rejection of a syllabus emphasizing that permanent peace could not be secured by military means alone and the adoption instead of a syllabus undeviatingly justifying the Allied cause. The needs of politics were further seen in J. Franklin Jameson’s contention that it was appropriate to stress Britain’s “nobler and better” qualities. The wartime mood among many historians was expressed by Samuel B. Harding: “In the present emergency it seems clear to me that if the teacher cannot conscientiously and wholeheartedly lend his influence to supporting the war with Germany, during the continuance of the war he ought at least to keep quiet.” Harding’s comments were in keeping with a general campus atmosphere described by Carol Gruber as “so conformist that neither tolerance nor respect was allowed for differences of opinion about the war” (132, 137, 210).⁴

The demand for “political correctness” also appeared at the beginning of World War II and most virulently during the Cold War period. In 1940 the New York legislative Rapp-Coudert Committee forced the dismissal of more than forty college faculty alleged to be members of the Communist Party, among them the pioneering labor historian Philip S. Foner. One City College English instructor, Morris U. Schappes, was sent to prison for declaring to the committee that he knew of only three Communists among his colleagues (see Schappes 1993, 177–87; 1941).⁵

Following the war, dismissals of professors for Communist affiliation or refusal to furnish names to congressional committees became commonplace. At the University of Washington,

three professors, Joseph Butterworth, Ralph Gundlach, and Herbert J. Phillips, were dismissed in 1949 on the grounds that Communist Party members were by definition unqualified to teach (Sanders 1979).

In the next few years, other professors lost their positions for having the “wrong” political ideas. Temple University fired distinguished philosopher Barrows Dunham, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology suspended mathematician Dirk J. Struik from his teaching post (although continuing to pay his salary) after he was indicted for supposedly conspiring to overthrow the state of Massachusetts. The mathematician Lee Lorch, with a record of opposing racial segregation both in New York and the South, was forced to emigrate to Canada to obtain a teaching position. Only Atlanta’s Morehouse College offered psychologist Harry Steinmetz a teaching position following his dismissal from San Diego State. Rutgers University fired (after an earlier Rapp-Coudert-era dismissal) Moses Finklestein, later honored with a knighthood for his distinguished career at Cambridge University. The University of Minnesota ousted the African American philosopher Forest Wiggins and physicists Joseph Weinberg and Frank Oppenheimer, brother of J. Robert Oppenheimer.

Among other institutions at which professors were dismissed were the University of Cincinnati, the University of Washington, the University of Vermont, Jefferson Medical College, Tulane University, New York University, the University of Michigan, and the various colleges of the New York municipal system.

During the post–World War II decades and even after the Vietnam War, no university would offer a regular teaching post to Herbert Aptheker, in spite of his international reputation as an outstanding scholar of African American history. As early as 1949, the National Education Association’s Educational Policies Commission adopted a resolution formulated by Harvard president James B. Conant that stated membership in the Communist Party “and the accompanying surrender of intellectual integrity, render an individual unfit to discharge the duties of a teacher in this country” (Schrecker 1986, 111–12).⁶ In 1953 the Association of American Universities declared that a professor’s invocation of the Fifth Amendment laid “upon his university an

obligation to reexamine his qualifications for membership in its society.”

Having exhaustively studied the record of the McCarthy era, Ellen Schrecker concludes: “The academy did not fight McCarthyism. It contributed to it.” Until the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War, she writes, “there was no real challenge to political orthodoxy on the nation’s campuses” (189, 340, 341). The sociologist Lionel Lewis, although taking a more favorable view of faculty response to Cold War conformity than does Schrecker, also observes: “The failure of so many academic administrators to protect their institutions was a failure in courage that created a great deal of human wreckage. . . . They became the enforcement arm of the radical right” (Lewis 1988, 267, 272)

All this is by way of making the point that there has been a long-established tradition of “political correctness” or ideological conformism within the academy and that it was directed overwhelmingly against critics of the status quo, those academic radicals who departed from orthodox political and economic views and sought to elevate the position of the disfranchised and disadvantaged. What we now confront is the contention that the radicals, the contemporary advocates of feminism, multiculturalism, Marxism, and antiracism have become the new champions of “political correctness.” The Right presents itself as the defender of intellectual freedom against a Left that would close off the dialogue of ideas. The U.S. university is now portrayed as though under the domination of the radicals. This contention has been widely disseminated among the nation’s reading and television-viewing audience. And much of the argumentation relates to questions of history.

The “political correctness” theme has appeared in numerous books, among them Martin Anderson’s *Imposters in the Temple* (1992), Allan Bloom’s *Closing of the American Mind* (1987), Richard Bernstein’s *Dictatorship of Virtue* (1994), Roger Kimball’s *Tenured Radicals* (1990), Dinesh D’Souza’s *Illiberal Education* (1991), and Charles J. Sykes’s *Profscam* (1988). The books given widest attention have been those by Bloom and D’Souza. D’Souza writes: “The transformation of American

campuses is so sweeping that it is no exaggeration to call it an academic revolution.” Relevant to history instruction is his finding that most universities “have diluted or displaced” the core curriculum stressing the great works of Western civilization to make room for new courses in non-Western cultures, African American studies, and women’s studies. University leadership supposedly discourages faculty from presenting factual material that might offend minority students. Current leaders of the academy, he believes, “inhabit the offices of presidents, provosts, deans, and other administrators.” D’Souza notes the “well-meaning ideals” of affirmative action, but he presents affirmative action in practice as geared to the preferential treatment of persons with inferior qualifications. In his view universities are willing to sacrifice the future happiness of Blacks and Hispanics in the interest of proportional representation. He poses individual justice against group equality and asserts that racial division is the consequence of elevating group equality. D’Souza gives much attention to the curriculum development at Stanford University, where the Western Civilization course in place since 1980 was transformed into a new set of courses entitled “Cultures, Ideas and Values.” Attacking the readings proposed for inclusion in the CIV courses, he singles out for criticism the book *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984), as a work reflecting “a projection of Marxist and feminist views onto South American Indian culture.” D’Souza insists that Stanford students have been provided with a curriculum that “now consists of little more than crude Western political slogans masquerading as the vanguard of Third World thought.”

In a chapter titled “Tyranny of the Minority,” D’Souza contends that intellectual freedom was violated when Harvard historian Stephan Thernstrom was criticized for racial insensitivity in the course he offered on ethnic groups. At the same time he dismisses as a work of shoddy scholarship, generated by political considerations, historian Martin Bernal’s study *Black Athena* (1987), which sets out the case for the Egyptian roots of Greek civilization (D’Souza 1991, 59–93, 194–228).

D’Souza offers a string of proposals, including replacing race as grounds for affirmative action with the category of

“socioeconomic disadvantage,” the prohibition of Black student organizations in the name of discouraging “minority self-segregation,” and a study of the classics that avoids a new form of “cultural imperialism in which Western intellectuals project their own domestic prejudices onto faraway countries, distorting them beyond recognition to serve political ends” (251–57).⁷

By the time *Illiberal Education* appeared, much of the context for the furor over “political correctness” (or PC) had already been set by Allan Bloom (1987). The 1960s are identified as a period in which “democratization of the university helped dismantle its structure and caused it to lose its focus.” In a virtual hymn of hate against a decade, Bloom declares that the ’60s were a time of “unmitigated disaster” for universities, in which institutions succumbed to the pressure of mass movements as in Nazi Germany. Hailing the 1950s as a period of academic calm (he tells readers that professors “were not fired, and they taught what they pleased in their classrooms”), Bloom finds that “what happened to the universities in Germany in the thirties is what has happened and is happening everywhere.” Bloom is vehemently critical of professors, recalling scenes in which they fawned over what he terms “rabble.” Making clear his own politicized version of U.S. nationalism, he announces that “the responsibility for the fate of freedom in the world has devolved upon our regime” (65, 312, 320, 324, 382). The writer who sets out such a premise is unlikely to be much interested in the cultures and ideologies of other nations and peoples.

The campaign against PC received official endorsement when President George Bush told a University of Michigan audience in 1991 that free speech was under attack on college campuses. He upheld freedom “to think and speak one’s mind” as the most vital of all our liberties. Political correctness, the president said, replaces old prejudices with new as it invites people to look for insult in every word or gesture (*New York Times*, 5 May 1991). Few remembered that two years earlier Bush had called for amending the Bill of Rights so as to ban flag burning.

Beginning with the early 1990s, a number of prominent historians joined in sounding the alarm about PC. Historian C. Vann Woodward reviewed D’Souza’s *Illiberal Education* favorably,

contending that at Stanford grievances had been used “to denigrate and reject the whole heritage of Western civilization.” Woodward notes that D’Souza “lines up on the right wing” but observes that “one need not be a right winger to be concerned about the problems D’Souza raises.” Woodward sees universities today in upheaval revolving around “the denial of freedom—freedom of thought, speech, and teaching—academic freedom.” There are precedents for such denial—in the menace of McCarthyism and, according to Woodward, in the 1960s, when students, supported by many professors, attempted to silence defenders of government policies. The new danger comes from those arguing the cause of minority rights and sensitivities within the university. He shares D’Souza’s alarm about minority self-segregation, finding its sources in policies of affirmative action that brought ill-equipped students to campus, resulting in frustration and defensive withdrawal from the larger university community.

Woodward grants that universities have neglected minority contributions to Western civilization, but in his eyes “these reasons for complaint were used to denigrate and reject the whole heritage of Western civilization, the common culture to which they owed their very right to protest.” Apparently without reading the book in question, Woodward unreservedly accepts D’Souza’s description of Rigoberta Menchú as a feminist and a Marxist. He sees historical objectivity compromised by claims asserting the Egyptian origins of Greek and Roman culture and declares that the fundamentals of intellectual freedom “are rapidly diminishing in many quarters, and in some the ancient right of disputation has already yielded to the practice of indoctrination.” The academy, he contends, is now shaped by “blatant tribalism” and “competitive racial chauvinism.” Woodward closes his review with an expression of hope that “the current aberration” will be halted, calling upon scholars to stand up and be counted (1991a, 1991c).

Ironically, Woodward himself is open to criticism for allegedly imposing standards of “political correctness” upon academic decision making. Criticism has been directed at Woodward’s veto of the 1975 invitation from students at Yale

University's Davenport College to Herbert Aptheker as a guest lecturer. According to Woodward biographer John Herbert Roper, the Yale historian "treated this question almost as if Aptheker were applying for a chair in his history department." The episode evoked considerable controversy (Woodward endorsed false charges of plagiarism against Aptheker), with Roper judging that Woodward took "unspoken and perhaps even unacknowledged pleasure" in settling old scores with the Communist Party (1987, 277–84; see also Lynd in this volume).

If Woodward's praise of D'Souza was set forth in measured tones, Eugene D. Genovese's endorsement was fervent. In an article "Heresy, Yes—Sensitivity, No," carrying the subhead "An Argument for Counterterrorism in the Academy," Genovese judges that D'Souza has recounted "in a manner both responsible and chilling, the atrocities that ravage our campuses" (1991). The alleged atrocities are said to include "the repression of professors and students who take unpopular stands against quotas, affirmative action, busing, abortion, homosexuality and much else." Genovese is of the opinion that "our conservative colleagues are today facing a new McCarthyism in some ways more effective and vicious than the old." Asserting that at Harvard Stephan Thernstrom and others "have been savaged for political incorrectness in the classroom," Genovese claims that university administrations seek to have faculty censor themselves.

Two elements of his review are noteworthy. One consists of a repudiation of democracy in any reasonable definition of the term. Genovese connects a decline in academic standards to "the radical egalitarian conviction that everyone is fit for, and has a right to, a college education." Vulgarizing the notion of equality, he writes that if some people, "black or white, begin with less cultural advantage, less preparation, and less talent than others, equality of opportunity can only result in the perpetuation of the initial levels of inequality." Then, too, Genovese supposes that academic freedom must be based on constriction of democracy, implying somehow that majority rule and minority rights are not both components of democracy. He states: "The hard truth is that academic freedom—the real work of scholarship—requires a willingness to set limits to the claims of democracy. It requires a

strong dose of hierarchical authority within institutions that must be able to defy a democratic consensus.” Will academic freedom really be safeguarded if universities are to be ruled by hierarchy, with all the deference and arbitrariness such governance entails, excluding a reliance upon collegial authority?

Secondly, Genovese’s comments about PC reflect a tendency to define academic issues in the most incendiary terms, in which reasoned discourse becomes extremely difficult. It is not enough for him to take issue with campus phenomena of which he disapproves; they must be labeled as “campus barbarism.” Regarding administrators and faculty who negotiate with “storm troopers,” Genovese offers the following guideline: “In every such political struggle, honorable men and women can defeat terrorism only by unleashing counterterrorism against cowardly administrators and their complicit faculty.” He would drive into administrators “the terrifying recognition that counterterrorists will (figuratively) draw their blood for every concession made to terrorists; that administrators who deftly avoid calls for their ouster from the one side will face such calls from the other side; that, whatever they do, they will suffer hard blows; and that, despite every smart move known to God and man, they will find no place to hide from any war that the terrorists unleash.” All this is to “liberate” administrators so they will stand on their principles. At the end, in language echoing the rhetoric of the Cold War, Genovese exclaims, “It is time to close ranks.”

Genovese’s comments here reflect the authoritarian vision of U.S. society outlined in his contribution to a *Commentary* magazine symposium (1990). He turns to these comments on the drug problem and finds that action “would require curtailment or redefinition of civil liberties, not to mention the high cost of incarcerations and some judiciously selected executions.” The same principle, he observes, is applicable to the problems of racism, poverty, crime, homelessness, pornography and all other practices incompatible with civilized life. While appearing as the champion of intellectual freedom, he would open the door to basic restriction of constitutional rights.

Genovese connects the PC issue to the long-standing issue of whether academic organizations should take positions on matters of public controversy. He told one interviewer:

I realize now that it did begin in the 1960s. It was at the American Historical Association annual convention in 1969 that it hit me. Some people wanted the A.H.A. to take an on-the-record position against the war in Vietnam. I was much more against the war than most people, but to me the point of the A.H.A. was that I could meet and debate with conservatives and liberals. I realized that I was against the politicization of an academic forum. (quoted in Hitchens 1994, 34)

Returning to the PC question in a *Partisan Review* article, Genovese argues that “the exponents of the totalitarianism now derisively called ‘political correctness’ are aiming their hardest blows against Western civilization itself and against the very idea of a distinct American nationality” (1994a, 426). Endorsing William Bennett’s call for respect of “a Western civilization that has brought the world to undreamed-of heights of personal freedom,” Genovese rails against his professorial opponents: “The assault on Western civilization and on Christianity that now disgraces our campuses has led inexorably to the assault on the idea of an American nationality and to the suicidal program for the transformation of our nation into a loose federation of People’s Republics of Purported Victims.” Again he casts the “political correctness” controversy in Manichean terms.

Genovese sees the PC issue as relevant to the larger question of fixing responsibility upon a diverse assortment of radicals, liberals, and democrats for what he identifies as the “mass murder” engaged in by the socialist world (1994b). He asserts that no one should be surprised that none of the leading U.S. historical organizations has sought to devote sessions to examination of the “socialist debacle,” and couples this with criticism of the Organization of American Historians for considering a resolution condemning apartheid. He ends the piece with the contention that “the deepest trouble with ‘political correctness’ arises from its thinly disguised invitation to an endless repetition of crimes, atrocities, and, worst of all, failures.” He judges the “movement” as marked by a record of “political and economic failure,” a record it cannot escape “no matter how many pyrrhic victories it

piles up on deranged and degraded college campuses.”⁸ He seeks to win the ideological argument against those calling for the further democratization of academia by blaming them for the debacle of socialism. Genovese’s taking up cudgels against “political correctness” is part of his gradual drift to identification with the political Right.

In a review of several of Genovese’s recent books, David Brion Davis notes Genovese’s defense of the “rational and critical tradition” of Western civilization, but also observes that “from his recent books on Southern conservatism one would never suspect that the Republican Party and much of our national politics itself have been dominated by Southern conservatives and a Southern-led Christian coalition” (1995). Davis calls attention to the strange turns Genovese has taken in his abandonment of socialism:

He does not seem to sense that his lifelong hostility to Emersonian liberalism and market values might drive him into a camp that uses the language of communalism and family values to justify the dismantling of the only agencies of power that can check corporate crime and corruption; regulate the excesses of the market; protect the environment; provide some physical assistance and decent treatment for the unemployed and unemployables; and sustain the kind of culture and scholarship that transcends the marketplace in highly diverse communities. (43–46)

For all his admiration of Southern paternalism, Genovese now upholds the established order of corporate capitalism.

Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, director in the 1990s of the Women’s Studies Program at Emory University, is another historian with prior “left” credentials who sees university integrity menaced by PC. She concludes that Dinesh D’Souza is “essentially accurate,” joining him in the perception that “a rising tide of thought control, special pleading, cultural separatism and intellectual dishonesty is inundating our campuses and subverting the true purposes of education, not to mention freedom of thought and racial integration.” While declaring that D’Souza “has brilliantly captured the excesses and abuses of the new policies and intellectual trends,” Fox-Genovese goes only so far with

the author of *Illiberal Education*, observing that African American studies and women's studies "do have legitimate claims upon our scholarly attention." And she faults D'Souza for unwillingness "to criticize any of our inherited intellectual traditions or academic practices" (1991b). After all, we are not so far in time from the era when anti-Semitism and racism dominated much of the academy.

Fox-Genovese's book *Feminism without Illusions* reflects her identification with academic values challenged by the advocates of multiculturalism (1991a, 168–71). At bottom she embraces a nationalism with the potential for commitment to a missionary conception of the U.S. role in the world. "For better or worse, we are also, as recent events in Eastern Europe and China testify, the model for the aspirations of people around the world" (197). She is open to revision of the canon (that representation of humanity's cultural heritage), but she states that the unrevised canon, "with all its faults, has represented a genuinely great civilization that has led the world in establishing the claims of individual rights while upholding the claims of social order." The very reclaiming of the canon "is to insist on the necessity for that common culture which defines us as the products of a common history and the members of a collectivity—the heirs of Western civilization." May it not be that as a new millennium approaches we will define ourselves also as the heirs of other civilizations and cultures? (197).⁹

A voice that has now entered the dialogue about "political correctness" is that of Arthur Schlesinger Jr. Schlesinger notes that U.S. history was long written in the interests of white Anglo-Saxon males, and he recognizes the uglier features of Anglo rule—callous discrimination against later immigrants, racism inflicted upon nonwhites and the creation of filiopietistic myths (1991, 24). But he views as alarming the rising consciousness of ethnicity appearing in the United States in recent decades. "The rising cult of ethnicity," he writes, "was a symptom of decreasing confidence in the American future"; the ethnic upsurge threatens to become a counterrevolution against the original notion of the United States as a unified people (16). In support of his case, Schlesinger writes what scarcely can be

doubted, that W. E. B. Du Bois did not shrink from contact with the Eurocentric tradition. Du Bois did indeed state in his *Souls of Black Folk*: “I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and welcoming women glide in gilded halls. . . . I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they come all graciously with no scorn or condescension.” But Du Bois, of course, did not define his cultural heritage in any narrow terms, and he was an internationalist at the same time as he affirmed his special pride in his African inheritance.

Schlesinger expresses his concern with the prevalence of separatism on college campuses and sets this in the framework of *The Disuniting of America* (1991). He observes that “the fragmentation of campuses in recent years into a multitude of ethnic organizations is spectacular—and disconcerting” (59). But if fragmentation has led to decomposition, this has been a process going on over many decades as racial separation, quite often segregation, has dominated university social life. Only recently have there been more than a very small number of nonwhite students and professors at most colleges. Harvard, during the years Schlesinger taught there, had almost no African American faculty.

When he discusses “political correctness” directly, Schlesinger finds that “a peculiarly ugly mood seems to have settled over the one arena where freedom of inquiry and expression should be most unconstrained and civility most respected—our colleges and universities” (64). He defines PC:

Moderates who would prefer fending for themselves as individuals are bullied into going along with their group. Groups get committed to platforms and to we-they syndromes. Faculty members appease. A code of ideological orthodoxy emerges. The code’s guiding principle is that nothing should be said that might give offense to members of minority groups. (65)

The history of the United States has been marked by adherence to ideals of democracy and human rights, Schlesinger

writes, although he grants there has been “an inevitable Anglo-Saxon coloration” to the U.S. synthesis (67). But that adherence has in practice been accompanied by features of class, racial, and gender domination. If the incongruity of ideals and social practice is to be overcome, may there not be need for modification of the synthesis that takes greater account of the diverse streams in our heritage? The problem with Schlesinger’s argument is that, consistent with his historical work, he sees the defects of U.S. society as flaws only blemishing an organization of society that in its fundamentals is beyond criticism. If the American, as Schlesinger writes, is the “best hope” (83), does that hope need to be pitted against serious reconsideration of U.S. culture?

Some further sense of Schlesinger’s priorities can be learned from his comment that “after we have mastered our own culture, we can explore the world.” As concerns the integration of ethnicity into U.S. culture, his notion is that the choice is either melting pot or chaos (*Wall Street Journal*, 23 April 1990).

Schlesinger’s views on these matters were reviewed favorably by C. Vann Woodward. *The Disuniting of America*, Woodward observes, is “a brief but brilliant” book. Brushing aside Martin Bernal’s work, Woodward writes that “classical scholars reject the dependence of Greek civilization on Egypt.” (Even in the conservative organ of the National Association of Scholars, *Academic Questions*, reviewer Michael Poliakoff writes that Bernal’s work *Black Athena* will engender “some productive reflections in classical studies and intellectual history (1991, 25). Stigmatizing an entire continent, Woodward writes that “contemporary Africa offers little but famine, civil wars and police states,” and, ignoring such figures as Paul Cuffe, Martin Delany, Henry McNeal Turner, Marcus Garvey, and much of the writings of W. E. B. Du Bois, he declares that rejection of Africa has long been the dominant message of Black leaders. Woodward judges that a variety of minorities have joined “in the common cult of victimization, inflammable sensitivity, alibi-seeking, and self-pity,” but he particularly finds that “blacks may have acquired the greatest susceptibility to paranoia.” Apart from his references to a few prominent public personalities, he seems

to know little of the full range and scope of African American opinion (1991b, 43).

The prominent historian of Europe, Gertrude Himmelfarb, is another to take up the cudgels against PC. Focusing on multiculturalism, she writes: “Multiculturalism has the obvious effect of politicizing history. But its more pernicious effect is to demean and dehumanize the people who are the subjects of history” (1994, 154). She is responsive to the claims of nationalism so long as it is a “Western-type, civic-minded nationalism,” but she has little use for intellectuals “in all the liberal democracies, who ‘demystify’ and denigrate their own nationalities as ‘Eurocentric,’ xenophobic, even racist, while at the same time giving legitimacy to nationalities in the Third World and elsewhere which are notably illiberal, inhumane, and, not infrequently, racist” (120–21). It is striking that she, who avows regard for civil liberties, apparently holds, “Not all nationalities are worthy of respect and recognition. Not all peoples have a ‘right’ to independence and self-determination” (119). Himmelfarb believes that with the collapse of the Soviet Union it is now necessary to move on to challenge liberalism to act against its own weaknesses and excesses (75). Her contention is that the contemporary attack upon the “canon” is a display of “professional deformation.” She inveighs against a broad spectrum of trends that have come to influence the writing of history, ranging from postmodernism to “history from below” (39). Himmelfarb clearly appears as an authentic voice of neoconservatism within the historical profession.

The historian Theodore Hamerow has also advanced arguments laying a basis for the conjuring up of PC. While critical of a number of contemporary approaches to history, including cliometrics and psychohistory, he is particularly concerned with “history from below,” contending that the notion that those with power and position are no more important than those lacking such assets has alienated the general reader (1987, 165, 201).

Useful in setting the PC question in perspective is Jesse Lemisch’s analysis of the profession, *On Active Service in War and Peace* (1975). He persuasively argues that the historians

who then dominated the profession sought to confine debate to a narrow range of ideas. They constituted a historical Establishment and certainly did not welcome interlopers. Lemisch finds that presidential speeches of the American Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians in the 1960s “reflected a very narrow range of politics and activism.” Such figures as Samuel Flagg Bemis, Thomas Bailey, and John K. Fairbank all continued to wage the ideological Cold War. With regard to organizational procedures, the AHA, Lemisch observes, held off efforts for greater membership participation in decision making by changing the constitution and so lessening the possibility for meaningful debate. He also reminds us of the uncivil reviews accorded by scholarly journals to books by New Left historians in the early 1960s. Certainly the Harvard historian Oscar Handlin did not contribute to open dialogue when he characterized William Appleman Williams’s *Contours of American History* as “farcical” and “an elaborate hoax” (Lemisch 1975, 111–12). The point of all this is that, even in the 1960s, dissenters from Cold War liberal and conservative orthodoxy could obtain a fair hearing for their ideas only with considerable difficulty.

Ronald Radosh, whose intellectual trajectory has taken him from the New Left to the neoconservative Right, has been among the more vehement historians to discover that PC menaces the academy. Praising Eugene Genovese for an earlier 1971 attack on the “nihilist perversions” of the New Left, Radosh argues that the underlying motive of those taking up the new social history “is that this is a preparation for developing the consciousness needed to reach socialism. They are in history because of a political goal they assumed at the start, and this is the way of realizing it. This is a new orthodoxy that I find very dangerous.” Radosh accuses such historians of “blackballing” anyone who does other kinds of historical work. He asks, “Isn’t it proper to respond as harshly as possible to this kind of new belief that there’s a black esthetic or a particular women’s esthetic that has to replace things?” (1993).

Following the Harvard episode in which he became involved, Stephan Thernstrom has appeared as a martyr to the cause of

resisting PC. He himself has described complaints by students about his alleged “racial insensitivity” as “ludicrous, pathetic and outrageous,” and relating his experience to the McCarthy era, he contends “this seemed to me very much like being named a subversive by Senator McCarthy, and indeed somewhat worse in that McCarthyism was external to the academy and had very little support from within it” (1990–1991, 15–16). Thernstrom here may have forgotten that in the 1950s those responsible for institutional decisions and professional organizations of academics only infrequently supported faculty who invoked the Fifth Amendment.

The furor about “political correctness” has been given organizational form by the conservative National Association of Scholars, funded by the right-wing John M. Olin Foundation. Among figures prominently identified with the NAS’s journal *Academic Questions* are Gertrude Himmelfarb, Irving Kristol, and the Rutgers sociologist Irving Louis Horowitz. In 1993 the organization bestowed its Sidney Hook Memorial Award on C. Vann Woodward. There is some irony in naming the award for Hook if we remember his 1939 warning to the academic world to cleanse itself of Communists or his later 1950s argument in a piece “Heresy, yes—Conspiracy, no,” that Communists were inherently unfit to teach (Schrecker, 1986, 105, 106). Woodward’s acceptance speech, “Where the Unthinkable Can Be Thought,” centered around the theme that the university is not an appropriate place for political struggle, “is not a political institution,” although this truth does not change the reality that the content of much of university life, both in the United States and abroad, has always been political.

The notion that the U.S. academy is dominated by radicals seeking to impose ideological conformity upon higher education does not conform to reality. Professors with views of the political Right continue to teach and their tenured positions remain undisturbed. Conservatives are a presence in innumerable academic departments, and no university is in the hands of leftists. The very structure of U.S. colleges and universities, with their dependence upon public subsidy and ultimate governance by trustees or overseers most often responsive to the priorities of

large corporations, necessarily militates against such a prospect. The contrivance of the PC issue has obscured the fact that in recent years there has been a considerable increase in violence and harassment directed against minority persons, reflecting the general resurgence of racism in the United States.¹⁰

Evidence against at least two arguments for the existence of the PC menace can be cited here. Much has been made of the contention that recent reexaminations of Western Civilization courses amount to extraordinary politicization of course offerings shaped earlier by purely scholarly considerations. Yet historian Gilbert Allardyce has shown that Western Civilization courses owe their origins to a "War Aims" course developed at Columbia University during World War I, later structured in 1919 as Western Civilization. The innovation stemmed from the wartime decision for a U.S.-European partnership. As Allardyce notes, the war issues course was a "strange marriage between war propaganda and the liberal arts" (1982). The course was formulated in the context in which the Students' Army Training Corps exerted a pervasive impact upon the university atmosphere. The origins of the course do not necessarily condemn its academic content, but they do speak to the issue that political judgments influenced curriculum, just as in the late 1960s the tide of opinion in the larger society played a role in establishing courses in African American and women's studies.

Allardyce's point is reinforced by humanities scholar W. B. Carnochan in *The Battleground of the Curriculum* (1993). Carnochan quotes Thorstein Veblen as insisting that the university is "still the corporate organ of the community's dominant intellectual interest." The university is an institution, according to Veblen, "subject to the conditions and limitations that surround any change in the habitual frame of mind prevalent in the community." Veblen's words should not be read as excluding academic dissent, but they do set the university in its social context. Carnochan throws down the gauntlet at the beginning of his book: "Once upon a time, so legend goes, all was harmony in the American curriculum, a time of accepted values, practices, texts; it was a golden age. This legend is simply wrong." He calls attention to the key role played by historians in the shaping of

the Columbia course. Carnochan also sheds light on the roots of the “great books” approach to university teaching, observing that “far from being ideologically neutral, the cult of ‘great books,’ as certain of its critics have realized or believed, was touched by obsessional concerns about ‘race,’ arising from the ‘nativist’ tradition, that flourished in the early decades of the century.” Pioneers in the “great books” approach to learning were the racist George Edward Woodberry and John Erskine, whose work, Carnochan states, was “laced with misogynist propositions” (xiii, 1, 84).

Much public attention has been paid to Stanford University’s replacement of the “Western Culture” course with a new course titled, “Cultures, Ideas, and Values” (CIV). The allegation has been made that the change was a caving in to radical political pressure determined to impose a program of “political correctness” on Stanford. Yet an examination of university materials (texts of faculty speeches published in *Campus Report* and items in *Stanford News* and the student newspaper *Stanford Daily*) regarding this matter reveals this was hardly the case. The work of course revision was the result of prolonged faculty discussion in which various views were debated. There was broad agreement that the process of introducing some non-Western perspective into the original course had long been delayed. The only extraneous intrusion was that of Secretary of Education William Bennett who, at Stanford and in the broadcast media, contended that the values of Western civilization were at stake in the battle to preserve the “Western Culture” course. (Stanford provost James N. Rosse wrote to the *Wall Street Journal* [17 January 1989] that the only intimidation came from outside the university.)

In a letter to the *New York Review of Books*, Stanford historian George Fredrickson wrote that there was no “political correctness” line at Stanford, that standards for faculty appointments had not been lowered, and that affirmative action never meant the employment of unqualified applicants. Fredrickson introduces a note of clarity:

Everyone knows that the real power in American society does not rest with minorities, feminists, and cultural

leftists. Under the banner of providing free speech for cultural conservatives, those who pay the bills for our universities might find a way to silence or deny tenure to the radicals of various kinds who currently constitute a small minority of the faculty in elite institutions. That would be a new McCarthyism indeed. (1991, 74)

Numerous historians participated in the curriculum discussions at Stanford. A representative statement of the case for the new course was that of intellectual historian Carolyn Lougee, who affirmed her continued interest in great works of literature but emphasized the need to study them in a “broader intellectual context.” She focuses upon new approaches that “view intellectual development as a dialogue of ideas, attitudes, and modes of thinking that involves a plurality of social levels and groups.” In Lougee’s view the prescriptiveness of the “core list” impedes attempts to implement these approaches (*Campus Report*, 27 January 1988). Expressing an opposing view was historian Carl Degler, who argued that “the idea of including non-Western texts in CIV makes no historical, cultural, or logical sense” and that there was no direct connection between the dominant ideas and institutions in U.S. culture and the cultures of Africa or Eastern Asia. At the same time Degler sought some compromise that would avoid reliance on a required list of “great books” (*Campus Report*, 10 February 1988). In the context of this discussion concerning the supposedly coerced nature of Stanford’s decision, what emerges clearly is the reasoned nature of the discussions in which a body of professors thoughtfully judged issues according to their merits. When we turn to the reading lists for the several segments of the CIV course, we see a wide assortment of traditional classical works, with the addition of works by W. E. B. Du Bois, Simone de Beauvoir, Elie Wiesel, Ralph Ellison, Frantz Fanon, and Toni Morrison (*Campus Report*, 17 May 1989). Stanford students, in the course of their university experience, will surely encounter numerous classic writings.

There have been widespread rebuttals to the view that the U.S. academy is menaced by PC. The American Association of University Professors, consistent with its heritage as a defender

of academic freedom, recognized that academic due process might be infringed by “inflammation of the campus climate” and assured professors it would defend the integrity of university personnel processes. But it took sharp issue with the charge that feminists and minority groups were chiefly responsible for attacks directed against university faculty, and it emphasized “the very real differences between the aggressions against individual rights systematically carried out by an arm of Congress and the haphazard, sometimes heated, and not infrequently cantankerous disagreements that inevitably attend the exchange of opinions on campus.” The attacks, the AAUP said, originate in animosity toward equal opportunity “and its first effects of modestly increasing the participation of women and racial and cultural minorities on campus” (AAUP 1991, 48).

Historians have been active among the scholars who have affiliated with Teachers for A Democratic Culture, an organization led by such academics as Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Gerald Graff. The historians have included Gary Wills, Gerda Lerner, Ellen Schrecker, Patricia Limerick, Herbert Shapiro, Richard Blackett, Natalie Zemon Davis, John Coatsworth, Hayden V. White, James Oakes, Lawrence Levine, Immanuel Wallerstein, and at least seventy other scholars active in the profession.¹¹ In their research and writing, most of these individuals have been active in furthering the new social history, emphasizing the need to bring the activity of the disadvantaged and oppressed into the published historical record. The group was formed to counter the PC attacks in the interest of supporting curriculum reform and the efforts made “to give a far richer diversity of people in the United States access to a college education.” The group recognizes that feminism and multiculturalism have enriched education, and it rejects the inflammatory cry that academics face a simple choice between civilization and barbarism.

Several historians have contributed essays broadening the scope of the PC debate. African Americanist Wilson J. Moses has helped demystify the fear generated among some academics by the notion of Afrocentrism. He says to those who would entirely remove W. E. B. Du Bois from the nationalist tradition, “Despite his erudition in the Western tradition, Du Bois was no

opponent of Afrocentrism, far from it. He was one of the leading proponents of the Afrocentric world view." Moses suggests that what Afrocentrists seek to find is a way "of easing black students into a study of the general and transcendental truth, through the gateway of the specific" (1991, 373).

Maurice Isserman, author of major histories of the Communist Party, has set the "political correctness" furor in the broader context of U.S. politics. He writes that the PC scare "is less a reflection of the political slant on American campuses than it is of the triumph of the Right virtually everywhere else." Isserman reminds us that the argument about PC being worse than the McCarthyite Red Scare must be matched against 1950s reality in which thousands lost jobs and reputations. He points out that in the 1990s, conservative professors do not lose their jobs because of their politics (1991).

Historian Joan Wallach Scott has offered a powerful rejoinder to those campaigning against "political correctness." She identified the nub of the issue when she wrote: "We are experiencing another phase of the ongoing Reagan-Bush revolution, which, having packed the courts and privatized the economy, now seeks to neutralize the space of ideological and cultural nonconformity by discrediting it" (1992, 60). Scott points to the new demographics that followed on the heels of the 1960s:

The new populations in the universities bring with them histories of their own that have not been part of the traditional curriculum; their presence challenges many of the prevailing assumptions about what counts as knowledge and how it is produced. (69)

Scott calls for a stress on differences, relational differences that "involve hierarchy and differentials of power that will be constantly contested." She declares we face the challenge of structuring the university as a place where "communities of difference" are conceptualized and exemplified (1992, 77).

Lawrence W. Levine, whose writings have notably enriched our knowledge of African American culture, has offered an eloquent affirmation of multiculturalism. Levine sums up the issue:

Multiculturalism as a historical approach means that to understand American culture it is not enough to understand only one of its components, no matter how important it may have been. It is crucial to study and understand as many of the contributing cultures and their interactions with one another as possible. not as matter of “therapeutic” history . . . but as a simple matter of understanding the nature and complexities of American culture and the processes by which it came, and continue to come, into being. (1996, 160)

Levine is on the mark when he observes that the critics of multiculturalism “have gotten one thing very wrong: social and racial and ethnic fragmentation are not the result of the new historiography; rather, the new historiography is, in part, a response to the continuing fragmentation in America which has led many scholars to question and rethink the old formulas and explanations and to look more closely at the groups that compose the United States” (166).

The promotion of “political correctness” as a major contemporary issue has its roots in opposition to the re-creation of the academy as a place where women and minorities will be able to obtain effective participation in every phase of university life. The historians who have campaigned against PC have only infrequently directly attacked the varied contributions of the new social history; the remarkable work in women’s history, African American history, and the history of the working class; the opening of the history of the U.S. West to questions of class, racial, and gender subordination and resistance.¹² In 1993, Ronald Takaki’s *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* put forward a broad interpretation of U.S. history from the perspective of multiculturalism, and other such works will surely follow. The work of reinterpretation will continue, and such scholarship will be facilitated if the U.S. academy does not surrender to fear of diversity but adjusts to changes in the nation and the world that underscore the need to move beyond racism, sexism, and class oppression.

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NOTES

1. See Schrecker 1983, 27–29. In its 1915 “Declaration of Principles,” the AAUP declared: “The university teacher, in giving instruction upon controversial matters, while he is under no obligation to hide his own opinion under a mountain of equivocal verbiage should, if he is fit for his position, be a person of fair and judicial mind; he should, in dealing with such subjects, set forth justly, without suppression or innuendo, the divergent opinions of other investigators” (AAUP 1954, 105). There appears to have been no recognition that the academic enterprise might be invigorated by scholars candidly setting forth their views.

2. Tugwell later recalled Nearing’s influence upon him: “Beginning with the readings Nearing required us to write about each term, I branched out into the minority history of America and accounts of the leaders of people’s movements and their struggles to establish economic and political democracy.” See Tugwell 1982, 24; and Witmer 1915.

3. The point about the larger number of faculty losing positions is also borne out by the experience of the later Cold War era. A case in point is that of Dr. Samuel Rappaport, faculty member at University of Cincinnati’s College of Medicine. In 1950 a *Cincinnati Enquirer* columnist had alleged that among Communist Party members in the Cincinnati area was a University of Cincinnati professor, although this journalist informed university president Raymond Walters that the professor did not use his position to propagandize either students or faculty. Still, James Ratliff, the journalist, soon named Dr. Rappaport as a Communist at a congressional hearing, and when Dr. Rappaport resigned from the university, Walters recorded in his diary: “News from Cincinnati gave me a feeling of sheer jubilation. . . . This means relief for the hospital and for the university from the great embarrassment which would be involved if charges of communism had to be heard—this has been all I wanted from Santa Claus. A happy Christmas is assured.” On 27 September, Walters, at a university convocation, informed students that the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association had declared that Communist Party membership “and the accompanying surrender of intellectual integrity render an individual unfit to discharge the duties of a teacher in this country” (Walters 1950). See also *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 22 February 1950 and *Cincinnati Times-Star*, 28 September 1950.

4. For a general treatment of U.S. academic freedom, see Hofstadter and Metzger 1955.

5. In the foreword to *Letters from the Tombs*, novelist Richard Wright wrote: “Many of our officials in America today believe that they are protecting

their civilization when they imprison a man for thinking in ‘a certain way,’ but they are not protecting their civilization. Instead, they are destroying its very foundations” (Schappes 1941, vi). See also Schrecker 1986, 79–81; Iversen 1959, 152–59, 213–15. Iversen notes that in the aftermath of an earlier attempt to dismiss Schappes from the City College faculty, New York City’s Board of Higher Education, “established procedures of hiring, promotion, and firing that became the envy of most American academicians” (156).

6. President Truman endorsed this policy of exclusion, telling reporters, “I don’t think that anybody ought to be employed as instructors for the young people of this country who believe in the destruction of our form of government” (see Hershberg 1993, 391–92). In comments to Harvard alumni, Conant maintained that a professor’s political views were of no concern to the university but the issue of Communist affiliations was quite another matter: “I am convinced that conspiracy and calculated deceit have been and are the characteristic pattern of behavior of regular Communists all over the world. For these reasons, so far as I am concerned, card-holding members of the Communist Party are out of bounds as members of the teaching profession.” In a letter to a correspondent, Conant further declared: “I start from a premise that this is not a question of heresy; this is a question of a conspiracy which can only be likened to that of a group of spies and saboteurs in an enemy country in time of war” (Conant 1970, 457–58).

7. In 1995 D’Souza set forth the argument that the U.S. civil rights movement has been fundamentally flawed by cultural relativism and that supposed Black inferiority is a product of “civilizational” backwardness rather than biological inheritance. D’Souza contends that discrimination frequently imposed upon Blacks in contemporary U.S. society is most often “rational” and argues that such discrimination “can be fully eradicated only by getting rid of destructive conduct by the group that forms that basis for statistically valid group distinctions” (287). D’Souza repeatedly argues for the notion of individual rights as contrasted to group entitlements, but he does not see as racist penalizing individuals because of the alleged defects of other Blacks. D’Souza proceeds from warning readers about the dangers of “political correctness” to denigrating the recent historical experience of African Americans, writing, “The last few decades have witnessed nothing less than a breakdown of civilization within the African American community” (477). In his review of the volume, historian George M. Fredrickson writes that D’Souza’s “idealization of a dominant culture . . . is not technically racist, but it comes close to being its functional equivalent. If whites believe, as he would have them believe, that most blacks are bearers of an inferior culture, then they will feel it is perfectly proper and ‘rational’ to discriminate against African Americans” (Fredrickson 1995).

8. Elsewhere, Genovese contends that the *Journal of American History* is apparently determined “to confirm political correctness” as the guiding spirit of the Organization of American Historians (1995, 142). He has targeted for attack a core institution of the historical profession.

9. In a recent paper Fox-Genovese finds that various kinds of intolerance have come to dominate many women’s studies programs (1997).

10. See text of "David Brinkley Report," 5 May 1991, ABC-TV, Ronald W. Walters of the National Institute against Prejudice. Ronald W. Walters is professor of political science at Howard University and was a campaign adviser to Jesse Jackson.

11. Information supplied by fax from Gerald Graff of Teachers for a Democratic Culture, 1 November 1994.

12. Note, however, must be taken of the intense campaign mounted against the planned Smithsonian Institution *Enola Gay* exhibition marking the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. The exhibition, as originally designed, would have included material calling attention to the range of historical views concerning the decision to use the atomic bomb against Japan. Under pressure, the Smithsonian exhibit was in the end reduced simply to display of the *Enola Gay*. Historians were unsuccessful in efforts to preserve the scholarly integrity of the exhibit. See "Enola Gay Controversy Continues" in *OAH Newsletter*, February 1995, 3; see also Daizaburo 1995. Seventy-five historians protested the deletion from the exhibition of material reflecting the scholarly debate over use of the bomb, writing Smithsonian Museum secretary Ira Michael Heyman: "It is most unfortunate that the Smithsonian is becoming associated with a transparent attempt at historical cleansing. That archival documents have been removed from the planned exhibit under political pressure is an intellectual corruption" (letter to Secretary Heyman, 11 November 1994; available in files of the Organization of American Historians).

There is also the matter of congressional pressure to prevent implementation of the National History Standards formulated by the National Center for History in the Schools. In a House subcommittee hearing, former National Endowment for the Humanities chair Lynne V. Cheney stated she did not believe any national group of historians could formulate acceptable standards ("An Update on National History Standards," *OAH Newsletter*, February 1995, 3).

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Herbert Aptheker has maintained a steady output for periodicals and newspapers, where his writing has appeared as regular columns and occasional articles. A column entitled “Books and Ideas” ran in *Political Affairs* for a number of years, and columns, reviews, and commentary have run in other publications including the African American newspapers *The Daily Challenge* (Brooklyn) and *The Michigan Citizen* (Detroit). In 1964 he was a founder of the American Institute for Marxist Studies and for twenty-two years (1964–1985) was the principal contributor of book reviews, bibliographies, and analysis to its newsletter.

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