racial oppression in america

robert blauner
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To the memory of two writers
My father, Samuel Blauner, who encouraged me to write in the essay form; and George Jackson, who was to be the subject of an essay that I could not write—may his death be avenged.

Cover photo: Michel Cosson

Racial Oppression in America

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Because life tends to race ahead of our understanding of it, the likelihood that one's work will be outdated soon after it appears is an occupational hazard that all writers face. How much more true this is for the sociologist who analyzes contemporary American society—and for one who was brazen enough to try to make sense out of the shifting currents and conflicts that surrounded racial politics in the decade of the 1960s.

If the analyses in this book have any enduring value in the face of such volatility, it will be because I have succeeded in interpreting the specific crises of the late 1960s and early 1970s in terms of persisting patterns in American social structure. Fundamental to my perspective is the notion that racial groups and racial oppression are central features of the American social dynamic. The thesis that racial minorities are internal colonies of American capitalism is not original; however, I have tried to develop this idea systematically and, at the same time, critically. The strategic role of racism within American culture is another theme that recurs in these essays, along with the profound yet paradoxical impact of oppression on the culture of colonized minorities. Finally, the studies may be read as critical rejoinders to dominant liberal outlooks on race in the United States—forms of liberalism expressed in popular viewpoints, in governmental policies, in professional and institutional ideologies, and in the theories of academic sociology.

As I look back on the period in which this book was written, I wonder now at the temerity that impelled me through a sea of
tensions and dilemmas. In the late 1960s, the white scholar who persisted in the sociology of race had his back up against the wall. Or, to shift metaphors, he was at least caught between the priorities and perspectives of subordinated groups—including his or her own students—and those of the academic community. My own developing framework probably owes more to the social movements of the oppressed than to standard sociology. At times, I have played the ambiguous role of interpreting the perspectives of the colonized to the more liberal colonizers. At other times, I felt as though I were balancing on a tightrope between sociological analysis that deals with the complexity of social reality and a radical commitment that speaks to the necessity of changing those realities.

Because these essays were written over a long period, it is difficult to acknowledge everyone who contributed to the book’s present form. Besides those writers and scholars whose work I cite within, the most important influence has been the students with whom I have tested and exchanged ideas on race relations and American society, in settings that have ranged from classes of four hundred or more undergraduates to intimate seminars and small working groups of graduates. Earlier versions of some chapters have been published previously. They have all, however, been rewritten, and with the addition of new material more than half of the contents of this volume is new.

The point of view in this book was worked out in close collaboration with David Wellman. Presently teaching at the University of Oregon, Dave was a student in the first graduate course on racial and ethnic relations that I taught at Berkeley in 1965. Shortly afterward, we began to develop research plans which later materialized into a study supported by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. Although the report of this three-year project is not yet completed, the staff discussions and student seminars that Dave and I organized created a context in which the racial conflicts of the day were analyzed in terms of their theoretical, political, and social research implications by an unusually enthusiastic and sophisticated group of students. Within this circle, Hardy Frye stands out for the unique energy of his participation and his ever-questioning critical mind. Other valuable members who contributed both to these seminars and to the research project included Barbara Ballis,
Douglas Davidson, William Dorsey, Sheila Gibson, Bruce Johnson, Ricardo Muratorio-Posse, Alex Papillon, Jeffrey Prager, Lillian Rubin, John Spier, and Nick Vaca. I remain in debt to David Wellman for his role in creating the climate of these seminars, as well as for his dedication to the project, general friendship, and many careful and critical readings of virtually every draft of the chapters that are included in the present book.

On the Berkeley campus, three research institutes provided facilities and other help: the Institute of Industrial Relations, the Institute of Race and Community Relations, and the Center for the Study of Law and Society. For off-campus research opportunities, I am grateful to Miriam Johnson and the Adult Opportunity Center in the Fillmore district of San Francisco, and to Harry Specht, to the late Anatole Shaffer, and particularly to the new careerists in the Richmond Community Development Project.

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The list of individuals whose critical responses to specific drafts or chapters made a difference to me and the book is a long one. It includes Bennett Berger, Gerald Berreman, Leon Bramson, Jan Dizard, Erving Goffman, Nathan Hare, Bruce Johnson, Dale Johnson, Ira Katznelson, Charles Keil, William Kornhauser, Gilbert Kushner, Lawrence Levine, Gary Marx, Huey Newton, Lee Rainwater, Lisa Rubens, Philip Selznick, Bill Sommerville, Art Stinchcombe, Immanuel Wallerstein, Carol Walton, Ortiz Walton, James Wood, and Robert Wood.

Lincoln Bergman, Kris Dymond, E. Homer Price, and Lisa Rubens undertook various research tasks along the way. Lynn Turner typed many of the early drafts, and Christine Egan typed the bulk of the final manuscript. Carol Hatch and Kris Dymond also typed several chapters. I appreciate all of this.

Finally I would like to thank my wife Rena, who suffered the
inconveniences that protracted writing brought about with as much graciousness as could be expected, and who instructed our children Marya and Jonathan to respect the privacy of their father's work.


Robert Blauner
part 1
theoretical perspectives
During the late 1960s a new movement emerged on the Pacific Coast. Beginning at San Francisco State College and spreading across the bay to Berkeley and other campuses, black, Chicano, Asian, and Native American student organizations formed alliances and pressed for ethnic studies curricula and for greater control over the programs that concerned them. Rejecting the implicit condescension in the label "minority students" and the negative afterthought of "nonwhite," these coalitions proclaimed themselves a "Third World Movement." Later, in the East and Middle West, the third world umbrella was spread over other alliances, primarily those urging unity of Puerto Ricans and blacks. In radical circles the term has become the dominant metaphor referring to the nation's racially oppressed people.

As the term third world has been increasingly applied to people of color in the United States, a question has disturbed many observers. Is the third world idea essentially a rhetorical expression of the aspirations and political ideology of the young militants in the black, brown, red, and yellow power movements, or does the concept reflect actual sociological realities? Posed this way, the question may be drawn too sharply; neither possibility excludes the other. Life is complex, so we might expect some truth in both positions. Furthermore, social relationships are not static. The rhetoric and ideology of social movements, if they succeed in altering the ways in which groups define their situations, can significantly shape and change social reality. Ultimately, the validity of the third world perspective will be tested in social and political practice. The future is open.

Still, we cannot evade the question, to what extent—in its ap-
lication to domestic race relations—is the third world idea grounded in firm historical and contemporary actualities? To assess this issue we need to examine the assumptions upon which the concept rests. There are three that seem to me central. The first assumption is that racial groups in America are, and have been, colonized peoples; therefore their social realities cannot be understood in the framework of immigration and assimilation that is applied to European ethnic groups. The second assumption is that the racial minorities share a common situation of oppression, from which a potential political unity is inferred. The final assumption is that there is a historical connection between the third world abroad and the third world within. In placing American realities within the framework of international colonialism, similarities in patterns of racial domination and exploitation are stressed and a common political fate is implied—at least for the long run. I begin by looking at the first assumption since it sets the stage for the main task of this chapter, a comparison and contrast between immigrant and third world experience. I return to the other points at the end of the essay.

The fundamental issue is historical. People of color have never been an integral part of the Anglo-American political community and culture because they did not enter the dominant society in the same way as did the European ethnics. The third world notion points to a basic distinction between immigration and colonization as the two major processes through which new population groups are incorporated into a nation. Immigrant groups enter a new territory or society voluntarily, though they may be pushed out of their old country by dire economic or political oppression. Colonized groups become part of a new society through force or violence; they are conquered, enslaved, or pressured into movement. Thus, the third world formulation is a bold attack on the myth that America is the land of the free, or, more specifically, a nation whose population has been built up through successive waves of immigration. The third world perspective returns us to the origins of the American experience, reminding us that this nation owes its very existence to colonialism, and that along with settlers and immigrants there have always been conquered Indians and black slaves, and later defeated Mexicans—that is, colonial subjects—on the national soil. Such a reminder is not pleasant to a society that represses those aspects of its history that do not fit the collective self-image of democracy for all men.
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The idea that third world people are colonial subjects is gaining in acceptance today; at the same time it is not at all convincing to those who do not recognize a fundamental similarity between American race relations and Europe's historic domination of Asia and Africa. (I discuss how U.S. colonialism differs from the traditional or classical versions toward the end of the chapter.) Yet the experience of people of color in this country does include a number of circumstances that are universal to the colonial situation, and these are the very circumstances that differentiate third world realities from those of the European immigrants. The first condition, already touched upon, is that of forced entry into the larger society or metropolitan domain. The second is subjection to various forms of unfree labor that greatly restrict the physical and social mobility of the group and its participation in the political arena. The third is a cultural policy of the colonizer that constrains, transforms, or destroys original values, orientations, and ways of life. These three points organize the comparison of colonized and immigrant minorities that follows.*

Group Entry and Freedom of Movement
Colonialism and immigration are the two major means by which heterogeneous or plural societies, with ethnically diverse populations, develop. In the case of colonialism, metropolitan nations incorporate new territories or peoples through processes that are essentially involuntary, such as war, conquest, capture, and other forms of force or manipulation. Through immigration, new peoples or ethnic groups enter a host society more or less freely. These are ideal-types, the polar ends of a continuum; many historical cases fall in between. In the case of America's racial minorities, some groups clearly fit the criterion for colonial entry; others exemplify mixed types.

Native Americans, Chicanos, and blacks are the third world

* There is another aspect of colonization which I do not deal with in this essay: the experience of being managed and manipulated by outsiders in terms of ethnic status. This is derived from the fact that the lives of colonized people tend to be administered by representatives of the dominant political and legal order. Immigrant groups experienced a considerable degree of such control, but less intensely and for a shorter period of time. They achieved a relative community autonomy earlier and gained power in a wider range of institutions relevant to them. See Chapter 3 for further discussion.
groups whose entry was unequivocally forced and whose subsequent histories best fit the colonial model. Critics of the colonial interpretation usually focus on the black experience, emphasizing how it has differed from those of traditional colonialism. Rather than being conquered and controlled in their native land, African people were captured, transported, and enslaved in the Southern states and other regions of the Western hemisphere. Whether oppression takes place at home in the oppressed's native land or in the heart of the colonizer's mother country, colonization remains colonization. However, the term \textit{internal colonialism} is useful for emphasizing the differences in setting and in the consequences that arise from it.\textsuperscript{2} The conquest and virtual elimination of the original Americans, a process that took three hundred years to complete, is an example of classical colonialism, no different in essential features from Europe's imperial control over Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The same is true of the conquest of the Mexican Southwest and the annexation of its Spanish-speaking population.

Other third world groups have undergone an experience that can be seen as part colonial and part immigrant. Puerto Rico has been a colony exploited by the mainland, while, at the same time, the islanders have had relative freedom to move back and forth and to work and settle in the States. Of the Asian-American groups, the situation of the Filipinos has been the most colonial. The islands were colonies of Spain and the United States, and the male population was recruited for agricultural serfdom both in Hawaii and in the States. In the more recent period, however, movement to the States has been largely voluntary.

In the case of the Chinese, we do not have sufficient historical evidence to be able to assess the balance between free and involuntary entry in the nineteenth century. The majority came to work in the mines and fields for an extended period of debt servitude; many individuals were "shanghaied" or pressed into service; many others evidently signed up voluntarily for serflike labor.\textsuperscript{3} A similar pattern held for the Japanese who came toward the end of the century, except that the voluntary element in the Japanese entry appears to have been considerably more significant.\textsuperscript{4} Thus, for the two largest Asian groups, we have an original entry into American society that might be termed semicolonial, followed in the twentieth century by immigration. Yet the exclusion of Asian immigrants and the restriction acts that fol-
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lowed were unique blows, which marked off the status of the Chinese and Japanese in America, limiting their numbers and potential power. For this reason it is misleading to equate the Asian experience with the European immigrant pattern. Despite the fact that some individuals and families have been able to immigrate freely, the status and size of these ethnic groups have been rigidly controlled.

There is a somewhat parallel ambiguity in the twentieth-century movement from Mexico, which has contributed a majority of the present Mexican-American group. Although the migration of individuals and families in search of work and better living conditions has been largely voluntary, classifying this process as immigration misses the point that the Southwest is historically and culturally a Mexican, Spanish-speaking region. Moreover, from the perspective of conquest that many Mexicans have retained, the movement has been to a land that is still seen as their own. Perhaps the entry of other Latin-Americans approaches more nearly the immigrant model; however, in their case, too, there is a colonial element, arising from the Yankee neocolonial domination of much of South and Central America; for this reason, along with that of racism in the States, many young Latinos are third world oriented.

Thus the relation between third world groups and a colonial-type entry into American society is impressive, though not perfect or precise. Differences between people of color and Europeans are shown most clearly in the ways the groups first entered. The colonized became ethnic minorities en bloc, collectively, through conquest, slavery, annexation, or a racial labor policy. The European immigrant peoples became ethnic groups and minorities within the United States by the essentially voluntary movements of individuals and families. Even when, later on, some third world peoples were able to immigrate, the circumstances of the earlier entry affected their situation and the attitudes of the dominant culture toward them.

The essentially voluntary entry of the immigrants was a function of their status in the labor market. The European groups were responding to the industrial needs of a free capitalist market. Economic development in other societies with labor shortages—for example, Australia, Brazil, and Argentina—meant that many people could at least envision alternative destinations for their emigration. Though the Irish were colonized at home, and poverty, potato famine, and other disasters made their exodus more of a flight than that
of other Europeans, they still had some choice of where to flee. Thus, people of Irish descent are found today in the West Indies, Oceania, and other former British colonies. Germans and Italians moved in large numbers to South America; Eastern Europeans immigrated to Canada as well as to the United States.

Because the Europeans moved on their own, they had a degree of autonomy that was denied those whose entry followed upon conquest, capture, or involuntary labor contracts. They expected to move freely within the society to the extent that they acquired the economic and cultural means. Though they faced great hardships and even prejudice and discrimination on a scale that must have been disillusioning, the Irish, Italians, Jews, and other groups had the advantage of European ancestry and white skins. When living in New York became too difficult, Jewish families moved on to Chicago. Irish trapped in Boston could get land and farm in the Midwest, or search for gold in California. It is obvious that parallel alternatives were not available to the early generations of Afro-Americans, Asians, and Mexican-Americans, because they were not part of the free labor force. Furthermore, limitations on physical movement followed from the purely racial aspect of their oppression, as I stressed in Chapter 1.

Thus, the entrance of the European into the American order involved a degree of choice and self-direction that was for the most part denied people of color. Voluntary immigration made it more likely that individual Europeans and entire ethnic groups would identify with America and see the host culture as a positive opportunity rather than an alien and dominating value system. It is my assessment that this element of choice, though it can be overestimated and romanticized, must have been crucial in influencing the different careers and perspectives of immigrants and colonized in America, because choice is a necessary condition for commitment to any group, from social club to national society.

Sociologists interpreting race relations in the United States have rarely faced the full implications of these differences. The immigrant model became the main focus of analysis, and the experiences of all groups were viewed through its lens. It suited the cultural mythology to see everyone in America as an original immigrant, a later immigrant, a quasi-immigrant or a potential immigrant. Though the black situation long posed problems for this framework, recent developments have made it possible for scholars and ordinary citizens alike
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to force Afro-American realities into this comfortable schema. Migration from rural South to urban North became an analog of European immigration, blacks became the latest newcomers to the cities, facing parallel problems of assimilation. In the no-nonsense language of Irving Kristol, "The Negro Today Is Like the Immigrant of Yesterday." 

The Colonial Labor Principle in the United States

European immigrants and third world people have faced some similar conditions, of course. The overwhelming majority of both groups were poor, and their early generations worked primarily as unskilled laborers. The question of how, where, and why newcomers worked in the United States is central, for the differences in the labor systems that introduced people of color and immigrants to America may be the fundamental reason why their histories have followed disparate paths.

The labor forces that built up the Western hemisphere were structured on the principle of race and color. The European conquest of the Native Americans and the introduction of plantation slavery were crucial beginning points for the emergence of a worldwide colonial order. These "New World" events established the pattern for labor practices in the colonial regimes of Asia, Africa, and Oceania during the centuries that followed. The key equation was the association of free labor with people of white European stock and the association of unfree labor with non-Western people of color, a correlation that did not develop all at once; it took time for it to become a more or less fixed pattern.

North American colonists made several attempts to force Indians into dependent labor relationships, including slavery. But the native North American tribes, many of which were mobile hunters and warrior peoples, resisted agricultural peonage and directly fought the theft of their lands. In addition, the relative sparsity of Indian populations north of the Rio Grande limited their potential utility for colonial labor requirements. Therefore Native American peoples were either massacred or pushed out of the areas of European settlement and enterprise. South of the Rio Grande, where the majority of Native Americans lived in more fixed agricultural societies, they were too numerous to be killed off or pushed aside, though they suffered drastic losses through disease and massacre. In most of Spanish
America, the white man wanted both the land and the labor of the Indian. Agricultural peonage was established and entire communities were subjugated economically and politically. Either directly or indirectly, the Indian worked for the white man.

In the Caribbean region (which may be considered to include the American South), neither Indian nor white labor was available in sufficient supply to meet the demands of large-scale plantation agriculture. African slaves were imported to the West Indies, Brazil, and the colonies that were to become the United States to labor in those industries that promised and produced the greatest profit: indigo, sugar, coffee, and cotton. Whereas many lower-class Britishers submitted to debt servitude in the 1600s, by 1700 slavery had crystallized into a condition thought of as natural and appropriate only to people of African descent. White men, even if from lowly origins and serflike pasts, were able to own land and property, and to sell their labor in the free market. Though there were always anomalous exceptions, such as free and even slave-owning Negroes, people of color within the Americas had become essentially a class of unfree laborers. Afro-Americans were overwhelmingly bondsmen; Native Americans were serfs and peons in most of the continent.

Colonial conquest and control has been the cutting edge of Western capitalism in its expansion and penetration throughout the world. Yet capitalism and free labor as Western institutions were not developed for people of color; they were reserved for white people and white societies. In the colonies European powers organized other systems of work that were noncapitalist and unfree: slavery, serfdom, peonage. Forced labor in a myriad of forms became the province of the colonized and "native" peoples. European whites managed these forced labor systems and dominated the segments of the economy based on free labor. This has been the general situation in the Western hemisphere (including the United States) for more than three out of the four centuries of European settlement. It was the pattern in the more classical colonial societies also. But from the point of view of labor, the colonial dynamic developed more completely within the United States. Only here emerged a correlation between color and work status that was almost perfect. In Asia and Africa, as well as in much of Central and South America, many if not most of the indigenous peoples remained formally free in their daily work, engaging in traditional subsistence economies rather than working in the plan-
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tations, fields, and mines established by European capital. The economies in these areas came within the orbit of imperial control, yet they helped maintain communities and group life and thus countered the uprooting tendencies and the cultural and psychic penetration of colonialism. Because such traditional forms of social existence were viable and preferred, labor could only be moved into the arenas of Western enterprise through some form of coercion. Although the association of color and labor status was not perfect in the classical colonial regimes, as a general rule the racial principle kept white Europeans from becoming slaves, coolies, or peons.

Emancipation in the United States was followed by a period of rapid industrialization in the last third of the nineteenth century. The Civil War and its temporary resolution of sectional division greatly stimulated the economy. With industrialization there was an historic opportunity to transform the nation's racial labor principle. Low as were the condition and income of the factory laborer, his status was that of a free worker. The manpower needs in the new factories and mines of the East and Middle West could have been met by the proletarianization of the freedmen along with some immigration from Europe. But the resurgent Southern ruling class blocked the political and economic democratization movements of Reconstruction, and the mass of blacks became sharecroppers and tenant farmers, agricultural serfs little removed from formal slavery.* American captains of industry and the native white proletariat preferred to employ despised, unlettered European peasants rather than the emancipated Negro population of the South, or for that matter than the many poor white Southern farmers whose labor mobility was also blocked as the entire region became a semi-colony of the North.

The nineteenth century was the time of "manifest destiny," the ideology that justified Anglo expansionism in its sweep to the Pacific.

* This pattern was not unique to the United States. The emancipation of slaves in other societies has typically led to their confinement to other forms of unfree labor, usually sharecropping. In this context Kloosterboer cites the examples of the British West Indies, South Africa, the Dutch West Indies, the Dutch East Indies (Java), Portuguese Africa, Madagascar, the Belgian Congo, and Haiti. The great influx of European immigration to Brazil also followed the abolition of slavery, and the new white Brazilians similarly monopolized the occupational opportunities brought by the industrialization that might have otherwise benefited the black masses.
The Texan War of 1836 was followed by the full-scale imperialist conquest of 1846-1848 through which Mexico lost half its territory. By 1900 Anglo-Americans had assumed economic as well as political dominance over most of the Southwest. As white colonists and speculators gained control (often illegally) over the land and livelihood of the independent Hispano farming and ranching villages, a new pool of dependent labor was produced to work the fields and build the railroads of the region. Leonard Pitt sums up the seizure of California in terms applicable to the whole Southwest:

In the final analysis the Californios were the victims of an imperial conquest. . . . The United States, which had long coveted California for its trade potential and strategic location, finally provoked a war to bring about the desired ownership. At the conclusion of fighting, it arranged to "purchase" the territory outright, and set about to colonize, by throwing open the gates to all comers. Yankee settlers then swept in by the tens of thousands, and in a matter of months and years overturned the old institutional framework, expropriated the land, imposed a new body of law, a new language, a new economy, and a new culture, and in the process exploited the labor of the local population whenever necessary. To certain members of the old ruling class these settlers awarded a token and symbolic prestige, at least temporarily; yet with that status went very little genuine authority. In the long run Americans simply pushed aside the earlier ruling elite as being irrelevant.

Later, the United States' economic hegemony over a semicolonial Mexico and the upheavals that followed the 1910 revolution brought additional mass migrations of brown workers to the crop-lands of the region. The Mexicans and Mexican-Americans who created the rich agricultural industries of the Southwest were as a rule bound to contractors, owners, and officials in a status little above peonage. Beginning in the 1850s, shipments of Chinese workmen—who had sold themselves or had been forced into debt servitude—were imported to build railroads and to mine gold and other metals. Later other colonized Asian populations, Filipinos and East Indians, were used as gang laborers for Western farm factories. Among the
third world groups that contributed to this labor stream, only the Japanese came from a nation that had successfully resisted Western domination. This may be one important reason why the Japanese entry into American life and much of the group’s subsequent development show some striking parallels to the European immigrant pattern. But the racial labor principle confined this Asian people too; they were viewed as fit only for subservient field employment. When they began to buy land, set up businesses, and enter occupations “reserved” for whites, the outcry led to immigration restriction and to exclusion acts.18

A tenet central to Marxian theory is that work and systems of labor are crucial in shaping larger social forces and relations. The orthodox Marxist criticism of capitalism, however, often obscures the significance of patterns of labor status. Since, by definition, capitalism is a system of wage slavery and the proletariat are “wage slaves,” the varied degrees of freedom within industry and among the working class have not been given enough theoretical attention. Max Weber’s treatment of capitalism, though based essentially on Marx’s framework, is useful for its emphasis on the unique status of the free mobile proletariat in contrast to the status of those traditional forms of labor more bound to particular masters and work situations. Weber saw “formally free” labor as an essential condition for modern capitalism.19 Of course, freedom of labor is always a relative matter, and formal freedoms are often limited by informal constraint and the absence of choice. For this reason, the different labor situations of third world and of European newcomers to American capitalism cannot be seen as polar opposites. Many European groups entered as contract laborers,20 and an ethnic stratification (as well as a racial one) prevailed in industry. Particular immigrant groups dominated certain industries and occupations: the Irish built the canal system that linked the East with the Great Lakes in the early nineteenth century; Italians were concentrated in roadbuilding and other construction; Slavs and East Europeans made up a large segment of the labor force in steel and heavy metals; the garment trades was for many years a Jewish enclave. Yet this ethnic stratification had different consequences than the racial labor principle had, since the white immigrants worked within the wage system whereas the third world groups tended to be clustered in precapitalist employment sectors.21

The differences in labor placement for third world and immi-
grant can be further broken down. Like European overseas colonialism, America has used African, Asian, Mexican and, to a lesser degree, Indian workers for the cheapest labor, concentrating people of color in the most unskilled jobs, the least advanced sectors of the economy, and the most industrially backward regions of the nation. In an historical sense, people of color provided much of the hard labor (and the technical skills) that built up the agricultural base and the mineral-transport-communication infrastructure necessary for industrialization and modernization, whereas the Europeans worked primarily within the industrialized, modern sectors.* The initial position of European ethnics, while low, was therefore strategic for movement up the economic and social pyramid. The placement of nonwhite groups, however, imposed barrier upon barrier on such mobility, freezing them for long periods of time in the least favorable segments of the economy.

Rural Versus Urban
European immigrants were clustered in the cities, whereas the colonized minorities were predominantly agricultural laborers in rural areas. In the United States, family farming and corporate agriculture have been primarily white industries. Some immigrants, notably German, Scandinavian, Italian, and Portuguese, have prospered through farming. But most immigrant groups did not contribute to the most exploited sector of our industrial economy, that with the lowest status: agricultural labor. Curiously, the white rural proletariat of the South and West was chiefly native born.

Industry: Exclusion from Manufacturing
The rate of occupational mobility was by no means the same for all ethnics. Among the early immigrants, the stigmatized Irish occupied a quasi-colonial status, and their ascent into a predominantly middle-class position took at least a generation longer than that of the Germans. Among later immigrants, Jews, Greeks, and Armenians—urban

* I do not imply a perfect correlation between race and industrial type, only that third world workers have been strikingly overrepresented in the "primary sector" of the economy. Unlike in classical colonialism, white labor has outnumbered colored labor in the United States, and therefore white workers have dominated even such industries as coal mining, non-ferrous metals, and midwestern agriculture.
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people in Europe—have achieved higher social and economic status than Italians and Poles, most of whom were peasants in the old country. But despite these differences, the immigrants as a whole had a key advantage over third world Americans. As unskilled laborers, they worked within manufacturing enterprises or close to centers of industry. Therefore they had a foot in the most dynamic centers of the economy and could, with time, rise to semiskilled and skilled positions.

Except for a handful of industrial slaves and free Negroes, Afro-Americans did not gain substantial entry into manufacturing industry until World War I, and the stereotype has long existed that Asians and Indians were not fit for factory work. For the most part then, third world groups have been relegated to labor in preindustrial sectors of the nonagricultural economy. Chinese and Mexicans, for example, were used extensively in mining and building railroads, industries that were essential to the early development of a national capitalist economy, but which were primarily prerequisites of industrial development rather than industries with any dynamic future.

Geography: Concentration in Peripheral Regions
Even geographically the Europeans were in more fortunate positions. The dynamic and modern centers of the nation have been the Northeast and the Midwest, the predominant areas of white immigration. The third world groups were located away from these centers: Africans in the South, Mexicans in their own Southwest, Asians on the Pacific Coast, the Indians pushed relentlessly "across the frontier" toward the margins of the society. Thus Irish, Italians, and Jews went directly to the Northern cities and its unskilled labor market, whereas Afro-Americans had to take two extra "giant steps," rather than the

* Even in the first generation, immigrants were never as thoroughly clustered in unskilled labor as blacks, Mexicans, and Chinese were in their early years. In 1855, when New York Irishmen dominated the fields of common labor and domestic service, there were sizable numbers (more than a thousand in each category) working as blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, painters, stonemasons, clerks, shoemakers, tailors, food dealers and cartmen.

** Of course some Europeans did parallel labor in mining and transportation construction. But since they had the freedom of movement that was denied colored laborers, they could transfer the skills and experience gained to other pursuits.
immigrants’ one, before their large-scale arrival in the same place in the present century: the emancipation from slavery and migration from the underdeveloped semicolonial Southern region. Another result of colonized entry and labor placement is that the racial groups had to go through major historical dislocations within this country before they could arrive at the point in the economy where the immigrants began! When finally they did arrive in Northern cities, that economy had changed to their disadvantage. Technological trends in industry had drastically reduced the number of unskilled jobs available for people with little formal education.25

Racial Discrimination
To these “structural” factors must be added the factor of racial discrimination. The argument that Jews, Italians, and Irish also faced prejudice in hiring misses the point. Herman Bloch’s historical study of Afro-Americans in New York provides clear evidence that immigrant groups benefited from racism. When blacks began to consolidate in skilled and unskilled jobs that yielded relatively decent wages and some security, Germans, Irish, and Italians came along to usurp occupation after occupation, forcing blacks out and down into the least skilled, marginal reaches of the economy.26 Although the European immigrant was only struggling to better his lot, the irony is that his relative success helped to block the upward economic mobility of Northern blacks. Without such a combination of immigration and white racism, the Harlems and the South Chicagos might have become solid working-class and middle-class communities with the economic and social resources to absorb and aid the incoming masses of Southerners, much as European ethnic groups have been able to do for their newcomers. The mobility of Asians, Mexicans, and Indians has been contained by similar discrimination and expulsion from hard-won occupational bases.27

Our look at the labor situation of the colonized and the immigrant minorities calls into question the popular sociological idea that there is no fundamental difference in condition and history between the nonwhite poor today and the ethnic poor of past generations. This dangerous myth is used by the children of the immigrants to rationalize racial oppression and to oppose the demands of third world people for special group recognition and economic policies—thus the folk beliefs that all Americans “started at the bottom” and most have been able to
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“work themselves up through their own efforts.” But the racial labor principle has meant, in effect, that “the bottom” has by no means been the same for all groups. In addition, the cultural experiences of third world and immigrant groups have diverged in America, a matter I take up in the next section.

Culture and Social Organization

Labor status and the quality of entry had their most significant impact on the cultural dynamics of minority people. Every new group that entered America experienced cultural conflict, the degree depending on the newcomers’ distance from the Western European, Anglo-Saxon Protestant norm. Since the cultures of people of color in America, as much as they differed from one another, were non-European and non-Western, their encounters with dominant institutions have resulted in a more intense conflict of ethos and world view than was the case for the various Western elements that fed into the American nation. The divergent situations of colonization and immigration were fateful in determining the ability of minorities to develop group integrity and autonomous community life in the face of WASP ethnocentrism and cultural hegemony.

Voluntary immigration and free labor status made it possible for European minorities to establish new social relationships and cultural forms after a period of adjustment to the American scene. One feature of the modern labor relationship is the separation of the place of work from the place of residence or community. European ethnics were exploited on the job, but in the urban ghettos where they lived they had the insulation and freedom to carry on many aspects of their old country cultures—to speak their languages, establish their religions and build institutions such as schools, newspapers, welfare societies, and political organizations. In fact, because they had been oppressed in Europe—by such imperial powers as England, Tsarist Russia, and the Hapsburg Monarchy—the Irish, Poles, Jews, and other East Europeans actually had more autonomy in the New World for their cultural and political development. In the case of the Italians, many of their immigrant institutions had no counterpart in Italy, and a sense of nationality, overriding parochial and regional identities, developed only in the United States.28

But there were pressures toward assimilation; the norm of “Anglo-conformity” has been a dynamic of domination central to
American life. The early immigrants were primarily from Western Europe. Therefore, their institutions were close to the dominant pattern, and assimilation for them did not involve great conflict. Among later newcomers from Eastern and Southern Europe, however, the disparity in values and institutions made the goal of cultural pluralism attractive for a time; to many of the first generation, America's assimilation dynamic must have appeared oppressive. The majority of their children, on the other hand, apparently welcomed Americanization, for with the passage of time many, if not most, European ethnics have merged into the larger society, and the distinctive Euro-American communities have taken on more and more of the characteristics of the dominant culture.

The cultural experience of third world people in America has been different. The labor systems through which people of color became Americans tended to destroy or weaken their cultures and communal ties. Regrouping and new institutional forms developed, but in situations with extremely limited possibilities. The transformation of group life that is central to the colonial cultural dynamic took place most completely on the plantation. Slavery in the United States appears to have gone the farthest in eliminating African social and cultural forms; the plantation system provided the most restricted context for the development of new kinds of group integrity.

In New York City, Jews were able to reconstruct their East European family system, with its distinctive sex roles and interlocking sets of religious rituals and customs. Some of these patterns broke down or changed in response, primarily, to economic conditions, but the changes took time and occurred within a community of fellow ethnics with considerable cultural autonomy. The family systems of West Africans, however, could not be reconstructed under plantation slavery, since in this labor system the "community" of workers was subordinated to the imperatives of the production process. Africans of the same ethnic group could not gather together because their assignment to plantations and subsequent movements were controlled by slaveholders who endeavored to eliminate any basis for group solidarity. Even assimilation to American kinship forms was denied as an alternative, since masters freely broke up families when it suited their economic or other interests.* In the nonplantation context, the

* I do not imply here that African culture was totally eliminated, nor
disruption of culture and suppression of the regrouping dynamic was less extreme. But systems of debt servitude and semifree agricultural labor had similar, if less drastic, effects. The first generations of Chinese in the United States were recruited for gang labor; they therefore entered without women and children. Had they been free immigrants, most of whom also were male initially, the group composition would have normalized in time with the arrival of wives and families. But as bonded laborers without even the legal rights of immigrants, the Chinese were powerless to fight the exclusion acts of the late nineteenth century, which left predominantly male communities in America’s Chinatowns for many decades. In such a skewed social structure, leading features of Chinese culture could not be reconstructed. A similar male-predominant group emerged among mainland Filipinos. In the twentieth century the migrant work situation of Mexican-American farm laborers has operated against stable community life and the building of new institutional forms in politics and education. However, Mexican culture as a whole has retained considerable strength in the Southwest because Chicanos have remained close to their original territory, language, and religion.

Yet the colonial attack on culture is more than a matter of economic factors such as labor recruitment and special exploitation. The colonial situation differs from the class situation of capitalism precisely in the importance of culture as an instrument of domination. Colonialism depends on conquest, control, and the imposition of new institutions and ways of thought. Culture and social organization are important as vessels of a people’s autonomy and integrity; when cultures are whole and vigorous, conquest, penetration, and certain modes of control are more readily resisted. Therefore, imperial regimes attempt, consciously or unwittingly, either to destroy the cultures of colonized people or, when it is more convenient, to exploit them for the purposes of more efficient control and economic profit. As Mina Caulfield has put it, imperialism exploits the cultures of the colonized as much as it does their labor. Among America’s third

that Afro-Americans have lived in a cultural vacuum. A distinctive black culture emerged during slavery. From the complex vicissitudes of their historical experience in the United States, Afro-American culture has continued its development and differentiation to the present day, providing an ethnic content to black peoplehood. For a full discussion, see Chapter 4.
world groups, Africans, Indians, and Mexicans are all conquered peoples whose cultures have been in various degrees destroyed, exploited, and controlled. One key function of racism, defined here as the assumption of the superiority of white Westerners and their cultures and the concomitant denial of the humanity of people of color, is that it "legitimates" cultural oppression in the colonial situation.

The present-day inclination to equate racism against third world groups with the ethnic prejudice and persecution that immigrant groups have experienced is mistaken. Compare, for example, intolerance and discrimination in the sphere of religion. European Jews who followed their orthodox religion were mocked and scorned, but they never lost the freedom to worship in their own way. Bigotry certainly contributed to the Americanization of contemporary Judaism, but the Jewish religious transformation has been a slow and predominantly voluntary adaptation to the group's social and economic mobility. In contrast, the U.S. policy against Native American religion in the nineteenth century was one of all-out attack; the goal was cultural genocide. Various tribal rituals and beliefs were legally proscribed and new religious movements were met by military force and physical extermination. The largest twentieth-century movement, the Native American Church, was outlawed for years because of its peyote ceremony. Other third world groups experienced similar, if perhaps less concerted, attacks on their cultural institutions. In the decade following the conquest, California prohibited bullfighting and severely restricted other popular Mexican sports. In the same state various aspects of Chinese culture, dress, pigtails, and traditional forms of recreation were outlawed. Although it was tolerated in Brazil and the Caribbean, the use of the drum, the instrument that was the central means of communication among African peoples, was successfully repressed in the North American slave states.

American capitalism has been partially successful in absorbing third world groups into its economic system and culture. Because of the colonial experience and the prevalence of racism, this integration has been much less complete than in the case of the ethnic groups. The white ethnics who entered the class system at its lowest point were exploited, but not colonized. Because their group realities were not systematically violated in the course of immigration, adaptation, and integration, the white newcomers could become Americans more or less at their own pace and on their own terms. They have moved up,
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though slowly in the case of some groups, into working-class and middle-class positions. Their cultural dynamic has moved from an initial stage of group consciousness and ethnic pluralism to a present strategy of individual mobility and assimilation. The immigrants have become part of the white majority, partaking of the racial privilege in a colonizing society; their assimilation into the dominant culture is now relatively complete, even though ethnic identity is by no means dead among them. In the postwar period it has asserted itself in a third-generation reaction to "overassimilation" and more recently as a response to third world movements. But the ethnic groups have basically accepted the overall culture's rules of "making it" within the system, including the norms of racial oppression that benefit them directly or indirectly.

The situation and outlook of the racial minorities are more ambiguous. From the moment of their entry into the Anglo-American system, the third world peoples have been oppressed as groups, and their group realities have been under continuing attack. Unfree and semifree labor relations as well as the undermining of non-Western cultures have deprived the colonized of the autonomy to regroup their social forms according to their own needs and rhythms. During certain periods in the past, individual assimilation into the dominant society was seen as both a political and a personal solution to this dilemma. As an individual answer it has soured for many facing the continuing power of racism at all levels of the society. As a collective strategy, assimilation is compromised by the recognition that thus far only a minority have been able to improve their lot in this way, as well as by the feeling that it weakens group integrity and denies their cultural heritage. At the same time the vast majority of third world people in America "want in." Since the racial colonialism of the United States is embedded in a context of industrial capitalism, the colonized must look to the economy, division of labor, and politics of the larger society for their individual and group aspirations. Both integration into the division of labor and the class system of American capitalism as well as the "separatist" culture building and nationalist politics of third world groups reflect the complex realities of a colonial capitalist society.*

*These two poles of the pendulum, integration and nationalism, have long been recognized as central to the political dynamics of American
The colonial interpretation of American race relations helps illuminate the present-day shift in emphasis toward cultural pluralism and ethnic nationalism on the part of an increasing segment of third world people. The building of social solidarity and group culture is an attempt to complete the long historical project that colonial domination made so critical and so problematic. It involves a deemphasis on individual mobility and assimilation, since these approaches cannot speak to the condition of the most economically oppressed, nor fundamentally affect the realities of colonization. Such issues require group action and political struggle. Collective consciousness is growing among third world people, and their efforts to advance economically have a political character that challenges longstanding patterns of racial and cultural subordination.

Conclusion: The Third World Perspective
Let us return to the basic assumptions of the third world perspective and examine the idea that a common oppression has created the conditions for effective unity among the constituent racial groups. The third world ideology attempts to promote the consciousness of such common circumstances by emphasizing that the similarities in situation among America's people of color are the essential matter, the differences less relevant. I would like to suggest some problems in this position.

Each third world people has undergone distinctive, indeed cataclysmic, experiences on the American continent that separate its history from the others, as well as from whites. Only Native Americans waged a 300-year war against white encroachment; only they were subject to genocide and removal. Only Chicanos were severed from an ongoing modern nation; only they remain concentrated in the area of their original land base, close to Mexico. Only blacks went through a 250-year period of slavery. The Chinese were the first people whose presence was interdicted by exclusion acts. The Japanese were the one group declared an internal enemy and rounded up in concentration camps. Though the notion of colonized minorities points to a blacks. As early as 1903 in The Souls of Black Folk W. E. B. Du Bois analyzed the existential "twoness" of the American Negro experience which lies behind this dilemma. However it is a general phenomenon applicable to all third world people in the United States, to the extent that their history has been a colonial one.
similarity of situation, it should not imply that black, red, yellow, and brown Americans are all in the same bag. Colonization has taken different forms in the histories of the individual groups. Each people is strikingly heterogeneous, and the variables of time, place, and manner have affected the forms of colonialism, the character of racial domination, and the responses of the group.

Because the colonized groups have been concentrated in different regions, geographical isolation has heretofore limited the possibilities of cooperation.* When they have inhabited the same area, competition for jobs has fed ethnic antagonisms. Today, as relatively powerless groups, the racial minorities often find themselves fighting one another for the modicum of political power and material resources involved in antipoverty, model-cities, and educational reform projects. Differences in culture and political style exacerbate these conflicts.

The third world movement will have to deal with the situational differences that are obstacles to coalition and coordinated politics. One of these is the great variation in size between the populous black and Chicano groups and the much smaller Indian and Asian minorities. Numbers affect potential political power as well as an ethnic group’s visibility and the possibilities of an assimilative strategy. Economic differentiation may be accelerating both between and within third world groups. The racial minorities are not all poor. The Japanese and, to a lesser extent, the Chinese have moved toward middle-class status. The black middle class also is growing. The ultimate barrier to effective third world alliance is the pervasive racism of the society, which affects people of color as well as whites, furthering division between all groups in America. Colonialism brings into its orbit a variety of groups, which it oppresses and exploits in differing degrees and fashions; the result is a complex structure of racial and ethnic division.38

The final assumption of the third world idea remains to be considered. The new perspective represents more than a negation of the immigrant analogy. By its very language the concept assumes an essential connection between the colonized people within the United States and the peoples of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, with re-

* The historical accounts also indicate a number of instances of solidarity. A serious study of the history of unity and disunity among third world groups in America is badly needed.
spect to whom the idea of *le tiers monde* originated. The communities of color in America share essential conditions with third world nations abroad: economic underdevelopment, a heritage of colonialism and neocolonialism, and a lack of real political autonomy and power.

This insistence on viewing American race relations from an international perspective is an important corrective to the parochial and ahistorical outlook of our national consciousness. The economic, social, and political subordination of third world groups in America is a microcosm of the position of all peoples of color in the world order of stratification. This is neither an accident nor the result of some essential racial genius. Racial domination in the United States is part of a world historical drama in which the culture, economic system, and political power of the white West has spread throughout virtually the entire globe. The expansion of the West, particularly Europe's domination over non-Western people of color, was the major theme in the almost five hundred years that followed the onset of "The Age of Discovery." The European conquest of Native American peoples, leading to the white settlement of the Western hemisphere and the African slave trade, was one of the leading historical events that ushered in the age of colonialism.* Colonial subjugation and racial domination began much earlier and have lasted much longer in North America than in Asia and Africa, the continents usually thought of as colonial prototypes. The oppression of racial colonies within our national borders cannot be understood without considering worldwide patterns of white European hegemony.

The present movement goes further than simply drawing historical and contemporary parallels between the third world within and the third world external to the United States. The new ideology implies that the fate of colonized Americans is tied up with that of the colonial and former colonial peoples of the world. There is at least impressionistic evidence to support this idea. If one looks at the place of the various racial minorities in America's stratified economic and social order, one finds a rough correlation between relative internal status and the international position of the original fatherland. According to most indicators of income, education, and occupation, Native Americans are at the bottom. The Indians alone lack an inde-

* The other major event was instituting trade with India.
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pendent nation, a center of power in the world community to which they might look for political aid and psychic identification. At the other pole, Japanese-Americans are the most successful nonwhite group by conventional criteria, and Japan has been the most economically developed and politically potent non-Western nation during most of the twentieth century. The transformation of African societies from colonial dependency to independent statehood, with new authority and prestige in the international arena, has had an undoubted impact on Afro-Americans in the United States; it has contributed both to civil rights movements and to a developing black consciousness.*

What is not clear is whether an international strategy can in itself be the principle of third world liberation within this country. Since the oppression, the struggle, and the survival of the colonized groups have taken place within our society, it is to be expected that their people will orient their daily lives and their political aspirations to the domestic scene. The racial minorities have been able to wrest some material advantages from American capitalism and empire at the same time that they have been denied real citizenship in the society. Average levels of income, education, and health for the third world in the United States are far above their counterparts overseas; this gap will affect the possibility of internationalism. Besides which, group alliances that transcend national borders have been difficult to sustain in the modern era because of the power of nationalism.

Thus, the situation of the colonized minorities in the United States is by no means identical with that of Algerians, Kenyans, In-

* In the early 1970s Pan-Africanism seems to be gaining ground among black American militants and intellectuals. The most celebrated spokesman has been Stokely Carmichael who has virtually eschewed the struggle in the United States. The Black Scholar devoted its February and March (1971) issues to Pan-Africanism. Afro-American organizations have been challenging the South African involvements of U.S. business and government, as, for example, in the action of black employees against the Polaroid Corporation. Chicano groups have been taking an active political interest in Mexico and Latin America. On some university campuses Asian militants have taken the lead in protesting American imperialism and genocide in Southeast Asia. Whereas only recently black and brown nationalists tended to see antiwar protest as a white middle-class "trip," the third world perspective has led to an aggressive condemnation of the war in Indochina and a sense of solidarity with the Vietnamese people.
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donesians, and other nations who suffered under white European rule. Though there are many parallels in cultural and political developments, the differences in land, economy, population composition, and power relations make it impossible to transport wholesale sociopolitical analyses or strategies of liberation from one context to another. The colonial analogy has gained great vogue recently among militant nationalists—partly because it is largely valid, partly because its rhetoric so aggressively condemns white America, past and present. Yet it may be that the comparison with English, French, and Dutch overseas rule lets our nation off too easily! In many ways the special versions of colonialism practiced against Americans of color have been more pernicious in quality and more profound in consequences than the European overseas varieties.

In traditional colonialism, the colonized "natives" have usually been the majority of the population, and their culture, while less prestigious than that of the white Europeans, still pervaded the landscape. Members of the third world within the United States are individually and collectively outnumbered by whites, and Anglo-American cultural imperatives dominate the society—although this has been less true historically in the Southwest where the Mexican-American population has never been a true cultural minority. The oppressed masses of Asia and Africa had the relative "advantage" of being colonized in their own land. In the United States, the more total cultural domination, the alienation of most third world people from a land base, and the numerical minority factor have weakened the group integrity of the colonized and their possibilities for cultural and political self-determination.

Many critics of the third world perspective seize on these differences to question the value of viewing America's racial dynamics within the colonial framework. But all the differences demonstrate is

* Within the United States, Native Americans and Chicanos, in general, retain more original culture than blacks and Asians, because they faced European power in their homelands, rather than being transported to the nation of the colonized. Of course the ecological advantage of colonization at home tends to be undermined to the extent to which large European settlements overwhelm numerically the original people, as happened in much of Indo-America. And in much of the Americas a relative cultural integrity among Indian peoples exists at the expense of economic impoverishment and backwardness.
that colonialisms vary greatly in structure and that political power and
group liberation are more problematic in our society than in the
overseas situation. The fact that we have no historical models for
decolonization in the American context does not alter the objective
realities. Decolonization is an insistent and irreversible project of the
third world groups, although its contents and forms are at present
unclear and will be worked out only in the course of an extended
period of political and social conflict.

NOTES

1. For accounts of this movement at San Francisco State, see James
McEvoy and Abraham Miller, eds., Black Power and Student Re-
bellion (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1969), especially the arti-
cles by Barlow and Shapiro, Gitlin, Chrisman, and the editors;
and Bill Barlow and Peter Shapiro, An End to Silence (New

2. In addition to its application to white-black relations in the
United States—see for example, Stokely Carmichael and Charles
1—the concept of internal colonialism is a leading one for a
number of students of Indian-white and Indian-mestizo relations
in Latin America. Representative statements are Pablo Gonzalez
Casanova, “Internal Colonialism and National Development,”
Rodolfo Stavenhagen, “Classes, Colonialism, and Acculturation,”
and Julio Cotler, “The Mechanics of Internal Domination and
Social Change in Peru,” Studies in Comparative International De-
1968, no. 12. The Stavenhagen and Cotler papers are found
also in Irving L. Horowitz, ed., Masses in Latin America (New
York: Oxford University Press, 1970). See also André Gunder
Frank, Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America (New
York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), and Eugene Havens and
William Flinn, eds., Internal Colonialism and Structural Change

3. Gunther Barth, Bitter Strength, A History of the Chinese in the
United States, 1850–1870 (Cambridge: Harvard University

It is an equally regular feature of the absorption of colonial peoples into the wider capitalistic system, that such absorption has often
been limited to the introduction of the minimum changes necessary for production of staples required by the Western economy, while otherwise leaving practically untouched the non-capitalistic economic system prevalent in the colonial areas. The sharp separation of worker and employer classes and the colonial status of plantation areas, that is, the limited social and political absorption of plantation populations are the usual correlates of the limited economic absorption.

The systems of labor by which these colonial populations come to participate in the world capitalist system are usually described in terms of a dichotomy of compulsory versus free labor which generally results in a typological and developmental continuum: slavery, forced or conscripted labor of subject populations, various forms of contract labor with elements of compulsion such as indentured labor or peonage, and finally free labor.

Also see W. Kloosterboer, Involuntary Labour Since the Abolition of Slavery (Leiden: Brill, 1960), for a general account and a specific analysis of 13 different societies. This survey found the racial principle to be the prevailing rule with the following exceptions: the forced labor camps in the Soviet Union during the Stalin era, the peonage of white laborers by Maine lumber companies around 1900, and two situations where people of African descent oppressed unfree black labor, Haiti and Liberia. In addition, Portuguese have at times served as semifree agricultural workers in Brazil and the Caribbean.

13. Ibid.
17. Carey McWilliams, Factories in the Fields (Boston: Little, Brown, 1934), and Ill Fares the Land (Boston: Little, Brown, 1942). See also McWilliams, North from Mexico (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1948). Recently two papers have applied the colonial model to Mexican-Americans. See Joan W. Moore, “Colonialism: The


A contrast between Mexican and European immigrant patterns of work and settlement, and their consequences for social mobility is found in Leo Grebler, Joan W. Moore, and Ralph C. Guzman, in The Mexican-American People (New York: The Free Press, 1970), chap. 5.

22. Analyzing early twentieth-century data on European immigrant groups, Stephen Steinberg has found significant differences in occupational background, literacy, and other mobility-related factors. The Jews were consistently advantaged on these points, Catholic ethnic groups such as Poles and Italians disadvantaged. S. Steinberg, “The Religious Factor in Higher Education,” Doctoral dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley (1971).


24. Robert Starobin, Industrial Slavery in the Old South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), and Leon Litwack, North of
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27. As far as I know no study exists that has attempted to analyze industrial and occupational competition among a variety of ethnic and racial groups. Such research would be very valuable. With respect to discrimination against Asians and Mexicans, Pitt, for example, describes how white and European miners were largely successful in driving Chinese and Mexican independent prospectors out of the gold fields. The Decline of the Californios, op. cit., chap. 3.


30. Beltran makes the point that the plantation system was more significant than enforced migration in affecting African cultural development in the new world. "This system, which had created institutionalized forms of land tenure, work patterns, specialization of labor, consumption and distribution of produce, destroyed African economic forms by forceably imposing Western forms. . . . Negro political life along with African social structure, was in a position of subordination." Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran, "African Influences in the Development of Regional Cultures in the New World," in Pan American Union, Plantation Systems of the New World, op. cit., p. 70.

31. According to Stokely Carmichael, capitalism exploits its own working classes, while racist systems colonize alien peoples of color. Here colonization refers to dehumanization, the tendency toward the destruction of culture and peoplehood, above and be-

32. An historical study of Brazilian coffee plantations illustrates how African cultural institutions were the focal point for the slave's resistance to intensified exploitation. Stanley Stein, *Vassouras* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), pt. 3.


The peculiar development of African culture in North America began with the loss of the drums. The Protestant, and often Puritan, slave owners interfered much more radically with the personal life of their slaves than did their Catholic colleagues in the West Indies or in South America. . . . And to forbid the drums was to show a keen scent for the essential: for without the drums it was impossible to call the orishas, the ancestors were silent, and the proselytizers seemed to have a free hand. The Baptists and Methodists, whose practical maxims and revivals were sympathetic to African religiosity quickly found masses of adherents.

Thus the long-term interest of many Afro-American youth in the playing of drums, as well as the more recent and general embracing of African and black cultural forms, might be viewed as the return of the repressed—to borrow a leading concept from Freudian psychology.


38. The ethnic and racially "plural society" is another characteristic colonial phenomenon. See J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), and


However, the international perspective on American racial problems is by no means new. W. E. B. Du Bois was one of its early exponents, and in more recent years Malcolm X placed domestic racism and strategies of liberation in a worldwide context. For a discussion of the internationalizing of Malcolm's politics, see Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 31–34.

40. McWilliams, *North From Mexico*, op. cit.
During the late 1950s identification with African nations and other colonial or formerly colonized peoples grew in importance among black militants. As a result the United States was increasingly seen as a colonial power, and the concept of domestic colonialism was introduced into the political analysis and rhetoric of militant nationalists. During the same period Afro-American theorists began developing this frame of reference for American realities. As early as 1962, Harold Cruse characterized race relations in this country as domestic colonialism. Two years later in Youth in the Ghetto Kenneth Clark demonstrated how the political, economic, and social structure of Harlem was essentially that of a colony. Finally, in 1967 a comprehensive discussion of internal colonialism provided the theoretical framework for Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton’s widely read Black Power. The following year the colonial analogy gained currency and new “respectability” when Eugene McCarthy habitually referred to black Americans as a colonized people during his campaign. While the rhetoric of internal colonialism was catching on,

* An earlier version of this chapter appeared in Social Problems, 16, no. 4 (Spring 1969), 393-408. Published by the Society for the Study of Social Problems. At the time of writing this article, unfortunately, I did not have available Robert L. Allen’s Black Awakening in Capitalist America (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), which analyzes ghetto revolts in terms of a conception of internal colonialism similar to my own. Allen, however, deals much more thoroughly with the history and the dynamics of the black movement, class divisions in the black community, and the neocolonial strategies of corporate capitalism.
other social scientists began to raise questions about its appropriateness as a scheme of analysis.

The colonial interpretation has been rejected as obscurantist and misleading by scholars who point to the significant differences in history and sociopolitical conditions between our domestic patterns and what took place in Africa and Asia. Colonialism traditionally refers to the establishment of domination over a geographically external political unit, most often inhabited by people of a different race and culture, where this domination is political and economic and the colony exists subordinated to and dependent upon the mother country. Typically, the colonizers exploit the land, the raw materials, the labor, and other resources of the colonized nation; a formal recognition is given to the difference in power, autonomy, and political status, and various agencies are set up to maintain this subordination. Seemingly the model must be stretched beyond utility if the American case is to be forced into its mold. For here we are talking about group relations within a society; the geographical separation between mother country and colony is absent. Although whites certainly colonized the territory of the original Americans, internal colonization of Afro-Americans did not involve the settlement of whites in a land that was unequivocally black. Unlike the classical situation, there has been no formal recognition of differences in power, outside the South, since slavery was abolished. Traditional colonialism involves the control and exploitation of the majority of a nation by a minority of outsiders, whereas in America the oppressed black population is a numerical minority and was, originally, the “outside” group.

This conventional critique of internal colonialism is useful in pointing to the differences between our domestic patterns and the overseas situation. At the same time its bold attack tends to lose sight of common experiences that have historically been shared by the subjugated racial minorities in America and nonwhite peoples in other parts of the world. These common core elements—which make up a complex I shall call colonization—may be more important for understanding the most significant developments in the recent racial scene than the undeniable divergences between the two contexts.

The common features ultimately relate to the fact that classical colonialism of the imperialist era and American racism both developed out of the same historical situation and reflected a common world economic and power stratification. The slave trade preceded the im-
perialist partition and economic exploitation of Africa; in fact it may have been a necessary prerequisite for colonial conquest, since it helped deplete and pacify Africa, undermining resistance to direct occupation. Slavery contributed one of the basic raw materials for the textile industry, which provided much of the capital for the West’s industrial development and economic expansionism. The essential condition for both American slavery and European colonialism was the political domination and the technological superiority of the Western world in relation to peoples of non-Western and nonwhite origins. This objective supremacy in technology and military power buttressed the West’s sense of cultural superiority, laying the basis for racist ideologies that were elaborated to justify control and exploitation of nonwhite people. Because classical colonialism and America’s internal colonialism developed out of similar technological, cultural, and power relations, a common process of social oppression characterized the racial patterns in the two contexts—despite the variations in political and social structure.

There appear to be four basic components of the colonization complex.* The first component is the mode of entry into the dominant society. Colonization begins with a forced, involuntary entry. Second, there is the impact on culture. The effects of colonization on the culture and social organization of the colonized people are more than the results of such “natural” processes as contact and acculturation. The colonizing power carries out a policy that constrains, transforms, or destroys indigenous values, orientations, and ways of life. Third is a special relationship to governmental bureaucracies or the legal order. The lives of the subordinate group are administered by representatives of the dominant power. The colonized have the experience of being managed and manipulated by outsiders who look down on them.

The final component of colonization is racism. Racism is a principle of social domination by which a group seen as inferior or different in alleged biological characteristics is exploited, controlled, and oppressed socially and psychically by a superordinate group. The systems of colonialism that have been most central to the modern era

*Perhaps a fifth should be added: the separation in labor status between the colonized and the colonizers. I develop this theme in Chapter 2, which was written after the main outlines of the present essay had been drafted.
have involved the subjugation of nonwhite Asian, African, and Latin American peoples by the white European powers, although imperial nations have colonized people who were technically considered to be of the same race; examples of such colonization are the British dominion over Ireland, the Hapsburg oppression of Central and Eastern European nationalities, and the Japanese suzerainty in Southeast Asia, which was ended by defeat in World War II. Even in these examples the link between colonialism and racism is indicated by the tendency of the ruling powers to view their subjects as inherently alien, culturally degenerate, and biologically inferior.*

The concept of colonization stresses the enormous fatefulness of the manner in which a minority group becomes a part of the dominant society.⁶ The crucial difference between the colonized Americans and the ethnic immigrant minorities is that the latter have always been able to operate fairly competitively within the relatively open spaces of the capitalist class order. They came voluntarily in search of a better life. They have worked predominantly as free laborers; therefore their movements in society have been less controlled. Finally, as white Europeans they could achieve a sense of membership in the larger society by making minor modifications in their ethnic institutions.

In present-day America, a major device of black colonization is the powerless ghetto. As the Haryou Report describes the situation:

Ghettoes are the consequence of the imposition of external power and the institutionalization of powerlessness. In this respect, they are in fact social, political, educational, and above all—economic colonies. Those confined within the ghetto walls are subject peoples. They are victims of the greed, cruelty, insensitivity, guilt and fear of their masters. . . .

*In stressing a general racist dynamic, I do not imply that the specific racial patterns of colonial societies have been identical in all historical and contemporary contexts. In fact, much research on slavery and colonialism has been devoted to the study of differences in the intensity of racial feeling, the definition of the subordinate races, the nature of interracial contacts, and strategies of control between one historical setting and another. Such variation, the importance of which remains a lively area of scholarly debate, has, however, existed within a situation of universal white dominance and belief in European cultural superiority."
The community can best be described in terms of the analogy of a powerless colony. Its political leadership is divided, and all but one or two of its political leaders are shortsighted and dependent upon the larger political power structure. Its social agencies are financially precarious and dependent upon sources of support outside the community. Its churches are isolated or dependent. Its economy is dominated by small businesses which are largely owned by absentee owners, and its tenements and other real property are also owned by absentee landlords. Under a system of centralization, Harlem's schools are controlled by forces outside the community. Programs and policies are supervised and determined by individuals who do not live in the community.

Many ethnic groups in America have lived in ghettos. What makes the black ghettos an expression of colonized status are three special features. First, the ethnic ghettos arose more through voluntary choice: the choice to immigrate to America and the choice to live among fellow ethnics. Second, the immigrant ghettos of the inner city were one- or two-generation phenomena—way stations along the road of acculturation and assimilation. When ethnic communities persist, they tend to reflect voluntary decisions to live among one's fellows and maintain group institutions, as in the case of the so-called "gilded ghettos" of the Jewish suburban middle class. The black ghettos on the other hand have been more permanent, though their boundaries expand and change and some individuals do escape them. But most relevant is the third point, that black communities are, to a great extent, controlled from the outside. For many Europeans—the Poles, Italians, and Jews, for example—there was only a brief period, often less than a generation, during which their residential buildings, commercial stores, and other enterprises were owned by outsiders. Afro-Americans are distinct in the extent to which their segregated communities have remained under outside control: economic, political, and administrative.

When we speak of Negro social disabilities under capitalism . . . we refer to the fact that he does not own anything—even what is ownable in his own community. Thus to fight for black liberation is to fight for his right
to own. The Negro is politically compromised today because he owns nothing. He has little voice in the affairs of state because he owns nothing. The fundamental reason why the Negro bourgeois-democratic revolution has been aborted is because American capitalism has prevented the development of a black class of capitalist owners of institutions and economic tools. To take one crucial example, Negro radicals today are severely hampered in their tasks of educating the black masses on political issues because Negroes do not own any of the necessary means of propaganda and communication. The Negro owns no printing presses, he has no stake in the networks of the means of communication. Inside his own communities he does not own the houses he lives in, the property he lives on, nor the wholesale and retail stores from which he buys his commodities. He does not own the edifices in which he enjoys culture and entertainment or in which he socializes. In capitalist society, an individual or group that does not own anything is powerless.8

And what is true of business is true also for the other social institutions that operate within the ghetto. The educators, policemen, social workers, politicians, and others who administer the affairs of ghetto residents are typically whites who live outside the black community. Thus the ghetto plays a strategic role as the focus for that outside administration which in overseas colonialism is called "direct rule."

The colonial status of the Negro community goes beyond the issue of ownership and decision making within black neighborhoods. Despite the fact that blacks are numerically superior to many other interest groups, the Afro-American population has very little influence on the power structure and institutions of most of the larger cities. A recent analysis of policy making in Chicago estimates that "Negroes really hold less than one percent of the effective power in the Chicago metropolitan area. (Negroes are 20 percent of Cook County's population.) Realistically the power structure of Chicago is hardly less white than that of Mississippi.99

Although the Chinese-American experience has not yet been adequately studied, it may be worthwhile to consider briefly how
“Chinatowns” relate to the two ideal types, the voluntary ethnic community and the involuntary racial ghetto. Like the blacks, the Chinese have faced intense color prejudice and a racist housing market. However, a major divergence from the Afro-American pattern is suggested by the estimate that the “income of Chinese-Americans from Chinese-owned businesses is in proportion to their numbers 45 times as great as the income of Negroes from Negro-owned businesses.”¹⁰ The strength of Chinese business and community institutions appears to be related to the fact that traditional ethnic culture and social organization, in which entrepreneurial values were strong, were not destroyed by slavery; it may also be that the group’s relatively small numbers made systematic oppression less central to American capitalism. Yet these facts in and of themselves do not prove the absence of colonization. Chinese middlemen played a major role in the exploitation of the masses of their own group: Chinese contractors supplied and managed the indentured laborers that worked in the mines and on the railroads. The Chinatowns of America may be viewed as neocolonial enclaves in which a business class has been able to gain wealth and political power within the ethnic community. In the larger society, however, the Chinese are ultimately powerless, controlled by outside political and economic arrangements.*

* In a criticism of an earlier version of this chapter, Nathan Glazer argues that I exaggerate the differences between Afro-American and immigrant ghettos by overstating the coercive and dependent character of the former, while minimizing the constraints and disabilities experienced by the latter. I have no quarrel with his reminder that many white ethnics also were policed and taught in the schools by people of other, more assimilated nationalities. Nevertheless, this pattern was not as uniform and monolithic for the ethnics; they were able to make inroads into some institutions and thus escape a situation of total domination by outsiders. I am less impressed with his response to my first point; the fact that one-sixth of New York Negroes were West Indian immigrants a generation ago makes little impact on the overall character of black entry into American life; nor does the fact that many Afro-Americans prefer to live in black communities (just as the European groups did) alter the predominant reality that they have had little choice in the matter. The most profound point raised by Professor Glazer is the ambiguity of the time and regional reference of the colonial interpretation. If one views the black situation from the limited time span of their large-scale migration to Northern cities, then the possibility is always open that a century from now they will have appeared to have followed a pattern of mobility and assimilation not dissimilar from the
Colonization outside of a traditional colonial structure has its own special conditions. In America the group culture and social structure of the colonized are less developed and less autonomous; the colonized are a numerical minority; and they are ghettoized more totally, yet are more dispersed geographically, than people under classic colonialism. All these realities affect the magnitude and direction of reaction by the colonized. But it is my basic thesis that the most important expressions of protest in the black community during the recent years reflect the colonized status of Afro-America. Riots, programs of separation, politics of community control, black revolutionary movements, and cultural nationalism each represents a different strategy of attack on domestic colonialism in America. Let us now examine some of these movements from this perspective.

Riot or Revolt?
The so-called riots are being increasingly recognized as a preliminary if primitive form of mass rebellion against colonial status. There is still a tendency to absorb their meaning within the conventional scope of assimilation-integration politics; some commentators stress the material motives involved in looting as a sign that the rioters want to join America’s middle-class affluence just like everyone else. That motives are mixed and often unconscious; that black people want good furniture and television sets like whites is beside the point. The guiding impulse in most major outbreaks has not been integration with American society, but an attempt to stake out a sphere of control by moving against that society and destroying the symbols of its oppression.

In my critique of the McCone Report (see Chapter 6), I observe that the rioters “were asserting a claim to territoriality, making an unorganized and rather inchoate attempt to gain control over their community turf.” In succeeding disorders also the thrust of the action has been toward ridding the community of the alien presence of white officials, rather than killing white people, as in a conventional race riot. The main attacks have been directed at the property of white businessmen and at the police who operate in the black community “like an army of occupation,” protecting the interests of outside ex-

European one. Unlike Glazer I do not think it is possible to restrict one’s time perspective and avoid a national approach to American racial realities by drastically separating the Southern and Northern black experiences.\textsuperscript{11}
ploiters and maintaining the domination over the ghetto of the central metropolitan power structure.\textsuperscript{12} The Kerner Report misleads when it attempts to explain riots in terms of integration: "What the rioters appear to be seeking was fuller participation in the social order and the material benefits enjoyed by the majority of American citizens. Rather than rejecting the American system, they were anxious to obtain a place for themselves in it."\textsuperscript{13} More accurately, the revolts pointed to alienation from the system on the part of many poor, and some not-so-poor, blacks. Again as I argue with respect to Los Angeles: the sacredness of private property, that unconsciously accepted bulwark of our social arrangements, was rejected. People who looted—apparently without guilt—generally remarked that they were taking things that "really belonged" to them anyway.* Obviously the society's bases of legitimacy and authority have been attacked. Law and order has long been viewed by Afro-Americans as the white man's law and order; but now this characteristic perspective of a colonized people is out in the open. The Kerner Report's own data question how well ghetto rebels have been buying the system: In Newark only 33 percent of self-reported rioters said they thought this country was worth fighting for in the event of a major war; in the Detroit sample the figure was 55 percent.\textsuperscript{15}

One of the most significant consequences of the process of colonization is a weakening of the individual and collective will to resist oppression. It has been easier to contain and control black ghettos because communal bonds and group solidarity have been weakened through divisions among leadership, failures of organization, and a general dispiritment that accompanies social oppression. The riots were a signal that the will to resist had broken the mold of accommodation. In some cities they represented nascent movements toward community identity. The outbursts stimulated new organizations and movements in several riot-torn ghettos. If it is true that the riot phenomenon of 1964–1968 has passed its peak, its historical import may be more for the "internal" organizing momentum that

* This kind of attitude has a long history. During slavery, blacks used the same rationalization to justify stealing from their masters. Appropriating things from the master was viewed as "taking part of his property for the benefit of another part," whereas stealing referred to appropriating something from another slave, an offense that was not condoned.\textsuperscript{14}
was generated than for any profound "external" response by the larger society in facing underlying causes.

Despite the appeal of Frantz Fanon to young black revolutionaries, America is not Algeria. It is difficult to foresee how rioting in our cities can function in a manner similar to the situation of overseas colonialism where such outbursts were an integral phase in a movement for national liberation. By 1968 some militant groups (for example, the Black Panther Party in Oakland) had concluded that ghetto riots were self-defeating for black people in the present balance of organization and gunpower—endangering their lives and their interests—though they had served to stimulate both black consciousness and white awareness of the depths of racial crisis. Such militants have been influential in "cooling" their communities during periods of high riot potential. Theoretically-oriented black radicals see riots as spontaneous mass behavior, which must be replaced by a revolutionary organization and consciousness. Despite the differences in objective conditions, violence seems to have served the same psychic function for young ghetto blacks in the 1960s as it did for the colonized of North Africa described by Fanon and Albert Memmi—the assertion of dignity and manhood.16

In the past few years riotlike political action appears to have shifted from the urban ghetto streets to more limited and focused institutional settings. One has been the high schools and colleges where a white European cultural system carries out the psychic and intellectual colonization of people of color. The second has been the prisons, whose inmates are disproportionately black, brown, and lower class. In confining within its walls a significant segment of those who have reacted against racial and colonialism overtly and aggressively, although not always with political consciousness, the prison is a concentrated essence of the colonial relationship. It is therefore not surprising that it has become a new breeding ground for nationalist and revolutionary organization.

Cultural Nationalism
Cultural conflict is generic to the colonial relation because colonization involves the domination of Western technological values over the more communal cultures of non-Western peoples. Colonialism played havoc with the national integrity of the peoples it brought under its sway. Of course, all traditional cultures are threatened by industrial-
Theoretical perspectives

isim, the city, and modernization in communication, transportation, health, and education. What is special to colonialism is that political and administrative decisions are made by colonizers toward the end of managing and controlling the colonized peoples. The boundaries of African colonies, for example, were drawn to suit the political conveniences of the European nations without regard to the social organization and cultures of African tribes and kingdoms. Nigeria as blocked out by the British included the Yorubas and the Ibos. The recent civil war was at least partially a by-product of the colonialist’s disrespect for the integrity of indigenous cultures.*

The most total destruction of culture took place not in traditional colonialism but in America. As E. Franklin Frazier stressed, the integral cultures of the diverse African peoples who furnished the slave trade were destroyed because slaves from different tribes, kingdoms, and linguistic groups were purposely separated to maximize domination and control. Language, religion, and national loyalties were lost in North America much more completely than in the Caribbean countries and Brazil, where slavery developed somewhat differently. On this key point America’s internal colonization has been more total and extreme than classic colonialism. The British in India and the European powers in Africa were simply not able—as outnumbered minorities—to destroy the national and tribal cultures of the colonized. Recall that American slavery lasted 250 years and its racist aftermath has lasted another 100. Colonial dependency in British Kenya and French Algeria lasted only 77 and 125 years, respectively. In the wake of this more drastic uprooting and destruction of culture and social organization, much more powerful agencies of social, political, and psychological domination developed in America.

Colonial control of many peoples inhabiting the colonies was more a goal than a fact, and at Independence there were undoubtedly fairly large numbers of Africans who had never seen a colonial administrator. The gradual process of extension of control from the administrative center on the African coast contrasts sharply with the total uprooting involved in the slave trade and the

totalitarian aspects of slavery in the United States. Whether or not Elkins is correct in treating slavery as a total institution, it undoubtedly had a far more radical and pervasive impact on American slaves than did colonialism on the vast majority of Africans.¹⁷

Yet a similar cultural process unfolds in both contexts of colonialism. To the extent that they are involved in the larger society and economy, the colonized are caught up in a conflict between two cultures. Fanon has described how the assimilation-oriented schools of Martinique taught him to reject his own culture and blackness in favor of Westernized, French, and white values.¹⁸ Both the colonized elites under traditional colonialism and perhaps the majority of Afro-Americans today experience a parallel split in identity, cultural loyalty, and political orientation.¹⁹

The colonizers use their culture to socialize the colonized elites (intellectuals, politicians, and middle class) into an identification with the colonial system. Because Western culture has the prestige, the power, and the key to the limited opportunity available to a minority of the colonized, the first reaction seems to be an acceptance of the dominant values. Call it brainwashing, as the Black Muslims put it; call it identifying with the aggressor, if you prefer Freudian terminology; call it a natural response to the hope and belief that integration and democratization can really take place, if you favor a more commonsense explanation; however the process is defined, this initial acceptance crumbles in time on the realities of racism and colonialism. The colonized, seeing that his success within colonialism is at the expense of his group and his own inner identity, moves radically toward a rejection of the Western culture and develops a nationalist outlook that celebrates his people and their traditions. As Memmi describes it:

Assimilation being abandoned, the colonized's liberation must be carried out through a recovery of self and of autonomous dignity. Attempts at imitating the colonizer required self-denial; the colonizer's rejection is the indispensable prelude to self-discovery. That accusing and annihilating image must be shaken off; oppression must be attacked boldly since it is impossible to go around it. After having been rejected for so long by the colonizer, the day has come when it is the colonized who must refuse the colonizer.²⁰
Memmi's book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, is based on his experience as a Tunisian Jew in a marginal position between the French and the colonized Arab majority. The uncanny parallels between the North African situation he describes and the course of black-white relations in our society is the best impressionist argument I know for the thesis that we have a colonized group and a colonizing system in America. His discussion of why the most radical French anticolonialist cannot participate in the struggle of the colonized is directly applicable to the situation of the white liberal and radical vis-à-vis the black movement.* His portrait of the colonized is as good an analysis of the psychology behind black power and black nationalism as anything that has been written in the United States.

Considered *en bloc* as them, they or those, different from every point of view, homogeneous in a radical heterogeneity, the colonized reacts by rejecting all the colonizers *en bloc*. The distinction between deed and intent has no great significance in the colonial situation. In the eyes of the colonized, all Europeans in the colonies are de facto colonizers, and whether they want to be or not, they are colonizers in some ways. By their privileged economic position, by belonging to the political system of oppression, or by participating in an effectively negative complex toward the colonized, they are colonizers. . . . They are supporters or at least unconscious accomplices of that great collective aggression of Europe.21

*During the early civil rights campaigns many whites had the illusion that they could disassociate themselves from racist privilege by participating in the movement for racial equality. Memmi shows how racism is a universal and inevitable part of the mentality of all members of the dominant group in a racially oppressive society. Out of their own experience this understanding came to black activists and led to the position that liberation could only develop out of "a black thing." The black power movement led also to a new reading of American racism as a colonial question. Confronted by this shift in perspective, white activists felt disoriented, left "out in the cold." Many former advocates of "Negro rights" not only turned against the black nationalist trend, but reversed their formerly "positive" orientation toward the Afro-American community as a whole, much in the manner of Memmi's left colonizer's reaction to the "excesses" of the anticolonial struggle. The recent third world movement seems to have aggravated this response: Black indifference is bad enough, but collective exclusion is intolerable!
The same passion which made him admire and absorb Europe shall make him assert his differences; since those differences, after all, are within him and correctly constitute his true self.\textsuperscript{22}

The important thing now is to rebuild his people, whatever be their authentic nature; to reforge their unity, communicate with it, and to feel that they belong.\textsuperscript{23}

Cultural revitalization movements play a key role in anticolonial movements. They follow an inner necessity and logic of their own that comes from the effects of colonialism on groups and personal identities; they are also essential to provide the solidarity that the political or military phase of the anticolonial revolution requires. In the United States an Afro-American culture has developed out of the ingredients of African world views, the experiences of slavery, migration, and the Northern lower-class ghettos—and, most importantly, the political history of the black population in its struggle against racism. That Afro-Americans are moving toward cultural consciousness in a period when ethnic loyalties tend to be weak (and perhaps on the decline) in this country is another confirmation of the unique colonized position of the black group.

The Movement for Ghetto Control
The call for black power unites a number of varied movements and tendencies.\textsuperscript{24} Although agreement on a unified program has not yet emerged, the most important emphasis seems to be on the movement for control of the ghetto. Black leaders and organizations are increasingly concerned with owning and controlling those institutions that exist within or impinge upon their community. The colonial model provides a key to the understanding of this movement; indeed, advocates of ghetto control have increasingly invoked the language of colonialism in pressing for local home rule. The framework of anti-colonialism explains why the struggle to put poor people in control of poverty programs has in many cities been more important than the content of these programs and why it has been crucial to exclude whites from leadership positions in black organizations.

The key institutions that anticolonialists want to take over or control are business, social services, schools, and the police. Though many spokesmen have advocated the exclusion of white landlords and small businessmen from the ghetto, the idea has evidently not caught
fire among the blacks, and little concrete movement toward economic expropriation has as yet developed. Welfare recipients have organized in many cities to protect their rights and gain a greater voice in the decisions that affect them. Larry Jackson observes that "there is no organizational structure in the black community which can equal (on a national level) the number of troops that the National Welfare Rights Movement can politically engage in literally hundreds of cities across the country." However, because the problems of welfare do not cut across class lines, whole communities have not mounted direct action against this form of colonialism. Thus, schools and the police have been the crucial issues of ghetto control politics.

The Schools
In many cities during the late 1960s educational priorities shifted from integration to community control, New York and Brooklyn being the most publicized examples. Afro-Americans demanded their own school boards, with the power to hire and fire principals and teachers and to construct a curriculum that would be relevant to the special needs and culture of ghetto youth. Black students across the country have been active in high schools and colleges, protesting in behalf of incorporating black power and black culture into the education system. Consider how similar the spirit behind these developments is to the attitude of the colonized North African toward European education:

He will prefer a long period of educational mistakes to the continuance of the colonizer's school organization. He will choose institutional disorder in order to destroy the institutions built by the colonizer as soon as possible. There we see, indeed a reactive drive of profound protest. He will no longer owe anything to the colonizer and will have definitely broken with him.

Protest and institutional disorder over the issue of school control in New York City came to a head in 1968. The procrastination in the Albany State legislature, the several crippling strikes called by the teachers' union, and the almost frenzied response of Jewish organizations made it clear that decolonization of education faces the resistance of powerful vested interests. Funding for the experimental school districts was ended after one year, and the limited autonomy that had been granted these districts was incorporated into a more
general plan of decentralization. The defeat of “community control” in New York may have contributed to its failure to spread rapidly to other major cities.27

The movement reflected some of the problems and ambiguities that stem from colonization within the borders of the “mother country.” The Afro-American community is not parallel in structure to the communities of colonized nations under traditional colonialism. The significant difference here is the lack of fully developed indigenous institutions other than the church. Outside of some areas of the South there is really no black economy, and most Afro-Americans are inevitably caught up in the larger society’s structure of occupations, education, and mass communications. Thus the ethnic nationalist orientation, which reflects the reality of colonization, exists alongside an integrationist orientation, which reflects the reality that the institutions of the larger society are much more developed than those of the incipient nation.28 As would be expected, the movement for school control reflected both orientations. The militant leaders who spearhead such local movements may be primarily motivated by the desire to gain control over the community’s institutions—they are anticolonialists first and foremost. Many parents who support them may share this goal, but the majority are probably more concerned about creating a new education that will enable their children to “make it” in the society and the economy as a whole; they know that the present school system fails ghetto children and does not prepare them for participation in American life.

In many communities black leaders are now struggling for measures that fall between the poles of integration and community autonomy: for example, control over special programs, ethnically oriented curricula, and “alternative schools” within a racially heterogeneous institution or district. And by 1971 the ways and means of achieving integration had reappeared as a major national controversy as the Nixon administration backtracked on the busing issue. As more cities and school systems move toward black majorities, however, demands for community control are likely to emerge again.

The Police
There has been a growing recognition that law enforcement is particularly crucial in maintaining the colonized status of black Americans. Of all establishment institutions, police departments probably
include the highest proportion of individual racists. This is no accident, since central to the workings of racism are attacks on the humanity and dignity of the subject group. The police constrict Afro-Americans to black neighborhoods by harassing and questioning them when they are found outside the ghetto; without provocation they break up groups of youths congregated on corners or in cars; and they continue to use offensive and racist language no matter how many seminars on intergroup understanding have been built into the police academy. They also shoot to kill ghetto residents for alleged crimes such as car thefts and running from officers of the law. According to a recent survey:

In the predominantly Negro areas of several large cities, many of the police perceive the residents as basically hostile, especially the youth and adolescents. A lack of public support—from citizens, from courts, and from laws—is the policeman’s major complaint. But some of the public criticism can be traced to the activities in which he engages day by day, and perhaps to the tone in which he enforces the “law” in the Negro neighborhoods. Most frequently he is “called upon” to intervene in domestic quarrels and break up loitering groups. He stops and frisks two or three times as many people as are carrying dangerous weapons or are actual criminals, and almost half of these don’t wish to cooperate with the policeman’s efforts.  

Thus the police enforce the culturally repressive aspects of middle-class American values against the distinctive ethnic orientations of Afro-American and other minority subcultures. It has been observed that few whites are arrested for gambling despite its popularity in a variety of forms; blacks, however, are arrested unduly for this offense and similar crimes like making noise in public. The Detroit officer David Senak as described by John Hersey  well exemplifies how individual policemen can become moral crusaders against “deviant behavior” and how the black community is particularly vulnerable to such cultural aggression.*

* In the trial of Huey Newton, the definition of the widely used expression “pig” became germane to the case. As a number of witnesses
Police are key agents in the power equation as well as in the dramas of dehumanization and cultural repression. In the final analysis they do the dirty work for the larger system by restricting the striking back of black rebels to skirmishes inside the ghetto, thus deflecting energies and attacks from the communities and institutions of the larger power structure. In an historical review, Gary Marx notes that since the French revolution, police and other authorities have killed large numbers of demonstrators and rioters; the rebellious "rabble" rarely destroys human life. The same pattern has been repeated in America's recent revolts. Journalistic accounts suggest that police see themselves as defending the interests of white people against a tide of black insurgence; the majority of whites appear to view "blue power" in this same light. There is probably no other opinion on which the races are today so far apart as they are on the question of attitudes toward the police.

Set off in many cases by a confrontation between an officer and a black citizen, the ghetto uprisings have dramatized the role of law enforcement and the issue of police brutality. In their aftermath, movements have arisen to contain police activity. One of the first was the Community Alert Patrol in Los Angeles, a group organized to police the police in order to keep them honest and constrain their violations of personal dignity. This was the first tactic of the Black Panther Party, which originated in Oakland—perhaps the most significant group to challenge the police role in maintaining the ghetto's colonized status. The Panthers' later policy of openly carrying guns (a legally protected right) and their intention of defending themselves against police aggression brought on a series of confrontations with the Oakland police department. In 1968 when I first drafted this chapter I wrote: "All indications are that the authorities intend to destroy the Panthers by shooting, framing up, or legally harassing their leadership—diverting the group's energies away from its primary purpose of self-defense and organization of the black community to that of legal defense and gaining support in the white community." Within testified, in the language of the ghetto the term connotes a spectrum much wider than that of policeman. As one man put it succinctly, a pig is any outsider who comes into an oppressed community to direct the lives and activities of people whose feelings and culture he neither understands nor respects.
three years all these "indications" had materialized into hard fact. The Panthers have suffered critical losses to their leadership and organizational unity, and their cofounder Huey Newton has publicly criticized his party for isolating itself from the problems and concerns of the black community.

There are three major answers to "police colonialism," which correspond to reformist and more radical approaches to the situation. The most elementary, and most superficial, focuses on the fact that ghettos are overwhelmingly patrolled by white rather than by black officers. Therefore, the first proposal—supported today by many police departments—is to increase the numbers of blacks on local forces to something like their distribution in the city, making it possible to reduce the use of white cops in the ghetto. This reform should be supported for a variety of obvious reasons, but it does not get to the heart of the role of the police as agents of colonization.

The Kerner Report documents the fact that in some cases black policemen can be as brutal as their white counterparts. I have not found data on who polices the ghetto, but statistics showing the proportion of blacks on the overall force are available for many cities. In most places the disparity is so striking that white police must predominate in patrolling black neighborhoods. Among the 30 cities listed by Ebony magazine, in the modal case the proportion of blacks in the population was three to four times as great as their proportion on the police force; for many cities this ratio was 5, 10, and even 20 times. In Oakland 34.5 percent of the population was black; only 4.7 percent of the policemen were black. For Boston the percentages were 16 and 2, for Cleveland 39 and 5, Dallas 25 and 2, Birmingham, 42 and 2! There were only five cities where the ratio was less than 2 to 1, that is, where the proportion of black cops was slightly more than one-half their percentage in the town as a whole: Gary, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Philadelphia, and Chicago. These figures suggest that both the extent and the pattern of colonization may vary from one city to another. It would be useful to study how black communities differ in degree of control over internal institutions as well as in economic and political power in the metropolitan area.

A second more radical demand is that the police must live in the communities where they work. The idea is that black officers who lived in the ghetto would have to be accountable to the community; if they came on like white cops then "the brothers would take care of
business” and make their lives miserable. In many cities large numbers of policemen, like other public employees, reside in adjacent suburbs; they have resisted the demand of political leaders and pressure groups that they live where they work on the grounds that it singles out their occupation for discriminatory treatment.

The third, or maximalist, position is based on the premise that the police play no positive role in the ghettos. It calls for the withdrawal of metropolitan officers from black communities and the substitution of an autonomous indigenous force that would maintain order without oppressing the population. The precise relation between such an independent police, a ghetto governing body that would supervise and finance it, the city and county law enforcement agencies, and the law itself is as yet unclear. It is unlikely that any major city will soon face these problems as directly as New York did in the case of its schools. Of all the programs of decolonization, police autonomy will be most resisted. It gets to the heart of the way the state controls and contains the black community by delegating the legitimate use of violence to police authority.*

The various black power programs that are aimed at gaining control of individual ghettos—buying up property and businesses, running the schools through community boards, taking over anti-poverty programs and other social agencies, diminishing the arbitrary power of the police—can serve to revitalize the institutions of the ghetto and build up an economic, professional, and political power base. These programs seem limited; we do not know at present whether they are enough in themselves to end colonized status. But they are certainly a necessary first step.

* As far as I know the only locale where these problems have been at least considered is Berkeley, California. In April 1971 a measure to divide the police department into autonomous units, each controlled by one of the city’s three major social areas (the white middle-class “hills,” the predominantly black South and West sides, and the youth-oriented campus section), was placed on the ballot. The plan received about 32 percent of the vote in the city as a whole. It did not receive the support of black Berkeley, where not a single precinct was carried. In my judgment this was because the project did not arise out of the experience and politics of the black community, but was chiefly engineered and organized by the white left and students. Others have stressed the middle-class character of Berkeley’s minority population and the sophistication and liberal image of its police force.
Yet they have dangers and pitfalls. Just as the limitation of a riot “strategy” became apparent, and just as the cultural movement bears a potential tendency toward antipolitical withdrawal that would have little impact on the condition of the poor and dispossessed, so ghetto control politics—indeed “black power” itself—faces the possibility that its programs and political thrust could be co-opted by the larger system of power. A number of radical political analysts already see a new stage of neocolonialism in which Afro-American leaders, under the black power banner, exercise a form of “indirect rule” over their internal communities, whose people are then more efficiently exploited and controlled by an ever-flexible corporate capitalism. While this eventuality is not to be discounted, I do not look for such a pat and facile solution to what Franz Schurmann has called a key contradiction of American capitalism—that between the emerging black cities and the white suburbs.

The Role of Whites

What makes the Kerner Report a less-than-radical document is its superficial treatment of racism and its reluctance to confront the colonized relation between black people and the larger society. The report emphasizes the attitudes and feelings that make up white racism, rather than the system of privilege and control, which is the heart of the matter. With all its discussion of the ghetto and its problems, it never faces the question of the stake that white Americans have in racism and ghettoization.

It is not a simple question, but this chapter should not end with the impression that police are the major villains. As I have argued in Chapter 1, all white Americans gain privilege and advantage from the colonization of black communities. The majority of whites also lose something from this oppression and division in society. Serious research should be directed to the ways in which white individuals and institutions are tied into the ghetto. Let me in closing suggest some possible parameters.

1. It is my guess that only a small minority of whites make a direct economic profit from ghetto colonization. This is hopeful, in that the ouster of white businessmen may become politically feasible. Much more significant, however, are the private and corporate interests in the land and residential property of the black community;
their holdings and influence on urban decision-making must be exposed and combatted.\textsuperscript{38}

2. A much larger minority of whites have occupational and professional interests in the present arrangements. The Kerner Commission reports that 1.3 million nonwhite men would have to be upgraded occupationally in order to make the black job distribution roughly similar to that for whites. The commission advocates such upgrading without mentioning that 1.3 million specially privileged white workers would lose in the bargain.\textsuperscript{39} In addition, there are those professionals who carry out what Lee Rainwater has called the “dirty work” of administering the lives of the ghetto poor: the social workers, the schoolteachers, the urban development people, and of course the police.\textsuperscript{40} The social problems of the black community will ultimately be solved only by people and organizations from that community; the emphasis within these professions must shift toward training such a cadre of minority personnel. Social scientists who study and teach courses on problems of race and poverty likewise have an obligation to replace themselves by bringing into the graduate schools and college faculties men and women of color who will become the future experts in these areas. For cultural and intellectual imperialism is as real as welfare colonialism, although it is currently screened behind such unassailable shibboleths as universalism and the objectivity of scientific inquiry.

3. Without downgrading the vested interests of profit and profession, the real nitty-gritty elements of the white stake are political power and bureaucratic security. Although few whites have much understanding of the realities of race relations and ghetto life, I think most give tacit or at least subconscious support for the containment and control of the black population. And whereas most whites have extremely distorted images of black power, many—if not most—would be frightened by actual black political power. Racial groups and identities are real in American life; white Americans sense they are on top, and they fear possible reprisals or disruptions were power to be more equalized. There seems to be in the white psyche a paranoid fear of black dominance; the belief that black autonomy would mean unbridled license is so ingrained that such reasonable outcomes as black political majorities and independent black police forces will be bitterly resisted.
On this level the major bulwark of colonization is bureaucratic security, which allows the middle classes to go about life and business in peace and quiet. The black militant movement is a threat to the orderly procedures by which bureaucracies and suburbs manage their existence, and I think today there are more people who feel a stake in conventional procedures than there are who gain directly from racism. In their fight for institutional control, the colonized are not playing by the white rules of the game. These administrative rules have kept them down and out of the system; therefore blacks are not committed to running institutions in the image of the white middle class.*

The liberal, humanist value that violence is the worst sin cannot be defended today if one is committed squarely against racism and for self-determination. Some violence is almost inevitable in the decolonization process; unfortunately racism in America has been so effective that the greatest power Afro-Americans wield today is the power to disrupt.** If we are going to swing with these revolutionary times and at least respond positively to the anticolonial movement, we shall have to learn to live with conflict, confrontation, constant change, and what may be either real or apparent chaos and disorder.

A positive response from the white majority needs to be in two major directions at the same time. First, community liberation movements should be supported in every way by pulling out white instruments of direct control and exploitation and substituting technical assistance to the community when this is asked for. But it is not enough to relate affirmatively to the nationalist movement for ghetto control without at the same time radically opening doors for full participation in the institutions of the mainstream. Otherwise the liberal and radical position is little different from the traditional segregationist position. Freedom in the special conditions of American colonization means that the colonized must have the choice between participating in the larger society and in independent structures of their own.

* Some, of course, will recreate "white" forms, as happened in a number of formerly colonial nations after independence, and as has been the pattern of "the black Anglo-Saxons." My point is that today the opposite tendency is on the rise.

** This is because racism has fractionated the black population, making unity of political action difficult. A unified people and movement would have power to implement its goals and force changes on the society that would go far beyond disruption.
NOTES

1. Nationalism, including an orientation toward Africa, is no new development. It has been a constant tendency within Afro-American politics. See Harold Cruse, Rebellion or Revolution (New York: Morrow, 1968), esp. chaps. 5–7.

2. This was five years before the publication of The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual (New York: Morrow, 1967), which brought Cruse into prominence. Thus, the 1962 article was not widely read until its reprinting in Cruse's essays, Rebellion or Revolution, op. cit.


The link between colonization and racism may be questioned from still another standpoint. In his provocative study, Rebels in Eden (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), Richard Rubenstein has expanded the concepts of internal colonialism and colonization to encompass the major subordinated strata—regardless of color and racism—in American history. Rubenstein views the social move-
ments of farmers in the eighteenth century, of the working class in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and of contemporary students—as well as those of the ethnic immigrants and racial minorities—as attempts to gain or defend a measure of local autonomy vis-à-vis alien and dominant power hierarchies. Rubenstein's analysis of ghetto revolt in the 1960s and his approach to decolonization today is in very close agreement with the theses of the present chapter; unfortunately his book did not come to my attention in time to give it the consideration it deserves.

6. As Eldridge Cleaver reminds us, "Black people are a stolen people held in a colonial status on stolen land, and any analysis which does not acknowledge the colonial status of black people cannot hope to deal with the real problem." “The Land Question,” Ramparts (May 1968), 51. Reprinted in Cleaver, Post-Prison Writings and Speeches (New York: Vintage, 1969).


12. “The police function to support and enforce the interests of the


19. Harold Cruse has described how these two themes of integration with the larger society and identification with ethnic nationality have struggled within the political and cultural movements of Negro Americans. *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, op. cit.*


24. Scholars and social commentators, black and white alike, disagree in interpreting the black power movement. The issues concern whether this is a new development in black protest or an old tendency revived; whether the movement is radical, revolutionary, reformist, or conservative; and whether this orientation is unique to Afro-Americans or essentially a black parallel to other ethnic group strategies for collective mobility. For an interesting discussion of black power as a modernized version of Booker T. Washington’s separatism and economism, see Harold Cruse, *Rebellion or Revolution, op. cit.*, pp. 193–258.


27. Major documents in the school controversy, various viewpoints and analyses are included in Maurice R. Berube and Marilyn Gittell, eds., *Confrontation at Ocean Hill-Brownsville* (New York: Praeger, 1969).

28. This split in the politics and psyche of the black American was poetically described by W. E. B. Du Bois in his *Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Crest, 1972), and more recently analyzed by Harold Cruse in *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, *op. cit.*


31. "In the Gordon Riots of 1780 demonstrators destroyed property and freed prisoners, but did not seem to kill anyone, while authorities killed several hundred rioters and hung an additional 25. In the Rebellion Riots of the French Revolution, though several hundred rioters were killed, they killed no one. Up to the end of the summer of 1967, this pattern had clearly been repeated, as police, not rioters, were responsible for most of the more than 100 deaths that have occurred. Similarly, in a related context, the
more than 100 civil rights murders of recent years have been matched by almost no murders of racist whites.” G. Marx, “Civil Disorders and the Agents of Social Control,” op. cit.


33. Thus, a United Press dispatch from Detroit notes that the police department has announced plans “to increase the percentage of black policemen on the force from 13 percent to 45 percent by 1980 to match the city’s current racial composition.” *San Francisco Chronicle* (July 24, 1971). Even if this were achieved by their formula of recruiting five blacks out of every eight new members, the personnel department has evidently failed to consider what the black proportion of Detroit’s population will be by 1980.


That black officers nevertheless would make a difference is suggested by data from one of the supplemental studies to the Kerner Report. They found Negro policemen working in the ghettos considerably more sympathetic to the community and its social problems than their white counterparts. Peter Rossi, et al., “Between Black and White—The Faces of American Institutions in the Ghetto,” op. cit., chap. 6.

35. Eldridge Cleaver has called this first stage of the anticolonial movement community liberation in contrast to a more long-range goal of national liberation, “Community Imperialism,” *Black Panther Party Newspaper*, 2, no. 3 (May 18, 1968).


