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# BLACK AMERICANS AT THE CROSSROADS

— WHERE DO WE GO  
FROM HERE?

by  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1	
The Beginning of the End .....	9
Chapter 2	
Brighton Heights, Pittsburgh, Pa. ....	18
Chapter 3	
Howard University .....	31
Chapter 4	
The Cosmopolites of Berkeley .....	39
Chapter 5	
The Black Negro .....	43
Chapter 6	
The Life and Times of the African American Association .....	69
Chapter 7	
The Philosophy and Operation of the African American Association .....	76
Chapter 8	
The Structure and Operation of the African American Association .....	107
Chapter 9	
The Matchline .....	121

Chapter 10	
Reaction to the African American Association . . .	134
Chapter 11	
Will Blacks Survive the 80's? . . . . .	140
Chapter 12	
The Collision of the 80's . . . . .	161
Chapter 13	
White Leadership in Crisis . . . . .	169
Chapter 14	
Do Blacks Threaten White Survival? . . . . .	185
Chapter 15	
The African American Association to the Rescue? . . . . .	199
Chapter 16	
The Pan-African Republic — Purposes and Goals . . . . .	204
Chapter 17	
Obstacles to the Pan-African Republic — Domestic and International . . . . .	209
Chapter 18	
The Arguments of our Enemies against the Pan-African Republic . . . . .	228

## Chapter 6

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*“I can admire the serpent for his swiftness, but if he gets into my bed, I will bruise his head.”*

*— an African Proverb*

## **THE LIFE AND TIMES BEFORE THE AFRICAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION**

### **“Student Unrest in the Bay Area”**

There were no Black power movements, Black studies programs, “Black is Beautiful” acknowledgements or major bridges with Africa in the early 60’s. To the contrary, most Black college students were generally indifferent to questions of racial identity. Some were flattered that admittance to prestigious colleges automatically conferred middle class social status upon them. This group at Berkeley, where Blacks were less than 1% of the enrollment, celebrated their social achievements with daily card parties in the “Bear’s Lairs” coffee shop and every night with gossip, coke drinking parties in the partitioned Morrison library cubicles set aside for student study.

Others retained an abiding conviction to focus on institutional racism through traditional civil rights groups like the N.A.A.C.P. With the leadership of Fullbright scholar Herman Black and Cedric Robinson, students were challenged to resist the status quo.

Still others assumed the Urban League type approach and spent long hours visiting segregated fraternity houses making passionate pleas to the “fraternity brothers” to admit Blacks through the Holy veil. Immutable barriers to substantial progress were always erected, however, as soon as the explosive question of interracial dating arose.

Finally, there was a “lonely crowd” of Black intellectuals who were offended by the extensive play attitudes toward education; the form, but substanceless attempts at civil rights protests; the degrading begging of White fraternities to admit Blacks. This group was headed by a recognized intellectual, Donald R. Hopkins, and included the likes of Maurice Dawson, Peter Aubrey and Jerry LaBrie, James Lacy, Mudavanha Patterson, Billy Alexander, Henry Ramsey, James Lindsely, Mary Lewis, Jay Wright, George Napper, Belvie Harraldson and myself.

This group had come to believe that no amount of proper speech, necktied dress, friendliness or intellectual conformity would make them an American in the operational sense of the word. No, they saw clearly that to be an American, even on a liberal college campus required that one be both Protestant and White; next Catholic and White and finally, Jewish and White. It was precisely this racial precondition that we could never fill. Accordingly, we found ourselves practicing a kind of voluntary association, some would say separation, and pursued the intrinsic values of ideas and knowledge.

There was at least one exciting occasion when most of the groups came together to defend Malcolm X's right to speak on the Berkeley campus. It seems that one campus organization was anxious to sponsor a lecture by Malcolm X. In keeping with the administration's guidelines, an approval was requested by the Dean of Students. After the request was summarily denied, Herman Blake and Cedric Robinson of the Campus N.A.A.C.P. invited me to attend a protest meeting with Dean Strong.

As the battle lines were drawn, the N.A.A.C.P. representatives charged ahead with the accusation that racism was blatant on the campus and the Malcolm X incident was just another undisguised example of this disease. Dean Strong, a philosophy instructor by profession, appeared to be delighted with the attack, and responded with a long impressive narration of U.C.'s noble efforts to destroy the "monster of discrimination" wherever they found it. And as far as Malcolm X was concerned, the state constitution insisted that the separation of church and state be maintained inviolate and for that reason alone Malcolm X, a Black Muslim minister, could not be permitted to use campus facilities. An undeniable sense of defeat and gloom descended on the Black delegation as the Dean summarized the salient points of his syllogism. The resulting silence only added to his smugness and sense of conquest. Up to this point, I had no intention of violating my observer status at the pow-wow.

Without warning, the strict methodologies of logical positivism as taught to me at Howard University's philosophy department by the brilliant Dr. Winston McAllister, coupled with the memory of the unforgiving ivy league students at the Temple debating tournament, exploded and I found myself unable to avoid the controversy.

I began slowly by introducing myself as a 3rd year Boalt Hall Law student. Then I acknowledged that the nature of the power inherent in the Dean's position make it completely unnecessary for the Dean to give an explanation of the denial of the request for Malcolm X to be heard on campus. And therefore, should the Dean decide to exercise his option in this regard, I, for one, would not be offended and would appreciate the frank disclosure. If on the other hand, the Dean desired to explain the administration's position, my only hope was that the laws of logic not be violated. At this point, the red faced Dean Strong had lost his smirk of superiority and almost in sleep talking tones said he would be delighted to describe the administration's position. In an effort to regain the offensive he repeated the church state separation argument.

Calmly and deliberately I asked if the real issue was nothing more than whether or not Malcolm X was coming to the 99% White campus to proselytize for conversion to the separatist Black Muslims. Dean Strong reluctantly admitted that that indeed was the real issue.

I then pointed out that only two weeks prior, Rev. Billy Graham had appeared on campus at the Greek Theatre and solicited the campus to light candles in the furtherance of the Christian witness. It would seem that this religious behavior clearly violated the relevant constitutional provisions. However, I was not asking the university to grant Malcolm X equal rights under the Constitution if such courtesy would compound a preexisting illegal act. At this point the Dean seemed stunned.

I refused to stop. I moved in for the kill, "Dean Strong," I asked, "what research or evidence do you have that Malcolm X was likely to proselytize on the U.C. Berkeley campus?"

Again silence. "For instance," I asked, "had you reviewed any of the prior speeches that Malcolm X had delivered at Queen's College in New York, The Yale Law Forum, Columbia University or Harvard Law Forum?" A negative head shake.

Finally, I agreed to supply copies of prior speeches Malcolm X had delivered at other White colleges to enable the Dean to make a fair, logical and legal determination. Dean Strong terminated the meeting with the embarrassing announcement that the decision had already been made and would remain. Here was another example of the kind of White man's justice that the Blacks in Liberty City would come to realize in 1980.

The Blacks were outraged with the administration's arbitrary ruling and organized to sponsor Malcolm's appearance at the Y.M.C.A. across the street from the campus. He was in rare form and provided many thrills for Blacks of all persuasions to watch their Big Brother say the things to Whites they would like to have said but lacked the courage. I would like to say that the Muslim doctrine of separation had little appeal for most Blacks in the audience, but the fact that this obviously intelligent man could visualize a life apart from Whites left a nagging psychological uneasiness that would not easily go away. Shortly thereafter most of the Blacks returned to their respective "business as usual."

It was not long after the Malcolm X appearance that a Howard graduate, Marry Lewis, and her roommate, Ann Cooke, offered their Dwight Avenue house to host weekly forums on the question of Black identity. The participants were restricted to persons of African descent. One of the first discussions concluded with the consensus that we would henceforth and forevermore insist on being called Blacks or African Americans, but never Negroes. Thereafter we began a systematic study of literature that would years later serve as the core of the Black studies' curriculum. First, there was *Myth of the Negro Past*, by H.J. Herskovits; then *Black Bourgeoisie* by E. Franklin Frazier; next *The Souls of Black Folks* by W.E.B. DuBois, *The Invisible Man* by Ralph



Ellison; and then *Black Moses*, the story of Marcus Garvey, by Cronin as well as Margaret Just Butcher, Kwame Nkrumah and the list never seemed to stop.

Those meetings were highly significant for me because of my heretofore profound ignorance about Black History. In addition, Blacks were inspired to know that we had a viable intellectual peer group that was not predicated upon White approbation.

The weekly meetings were transferred from Berkeley to the Oakland apartment of Donald R. Hopkins as rumors of Black independence began to attract college students throughout the Bay Area. At times the meetings boasted as many as 50 students. Fortunately, the growth of interest, never vitiated the integrity and quality of the intellectual exchange. Much of the credit in this regard should be attributed to Donald R. Hopkins, then to Henry Ramsey, then to Ralph Jones, then to the residual.

### **“Reading or Community Action — Which Way Should We Go?”**

One of the inevitable results of a large number of enthusiastic Blacks being turned on to the intrinsic value of the universality of ideas and knowledge is that they tend to become evangelists. In our case it was difficult for people like Otho Green to conceal the fact that he had gone from a D student/playboy at Hayward State College to a serious A- achiever in less than one year. Similar testimonies tended to burst Hopkins’ apartment at the seams each time we met.

Simultaneous with the increased audience was the problem of giving individual recognition to a significant number of such a diverse group. Some easily earned respect with their penetrating insights and comments on the books under discussion. Others simply lacked the vocabulary, self confidence and background to gain instant recognition. The result was a tendency to search other alternatives for recognition. Occasionally the core group was subtly accused of being intellectual elitist, who were not doing enough for

the masses. Gradually, a polite insistence was made to debate the issue of reading books vs. community action.

I entered the debate on the side of the readers. My position was that the group was primarily composed of college students. And as such, our highest responsibility to ourselves and the community was to acquire negotiable skills that would empower us to make a sustained contribution to the masses of the community. In addition any meaningful community program would at this time detract substantially from the primary objective. Finally, I argued, the group, though undeniably sincere, lacked a functional knowledge and rapport with the community to be credible.

It is not surprising that the debate became hot and heavy. In the end the proponents for community action carried the vote and the African American Association was born. In compromise, it was agreed that an honest attempt would be made to maintain the integrity of the discussion group while not precluding community action.

The next challenge revolved around defining and operating programs of action. The more successful the programs became as evidenced by the presence of the masses the more some of the college students quietly returned to the security of campus life and gradually abandoned the meetings altogether. Abandonment was as foreign to my vocabulary as it was to my father's. Therefore, my participation increased instead of decreased with the passing of time. For many reasons many responsibilities of the African American Association fell squarely upon my shoulders. And through a beautiful blend of the masses and the classes a leadership emerged that combined imagination and sheer determination to build a monumental legacy for our people. Eventually our thinking led to the inevitability of the Pan-African Republic — a right to a free choice for an African American homeland.

But let's look at the evolution of our philosophy and operation in a more chronological order.

## Chapter 7

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*“The efforts of government alone will never be enough. In the end, the people must choose and the people must help themselves.”*

*John F. Kennedy*

## THE PHILOSOPHY AND OPERATION OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION

### “Africa Is the Heart”

After it was finally decided to “get involved” and develop relevant community action programs, we hit the streets with reckless abandon. Lacking both organizational experience and financial resources we were forced to operate from the ignorance of our hearts. Fortunately for us, we did not visit Harlem, the mecca of street speaking Black Nationalism, to take our direction.

As any student of Black history knows, Harlem has symbolized the best of Black Nationalism since the days of Marcus Garvey. It was in Harlem that the nexus of reading, preaching, rumor recycling and the gala of the “gay 90’s” coalesced. Here Africans, West Indies and African Americans bared their souls to one another in the name of Pan Africanism. Names like Michaeux, Pork Chop Davis, Queen Mother Moore, Malcolm X, James Lawson, Patrice Lumumba, Kwame Nkrumah and Fidel Castro had become legendary.

However, Harlem of the 60’s had lost some of its fervor to habit and ritual. The same slogans were used, the same subject matter referred to, the same audience paused on 7th Ave. and 125th for inspiration; but there was no one to effectively translate and predict the effects of the Third World rise in power on the suffering condition of the Black masses.

Consequently, in retrospect, I am afraid a trip to the Black mecca by inexperienced but sincere Bay Area reformers would have imbued us with great excitement, but few reliable pillars for our crusade.

Therefore, having no reference point or experienced guides except the readings of great men, we darted to the street corners to awaken the community.

Public speaking on San Francisco streets must be regarded, physically at least, as cruel and unusual punish-

ment. To begin with Fillmore and Ellis Streets do not have the congested supportive crowds of Harlem. Next the onlookers ranged from annoyed workers who could not sleep comfortably with the distracting noise to housewives who wanted nothing more than to pass freely on the sidewalk. In between there are recalcitrant drunks, playful youths, and a number of curious, undecided soul folk who were attracted by the noise.

To bring off a successful street meeting one needs rhythm, information, loud voices and luck. The college students who lobbied for community action formed the core of our initial 20-40 Saturday afternoon crowd. They passed out literature, tried to explain the purpose of the gathering and escorted away unruly dissidents. But it was the challenge of the street orators to hold the audience. Because of the after effects of the San Francisco fog, the sun could not be counted on to warm up the noon air. Many times cold air, instead of wisdom filled words, filled the speaker's mouth. Coughing and hoarseness resulted. To make things worse, the speakers were on their own as they mounted the box, there were no prepared texts, division of labor, etc.

The speakers learned early in the movements that one could not be effective if: (1) the vocabulary was too esoteric, (2) one attempted to read, (3) eye contact was broken with the audience (4) they permitted the barbershop philosophers to break the speaking cadence with jokes.

Fortunately, we had a barrage of hard working students who helped create a favorable atmosphere with their reaffirming shouts; and of equal importance, we had an incredible roster of gifted speakers. Heading the list was S.F. State student Weldon Smith; he was followed by law students, Robert Ward and Henry Ramsey, Hal Perry and finally, Maurice Dawson and myself. Later, Bobby Seals and Knovel Cherry would prove effective. The dynamism of organizing 4-5 street corner Saturday afternoon rallies so impressed musician Max Roach that he dedicated the album, "Go Man Go", to us.

We usually finished our rallies at 2:30 in San Francisco

and then went to Oakland and Richmond, where the sun was warmer, to begin all over again. We usually ended, exhausted but inspired, around sundown.

In a very real sense, the philosophy of the African American Association was born out of the street meetings. It was here that we heard, first hand, the anger, fears, hopes, aspirations, contradictions, and class divisions of Black America. In response hereto, we began to think out loud with our people in a way that surprised everyone. Inexperience became maturity, apprehension became confidence, class division became solidarity, disrespect for Africa became racial pride predicated upon the sustained enlightenment, blind materialism became sharing, physical self hatred and bleaching creams became “Black is Beautiful,” drugs and alcohol became objects of scorn, and ignorance became unacceptable.

Specifically the interaction of the street meetings gave rise to the following commitments:

### **1. Black Identity**

Prior to 1962 the term Black was almost never used to refer to persons of African descent born in America. Even the Black Muslims protested the label Black and opted for the designation so-called Negro or simply Muslim.

We screamed “Black people” from the top of our lungs. The purpose was twofold: (1) By everyone referring to themselves as Black we programed the mind to resist the media induced belief that if your skin is “white, you’r alright; if you’r brown stick around; but if you’r Black stay back.” (2) Black was widely used on the African continent and our usage would be one more step toward unification.

It would be a mistake, however, to infer from our noble purposes that the S.F. Bay Area Black community accepted the term Black without a fight. Historically, one of the most dangerous insults anyone could make against the Black American was to call them Black. Congressman Ronald Dellums related his personal experience. It seems that he was insulted in elementary school when a student called him

a Black bastard. After the fight, he discussed the occasion with his mother. To her, he confessed, that his rage was over the word Black, not bastard. It was then that he received his first lesson in racial pride.

Few White Americans have any idea of the utter disgust and anger the term “Black” calls forth in Black Americans. The explanation is complicated, sensitive and perhaps, even embarrassing.

From the time Blacks can remember the term Black was used by Whites, and eventually inculcated into Blacks, as a derogatory term. Evil, curse, magic, sin and ugly was defined in terms of Black. White was held to be pure, angelic, good and beautiful. The respective definitions were imbued into the fabric of every major institution of America.

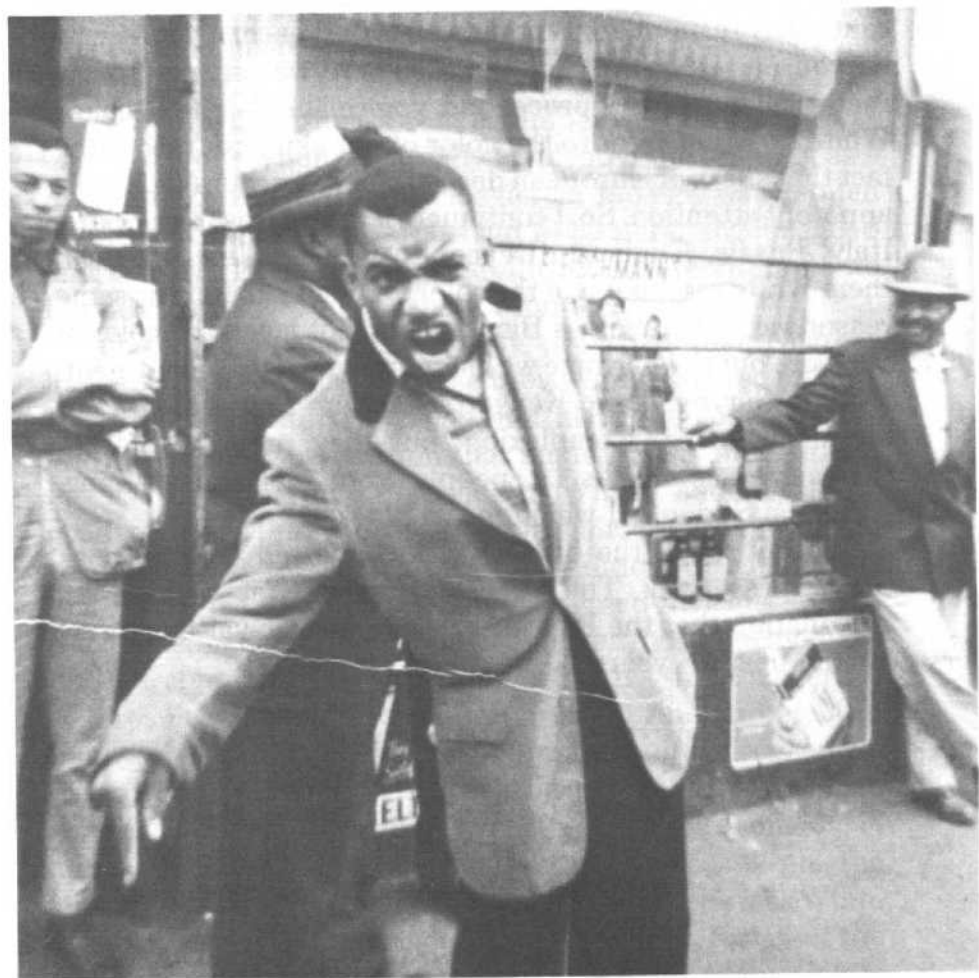
The Christian church openly preached that Negroes looked ugly and Black because they wore the curse of God. Relying on the story of Noah and his three sons, Whites fabricated an interpretation that made Blacks predestined for slavery in perpetual service to Whites and physically changed (thick lips, wide nose, wooly hair, etc.) so they could be detected as the cursed ones. In addition, the plantation system tended to retain the lighter skinned Africans around the house, hence the term, house nigger; but banished the darkest complexioned slaves to the fields (“field niggers”). The result was a high social preference for mulattoes. And finally, the media defined beauty in terms of whiteness. So from Gloria Swanson to Bo Derek, beauty means White as an American ideal. Accordingly, the more White one is in appearance, the more beautiful they are; the less White, the less beautiful they are. The fact is that Black look less White than any group in the society. And, therefore, for all of the above reasons, an almost pathological reaction to the term is imbrued in the race.

Nevertheless, we knew that Blacks could never discover themselves, eliminate color preference based on White models and complete an identification with Africa short of an acceptance; indeed a pride in Blackness. The scope and depth of the challenge was revealed at a San Francisco street

rally when an angry resident flashed a knife and threatened to apply it to my neck if I did not apologize for calling him Black. The immediacy of the predicament did not lend itself to historical and sociological discourse. I found myself resorting to the Socratic method. Brother, I said, if Marilyn Monroe gets a suntan, is she Black or White? White, he cautiously responded. But her skin is darker than yours, why do you persist to call her White. There was silence to the rhetorical question. I proceeded, you call her White because White does not refer to the color of her skin, but rather the fact that she is of European descent. I was encouraged by his apparent attention. So, I continued, if a person is from Spain, Italy, Russia, England, Greece, Scandinavia, etc.. you call them White regardless of the color of their skin. For the same reason we call ourselves Black; we do not mean the color of our skin, but the heritage we claim from the Black continent. Marcus Garvey, Jomo Kenyetta, Mariam Makeeba are not literally Black in complexion, but they proudly refer to themselves as Blacks i.e. people from the land of Zang, Ethiopia, Sudan, all which mean Black.

To my relief, the brother was converted and my neck tissue preserved. The success of the logic yielded an explanation that the Bay Area was to hear in various forms for the next 18 years.





*The Saturday afternoon street rallies brought us in direct contact with our people. From all walks of life knowledge emerged into an organic network. Musician Max Roach dedicated his Album "Go Man Go" to one of the rallies that he attended.*



*Dignity Clothes designed by Jeanette Tucker and manufactured  
by the African American Association.*

*(Photos courtesy of Walter Taylor)*



*"Busing can cost billions, but it can't make you want to learn. Unless it is better to flunk out of an integrated school than a segregated school, we are missing the boat."*



*"Dignity Clothes" manufacturing facility, Oakland, California.  
(Photo courtesy of Walter Taylor)*



*"Biological Pan Africanism" — Black Americans possess the blood of every tribe in Africa and the Middle East.  
(Photo courtesy of Walter Taylor)*

## 2. Educational Goals

One of the first lessons we learned at our street rallies was that the Black parents were totally committed to the education of their children as the only reasonable path to advancement and security. We also observed that they had little interest or concern in the popular issues of integrated vs. defacto segregated v. desegregated educational classrooms. This does not mean that the community was indifferent to White racist proclamations that the presence of Blacks would erode standards of White education. Of course such insulting charges produced emotional reactions. But it is to say that they were at a loss to see how the presence of Whites in the Black school and vice versa would accelerate learning. To some extent the mystery prevailed because most of the Bay Area Black families were born in the South, had attended Black schools and did not equate an all Black school with an inferior education.

The families were greatly concerned with how they could develop the wherewithal to motivate their children to learn. In the early 60's many Blacks, both men and women, were able to find employment, even if meager. The working patterns frequently conflicted with proper home supervision for their school age children. All too often the parents did not pursue such matters as homework assignments, counseling recommendation, reading and writing competence. Many found both principals, teachers and PTA encounters intimidating and they seldom felt the kind of professional warmth and interaction that prevailed in the South. As a result many parents dreaded going to the school house, although for different reasons, as much as their children. A kind of malaise and hopelessness ensued and the destructive syndrome of T.V., long play hours and work avoidance set in.

We struck a responsive chord in both parents and their children when we challenged them to pursue education with an excitement surpassed only by church meetings. The youth responded strongly when we promised to refute William Shockley's genetical views and thereby prove they

had superior minds. We cited lessons from their community experiences: If young people can listen to a soul record only two times and know every word of the song and their teachers and administrators listen to the same record 10 times and yet are unable to master the words, who has the better mind? Again, if a 65 year old choir member can learn a song in one evening so as to be able to sing for the pastor's anniversary, how can one doubt the strength of the mind.

After winning the approval of our audience, we painted the picture in glowing terms of the benefits of an educationally vibrant community. To guarantee the message would not be lost, we dissected the components of learning before parents and children alike.

We stated that the youth could learn the soul songs as easily as the choir singer because they began in an atmosphere of excitement and secondly, their self confidence level was extraordinary. By comparison, physics, chemistry, math, reading, etc. could be learned just as quickly if the essential ingredients were also present. We cited the impressive educational achievements of African students in America.

We defied the educator's text books to demonstrate how to instill excitement and self confidence. Certainly, many teachers could not inspire self confidence because they themselves lacked any confidence in 80% of the Blacks they taught. A visit to most classrooms proved that most teachers were inept at conveying excitement in their lectures.

We insisted that racial identity and commitment could serve as explosive forces in the life of the community. But we knew less about ourselves than anything else. "Jews went to Jewish schools to learn about Jews; Chinese went to Chinese schools to learn about Chinese, Whites went to White schools to learn about White people; and Blacks went to White schools to learn about White people. How could we build a community commitment without a master plan?"

One of the valuable lessons I learned at Howard with my conversation with Africans was that part of their fierce motivation arose from the acceptance of an abiding com-

mitment to help “their people.” They never forgot the drums, handshakes and supportive smiles that saluted them as they left to study in America. Invariably they heard the words: “Hurry back my son, your people are awaiting your knowledge.” The memory successfully carried the African student beyond the boredom, barriers and distractions to becoming academic achievers in America. In large measure Blacks had been robbed of the ability to say *I will* become a doctor, lawyer, dentist, technician, educator, etc. because my people need me. In its place was the empty counselor’s pleas to get an education primarily for the purpose of the material gain. The community audience shouted their categorical support.

I often predicted the outcome of organizing the Black community by blocks, and in each block setting educational goals. Each block would be responsible for sprouting a given number of professionals, technicians, etc. In addition all the institutions of the block would be mobilized to reinforce the educational goals from kindergarten to college graduation. For example, the church would have monthly prayer meetings, scholarship collections, grade review and tutoring sessions. Merchants would post the photos and career promises of youth students in their blocks. And finally, parades and public signs would be organized around the theme:

“No drop outs, no flunk outs; honor grades will make you feel good; as Black youth should.”

It was not long after our street meetings started that we structured evening community meetings in Oakland, California. The weekly meetings reinforced on Monday and Friday nights what the themes the street rally introduced on Saturday afternoons.

The results were spectacular. Included in the more impressive testimonials were persons like Elsie Maddox, Audrey Guess Knight and Jeanette Tucker.

Elsie Maddox was approximately 55 years of age when she decided to attend the African American Association meetings. Week after week she was exposed to our philoso-



phy. She, along with many senior citizens, were challenged to enroll in school and save the race. Such a challenge was remote indeed for a Black woman who had been a domestic maid for a great part of her adult life. Indeed, prior to coming to the African American Association she prided herself in making the necessary sacrifices so that her sons could attend college. As her son, Leonard, was awarded a master's degree in business administration from San Francisco State University, this proud lady felt that she had completed her job with excellence. But we insisted — no. The struggle for knowledge must never cease. To reinforce the point we read the stories of post slavery Blacks plowing the fields with one hand on the mules reins and one hand on their book. (E. Franklin Frazier — *The Negro in the United States.*) We in effect dared Mrs. Maddox to take another step toward greatness. She responded. She attended Laney Jr. College and received a A.A. degree. Her persistence and good grades gained her a seat in the junior class of Lone Mountain College of San Francisco. Six years later she received a master's degree.

Audrey Guess Knight was married, the mother of 7 children and a full time employee of the U.S. post office when she came under the spell of the African American Association. Combining super human concentration while not abdicating wifely and other responsibilities; she enrolled at Laney Community College. After 2½ years she was accepted at San Francisco State University and 1½ years later this proud Black mother of 7 graduated in the number one position in her class — she now has a PH.D. from the University of California at Berkeley

Jeanette Tucker came to California after more than 16 years as a power operator and later a successful designer in New York's garment industry. After visiting the weekly street meetings, she decided to liquidate her business in New York and join the revolution. Her immediate plans called for establishing a clothing factory in the Black community to open jobs and success images for the community. Shortly after the endeavor began, a "mysterious" theft

depleted the entire inventory. And although the crime was never solved, large bolts of cloth were floating in the river. The police concluded that the purpose of the crime was not to enrich the thief.

A more timid soul would have reacted to the news with a plane reservation back to New York. Instead this brave woman installed her two teenage children in a heatless, sometimes waterless loft in the back of the building where the African American Association meetings were held and proceeded to plan a career consistent with our theme: "Each One Teach One." Soon she was seen peddling her bicycle feverishly to the University of California (Berkeley) to pursue an accounting degree. By graduation time she took the C.P.A. exam and shortly thereafter became the first Black female to pass the exam in the State of California. She can still be found on Mondays and Fridays at the African American Association.

In addition to the examples cited above, there are hundreds of Bay Area Blacks who borrowed from the African American Association philosophy to propel themselves to academic and professional success.

By this time we recognized the need for assistance. We simply did not have the financial resources to establish a full time, full service alternative private school. At the same time we tenaciously maintained our covenant not to seek or accept government funds. Accordingly, our only alternative was to motivate Black youth to excel in existing, though inadequate public schools.

To stress the education motivation theme, we organized community marches of confidence. Instead of marching on the school boards for integration and busing, we enlisted every element of the Black community to parade around selected predominantly Black schools to spread the word of educational excellence. We soon discovered that the school cheerleaders were much more adept than we at composing chants and cheers to convey the message without sacrificing the soulful cultural component. What a sight we must have conveyed to the bewildered monitoring police and F.B.I. as

we shouted the themes of education as the core of an overwhelming note of confidence from the community.

To insure continuity of our message we organized "Summer of Progress" parades. At these affairs we would begin and end the summer with long marches from one library to another to reinforce the importance of education. As we walked along the streets of soulville, residents joined in to swell the effect. On many occasions people like Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Pierce donated free soft drinks from their tavern. All in all we had tasted of the fruits of unity.

At about this time, the fall of 1962 we decided to embark upon a systematic campaign to attract Black celebrities to endorse educational themes. Because we were beggars in some sense of the word, we were forced to pursue the entertainers wherever they could be found; this usually ended in a long trek to the night club or ball room where they were appearing. For Aretha Franklin it was the Continental Club, for James Brown it was Sweet's Ball Room; for Marvin Gaye it was his hotel room; and for Olatunji and Miriam Makeeba it was the African American Association meetings.

The outgrowth of celebrity involvement was mutually beneficial. The entertainers were pleased that we were not seeking financial aid or already overly committed charitable concerts; but rather we challenged them to use their minds to help save the race. The powerful recording "Don't Be A Dropout" by James Brown was just one of the by-products. Others consisted of thousands of Black Oakland youth who came to believe that they could learn even if Whites were not sitting next to them.

Finally, we organized two major conferences at McClymonds High School entitled "The Mind of the Ghetto" to let Blacks talk out loud with each other about problems and solutions. It should be stressed that every conceivable element of the local Black community was involved in the conferences, as well as national figures like Malcolm X, Ron Karenga, Rev. Roy Nichols, Atty. Cecil Moore of Philadelphia, Muhammed Ali and a host of entertainers. The title of the conference was carefully

selected to underscore the mental component of the Black ghetto.

### **3. Social Goals**

Our social goals were quite simple. The differences between a slum and a prosperous community was not the racial identity of the residents, but rather the commitment and programs those residents have adopted.

Accordingly, we sponsored street sweeping campaigns, sometimes there were 100 in attendance; anti-crime campaigns, most of the crimes committed in the ghetto are of a Black on Black variety, family information seminars.

### **4. Economic Goals**

Economically we stressed converting education opportunities for free technical training into permanent employment positions. Vocational training and working with one's hands was always praised. More importantly, we demonstrated employment opportunities by evaluating the Want Ads. Using this approach, we could dramatically show that the demand for unskilled laborers was rapidly disappearing while the demand for technically trained personnel was steadily expanding.

In addition we called for Blacks to initiate more businesses to form an economic base; and for college students to donate labor to service businesses in order to reinforce a standard of commercial excellence.



*Jeanette Warden Tucker, Certified Public Accountant. Attended University of California in Berkeley after hearing the racial pride message of the African American Association.*



*Mrs. Elsie Maddox and her two sons, Dennis and Leonard, as she prepares to march in her college graduation for her master's degree. Mrs. Maddox has inspired thousands in the Bay Area to realize that one is never too old to learn.*



*"No flunk outs, no drop outs,  
Honor grades make you feel good,  
Like Black youth should."*

*(Photo courtesy of Walter Taylor)*



*Where there is Unity there is Strength.*

*(Photo courtesy of Walter Taylor)*





*Black men at the African American Association stand so that women and children can be comfortable.  
(Photos courtesy of Walter Taylor)*

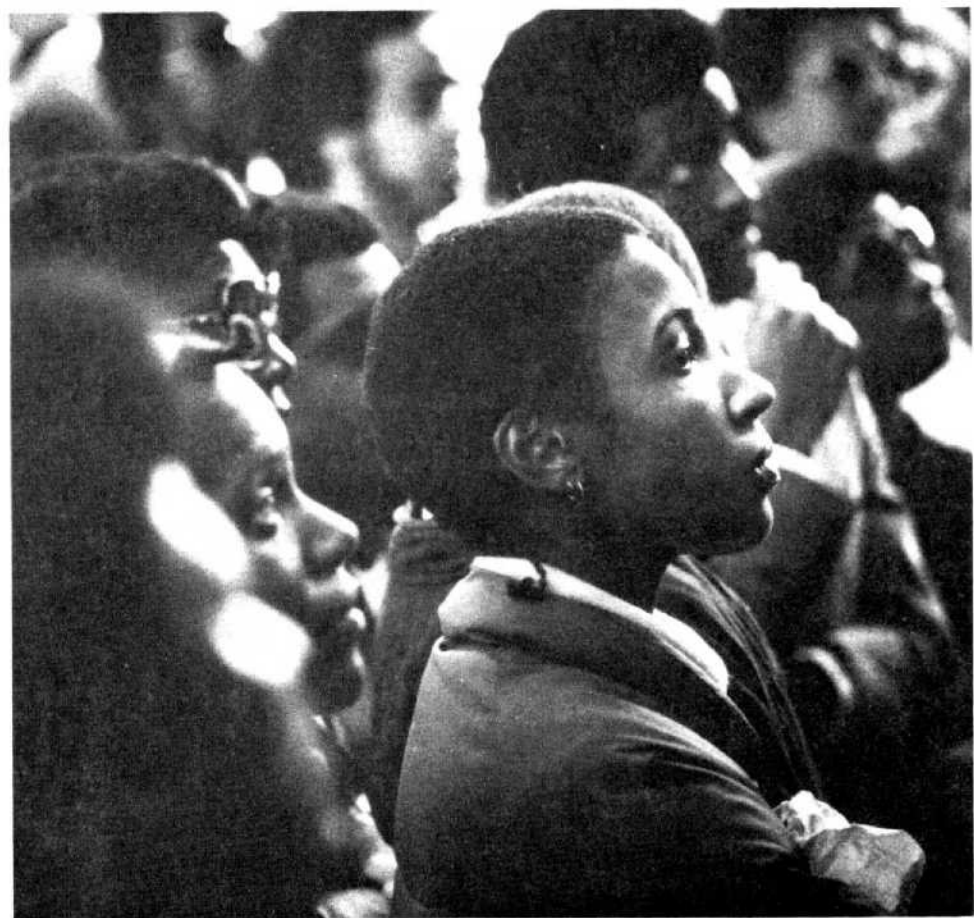
## 5. Politically

After careful consideration we had little confidence that the political process would prove of major value in solving the problem of the Black masses. That is not to say that Blacks should be encouraged to shun the election polls, but it is to say that 15% of the population would never control 85% of the population. And even if the system were completely changed to another form, such a conversion would in no way change the group percentages or demographics, i.e. Blacks would still be a minority.

Further, it seemed ludicrous that Blacks were effectively prevented from participating in the two party system by a strange coalition of liberals, labor and civil "leaders." Accordingly, we would point out, "if the democrats know they have your vote, and the Republican s are convinced that they can never win your vote, both parties will ignore you." No where is this lesson more vibrant than in the Carter v. Ford and the Reagan v. Carter presidential elections.

To be brutally frank, to play the game of politics in America one must have votes, money or a combination of the two. In the Black community the masses are too disillusioned to vote and the classes are too mortgaged to contribute a major undertaking; the result is we tend to play at politics, and not really in politics. If I were pressed, I suppose I could think of a few exceptions. At the top of the list would be California Assemblyman Willie Brown, then Donald R. Hopkins on behalf of congressman Ronald V. Dellums, Berkeley Mayor, Gus Newport, Barbara Jordan and Detroit Mayor, Coleman Young.

Respectfully, because of employment benefits the political process yields for a few Black politicians, I am in favor of Blacks voting. I am categorically opposed, however, to misleading our race into thinking the U.S. process is prepared to take them seriously. Such mendacity is unforgivable.



*For once the Black woman is safe.*



*"Black is Beautiful"*

*(Photo by Joe L. Moore)*



*"Say it loud, I'm Black and I'm proud."*

*(Photo by Joe L. Moore)*



*Black professionals led by Atty. Louis C. Jones of New York visit the African American Association in 1966.*

*(Photo courtesy of Walter Taylor)*



*Businesswoman Curly Collins lectures on health, nutrition, home care, family budgeting, etiquette and dedication (1968).*





*Who will protect the Black woman and the Black family?  
(Photo courtesy of Walter Taylor)*





*The African American Association learns all facts of the record entertainment industry from the legendary giant, Raymond Dobard.*

*(Photo courtesy of Walter Taylor)*

## Chapter 8

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*“Structure without life is dead. But life without structure is unseen.”*

*John Cage*

## **The Structure and Operation of the African American Association**

To say that the African American Association ever developed classical structure in the administrative sense of the word is to use language very, very loosely. We were able, however, to develop enough of a structure to meet our objectives without inducing the kind of divisive confrontation and ad hominem-filled debates that destroyed many community groups in the 60's.

The major activities of the organization was educational in nature. The street rallies were designed to stimulate the interest of the masses, and the weekly evening meetings were designed to buttress the preliminary interest with a kind of rehabilitation incubator where Blacks could rediscover themselves as proud persons of African descent. In such a dynamic atmosphere it became our responsibility to direct the inevitable, personal energy explosion into constructive mental channels.

Therefore, to accomplish our goals we needed little more than "born again" well informed lecturers, a building to hold our meetings and several standing committees to implement the necessary concomitants of our programs.

In practice, our program changed little since 1962. On Monday evening we provided a 30 minute lecture on current events; 15-30 minutes slide or speaker presentation on consumer protection and finally an hour lecture on any aspects of the Black experience. At first most of the one hour lecturers tended to be restricted to aspects of Black history. After about a year the topics ranged far and wide: religion, archeology, psychology, economics, banking, ESP, science and engineering, media control, etc. It should be noted that the African American Association placed heavy emphasis on science and technical training.

From time to time the lectures became so popular that we were compelled to relocate across the street to a Catholic Church in order to accomodate the hundreds of overflow. The content of the most popular lectures to date, I feel, have

made a quality contribution to the state of art of the field of Islam, foreign affairs, ESP and sexual practice. Certainly, the F.B.I. and C.I.A. agents who were assigned to monitor our meetings from time to time, must have been sorely perplexed to write a report about hundreds of Blacks rejecting the intrigues of Monday night football to do nothing more revolutionary than promoting racial pride, human rights, consumer protection, education excellence, anti alcohol, drug and community abuse.

But the effects, of course, were revolutionary., For the first time many Blacks tasted the fruits of indepth racial pride. Thousands understood the nature and operation of the American system and who really held the reigns of power; understood the necessity of building bridges with Third World countries; the racist conspiracy of movies, T.V., multinational corporations and federal agencies to disparage and destroy the basis of respect for African Americans from the outside world, especially the Third World; the dangers of environmental pollution — both physical and emotional; their ability to compete effectively on all levels of the American educational system.

The habitual presence of Third World students and visitors tended to legitimize our representations that the world cares about us.

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of all was looking out over the audience and seeing Black professionals, blue and white collar workers, the underclass and unemployed completely integrated around a platform of constructive activity.

For purposes of group dynamics, ego rivalries and individual “will to power” considerations, that slaughtered many communities in the sixties posed no problems to us. We had no money to attract the power brokers or the professional protesters. We had little “influence contacts” to offer the ambitious. We could offer no notoriety for talented organizers. Plain and simple, we were a group of Blacks involved in the never ending search for knowledge. Leadership recognition was accorded to those lecturers and

discussion directors, without regard to educational background, who contributed to this goal. The amazing accomplishment was that hundreds of Blacks forgot individual ego and spent 18 years of their life acquiring knowledge from a base of brotherhood and mutual respect.



*Lecturer, Elmer Rush, praises the Black women as the "flowers of the earth for first bringing color into the world" (1970)  
(Photos courtesy of Walter Taylor)*



*Young and old, sick and healthy, unemployed and professionals. All gather together in the spirit of brotherhood every Monday and Friday in Oakland, California. The African American Association has been meeting since March, 1962. The message is still the same — "Unity, Self Help, Education and Dignity."  
(Photo by Jerome Bryan)*



*Anyone can be a leader in the African American Association if they are willing to destroy self hatred.*

*(Photo taken by Jerome Bryan)*





*In 1980 a convalescent home owned by a Black American in San Francisco, Ca., was the object of a burglary/robbery. Many of the senior citizens were subject of cruel and unusual punishment. One blind lady over 60 years of age was raped.*



*The rest home support rally continues with food and solidarity.  
(Photos by Jerome Bryan)*



*The lady who has done more to defend and promote the Black community than anyone since Marcus Garvey. Every summer she can be found on the continent of Africa refreshing her roots.*

*Reporter, editor, crusader, warrior and intellectual. The unsung hero of the Pan African Republic — Edith Austin.*

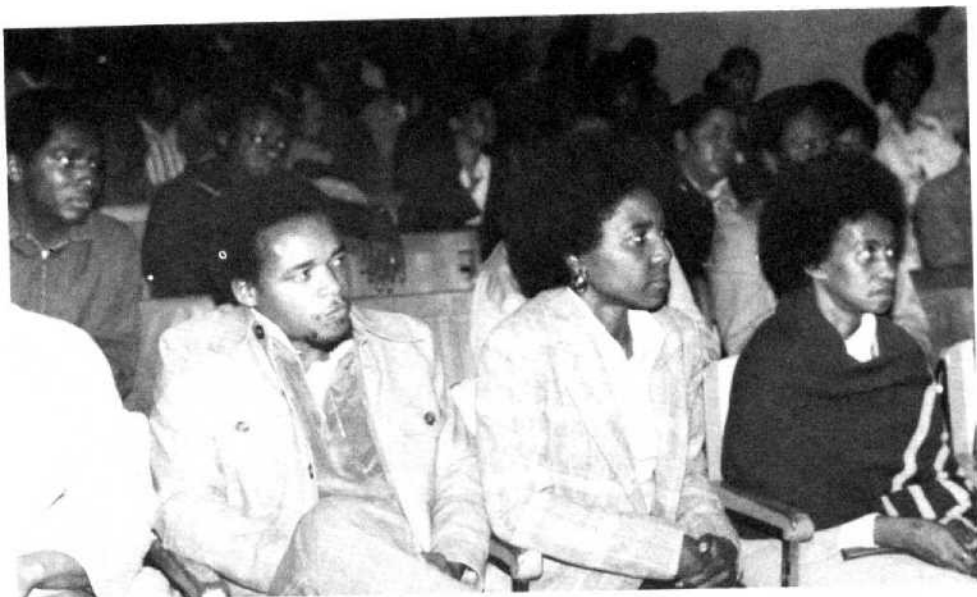
*(Photo by Jerome Bryan)*



*Faissal Fahad Al Talal and Khalid Abdullah Tariq Al Mansour autograph their first book — **“The Challenges of Spreading Islam in America and Other Essays.”***

*All proceeds are donated to the Islamic Center of America.*

*(Photo by Jerome Bryan)*



*In addition to Islam, world history, general economics, law and finance, the African American Association offers language instruction.*

*(Photo courtesy by John Brown)*



*Street rallies bring the message home to the community —  
"Unity, Self Help, Education and Dignity"*

*(Photo by Jerome Bryan)*



*African American Association teaches the merits of Islam and clean living.*

*(Photo by Jerome Bryan)*

## Chapter 9

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*“Let thy speech be better than silcene, or be silent.”*  
*Dionysius The Elder*



## “The Matchline”

One of the most successful ways of projecting the philosophy and goals of the African American Association was a weekly radio program on radio station KDIA in Oakland, California.

In the fall of 1962 the Oakland/Bay Area awakened to, “The African American Association presents — We Care Enough To Tell It Just Like It Is.”

From that Saturday morning until today the controversial voice of the African American Association has been heard in the Bay Area. For thousands of Blacks the program gives the long awaited insights into the Black perspective on the news. For youth it is an opportunity to go over homework assignments; for families a chance to hear the values of unity; for musicians, someone who understands the trade; for foreign students, an honest appraisal of the news; for intellectuals — food for thought; for Black women — it was a comfortable relief to be reassured that someone cared.

I am amazed to this day at the number of Blacks who stop me in the streets to praise the programs of the Association that motivated them to career success.

In June of 1964 the Congressional Record reprinted one of my speeches outlining the philosophy of the African American Association (Vol. 110, No. 99). The strength of the fresh ideas attracted considerable attention. Finally, *Vital Speeches* publication, consistent with their boast to present the “best thoughts of the best minds on current national questions,” reprinted the “Walk In Dignity” speech in the July 1, 1964, issue. The same issue included speeches by the then Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, as well as Thomas S. Power, then Commander in Chief of SAC.

To further provide the reader with our approach I am including the entire speech.

### **Walk In Dignity**

*by Khalid Abdullah Tariq Al Mansour*

It is a great pleasure for me to be here this morning and to

talk to this great assembly on a very timely topic — a topic that you have heard a great deal about and a topic which I am going to treat slightly differently.

The approach of the Afro-American Association is an old approach. It is an approach that has been employed by mankind throughout the world in any given nation in any given time. It is a summary of the life and the history of America. Nevertheless, it seems new today because in the area of race relations for the last 100 years, it has not been heard. Many of the concepts will be new and possibly even strange; so, I am inviting your very, very critical attention.

The purpose of my address this morning is not to convince anyone that the Afro-American Association has the only program that will solve the problem of 20 million people in America, but I am maintaining that the Afro-American Association has an analysis — a definition of the problem that, if recognized, will bring meaningful progress to the race and to America.

Our program is based upon the fact that any approach today in America from any group, that does not include the welfare of America, is illegitimate.

It makes me very sad to have to describe the condition of 20 million people in America who have been brought to a land reeking with opportunity but who, as a result of a great deal of deceit have been kept at the bottom; deceit coming often from their own leader and from a variety of persons who have wanted to use them.

America has attracted to its borders persons from Ireland, France, England, China — from all over the world. After these persons came to America, they made a decision: that you get nothing for nothing, but with hard work and initiative, and sacrifice, we can build ourselves and the country into something worthwhile.

These groups did not come to America with the idea of disappearing. The Chinese began to say that “I am Chinese-American”; the Japanese, because they came from Japan, “Japanese-American,” the Irish, “Irish-American.”

There is no Negro land. My ancestors came from Africa, and I don't want anyone to forget it. That's the reason we call ourselves Africans or Afro-Americans: to describe our history and our heritage, and after such great contributions by my

race in Africa and in America, let me remind you of a few things such as Ibn Batuta traveling throughout the continent of the Ghana kingdom before Columbus discovered America, and meeting 300,000 people living together without any police and without any crime. This was done because that society, in an effort to establish a monument, to establish love and respect that would live forever, built up within their group — within their race — pride, respect, love. And when I look throughout America today at the descendants of these people, I find a fantastic crime rate, so great that the leaders are embarrassed to discuss it.

Throughout the Bay Area, approximately 67 to 70 per cent of the arrests are persons of African descent. If a white person were to make this allegation, he would be immediately accused of being a bigot, and I am immediately accused of being an Uncle Tom.

But I ask us now temporarily before we become emotionally involved to hold off from placing labels on anyone — let's find out whether it is true or not and if it is true, let's design a program to solve it. It is no disgrace or no shame for me to admit the high crime rate, but what is disgraceful and shameful is to not do anything about it, to use excuses and crutches, to use types of sociological analysis which say, "All poor people commit crime, you're poor, therefore you'll commit crime and until people make you rich, you'll always commit crime. We cannot afford it."

In reviewing Africa before Columbus discovered America, we find the University of Timbuctoo, the University of San Kore. We find economic skills that were in such demand that many Africans from the continent, especially from the west coast, were brought into Latin America to do the early mining. After the African came to America, the West Indies and Latin America, they did not stop trying to build something that would give them pride and dignity. We watched George Washington Carver. We watched Mr. Benjamin Banneker design the city of Washington, D.C. We observed Dr. Hale Williams perform the first medical heart operation in America in 1893. We observed again Augustus Morgan invent the gas mask that saved so many lives in America. But he did not do these things just for himself. He did it so that his race might live and that his country might advance.

And after these great contributions today in America educationally over 70 per cent of the race is dropping out or flunking out of school, not counting those who will be forced out through different type walkouts. Seventy per cent. This is not the spirit that their ancestors established with the University of Timbuctoo. This is not even the spirit of Sonni Ali, the great emperor, who addressed his people in the 16th century and said, "Without education, we have neither favor nor pleasure — we're absolutely nothing."

We have large numbers of people on welfare and living in public housing. We have a very, very great and vast inferiority complex and, most important, inside of the personality something is missing — a vacancy. There is a vacancy so large and so great, that it is difficult even to describe the type of life that a black man lives. We are one of the most despised groups in the world. Chinese, Japanese, Jews, Irish, Italians — everyone comes to America, but no one wants to live near the Negro. He is despised and he is disrespected. From such a mighty and great tradition, he has become a member of the perennial bottom

The Chinese came to America — they found us at the bottom and they moved up. We're still at the bottom. The Japanese came to America — they found us at the bottom and they moved up. We're still at the bottom. Irish, Italians, Jews, Hungarians, Cubans came to America and found us at the bottom. These groups moved up. We're still at the bottom. The question then becomes, "How did the other groups move up?" This is the question that we present to Lyndon Johnson. This is the question that we present to Rev. Martin Luther King. This is the question that we present to America.

Let's examine the history and find out what is the real genius of America in terms of advancement and in terms of success. The civil rights groups say "we have the answer." Educationally, if we just desegregate the schools, you will solve the educational problem. This is a lie. How do I know this? Again, we promise not to become emotional but to back up and to support everything we say. That's an intellectual responsibility. If desegregating schools were the answer as Lyndon Johnson seems to think, as the present administration seems to think, then we could look to those areas where

the schools are desegregated, and we would find educational progress. Even out of the mouths of the civil rights groups comes condemnation. There are greater dropouts in the North than in the South.

The African comes to America. He has gigantic barriers. He came from a village school where the facilities were very, very poor — certainly not equal to anything in Mississippi. He came to America with a language barrier. He had to learn English, and be able to write examinations so that he could pass courses. He came to America with a cultural barrier. The customs were not the same. Nevertheless, in America today, 22 per cent of all African students are “A” students. Thirty-six per cent are “B” students. That’s 58 per cent of either “A” or “B.” Now did they first desegregate the facilities of Africa before they could learn? No. If one were to ask the African “Why do you study so hard? Why do you apply yourself so diligently?” he would say, “My people need me.” A sense of responsibility, a sense of purpose, a sense of motivation.

The civil rights groups are sometimes unconsciously reinforcing an inferiority complex. If it is an all-Catholic or an all-Jewish school, they say, “That’s all right. That’s religion.” If it is an all-Japanese school, they say, “That’s all right. That’s cultural.” But if it is an all-black school, they say, “It must be segregation because look at it. It’s all black.” It reinforces inferiority. It says anything all black is inherently inferior. You can’t build pride when you adopt this position.

We want educational progress. Our race is facing a crisis. It’s similar to the crisis, mentioned by one of the last speakers, faced during the depression, October 24, 1929. We can’t afford a lot of luxury. It’s a crisis now. Large numbers of people are flunking out and dropping out.

We have found that by teaching racial pride, the history of the race, it gives the race a sense of purpose. The young man goes to school not asking the counselor, “What should I be when I grow up?” He goes to the community for community support, and he asks the community, “What do you need?” And the community says, “We need doctors, we need lawyers, we need scientists, we need inventors, we need mathematicians.” And then he goes to the counselor and wants to know, “Do I have the ability to do what my people

want me to do?" This is the pride. This is the sense of motivation, and it kills flunk-outs and drop-outs.

We must open up a gigantic war on drop-outs and flunk-outs if we're going to save the race. What the Afro-American Association has done is this: we have gone to school, and marched around the school, and brought all of the parents out on the street and on the sidewalk. A demonstration, but a practical, affirmative one. We brought the people out on the sidewalks, and we had signs telling the kids to meet us at the library. "Honor grades will make you feel good, like black people should."

Then we tell them, "it's what's inside that counts." Then we had them sign pledges that they would use all reasonable effort to obtain honor grades especially in reading, writing, sciences, mathematics and technical skills. Practical. We sang songs so that they could go to school and come home from school singing words that were meaningful. This is the type of educational program that the Afro-American Association submits. It's practical and it will bring meaningful progress.

The other areas I'm going to summarize more briefly and I apologize for this.

Economics. Because of automation today, if you don't have a skill, you're not going to get a job, white or black, or any other color.

You cannot pass laws to make people want to learn. You cannot pass laws to give motivation. And you cannot pass laws to require people to obtain economic skill. It's again a problem of motivation.

In the Bay Area and throughout the United States, they have free public schools at night where a person can come and obtain skills and get jobs. The Afro-American Association has an employment office. And for every job we place, we have 50 that we can't place because of the lack of skill. The openings are there today — without any demonstration — without any picketing. They're open.

I am not suggesting that discrimination does not exist, but I'm suggesting that first things must come first. If you're facing a problem, you put most of your energy where the problem is the greatest. Right now, we need parades organized, demonstrations organized, to march people away from

the television — away from Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, and Porky Pig — into the schools.

Now why should I pay someone to hate me? That reinforces an inferiority complex. It makes me feel stupid. It's the same as the son who is brought up in a family, who is illegitimate. Everyone in the community says, "Well, you're illegitimate. You really don't have any roots here." They say, "Not only are you illegitimate, but your parent, the one that we know about, was a criminal — a dope addict — he's horrible, no good." So the kid wants to run away from home or he wants to go to a new community. He does not have any respect for his family.

Well, this is what has happened to my race. But if we ask Reverend King, "Are you a leader of the race? What race do you belong to?" he says, "I'm not sure because I have Irish blood in me and I have Indian blood in me, and I have Negro blood in me."

And I say, "King, if you're not sure, then don't lead the race. First, find your identity before you lead a group."

"Because we love you, Dr. King, and because we love everyone, we'll give you some suggestions. If you really think you have Irish blood in you, we're going to send you to Ireland, with a shamrock in your hand, and you say, 'I'm coming home, my brother and sister'. If you think you have Cherokee blood in you, I'll send you to talk with Sitting Bull. You sit in on him and ask him if he will recognize you as a brother."

The issue is that the very race that he belongs to is the race that we have been trying to get away from. We have not had the respect and pride in our own race. Every time a person gets a little money, they want to run away from the race, move away from the race. Someone has to come back into the race to build up the race. You can't do it if everyone moves.

In the civil rights (and I'm not per se against civil rights, I'm trying to evaluate it — and that's never been done before — the civil rights groups won't evaluate it) they say that they believe in free speech. We have offered invitations from Lyndon Johnson all the way down to Rev. Martin Luther King. Martin Luther King will debate Black Muslims, he will debate members of the Klu Klux Klan, but the Afro-

American Association is the only group he is scared to death to face.

And they say they believe in free speech. We don't want to criticize each other, but we feel that the American public has a right to hear both sides, and then let the masses decide.

In Birmingham, Ala., Martin Luther King, the merchants have told me, "I just hate you. Maybe I shouldn't. Maybe I should. But I'm honest. I just hate you. I've told you that."

Reverend King says, "I don't care if you do hate me. I'm going to sit-in, roll-in, crawl-in, beg-in, knee-in, steal-in until you take my money." Now the merchant is richer, we are poorer, he has our money, and he still hates us.

It would be more practical to take the millions of dollars spent in Birmingham, Ala., and to put up 100 factories. Then you build the race. Then you have to learn responsibility. You have to learn how to run factories. You have to learn how to make decisions, how to keep books. And these things build the race. Not only that, it means that when the children walk to and from the community, they say, "Mommy, I thank you. Look what you have done for me." It builds up confidence. It's what the Chinese derive when they walk through Chinatown. It gives a feeling of accomplishment and this is the only way you can maintain dignity.

If we put up businesses and factories, which I feel must be done, this isn't a complete solution — but it's a partial solution. It's what the Chinese have done. If you go to Chinatown, you're not going to say, "I'm not going to go back there anymore. Those people are practicing segregation. I don't think that's right." It's all a Chinese community. No one says it's inferior. The Chinese own one-half of Russian Hill in San Francisco. They could move there tomorrow. But they prefer to take the money to continue to rehabilitate and build up Chinatown, because they love Chinatown. They love to be with each other and they take pride in their accomplishment and achievement.

The same with the Banks of Tokyo throughout the country. It gives the Japanese a sense of achievement. The same with the Jewish hospitals, the Catholic school. What has the civil rights group given the Negro that they can point out and tell their children, "Look what we have done?"

If we put up businesses and factories, then we pay taxes



like everyone else. And then we stick out our chest and say, "Race, we've not only helped you, we've helped America." Do you realize, regardless of what Lyndon Johnson says about a declaration on poverty, that we are the only race in America that can balance the budget and reduce national debt.

This is a sense of achievement I want the newspapers to print. The newspapers print only the demonstrations because they think they sell news. I want new information in the news,

I want information every year so I know just how far my race has come. I want to know how many more factories we have put up every year. I want to know how many drop-outs and flunk-outs we have reduced every year. I want to know how much crime we have reduced every year. I want to know how many people we have taken out of public housing every year. So that I can hold these statistics up to my race and say, "Look, we're making progress."

During the depression when the so-called social reform programs were invoked, we never tested the strength of America on the basis of how many people were on welfare, or in public housing. Rather it was this: How many people who were once on welfare are no longer on welfare? Then we said the country was getting back on its feet. How many people who were once in public housing are no longer in public housing? Then we said the country is getting back on its feet. This is the same test I want the newspapers to employ for the advancement of 20 million people and 160 million people in America.

This is the reason the civil rights groups don't want to debate us, because everywhere we go, white or black, this is America's program. It's basic. It's simple. There's nothing revolutionary. There's nothing radical. There's nothing extreme. This is what France did after the Second World War. This is what England did after the Second World War. This is what Africa is doing today — a self-help program trying to build accomplishment and achievement that will develop the group and develop the country in terms of prestige and in terms of dignity, endurance and continuity. This is the only program that can save the race and America.

The last thing I have to say is in the area of crime. We have a program to destroy crime. Most of the crimes that we

commit, regardless of what you read in the newspaper, are against each other. Most of the crimes we commit are not crimes of raping white women. They are crimes where we shoot each other up, cut each other up on the weekend. That's true. The civil rights group says we can solve this by breaking up the ghetto. Get a fair housing ordinance, or a Rumford Act. And people use us again.

Governor Brown talks more about the Rumford Act than Rumford does. And the newspapers print everything he says about the Rumford Act. He can talk to Boy Scouts and it will be in the newspaper that Governor Brown told the Boy Scouts, who are 9 and 8 and 12 years old, that when you grow up, fight for the Rumford Act.

Now this may help Governor Brown in the election, but it'll leave the masses of the people at the bottom, and let me prove this to you. We don't have to ask ourselves what would occur if the Rumford Act passes. It's already passed. We don't have to ask ourselves what would occur if there were the right to vote. We already have the right to vote in California. We don't have to ask ourselves what would occur if facilities were desegregated. They're already desegregated in California. And what has happened? The masses of my people are at the bottom.

Civil rights leaders come to California and say that California is as bad as Birmingham, Ala. Now, if it is as bad, why should I spend millions and millions and millions of dollars to get the same laws in Birmingham?

We can reduce crime because we're going to build up racial love and respect in a race. We're going to give our women more respect than they've ever had. We apologize to our women for the way we've acted in the past. We're telling people that we're going to get off welfare and get jobs. If the blind people thought enough of themselves to come away from the corners with their cups begging and to put up factories and business because they knew that it would reinforce their pride and their self-image, I think it's good enough for us to try it for a little while.

The civil rights groups have not put up one business or one factory in their entire history. Not one. Not even as a token, or a symbol of what could be done. We need images to give the race confidence in itself. As we teach racial pride in

history, people don't commit crimes against themselves or anyone else.

The Chinese came to America poor but you never found any crime rate. The Japanese came to America poor but you never found a crime rate because of the degree of love and unity. This is what we are attempting to do. We have to call on our musicians — like Tina Turner, Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles. Some of you don't know him, but your children do. And we're going to ask Ray Charles, "I don't want your money. I don't want you just to raise a benefit for me or the association. That's not the point. I want you to be an artist. Do the type of thing that an artist is supposed to do. I want you to sing a song with all your rhythms, saying 'No flunk-outs and no drop-outs.' Saying 'progress' so that when the kids and the families hear it all day long, no crime."

"Take a song like 'Say it isn't so,' Aretha, sing it differently. Say 'Drop-outs, it isn't so — flunk-outs, it isn't so.' "

This program, we contend, is going to sweep the country in the 1964 election. It's going to be the determining factor because we want a new plank on the political sphere. We're going to make every candidate face up to it. He's going to have to tell my people why he doesn't come out for business and factories and racial pride and development. We don't want to move away from every community and be pushed around like little electrons. We want to build a community. If it's a slum now — if we built it into a flourishing community — we give jobs to contractors, real estate agents, insurance people, but we give the race a legacy that they can be proud of for many, many years.

We think our program should also be adopted in many respects by the overall country. We feel that many of the ideas that we have can be equally applied to the overall country to bring educational, social, economic progress both to the race and to America.

The last — the very last thing — I have to say is that we of the Afro-American Association are going to make every political party take note. The democrats are now going to get the vote just because they're Democrats. Republicans are not going to get the vote just because they're Republicans. They're going to have to, for the first time in 100 years, face

the real issue about America — the whole country — 180 million people in every strata and the race in every strata, and we're going to look to you to make sure that this is done.

Thank you very much.

## Chapter 10

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*“All Men who reflect on controversial matters should be free from hatred, friendship, anger and pity.”*

*Julius Caesar*

## **Reaction to the African American Association**

Reaction to the African American Association differed widely within the power structure of the Bay Area. Where some Whites were sympathetic to the doctrines of self help, some Blacks regarded it as devious. As some Blacks were flattered by some references to Black history, some Whites believed it unnecessary and capable of germinating White hatred. As some Blacks trembled at any suggestion of African identification, some Whites believed the group might be useful for the purpose of an economic exploitation of Africa; as White communists and liberals tended to distrust the restricting nationalistic tendencies, some law enforcement officials regarded the group as highly dangerous. (In 1965 a former Black Oakland police officer who was passing as a White man came to the radio station to inform me that every Oakland policeman had been given my photograph with the instruction to shoot me dead at the "slightest provocation.")

### **"Crisis of Black Leadership"**

The Black leadership in the Bay Area in the early 60's was typical of Negro leadership throughout the country. The components tended to consist of an unwieldy composition of clergy, politicians, professionals and entertainers. Understandably rivalries and conflicts were substantial. The greatest defect was in the failure, conscious or otherwise, to decide who was being lead and on which path.

To some extent the confusion that plagued Black leadership was demographic in nature. Prior to the second world war there were relatively few Black families in the Bay Area. Those who were residents tended to pride themselves in being seen and not heard. For the most part they worked as domestic servants and accepted the limitation imposed on any servant class.

With the war came employment opportunities on the assembly lines of war related industries. Responding to the

rumor based opportunities, Blacks from Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Georgia poured into California. A Black cloud seemed to descend on the Oakland/Berkeley Bay Area almost overnight. The pre-war residents were alarmed at the strange visitors and pointed out with pride how peaceful and humanistic race relations were in the pre-migration days.

If the older, long term residing Blacks were apprehensive about the presence of their distant southern cousins, the White power structure was terrified.

For the political and economic leaders who formed the East Bay power elite, the war was a rare opportunity to expand major boundaries of power. The democratic party rallied their traditional allies, labor, liberals and the working class to challenge the stronghold of business conservatism. The business community enjoyed a death grip on the media, Oakland Tribune and Berkeley Gazette; and city government. After the battle lines were drawn, it became clear to all that the escalating balance of power would emerge from the thousands of watermelon-loving Blacks who were pouring, nonstop, in from the South. But who had any intelligence reports on these people?

As the city fathers jockeyed for position to control their power base, the democratic party went into action. Delicate layers of social, political and psychological framework was constructed into a wobbling pyramid., Confrontations, rivalries and occasional open warfare characterized their growth.

At the top were the White liberals and power brokers who promised to support White labor's demands without pressing too hard for the unions to desegregate. In addition, they would control the two other essential components of the political process — fund raising and vote production. To achieve the former, they would look to the emerging White educational and civil service middle class; for the latter, they would broker and leverage the potential large Black vote. The precondition for their success was the undisputed, exclusive control over the Black political process. Pursuant thereto, they began to scout out the Blacks and build

cautious, but safe ties with their “leaders.”

On the other hand, Black leadership tended to be immature, revolving and weak. For one thing they could not match the financial strength of their White liberal friends. For another, their ability to deliver the vote was always suspect. An ever collapsable alliance of Black ministers, politicians and professionals resulted. The ministers were needed because of their daily contacts with large numbers of people. The politicians tended to be the Black aristocrats who were drawn from the few available political slots — i.e. school boards, union boards, public housing boards, state assembly and an occasional judgeship. The professionals were needed to underwrite the cost of social/political functions, their contacts with a cross section of the community and their general disinclination to build rival political organizations. (Ambitious lawyers were the general exception to this accepted rule.) Third, the masses were needed to vote. The whole structure could blow up in any given day if the vote was not produced. Accordingly, as local, state and national elections came into view, a barrage of the tired speeches, desperate faces and warmed over promises were blasted at the Black community. Every civic, religious and social group was expected to get heavily involved. Political rallies and parties tended to direct much of the social life of the “make-believe” during these periods. Every participant was promised some reward. For the professionals, an excuse for the best social parties, alcohol, etc. and the needed psychological feeling that they were of worth; for the ministers, an occasional visit from the powerful White leadership to prove to their congregations that God was on their sides; to the Black politicians, the opportunity to win a few more gains for themselves and their qualified (middle class) friends; for the White liberals, the undisputed, exclusive middleman between the political process and the Black vote; and finally, for the Black masses, the few political crumbs that the White liberal and/or the Black politicians choose to share. Because the masses always received a small disproportionate share of the benefits compared to their numbers; they have always



been reluctant to play the game by voting. To improve upon their disinclination they are constantly reminded that Martin L. King died for the right to vote, voting is the most effective avenue to “real power” in America and more importantly, they owe it to God and the nation to vote.

At the nexus of the Black political/social pyramid was the ability to sustain media exposure. Such a power not only enabled one to influence the masses, but it also brought one to the attention of the all important White power brokers. In this regard heading up the local N.A.A.C.P. Chapter was always a desirable position, for it was in this position that one had frequent access to the media as well as the opportunity to prove to the White community one’s ability to be tough, to compromise, to reason and to develop character. To the credit of some, they would never abuse the trust of this office to the detriment of their constituents; others were less honorable.

The frailty of the Black political structure of the 60’s was that no one could feel secure in their allotted position. To this extent the artificiality of the political process in the Black community differed little from the operation of the same process in the White community. The salient difference, however, was that White power was involved directly with power, while Black power was involved with the White political brokers and therefore had no direct connection with power. This fact kept the Black politicians feuding, fussing and fighting among themselves. They never knew when some young, upstart might go around their machinery and make direct contact with the White power brokers. It seemed that the White liberals had little regard for loyalty in those days. As a result Black politicians spent inordinate amounts of time beating down any potential “outside” Black leadership within the community.

With this background you can imagine the excitement, fear and anxiety with which the White brokers and the Black political clients watched the growth and development of the African American Association. The San Francisco Chronicle exploded the news on the front page of their 1962 Sunday

Edition, *Bay Negroes "Self-Help" Movement*.

Media coverage frequently covered successful speeches and debates. Much was made over the fact that many of our leadership were the children of the Black power elite who had degrees, training and commitment. The reoccurring question was — why don't they work within the system?

Instead of the system we paid radio station KDIA \$55.00/week for 30 minutes of time to "tell it like it is." Therefore, with guaranteed media access, a mass following and credentials, we possessed the prize characteristics for alliances with traditional White leaders and the destruction of the Black political machine. We quickly rejected all inquiries on the part of the White power broker on the grounds that we had little in common. It was, therefore, not surprising to discover this group along with their Black middle class friends seeking every opportunity to discredit the African American Association and myself personally.

Thanks to Allah, this was a different task. It was well known in the community that I am a Muslim, and therefore do not drink, use alcohol and drugs. My life has been without scandal and therefore sustained attacks are hard to come by.

Through the years the attitude of the middle class Blacks changed. To some extent a larger, more perceptive membership became more aware of the limitation of their relationships with the White power structure. In addition, the philosophy of motivation and excellence in education and business had greater appeal for all, lower and middle class; but most importantly, I made no move to seek or be appointed to political or judicial office. The latter fact eliminated me and the Association from the ranks of competition.

And except for an occasional comment that Khalid Abdullah Tariq Al Mansour was a talented man who ignored opportunities from America, the masses of Whites have ignored us.