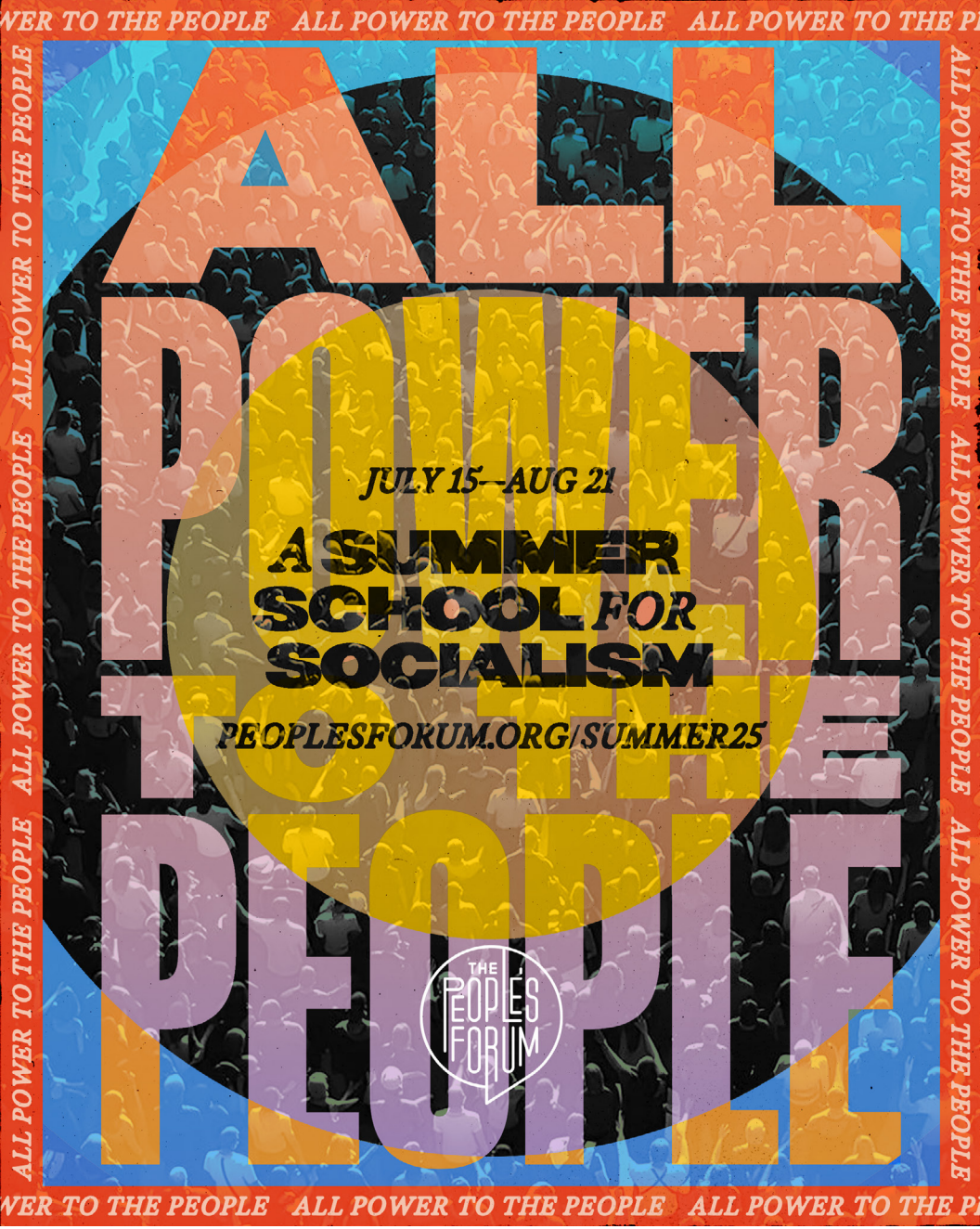

COURSE READINGS

MODULE 3


THE
PEOPLE'S
FORUM

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ONE MORE "S" IN THE U.S.A

By Langston Hughes, 1934

Langston Hughes's 1934 poem One More 'S' in the U.S.A., published in the Communist newspaper The Daily Worker, calls for a transformation of America into a socialist nation through the struggle of the united working class. Through the rhythm of a work song and an optimistic tone, Hughes envisions a future where workers and farmers own the means of production, inspired by the Soviets. Langston Hughes travelled to the USSR in 1932 with 22 other Black artists, filmmakers and actors to create a film about African American life in the U.S. South, and wrote many powerful accounts about his experience and the hospitable treatment that he and his crewmates received.

Put one more s in the U.S.A.
To make it Soviet.
One more s in the U.S.A.
Oh, we'll live to see it yet.
When the land belongs to the farmers
And the factories to the working men —
The U.S.A. when we take control
Will be the U.S.S.A. then.

Now across the water in Russia
They have a big U.S.S.R.
The fatherland of the Soviets —
But that is mighty far
From New York, or Texas, or California, too.
So listen, fellow workers,
This is what we have to do.

Put one more S in the U.S.A.
[Repeat chorus]

But we can't win by just talking.
So let us take things in our hand.
Then down and away with the bosses' sway —
Hail Communistic land.
So stand up in battle and wave our flag on high,
And shout out fellow workers
Our new slogan in the sky:

Put one more S in the U.S.A.

But we can't join hands together
So long as whites are lynching black,

So black and white in one union fight
And get on the right track.
By Texas, or Georgia, or Alabama led
Come together, fellow workers
Black and white can all be red:

Put one more S in the U.S.A.

Oh, the bankers they all are planning
For another great big war.
To make them rich from the worker's dead,
That's all the war is for.
So if you don't want to see bullets holding sway
Then come on, all you workers,
And join our fight today:

Put one more S in the U.S.A.
To make it Soviet.
One more S in the U.S.A.
Oh, we'll live to see it yet.
When the land belongs to the farmers
And the factories to the working men —
The U.S.A. when we take control
Will be the U.S.S.A. then.

THE ORIGIN OF NEGRO SLAVERY

From *Capitalism and Slavery* by Eric Williams, 1944 *(Link to original)*

In Capitalism and Slavery, historian and first Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago Eric Williams argues that the trans-Atlantic slave trade and the plantation economy were central to the rise of Western capitalism, and that slavery was abolished not for moral reasons but because it had become economically obsolete. In Chapter 1, "The Origin of Negro Slavery," he traces the rise of chattel slavery, arguing that it was driven primarily by economic motives, with racism developing afterward as a justification for the exploitation of African labor

When in 1492 Columbus, representing the Spanish monarchy, discovered the New World, he set in train the long and bitter international rivalry over colonial possessions for which, after four and a half centuries, no solution has yet been found. Portugal, which had initiated the movement of international expansion, claimed the new territories on the ground that they fell within the scope of a papal bull of 1455 authorizing her to reduce to servitude all infidel peoples. The two powers, to avoid controversy, sought arbitration and, as Catholics, turned to the Pope—a natural and logical step in an age when the universal claims of the Papacy were still unchallenged by individuals and governments. After carefully sifting the rival claims, the Pope issued in 1493 a series of papal bulls which established a line of demarcation between the colonial possessions of the two states: the East went to Portugal and the West to Spain. The partition, however, failed to satisfy Portuguese aspirations and in the subsequent year the contending parties reached a more satisfactory compromise in the Treaty of Tordesillas, which rectified the papal judgment to permit Portuguese ownership of Brazil.

Neither the papal arbitration nor the formal treaty was intended to be binding on other powers, and both were in fact

repudiated. Cabot's voyage to North America in 1497 was England's immediate reply to the partition. Francis I of France voiced his celebrated protest: "The sun shines for me as for others. I should very much like to see the clause in Adam's will that excludes me from a share of the world." The king of Denmark refused to accept the Pope's ruling as far as the East Indies were concerned. Sir William Cecil, the famous Elizabethan statesman, denied the Pope's right "to give and take kingdoms to whomsoever he pleased." In 1580 the English government countered with the principle of effective occupation as the determinant of sovereignty. Thereafter, in the parlance of the day, there was "no peace below the line." It was a dispute, in the words of a later governor of Barbados, as to "whether the King of England or of France shall be monarch of the West Indies, for the King of Spain cannot hold it long..."England, France, and even Holland, began to challenge the Iberian Axis and claim their place in the sun. The Negro, too, was to have his place, though he did not ask for it: it was the broiling sun of the sugar, tobacco and cotton plantations of the New World.

According to Adam Smith, the prosperity of a new colony depends upon one simple economic factor—"plenty of good land." The British colonial possessions up to 1776, however, can broadly be divided into two types. The first is the self-sufficient and diversified economy of small farmers, "mere earth-scratchers" as Gibbon Wakefield derisively called them, living on a soil which, as Canada was described in 1840, was "no lottery, with a few exorbitant prizes and a large number of blanks, but a secure and certain investment." The second type is the colony which has facilities for the production of staple articles on a large scale for an export market. In the first category fell the Northern colonies of the American mainland; in the second, the mainland tobacco colonies and the sugar islands of the Caribbean. In colonies of the latter type, as Merivale pointed out, land and capital were both useless unless labor could be commanded. Labor, that is, must be constant and must work, or be made to work, in co-operation. In such colonies the rugged individualism of the Massachusetts farmer, practising his intensive agriculture and wringing by the sweat of his brow niggardly returns from a grudging soil, must yield to the disciplined gang of the big capitalist practising extensive agriculture and producing on a large scale. Without this compulsion, the laborer would otherwise exercise his natural inclination to work his own land and toil on his own account. The story is frequently told of the great English capitalist,

Mr. Peel, who took £50,000 and three hundred laborers with him to the Swan River colony in Australia. His plan was that his laborers would work for him, as in the old country. Arrived in Australia, however, where land was plentiful—too plentiful—the laborers preferred to work for themselves as small proprietors, rather than under the capitalist for wages. Australia was not England, and the capitalist was left without a servant to make his bed or fetch him water.

For the Caribbean colonies the solution for this dispersion and "earth-scratching" was slavery. The lesson of the early history of Georgia is instructive. Prohibited from employing slave labor by trustees who, in some instances, themselves owned slaves in other colonies, the Georgian planters found themselves in the position, as Whitefield phrased it, of people whose legs were tied and were told to walk. So the Georgia magistrates drank toasts "to the one thing needful"—slavery—until the ban was lifted. "Odious resource" though it might be, as Merivale called it, slavery was an economic institution of the first importance. It had been the basis of Greek economy and had built up the Roman Empire. In modern times it provided the sugar for the tea and the coffee cups of the Western world. It produced the cotton to serve as a base for modern capitalism. It made the American South and the Caribbean islands. Seen in historical perspective, it forms a part of that general picture of the harsh treatment of the underprivileged classes, the unsympathetic poor laws and severe feudal laws, and the indifference with which the rising capitalist class was "beginning to reckon prosperity in terms of pounds sterling, and ... becoming used to the idea of sacrificing human life to the deity of increased production."

Adam Smith, the intellectual champion of the industrial middle class with its new-found doctrine of freedom, later propagated the argument that it was, in general, pride and love of power in the master that led to slavery and that, in those countries where slaves were employed, free labor would be more profitable. Universal experience demonstrated conclusively that "the work done by slaves, though it appears to cost only their maintenance, is in the end the dearest of any. A person who can acquire no property can have no other interest than to eat as much, and to labour as little as possible."

Adam Smith thereby treated as an abstract proposition what is a specific question of time, place, labor and soil. The eco-

nomic superiority of free hired labor over slave is obvious even to the slave owner. Slave labor is given reluctantly, it is unskilful, it lacks versatility. Other things being equal, freemen would be preferred. But in the early stages of colonial development, other things are not equal. When slavery is adopted, it is not adopted as the choice over free labor; there is no choice at all. The reasons for slavery, wrote Gibbon Wakefield, "are not moral, but economical circumstances; they relate not to vice and virtue, but to production." With the limited population of Europe in the sixteenth century, the free laborers necessary to cultivate the staple crops of sugar, tobacco and cotton in the New World could not have been supplied in quantities adequate to permit large-scale production. Slavery was necessary for this, and to get slaves the Europeans turned first to the aborigines and then to Africa.

Under certain circumstances slavery has some obvious advantages. In the cultivation of crops like sugar, cotton and tobacco, where the cost of production is appreciably reduced on larger units, the slaveowner, with his large-scale production and his organized slave gang, can make more profitable use of the land than the small farmer or peasant proprietor. For such staple crops, the vast profits can well stand the greater expense of inefficient slave labor. Where all the knowledge required is simple and a matter of routine, constancy and co-operation in labor—slavery—is essential, until, by importation of new recruits and breeding, the population has reached the point of density and the land available for appropriation has been already apportioned. When that stage is reached, and only then, the expenses of slavery, in the form of the cost and maintenance of slaves, productive and unproductive, exceed the cost of hired laborers. As Merivale wrote: "Slave labour is dearer than free wherever abundance of free labour can be procured."

From the standpoint of the grower, the greatest defect of slavery lies in the fact that it quickly exhausts the soil. The labor supply of low social status, docile and cheap, can be maintained in subjection only by systematic degradation and by deliberate efforts to suppress its intelligence. Rotation of crops and scientific farming are therefore alien to slave societies. As Jefferson wrote of Virginia, "we can buy an acre of new land cheaper than we can manure an old one." The slave planter, in the picturesque nomenclature of the South, is a "land-killer." This serious defect of slavery can be counter balanced and postponed for a time if fertile soil is practically unlimited. Expansion is a necessity of slave societies; the slave

power requires ever fresh conquests. "It is more profitable," wrote Merivale, "to cultivate a fresh soil by the dear labour of slaves, than an exhausted one by the cheap labour of free men." From Virginia and Maryland to Carolina, Georgia, Texas and the Middle West; from Barbados to Jamaica to Saint Domingue and then to Cuba; the logic was inexorable and the same. It was a relay race; the first to start passed the baton, unwillingly we may be sure, to another and then limped sadly behind.

Slavery in the Caribbean has been too narrowly identified with the Negro. A racial twist has thereby been given to what is basically an economic phenomenon. Slavery was not born of racism: rather, racism was the consequence of slavery. Unfree labor in the New World was brown, white, black, and yellow; Catholic, Protestant and pagan.

The first instance of slave trading and slave labor developed in the New World involved, racially, not the Negro but the Indian. The Indians rapidly succumbed to the excessive labor demanded of them, the insufficient diet, the white man's diseases, and their inability to adjust themselves to the new way of life. Accustomed to a life of liberty, their constitution and temperament were ill-adapted to the rigors of plantation slavery. As Fernando Ortiz writes: "To subject the Indian to the mines, to their monotonous, insane and severe labor, without tribal sense, without religious ritual,…was like taking away from him the meaning of his life.… It was to enslave not only his muscles but also his collective spirit."

The visitor to Ciudad Trujillo, capital of the Dominican Republic (the present-day name of half of the island formerly called Hispaniola), will see a statue of Columbus, with the figure of an Indian woman gratefully writing (so reads the caption) the name of the Discoverer. The story is told, on the other hand, of the Indian chieftain, Hatuey, who, doomed to die for resisting the invaders, staunchly refused to accept the Christian faith as the gateway to salvation when he learned that his executioners, too, hoped to get to Heaven. It is far more probable that Hatuey, rather than the anonymous woman, represented contemporary Indian opinion of their new overlords.

England and France, in their colonies, followed the Spanish practice of enslavement of the Indians. There was one conspicuous difference—the attempts of the Spanish Crown, however ineffective, to restrict Indian slavery to those who refused to accept Christianity

and to the warlike Caribs on the specious plea that they were cannibals. From the standpoint of the British government Indian slavery, unlike later Negro slavery which involved vital imperial interests, was a purely colonial matter. As Lauber writes: "The home government was interested in colonial slave conditions and legislation only when the African slave trade was involved…Since it (Indian slavery) was never sufficiently extensive to interfere with Negro slavery and the slave trade, it never received any attention from the home government, and so existed as legal because never declared illegal."

But Indian slavery never was extensive in the British dominions. Ballagh, writing of Virginia, says that popular sentiment had never "demanded the subjection of the Indian race per se, as was practically the case with the Negro in the first slave act of 1661, but only of a portion of it, and that admittedly a very small portion…In the case of the Indian…slavery was viewed as of an occasional nature, a preventive penalty and not as a normal and permanent condition." In the New England colonies Indian slavery was unprofitable, for slavery of any kind was unprofitable because it was unsuited to the diversified agriculture of these colonies. In addition the Indian slave was inefficient. The Spaniards discovered that one Negro was worth four Indians. A prominent official in Hispaniola insisted in 1518 that "permission be given to bring Negroes, a race robust for labor, instead of natives, so weak that they can only be employed in tasks requiring little endurance, such as taking care of maize fields or farms." The future staples of the New World, sugar and cotton, required strength which the Indian lacked, and demanded the robust "cotton nigger" as sugar's need of strong mules produced in Louisiana the epithet "sugar mules." According to Lauber, "When compared with sums paid for Negroes at the same time and place the prices of Indian slaves are found to have been considerably lower."

The Indian reservoir, too, was limited, the African inexhaustible. Negroes therefore were stolen in Africa to work the lands stolen from the Indians in America. The voyages of Prince Henry the Navigator complemented those of Columbus, West African history became the complement of West Indian.

The immediate successor of the Indian, however, was not the Negro but the poor white. These white servants included a variety of types. Some were indentured servants, so called because,

before departure from the homeland, they had signed a contract, indented by law, binding them to service for a stipulated time in return for their passage. Still others, known as "redemptioners," arranged with the captain of the ship to pay for their passage on arrival or within a specified time thereafter; if they did not, they were sold by the captain to the highest bidder. Others were convicts, sent out by the deliberate policy of the home government, to serve for a specified period.

This emigration was in tune with mercantilist theories of the day which strongly advocated putting the poor to industrious and useful labor and favored emigration, voluntary or involuntary, as relieving the poor rates and finding more profitable occupations abroad for idlers and vagrants at home. "Indentured servitude," writes C. M. Haar, "was called into existence by two different though complementary forces: there was both a positive attraction from the New World and a negative repulsion from the Old." In a state paper delivered to James I in 1606 Bacon emphasized that by emigration England would gain "a double commodity, in the avoidance of people here, and in making use of them there."

This temporary service at the outset denoted no inferiority or degradation. Many of the servants were manorial tenants fleeing from the irksome restrictions of feudalism, Irishmen seeking freedom from the oppression of landlords and bishops, Germans running away from the devastation of the Thirty Years' War. They transplanted in their hearts a burning desire for land, an ardent passion for independence. They came to the land of opportunity to be free men, their imaginations powerfully wrought upon by glowing and extravagant descriptions in the home country. It was only later when, in the words of Dr. Williamson, "all ideals of a decent colonial society, of a better and greater England overseas, were swamped in the pursuit of an immediate gain," that the introduction of disreputable elements became a general feature of indentured service.

A regular traffic developed in these indentured servants. Between 1654 and 1685 ten thousand sailed from Bristol alone, chiefly for the West Indies and Virginia. In 1683 white servants represented one-sixth of Virginia's population. Two-thirds of the immigrants to Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century were white servants; in four years 25,000 came to Philadelphia alone. It has been estimated that more than a quarter of a million persons were of this class during the colonial period, and that they probably

constituted one-half of all English immigrants, the majority going to the middle colonies. As commercial speculation entered the picture, abuses crept in. Kidnaping was encouraged to a great degree and became a regular business in such towns as London and Bristol. Adults would be plied with liquor, children enticed with sweetmeats. The kidnappers were called "spirits," defined as "one that taketh upp men and women and children and sells them on a shipp to be conveyed beyond the sea." The captain of a ship trading to Jamaica would visit the Clerkenwell House of Correction, ply with drink the girls who had been imprisoned there as disorderly, and "invite" them to go to the West Indies. The temptations held out to the unwary and the credulous were so attractive that, as the mayor of Bristol complained, husbands were induced to forsake their wives, wives their husbands, and apprentices their masters, while wanted criminals found on the transport ships a refuge from the arms of the law. The wave of German immigration developed the "newlander," the labor agent of those days, who traveled up and down the Rhine Valley persuading the feudal peasants to sell their belongings and emigrate to America, receiving a commission for each emigrant.

Much has been written about the trickery these "newlanders" were not averse to employing. But whatever the deceptions practised, it remains true, as Friedrich Kapp has written, that "the real ground for the emigration fever lay in the unhealthy political and economic conditions…The misery and oppression of the conditions of the little (German) states promoted emigration much more dangerously and continuously than the worst 'newlander.'"

Convicts provided another steady source of white labor. The harsh feudal laws of England recognized three hundred capital crimes. Typical hanging offences included: picking a pocket for more than a shilling; shoplifting to the value of five shillings; stealing a horse or a sheep; poaching rabbits on a gentleman's estate. Offences for which the punishment prescribed by law was transportation comprised the stealing of cloth, burning stacks of corn, the maiming and killing of cattle, hindering customs officers in the execution of their duty, and corrupt legal practices. Proposals made in 1664 would have banished to the colonies all vagrants, rogues and idlers, petty thieves, gypsies, and loose persons frequenting unlicensed brothels. A piteous petition in 1667 prayed for transportation instead of the death sentence for a wife convicted of stealing goods valued at three shillings and four pence. In 1745

transportation was the penalty for the theft of a silver spoon and a gold watch. One year after the emancipation of the Negro slaves, transportation was the penalty for trade union activity. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that there was some connection between the law and the labor needs of the plantations, and the marvel is that so few people ended up in the colonies overseas.

Benjamin Franklin opposed this "dumping upon the New World of the outcasts of the Old" as the most cruel insult ever offered by one nation to another, and asked, if England was justified in sending her convicts to the colonies, whether the latter were justified in sending to England their rattlesnakes in exchange? It is not clear why Franklin should have been so sensitive. Even if the convicts were hardened criminals, the great increase of indentured servants and free emigrants would have tended to render the convict influence innocuous, as increasing quantities of water poured in a glass containing poison. Without convicts the early development of the Australian colonies in the nineteenth century would have been impossible. Only a few of the colonists, however, were so particular. The general attitude was summed up by a contemporary: "Their labor would be more beneficial in an infant settlement, than their vices could be pernicious."There was nothing strange about this attitude. The great problem in a new country is the problem of labor, and convict labor, as Merivale has pointed out, was equivalent to a free present by the government to the settlers without burdening the latter with the expense of importation. The governor of Virginia in 1611 was willing to welcome convicts reprieved from death as "a readie way to furnish us with men and not always with the worst kind of men." The West Indies were prepared to accept all and sundry, even the spawn of Newgate and Bridewell, for "no goale bird [sic] can be so incorrigible, but there is hope of his conformity here, as well as of his preferment, which some have happily experimented."

The political and civil disturbances in England between 1640 and 1740 augmented the supply of white servants. Political and religious nonconformists paid for their unorthodoxy by transportation, mostly to the sugar islands. Such was the fate of many of Cromwell's Irish prisoners, who were sent to the West lndies. So thoroughly was this policy pursued that an active verb was added to the English language—to "barbadoes" a person. Montserrat became largely an Irish colony, and the Irish brogue is still frequently heard today in many parts of the British West Indies. The Irish, however, were poor servants. They hated the English, were always ready to

aid England's enemies, and in a revolt in the Leeward Islands in 1689 we can already see signs of that burning indignation which, according to Lecky, gave Washington some of his best soldiers. The vanquished in Cromwell's Scottish campaigns were treated like the Irish before them, and Scotsmen came to be regarded as "the general travaillers and soldiers in most foreign parts." Religious intolerance sent more workers to the plantations. In 1661 Quakers refusing to take the oath for the third time were to be transported; in 1664 transportation, to any plantation except Virginia or New England, or a fine of one hundred pounds was decreed for the third offence for persons over sixteen assembling in groups of five or more under pretence of religion. Many of Monmouth's adherents were sent to Barbados, with orders to be detained as servants for ten years. The prisoners were granted in batches to favorite courtiers, who made handsome profits from the traffic in which, it is alleged, even the Queen shared. A similar policy was resorted to after the Jacobite risings of the eighteenth century.

The transportation of these white servants shows in its true light the horrors of the Middle Passage—not as something unusual or inhuman but as a part of the age. The emigrants were packed like herrings. According to Mittelberger, each servant was allowed about two feet in width and six feet in length in bed. The boats were small, the voyage long, the food, in the absence of refrigeration, bad, disease inevitable. A petition to Parliament in 1659 describes how seventy-two servants had been locked up below deck during the whole voyage of five and a half weeks, "amongst horses, that their souls, through heat and steam under the tropic, fainted in them." Inevitably abuses crept into the system and Fearon was shocked by "the horrible picture of human suffering which this living sepulchre" of an emigrant vessel in Philadelphia afforded. But conditions even for the free passengers were not much better in those days, and the comment of a Lady of Quality describing a voyage from Scotland to the West Indies on a ship full of indentured servants should banish any ideas that the horrors of the slave ship are to be accounted for by the fact that the victims were Negroes. "It is hardly possible," she writes, "to believe that human nature could be so depraved, as to treat fellow creatures in such a manner for so little gain.

The transportation of servants and convicts produced a powerful vested interest in England. When the Colonial Board was created in 1661, not the least important of its duties was the control of the trade in indentured servants. In 1664 a commission

was appointed, headed by the King's brother, to examine and report upon the exportation of servants. In 1670 an act prohibiting the transportation of English prisoners overseas was rejected; another bill against the stealing of children came to nothing. In the transportation of felons, a whole hierarchy, from courtly secretaries and grave judges down to the jailors and turnkeys, insisted on having a share in the spoils. It has been suggested that it was humanity for his fellow countrymen and men of his own color which dictated the planter's preference for the Negro slave. Of his humanity there is not a trace in the records of the time, at least as far as the plantation colonies and commercial production were concerned. Attempts to register emigrant servants and regularize the procedure of transportation—thereby giving full legal recognition to the system—were evaded. The leading merchants and public officials were all involved in the practice. The penalty for man-stealing was exposure in the pillory, but no missiles from the spectators were tolerated. Such opposition as there was came from the masses. It was enough to point a finger at a woman in the streets of London and call her a "spirit" to start a riot.

This was the situation in England when Jeffreys came to Bristol on his tour of the West to clean up the remnants of Monmouth's rebellion. Jeffreys has been handed down to posterity as a "butcher," the tyrannical deputy of an arbitrary king, and his legal visitation is recorded in the textbooks as the "Bloody Assizes." They had one redeeming feature. Jeffreys vowed that he had come to Bristol with a broom to sweep the city clean, and his wrath fell on the kidnapers who infested the highest municipal offices. The merchants and justices were in the habit of straining the law to increase the number of felons who could be transported to the sugar plantations they owned in the West Indies. They would terrify petty offenders with the prospect of hanging and then induce them to plead for transportation. Jeffreys turned upon the mayor, complete in scarlet and furs, who was about to sentence a pickpocket to transportation to Jamaica, forced him, to the great astonishment of Bristol's worthy citizens, to enter the prisoners' dock, like a common felon, to plead guilty or not guilty, and hectored him in characteristic language: "Sir, Mr. Mayor, you I meane, Kidnapper, and an old Justice of the Peace on the bench…I doe not knowe him, an old knave: he goes to the taverne, and for a pint of sack he will bind people servants to the Indies at the taverne. A kidnapping knave! I will have his ears off, before I goe forth of towne.… Kidnapper, you,

I mean, Sir.... If it were not in respect of the sword, which is over your head, I would send you to Newgate, you kidnapping knave. You are worse than the pick-pockett who stands there.... I hear the trade of kidnapping is of great request. They can discharge a felon or a traitor, provided they will go to Mr. Alderman's plantation at the West Indies." The mayor was fined one thousand pounds, but apart from the loss of dignity and the fear aroused in their hearts, the merchants lost nothing—their gains were left inviolate.

According to one explanation, Jeffreys' insults were the result of intoxication or insanity. It is not improbable that they were connected with a complete reversal of mercantilist thought on the question of emigration, as a result of the internal development of Britain herself. By the end of the seventeenth century the stress had shifted from the accumulation of the precious metals as the aim of national economic policy to the development of industry within the country, the promotion of employment and the encouragement of exports. The mercantilists argued that the best way to reduce costs, and thereby compete with other countries, was to pay low wages, which a large population tended to ensure. The fear of overpopulation at the beginning of the seventeenth century gave way to a fear of under-population in the middle of the same century. The essential condition of colonization—emigration from the home country—now ran counter to the principle that national interest demanded a large population at home. Sir Josiah Child denied that emigration to America had weakened England, but he was forced to admit that in this view he was in a minority of possibly one in a thousand, while he endorsed the general opinion that "whatever tends to the depopulating of a kingdom tends to the impoverishment of it." Jeffreys' unusual humanitarianism appears less strange and may be attributed rather to economic than to spirituous considerations. His patrons, the Royal Family, had already given their patronage to the Royal African Company and the Negro slave trade. For the surplus population needed to people the colonies in the New World the British had turned to Africa, and by 1680 they already had positive evidence, in Barbados, that the African was satisfying the necessities of production better than the European.

The status of these servants became progressively worse in the plantation colonies. Servitude, originally a free personal relation based on voluntary contract for a definite period of service, in lieu of transportation and maintenance, tended to pass into a property

relation which asserted a control of varying extent over the bodies and liberties of the person during service as if he were a thing. Eddis, writing on the eve of the Revolution, found the servants groaning "beneath a worse than Egyptian bondage." In Maryland servitude developed into an institution approaching in some respects chattel slavery. Of Pennsylvania it has been said that "no matter how kindly they may have been treated in particular cases, or how voluntarily they may have entered into the relation, as a class and when once bound, indentured servants were temporarily chattels." On the sugar plantations of Barbados the servants spent their time "grinding at the mills and attending the furnaces, or digging in this scorching island; having nothing to feed on (notwithstanding their hard labour) but potatoe roots, nor to drink, but water with such roots washed in it, besides the bread and tears of their own afflictions; being bought and sold still from one planter to another, or attached as horses and beasts for the debts of their masters, being whipt at the whipping posts (as rogues,) for their masters' pleasure, and sleeping in sties worse than hogs in England...." As Professor Harlow concludes, the weight of evidence proves incontestably that the conditions under which white labor was procured and utilized in Barbados were "persistently severe, occasionally dishonourable, and generally a disgrace to the English name."

English officialdom, however, took the view that servitude was not too bad, and the servant in Jamaica was better off than the husbandman in England. "It is a place as grateful to you for trade as any part of the world. It is not so odious as it is represented." But there was some sensitiveness on the question. The Lords of Trade and Plantations, in 1676, opposed the use of the word "servitude" as a mark of bondage and slavery, and suggested "service" instead. The institution was not affected by the change. The hope has been expressed that the white servants were spared the lash so liberally bestowed upon their Negro comrades. They had no such good fortune. Since they were bound for a limited period, the planter had less interest in their welfare than in that of the Negroes who were perpetual servants and therefore "the most useful appurtenances" of a plantation. Eddis found the Negroes "almost in every instance, under more comfortable circumstances than the miserable European, over whom the rigid planter exercises an inflexible severity." The servants were regarded by the planters as "white trash," and were bracketed with the Negroes as laborers. "Not one of these colonies ever was or ever can be brought to any

considerable improvement without a supply of white servants and Negroes," declared the Council of Montserrat in 1680. In a European society in which subordination was considered essential, in which Burke could speak of the working classes as "miserable sheep" and Voltaire as "canaille," and Linguet condemn the worker to the use of his physical strength alone, for "everything would be lost once he knew that he had a mind"—in such a society it is unnecessary to seek for apologies for the condition of the white servant in the colonies.

Defoe bluntly stated that the white servant was a slave. He was not. The servant's loss of liberty was of limited duration, the Negro was slave for life. The servant's status could not descend to his offspring, Negro children took the status of the mother. The master at no time had absolute control over the person and liberty of his servant as he had over his slave. The servant had rights, limited but recognized by law and inserted in a contract. He enjoyed, for instance, a limited right to property. In actual law the conception of the servant as a piece of property never went beyond that of personal estate and never reached the stage of a chattel or real estate. The laws in the colonies maintained this rigid distinction and visited cohabitation between the races with severe penalties. The servant could aspire, at the end of his term, to a plot of land, though, as Wertenbaker points out for Virginia, it was not a legal right, and conditions varied from colony to colony. The serf in Europe could therefore hope for an early freedom in America which villeinage could not afford. The freed servants became small yeomen farmers, settled in the backcountry, a democratic force in a society of large aristocratic plantation owners, and were the pioneers in westward expansion. That was why Jefferson in America, as Saco in Cuba, favored the introduction of European servants instead of African slaves—as tending to democracy rather than aristocracy.

The institution of white servitude, however, had grave disadvantages. Postlethwayt, a rigid mercantilist, argued that white laborers in the colonies would tend to create rivalry with the mother country in manufacturing. Better black slaves on plantations than white servants in industry, which would encourage aspirations to independence. The supply moreover was becoming increasingly difficult, and the need of the plantations outstripped the English convictions. In addition, merchants were involved in many vexatious and costly proceedings arising from people signifying their willingness to emigrate, accepting food and clothes in advance,

and then suing for unlawful detention. Indentured servants were not forthcoming in sufficient quantities to replace those who had served their term. On the plantations, escape was easy for the white servant; less easy for the Negro who, if freed, tended, in self-defence, to stay in his locality where he was well known and less likely to be apprehended as a vagrant or runaway slave. The servant expected land at the end of his contract; the Negro, in a strange environment, conspicuous by his color and features, and ignorant of the white man's language and ways, could be kept permanently divorced from the land. Racial differences made it easier to justify and rationalize Negro slavery, to exact the mechanical obedience of a plough-ox or a cart-horse, to demand that resignation and that complete moral and intellectual subjection which alone make slave labor possible. Finally, and this was the decisive factor, the Negro slave was cheaper. The money which procured a white man's services for ten years could buy a Negro for life. As the governor of Barbados stated, the Barbadian planters found by experience that "three blacks work better and cheaper than one white man." But the experience with white servitude had been invaluable. Kidnaping in Africa encountered no such difficulties as were encountered in England. Captains and ships had the experience of the one trade to guide them in the other. Bristol, the center of the servant trade, became one of the centers of the slave trade. Capital accumulated from the one financed the other. White servitude was the historic base upon which Negro slavery was constructed. The felon-drivers in the plantations became without effort slave-drivers. "In significant numbers," writes Professor Phillips, "the Africans were latecomers fitted into a system already developed."

Here, then, is the origin of Negro slavery. The reason was economic, not racial; it had to do not with the color of the laborer, but the cheapness of the labor. As compared with Indian and white labor, Negro slavery was eminently superior. "In each case," writes Bassett, discussing North Carolina, "it was a survival of the fittest. Both Indian slavery and white servitude were to go down before the black man's superior endurance, docility, and labor capacity." The features of the man, his hair, color and dentifrice, his "subhuman"characteristics so widely pleaded, were only the later rationalizations to justify a simple economic fact: that the colonies needed labor and resorted to Negro labor because it was cheapest and best. This was not a theory, it was a practical conclusion deduced from the personal experience of the planter. He would have gone to

the moon, if necessary, for labor. Africa was nearer than the moon, nearer too than the more populous countries of India and China. But their turn was to come.

This white servitude is of cardinal importance for an understanding of the development of the New World and the Negro's place in that development. It completely explodes the old myth that the whites could not stand the strain of manual labor in the climate of the New World and that, for this reason and this reason alone, the European powers had recourse to Africans. The argument is quite untenable. A Mississippi dictum will have it that "only black men and mules can face the sun in July." But the whites faced the sun for well over a hundred years in Barbados, and the Salzburgers of Georgia indignantly denied that rice cultivation was harmful to them. The Caribbean islands are well within the tropical zone, but their climate is more equable than tropical, the temperature rarely exceeds 80 degrees though it remains uniform the whole year round, and they are exposed to the gentle winds from the sea. The unbearable humidity of an August day in some parts of the United States has no equal in the islands. Moreover only the southern tip of Florida in the United States is actually tropical, yet Negro labor flourished in Virginia and Carolina. The southern parts of the United States are not hotter than South Italy or Spain, and de Tocqueville asked why the European could not work there as well as in those two countries? When Whitney invented his cotton gin, it was confidently expected that cotton would be produced by free labor on small farms, and it was, in fact, so produced. Where the white farmer was ousted, the enemy was not the climate but the slave plantation, and the white farmer moved westward, until the expanding plantation sent him on his wanderings again. Writing in 1857, Weston pointed out that labor in the fields of the extreme South and all the heavy outdoor work in New Orleans were performed by whites, without any ill consequences. "No part of the continental borders of the Gulf of Mexico," he wrote, "and none of the islands which separate it from the ocean, need be abandoned to the barbarism of negro slavery." In our own time we who have witnessed the dispossession of Negroes by white sharecroppers in the South and the mass migration of Negroes from the South to the colder climates of Detroit, New York, Pittsburgh and other industrial centers of the North, can no longer accept the convenient rationalization that Negro labor was employed on the slave plantations be cause the climate was too rigorous for the constitution of the white man.

A constant and steady emigration of poor whites from Spain to Cuba, to the very end of Spanish dominion, characterized Spanish colonial policy. Fernando Ortíz has drawn a striking contrast between the role of tobacco and sugar in Cuban history. Tobacco was a free white industry intensively cultivated on small farms; sugar was a black slave industry extensively cultivated on large plantations. He further compared the free Cuban tobacco industry with its slave Virginian counterpart. What determined the difference was not climate but the economic structure of the two areas. The whites could hardly have endured the tropical heat of Cuba and succumbed to the tropical heat of Barbados. In Puerto Rico, the jíbaro, the poor white peasant, is still the basic type, demonstrating, in the words of Grenfell Price, how erroneous is the belief that after three generations the white man cannot breed in the tropics. Similar white communities have survived in the Caribbean, from the earliest settlements right down to our own times, in the Dutch West Indian islands of Saba and St. Martin. For some sixty years French settlers have lived in St. Thomas not only as fishermen but as agriculturalists, forming today the "largest single farming class" in the island. As Dr. Price concludes: "It appears that northern whites can retain a fair standard for generations in the trade-wind tropics if the location is free from the worst forms of tropical disease, if the economic return is adequate, and if the community is prepared to undertake hard, physical work." Over one hundred years ago a number of German emigrants settled in Seaford, Jamaica. They survive today, with no visible signs of deterioration, flatly contradicting the popular belief as to the possibility of survival of the northern white in the tropics. Wherever, in short, tropical agriculture remained on a small farming basis, whites not only survived but prospered. Where the whites disappeared, the cause was not the climate but the supersession of the small farm by the large plantation, with its consequent demand for a large and steady supply of labor.

The climatic theory of the plantation is thus nothing but a rationalization. In an excellent essay on the subject Professor Edgar Thompson writes: "The plantation is not to be accounted for by climate. It is a political institution." It is, we might add, more: it is an economic institution. The climatic theory "is part of an ideology which rationalizes and naturalizes an existing social and economic order, and this everywhere seems to be an order in which there is a race problem."

The history of Australia clinches the argument. Nearly half of this island continent lies within the tropical zone. In part of this tropical area, the state of Queensland, the chief crop is sugar. When the industry began to develop, Australia had a choice of two alternatives: black labor or white labor. The commonwealth began its sugar cultivation in the usual way—with imported black labor from the Pacific islands. Increasing demands, however, were made for a white Australia policy, and in the twentieth century non-white immigration was prohibited. It is irrelevant to consider here that as a result the cost of production of Australian sugar is prohibitive, that the industry is artificial and survives only behind the Chinese wall of Australian autarchy. Australia was willing to pay a high price in order to remain a white man's country. Our sole concern here with the question is that this price was paid from the pockets of the Australian consumer and not in the physical degeneration of the Australian worker.

Labor in the Queensland sugar industry today is wholly white. "Queensland," writes H. L. Wilkinson, "affords the only example in the world of European colonization in the tropics on an extensive scale. It does more; it shows a large European population doing the whole of the work of its civilization from the meanest service, and most exacting manual labor, to the highest form of intellectualism." To such an extent has science exploded superstition that Australian scientists today argue that the only condition on which white men and women can remain healthy in the tropics is that they must engage in hard manual work. Where they have done so, as in Queensland, "the most rigorous scientific examination," according to the Australian Medical Congress in 1920, "failed to show any organic changes in white residents which enabled them to be distinguished from residents of temperate climates."

Negro slavery, thus, had nothing to do with climate. Its origin can be expressed in three words: in the Caribbean, Sugar; on the mainland, Tobacco and Cotton. A change in the economic structure produced a corresponding change in the labor supply. The fundamental fact was "the creation of an inferior social and economic organization of exploiters and exploited." Sugar, tobacco, and cotton required the large plantation and hordes of cheap labor, and the small farm of the ex-indentured white servant could not possibly survive. The tobacco of the small farm in Barbados was displaced by the sugar of the large plantation. The rise of the sugar industry in the Caribbean was the signal for a gigantic dispossession

of the small farmer. Barbados in 1645 had 11,200 small white farmers and 5,680 Negro slaves; in 1667 there were 745 large plantation owners and 82,023 slaves. In 1645 the island had 18,300 whites fit to bear arms, in 1667 only 8,300. The white farmers were squeezed out. The planters continued to offer inducements to newcomers, but they could no longer offer the main inducement, land. White servants preferred the other islands where they could hope for land, to Barbados, where they were sure there was none. In desperation the planters proposed legislation which would prevent a landowner from purchasing more land, compel Negroes and servants to wear dimity manufactured in Barbados (what would English mercantilists have said?) to provide employment for the poor whites, and prevent Negroes from being taught a trade. The governor of Barbados in 1695 drew a pitiful picture of these ex-servants. Without fresh meat or rum, "they are domineered over and used like dogs, and this in time will undoubtedly drive away all the commonality of the white people." His only suggestion was to give the right to elect members of the Assembly to every white man owning two acres of land. Candidates for election would "sometimes give the poor miserable creatures a little rum and fresh provisions and such things as would be of nourishment to them," in order to get their votes—and elections were held every year. It is not surprising that the exodus continued.

The poor whites began their travels, disputing their way all over the Caribbean, from Barbados to Nevis, to Antigua, and thence to Guiana and Trinidad, and ultimately Carolina. Everywhere they were pursued and dispossessed by the same inexorable economic force, sugar; and in Carolina they were safe from cotton only for a hundred years. Between 1672 and 1708 the white men in Nevis decreased by more than three-fifths, the black population more than doubled. Between 1672 and 1727 the white males of Montserrat declined by more than two thirds, in the same period the black population increased more than eleven times. "The more they buie," said the Barbadians, referring to their slaves, "the more they are able to buye, for in a yeare and a halfe they will earne with God's blessing as much as they cost." King Sugar had begun his depredations, changing flourishing commonwealths of small farmers into vast sugar factories owned by a camarilla of absentee capitalist magnates and worked by a mass of alien proletarians. The plantation economy had no room for poor whites; the proprietor or overseer, a physician on the more prosperous plantations, possibly

their families, these were sufficient. "If a state," wrote Weston, "could be supposed to be made up of continuous plantations, the white race would be not merely starved out, but literally squeezed out." The resident planters, apprehensive of the growing disproportion between whites and blacks, passed Deficiency Laws to compel absentees, under penalty of fines, to keep white servants. The absentees preferred to pay the fines. In the West Indies today the poor whites survive in the "Red legs" of Barbados, pallid, weak and depraved from in-breeding, strong rum, insufficient food and abstinence from manual labor. For, as Merivale wrote, "in a country where Negro slavery prevails extensively, no white is industrious."

It was the triumph, not of geographical conditions, as Harlow contends, but of economics. The victims were the Negroes in Africa and the small white farmers. The increase of wealth for the few whites was as phenomenal as the increase of misery for the many blacks. The Barbados crops in 1650, over a twenty-month period, were worth over three million pounds, about fifteen millions in modern money. In 1666 Barbados was computed to be seventeen times as rich as it had been before the planting of sugar. "The buildings in 1643 were mean, with things only for necessity, but in 1666, plate, jewels, and household stuff were estimated at £500,000, their buildings very fair and beautiful, and their houses like castles, their sugar houses and negroes huts show themselves from the sea like so many small towns, each defended by its castle." The price of land skyrocketed. A plantation of five hundred acres which sold for £400 in 1640 fetched £7,000 for a half-share in 1648. The estate of one Captain Waterman, comprising eight hundred acres, had at one time been split up among no less than forty proprietors. For sugar was and is essentially a capitalist undertaking, involving not only agricultural operations but the crude stages of refining as well. A report on the French sugar islands stated that to make ten hogsheads of sugar required as great an expenditure in beasts of burden, mills and utensils as to make a hundred. James Knight of Jamaica estimated that it required four hundred acres to start a sugar plantation. According to Edward Long, another planter and the historian of the island, it needed £5,000 to start a small plantation of three hundred acres, producing from thirty to fifty hogsheads of sugar a year, £14,000 for a plantation of the same size producing one hundred hogsheads. There could be only two classes in such a society, wealthy planters and oppressed slaves.

The moral is reinforced by a consideration of the history

of Virginia, where the plantation economy was based not on sugar but on tobacco. The researches of Professor Wertenbaker have exploded the legend that Virginia from the outset was an aristocratic dominion. In the early seventeenth century about two-thirds of the landholders had neither slaves nor indentured servants. The strength of the colony lay in its numerous white yeomanry. Conditions became worse as the market for tobacco was glutted by Spanish competition and the Virginians demanded in wrath that something be done about "those petty English plantations in the savage islands in the West Indies" through which quantities of Spanish tobacco reached England. None the less, though prices continued to fall, the exports of Virginia and Maryland increased more than six times between 1663 and 1699. The explanation lay in two words—Negro slavery, which cheapened the cost of production. Negro slaves, one-twentieth of the population in 1670, were one-fourth in 1730. "Slavery, from being an insignificant factor in the economic life of the colony, had become the very foundation upon which it was established." There was still room in Virginia, as there was not in Barbados, for the small farmer, but land was useless to him if he could not compete with slave labor. So the Virginian peasant, like the Barbadian, was squeezed out. "The Virginia which had formerly been so largely the land of the little farmer, had become the land of Masters and Slaves. For aught else there was no room."

The whole future history of the Caribbean is nothing more than a dotting of the i's and a crossing of the t's. It happened earlier in the British and French than in the Spanish islands, where the process was delayed until the advent of the dollar diplomacy of our own time. Under American capital we have witnessed the transformation of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic into huge sugar factories (though the large plantation, especially in Cuba, was not unknown under the Spanish regime), owned abroad and operated by alien labor, on the British West Indian pattern. That this process is taking place with free labor and in nominally independent areas (Puerto Rico excepted) helps us to see in its true light the first importation of Negro slave labor in the British Caribbean—a phase in the history of the plantation. In the words of Professor Phillips, the plantation system was "less dependent upon slavery than slavery was upon it.... The plantation system formed, so to speak, the industrial and social frame of government . . .,while slavery was a code of written laws enacted for that purpose."

Where the plantation did not develop, as in the Cuban tobacco industry, Negro labor was rare and white labor pre-dominated. The liberal section of the Cuban population consistently advocated the cessation of the Negro slave trade and the introduction of white immigrants. Saco, mouthpiece of the liberals, called for the immigration of workers "white and free, from all parts of the world, of all races, provided they have a white face and can do honest labor." Sugar defeated Saco. It was the sugar plantation, with its servile base, which retarded white immigration in nineteenth century Cuba as it had banned it in seventeenth century Barbados and eighteenth century Saint Domingue. No sugar, no Negroes. In Puerto Rico, which developed relatively late as a genuine plantation, and where, before the American regime, sugar never dominated the lives and thoughts of the population as it did elsewhere, the poor white peasants survived and the Negro slaves never exceeded fourteen percent of the population. Saco wanted to "whiten" the Cuban social structure. Negro slavery blackened that structure all over the Caribbean while the blood of the Negro slaves reddened the Atlantic and both its shores. Strange that an article like sugar, so sweet and necessary to human existence, should have occasioned such crimes and bloodshed!

After emancipation the British planters thought of white immigration, even convicts. The governor of British Guiana wrote in glowing terms in 1845 about Portuguese immigrants from Madeira. But though the Portuguese came in large numbers, as is attested by their strength even today in Trinidad and British Guiana, they preferred retail trade to plantation labor. The governor of Jamaica was somewhat more cautious in his opinion of British and Irish immigrants. Sickness had broken out, wages were too low, the experiment could only be partially useful in making an immediate addition to the laboring population, and therefore indiscriminate importation was inadvisable. The European immigrants in St. Christopher bewailed their fate piteously, and begged to be permitted to return home. "There is not the slightest reluctance on our part to continue in the island for an honest livelihood by pleasing our employers by our industrious labour if the climate agreed with us, but unfortunately it do not; and we are much afraid if we continue longer in this injurious hot climate (the West Indies) death will be the consequence to the principal part of us...."

It was not the climate which was against the experiment. Slavery had created the pernicious tradition that manual labor was

the badge of the slave and the sphere of influence of the Negro. The first thought of the Negro slave after emancipation was to desert the plantation, where he could, and set up for himself where land was available. White plantation workers could hardly have existed in a society side by side with Negro peasants. The whites would have prospered if small farms had been encouraged. But the abolition of slavery did not mean the destruction of the sugar plantation. The emancipation of the Negro and the inadequacy of the white worker put the sugar planter back to where he had been in the seventeenth century. He still needed labor. Then he had moved from Indian to white to Negro. Now, deprived of his Negro, he turned back to white and then to Indian, this time the Indian from the East. India replaced Africa; between 1833 and 1917, Trinidad imported 145,000 East Indians and British Guiana 238,000. The pattern was the same for the other Caribbean colonies. Between 1854 and 1883 39,000 Indians were introduced into Guadeloupe; between 1853 and 1924, over 22,000 laborers from the Dutch East Indies and 34,000 from British India were carried to Dutch Guiana. Cuba, faced with a shortage of Negro slaves, adopted the interesting experiment of using Negro slaves side by side with indentured Chinese coolies, and after emancipation turned to the teeming thousands of Haiti and the British West Indies. Between 1913 and 1924 Cuba imported 217,000 laborers from Haiti, Jamaica and Puerto Rico. What Saco wrote a hundred years ago was still true, sixty years after Cuba's abolition of slavery.

Negro slavery therefore was only a solution, in certain historical circumstances, of the Caribbean labor problem. Sugar meant labor—at times that labor has been slave, at other times nominally free; at times black, at other times white or brown or yellow. Slavery in no way implied, in any scientific sense, the inferiority of the Negro. Without it the great development of the Caribbean sugar plantations, between 1650 and 1850, would have been impossible.

FIRST VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION

From *The Man Who Cried Genocide* by William Patterson, 1971 *(Link to original)*

While attending the Workers School in New York City - an initiative by the Communist Party USA to promote class consciousness and offer an alternative to capitalist education to workers - William Patterson was invited to travel to the Soviet Union "to study the source and nature of racism as an ideology and its political and economic aspects, including the causes of slums and joblessness... to observe the country where the working class had come to power under the leadership of their Communist Party-the greatest victory won by exploited peoples in centuries of freedom struggle." He attended the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (KUTVA) in which he studied with Maude White, Harry Haywood, James Ford, George Padmore and other African-African scholars. In this chapter, he reflects on his experiences learning with revolutionary thinkers, witnessing the social transformation of the USSR, and walking the streets of Moscow as a Black man, filled with hope for the possibility of building a new society in the U.S.

We landed in Leningrad and although there was no time for sightseeing, I was thrilled to be in the city where Alexander Pushkin, the world-renowned poet, had lived. As a Black man I had reason to be proud of Pushkin. He was of African lineage, and he had taken his place alongside the progressive forces of history. To the Russians, Pushkin was a Russian, a great Russian poet—to me he was also a Russian-African. That is what the quest for identity in the United States had done for me. My country's lies about the history and culture of Black men, unrelieved by any acknowledgment of their contributions to the development of mankind, were circulated in order to justify slavery and, later, discrimination and exploitation. This shameful distortion of history forced the Afro-American to emblazon on his banner all great men with Black ancestry. Pushkin loved his African background no less than he loved Russia; he loved

all men seeking liberation, and under Russian skies that love for humanity had flowered.

Leningrad was the expansive window to the West opened by Peter the Great, and it was indeed like a Western city in many physical respects. We freshened up at the Hotel Europa on Nevsky Prospect, one of the great highways of the world. The hotel had once been one of Europe's most luxurious hostelries but the terrible battles that had taken place in and around Leningrad had caused so much devastation that priority had to be given to other tasks of reconstruction. The rehabilitation of the hotel had been left to a later date.

On the overnight trip to Moscow in the early morning there was little to see save the snow-covered village fields. We came into the Yaroslavsky Station, which stands in an enormous public square housing three railroad stations. There an automobile awaited me, and I was driven to a building on Tversky Boulevard, a short distance from Pushkin Square. The large building known as the Tversky Boulevard Building was now a student dormitory. Before the Revolution it had been a fashionable school for the daughters of the aristocracy. It now served as the University of the Toiling People of the Far East, as well as for students from India, Africa and the Near East.

Here I was to meet hundreds of young men and women who were later to become part of the administrative and cultural institutions of countries freed from colonial oppression. The students were by no means exclusively Communists; by and large they were children of workers denied educational opportunities in their homeland.

Why did the leaders of the Soviet Union go to such expense and trouble to establish a school for foreign students at a time when they scarcely could provide for their own? The imperialists had refined the techniques of miseducation to a fine art. Afro-American, African, Indian, and East Asian colonial youth had the slimmest chance of winning through to a college degree. The master class in Europe's capitals used schooling in their colonies with the shrewdest calculation. A very limited number of their victims were trained in simple clerical work, bookkeeping and so forth—just enough to hold some minor jobs in the cities. A few, sons of chiefs and other powerful men whose friendship was useful to their rulers, were allowed to attend the great universities in London, Paris,

Berlin. But for a great majority of the colonial people, their chances of education beyond the earliest grades were as remote as those of the children of a Mississippi sharecropper.

To many thousands of Black, Brown and Yellow students, the effort of the USSR to give them a chance to become acquainted with the real world and with objective truth was a priceless gift. And to the USSR it represented the acceptance of responsibility to mankind, to international working-class solidarity—the essence of their Philosophy.

My first day at the University of the Toiling People of the Far East was a day of getting to know one another. Not just exchanging names—some did, some didn't. I met a young Black woman whose name was Maude White; she told me she has been a student at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Another person I met was a Black man about my own age who used the name Otto Hall. He and his brother, Harry Haywood, were later to become leaders in the Negro liberation movement in the United States. Then there was a chap known as Denmark Vesey, a slender young Black man eager to learn what had taken place in Russia and why.

Among the Chinese there was a son of General Chiang Kai-shek and among the Indians a niece of Pandit Nehru. Both were studying the science of social development.

I formed a habit of getting up early and walking about this 800-year-old city. Time and again I walked around the Kremlin. From that structure for hundreds of years men had controlled the destiny of millions of people in Russia and the Asian lands. Now it housed the people's elected representatives. Everywhere in the city there was evidence of the ravages of war and civil war. Ochotny Ryad (Hunters' Row), a main thoroughfare, was an array of shacks just outside Red Square—one of the most colorful public squares in the world. But the shacks were not to remain there long—the huge Hotel Moscow was to rise on the site before long. Across the street, offices of the various ministries of the government were to be housed in a splendid new edifice. Moscow was building anew—and building and building.

Nearby was the world-famed Bolshoi Theater, home of the Russian Ballet and opera. Central Moscow was circled by the famous Sadovaya (garden) Boulevard. I walked around the circle many times and I grew to love the city. Everywhere steps were being taken to eradicate the ravages of time and war; and in the transformation

of the conditions of living, one could see the transformation of a whole people rebuilding their lives and laying new foundations for their children's lives.

I made many acquaintances at the University. A large percentage of the students were one day to become freedom fighters in some faraway land. Some were to come through savage struggles and become leaders of their people in many avenues of work and life. I was also to see some of them again at the United Nations.

We called the University KUTVA—the Russian initials of the long name it bore. Among my instructors was one man, Endre Sik, whom I shall never forget. A refugee after the first Hungarian revolution had been crushed, he had somehow reached the USSR. He was tall and slender, with one unforget¬ table physical feature—a magnificent shock of white hair. He was a doctor of philosophy, a dedicated scientist. He lived to help others understand the ways in which to fight exploitation and to work for the liberation of man. But had you asked Endre Sik where he most wanted to serve, I believe that he would have answered, "In the liberation of Black men."

Sik lived with his wife and a young son and daughter in a Quonset hut near the railroad station from which trains left for Leningrad. The large hut was built from stores captured from Americans when they had joined in the attempt to crush the October Revolution. It housed four families, which, in the light of the great housing shortage, was not as bad as it sounds.

Sik was a very busy man. He taught at more than one school and also met with other Hungarian refugees to discuss their national problems. We students were busy too, but as often as possible I visited Sik's home He spoke English as well as French, German, Russian and, of course, his native tongue, and so he had little difficulty in discussing economics, politics and ideology with most of his students. I never met a man for whom I had a greater respect.

I never learned what had first turned Sik's attention to so intense a study of the persecution of Black men. He was, it is true, a profound humanist; there were many Bolsheviks who were, yet not all of them were so deeply concerned with Africa or Afro-Americans. Perhaps it was because he saw the African peoples, especially those who lived south of the Sahara, as amongst the most maligned and vilified of all the peoples of the earth. Foreseeing at the same time the vital role Black Africa would play in its liberation struggles and

the future development of mankind, he became extraordinarily concerned with the history and struggles of Black men.

He was greatly desirous of blasting the lies and propaganda of the pseudo-historians, biologists and sociologists of the West who went to great lengths to show Black Africans as being inherently inferior. In the late 20's he had begun a history of Africa. Now completed, it treats of the evolution of the African peoples and the role of the imperialists in their subjugation and in the partition of the African continent (The History of Black Africa, Academiai Kiado, Budapest, 1966).

The Republic of South Africa already had a Communist party and so did several other African countries. There was also a Pan-African movement, fathered by Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois. The African people were not asleep; they were destined to move into the orbit of world revolutionary struggle.

The talks with Sik were extremely profitable, not only for me but for all the Black students who participated in them. We understood that the ideology and philosophy of the Revolution that had deposed tsarism had far-reaching influence: they were sapping at the foundations of colonialism. The Socialist Revolution had added new dimensions to all the liberation struggles of mankind.

Studying at KUTVA was a fascinating experience, the more so because no one was seeking an education for purposes of self-aggrandizement. Everyone there was seeking to break with an ideology that had kept him tied to colonial oppression. Combined with formal study there was practical experience. Students traveled throughout the Soviet Union to see the national development at many levels. They studied and observed the problems of the colonial peoples who had been held in the tsar's "prison of nations" and how they were solving them in the "family of nations" for which the Revolution had laid the foundation.

I traveled to many of the Eastern Socialist Republics and what I saw amazed me. What was taking place in Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and other nations of the USSR would knock the props out of the arguments of every racist. The national budget of the USSR was divided so as to give to those people who had been kept in a backward state by the tsars a larger share than would strictly have been theirs. Equality of rights and opportunities could be available to them only if they received a larger share at the outset. Those who had been held back had to be helped to catch up.

Wherever one traveled, the picture was one of tremendous movement in culture, industrial development and participation in politics. Schools were literally springing up everywhere. I will be forgiven if my thoughts returned time and again to Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, South Carolina, Texas and all points South to review the efforts to keep the Negro from securing an education—especially in his own history and heritage. Here I was in a democracy with a new kind of content, little more than a decade old and yet seeking with all its resources to wipe out illiteracy and to educate all of its peoples.

The trips to the various sections of the country were eye-openers. Witnessing the application of new relations was the only way to determine how the new social attitude really worked. I took notes in the course of the many discussions I sat in on where criticisms and decisions were weighed and in many instances applied. I would, of course, be expected to make a report on my return, both to the school and later to the Party. The reporting-back assignment was remarkably helpful in sharpening the students' powers of observation. The reports were studied by Soviet authorities in reviews of the correctness of their theory and course of action. It was a two-way street: the teachers became pupils and the students, teachers. From these trips there came a deep sense of the world role of the USSR.

What one saw was a multinational effort. Production was based upon the character of the natural resources of each republic, with the all-union government lending every possible aid to the development of water power, irrigation, health and education. The determination and vigor with which the fight against racial and religious prejudice was waged were truly remarkable. A factor of great importance was the fight led by the central government and its leadership against what was known as Great Russian chauvinism, a tool of the ideologists of the tsarist empire much like the myths of white superiority that are used to brainwash and dehumanize the white masses in America.

A new life was flourishing in the countryside, in the villages and towns; the people had acquired land; new cities were coming into being. The veils had been lifted from the faces of the women in the former Moslem colonies. Myths about woman's place in society that had flourished for hundreds of years were being banished from the minds of both men and women. The creative genius of these

once stultified peoples had been released and they proved to be as gifted as any other people on earth.

In the meanwhile, the political leaders of England, France and the United States were taking no effective steps to check those powerful men who in Italy, Germany and Japan were openly talking about the need for the re-division of the world by force. The politicians and powerful monopolies that backed them wanted not only colonies in Asia and Africa, but political dominance in Europe as well. In spite of the fact that these forces menaced the interests of the U.S. monopolies in the world market, American imperialism was gambling recklessly by supporting them, seeking always to turn them against the USSR.

It was evident to those who read Mein Kampf or saw and heard Hitler in his rantings that he was a maniacal racist as well as a warmaker. Hitler's fascism threatened the very existence not only of all Jews, all revolutionaries, all progressive whites, but also that of every Black man in the world.

The Soviets alone raised the cry "Stop fascism!" The Sixth Congress of the Communist International met in Moscow in 1928 to discuss the rise of fascist ideas and actions and how to organize for successful struggles against them. Nicolai Bukharin of the Soviet Union made a major report on the situation in the colonies. But Harry Haywood, James Ford and I, who attended, were not satisfied with the way in which Bukharin handled the relationship of the Black man in the United States to the colonial movement and what should be the tasks of all Communists in that situation. It was our opinion that it was necessary to stress the position of the Afro-American and the role that Negroes could play in the struggle—especially in the light of the magnitude of American imperialism's menace to the world.

We discussed the matter with Otto Kuusinen, Dmitri Manuilsky and a number of other comrades who were handling the program. A meeting was arranged with Bukharin before he made his summation. Our position was that the United States in its historical development was somewhat unique, due to the contradiction of slavery and the post-Civil War freedom conflicts. The Black man had paid for his freedoom with his blood, playing a decisive part in winning the war. Naturally, we did not expect Bukharin to go into the details of the Negro's struggles—only that he deepen and expand upon the subject. After considerable discussion, the correctness of

our position was admitted and an agreement was reached to include the matter as we saw it in the summary.

I was impressed by the manner in which Jim Ford handled himself at that discussion. Ford was an American Negro, born in Alabama in 1893. He lived and worked for the liberation of Negroes from jimcrow restrictions and the achievement of their constitutional and human rights. He worked also for the deliverance of mankind from the tyranny of economic overlords who had appropriated the natural resources of the world, whose wars were fought to redivide the world's wealth, and who threatened the very existence of the Black peoples. Jim Ford was a dedicated man.

Trips abroad to attend international conferences were also part of the broad education I and my fellow-students were receiving at KUTVA. Another gathering that I attended was the Second Congress of the Anti-Imperialist League, which met in Germany in July 1929. I was nominated to go by my class.

But before I left for Western Europe, I embarked on my second marriage. At one of the school's social affairs I had met Vera Gorohovskaya. A most attractive and cultured woman, she spoke several languages, among them English. After our first meeting, we began to see each other regularly. Her home was in Leningrad but she was spending her summer vacation with an aunt in Moscow. After a brief courtship, we decided to get married. (We were to have two daughters, both of whom now reside in Leningrad. The elder, Lola, is now an engineer and the mother of six children; the younger, Anna, is a newspaper correspondent for Tass.)

Vera and I were amicably divorced several years later. She thought it would be harmful to my work if she came back to the United States to live with me—considering the rampant racism here. We remained good friends, however, and my love for the children never waned.

At that time, in 1928, two events were being organized: one was the second Congress of the League Against Imperialism that I have referred to; the second was the First International Negro Workers Congress. The proposal to hold the latter meeting had been raised by Ford, who had organized an office for the International Negro Workers Trade Union Committee in Hamburg, Germany, from which he had begun to make contacts with Negro workers in all parts of the world.

Working together with Ford was George Padmore, a British West Indian freedom fighter who had joined the American Communist Party while studying at Howard University. The Negro Worker, a trade union publication organized by Ford and edited by Padmore, had its office in Hamburg. At that time no fixed date or place had been determined for the International Negro Workers Congress. But it was obvious that both the League Against Imperialism and the trade union congress would deal first and foremost with the growth of fascism. Above all, the Communists would place the question of fascism and the dangers of war before the people with all their ability.

James Ford and I left the Soviet Union together for Frankfort-on-Main, Germany, near the end of July. We went as observers to the Second Congress of the League Against Imperialism, hoping and expecting to speak with as many delegates as possible and, above all, to talk with the Black delegates from Africa and the Americas, North and South. Obviously, as participants in a Congress described as antiimperialist, we wanted to meet with the other delegates and specifically discuss the economic needs of each country.

The New York Times (July 22,1929) reported that nearly 400 delegates from the oppressed peoples of all lands attended the Congress. Among them there was the Negro leader William Pickens of New York and several other Americans. Pickens was destined to become one of the leaders of the NAACP. A brilliant speaker, he was a graduate of Yale University, among the top ten of his class. He had won the Ten Eyck Prize. In the United States he was regarded as a militant and ardent fighter for the rights of Negroes.

Ford and I made every effort to contact Pickens, but he studiously avoided us. This seemed strange to me, since he had been speaking about the horrors of racism in the United States. But, as I discovered later, he had also spoken against the Communists. Pickens addressed the Congress in German and left almost immediately without exchanging a word with his colored brothers.

While not a delegate, Ford was able to get the floor and deliver a splendid anti-war, anti-imperialist statement. He and I had the opportunity of talking with a number of Africans. We spoke of the forthcoming First International Congress of Negro Workers. We were now more than ever certain that a gathering of Black men from all parts of the world was necessary if a united anti-imperialist position was to be taken. Mindful of Pickens' anti-communist

attitude we felt that a consistent anti-imperialist position could not be taken by one who was anti-Soviet or anti-communist.

What was demanded was an objective appraisal of history. The peoples of the Tsarist Empire had won a monumental socialist revolution and civil war. During the civil war period they had fought heroically against the interventionist troops of the erstwhile allies of Russia—England, the United States, France and others. They had called for peace among the peoples of the world; they had demonstrated their courage and self-sacrifice and their respect for oppressed mankind. They had established the first fortress of a new world. Like it or not, there it stood, the first socialist state in the world, a rallying point for the progressive forces of mankind.

As my return to the United States approached, I began to evaluate many aspects of the socialist country in which I had had the good fortune to study, to travel, to learn, to participate in the anti-fascist struggle. The peoples of the USSR were faced with a mountain of problems in the building of a socialist society. The tsar had bequeathed them a heritage of poverty, ignorance, medieval farming techniques, racial and national prejudice. In addition, World War I, the international enemies of the Revolution, and the defeated counterrevolution had wrought wide devastation. Millions of families were homeless, tens of thousands of orphaned children wandered across the land, stealing to live.

It is difficult to convey the impact of a place like Moscow in 1927, particularly on a Negro. Just the strangeness of the city—the architecture, the foods, the clothes, the customs. The quiet darkness of the streets at night. There was nothing to compare with the massive explosion of neon signs in New York, the sidewalk pitchmen, the blaring music, the flags and bands of our hard-sell society, the general Main Street hysteria—nor the river of autos, taxicabs and trucks that fill our own downtown streets with the roar of a giant waterfall.

The second impact, if one is an American Negro, comes in the discovery that there is no racial tension in the air. One looks at, talks to, works with white men and women and youth as an equal. It is as if one had suffered with a painful affliction for many years and had suddenly awakened to discover the pain had gone. The Russians seemed to give a man's skin coloration only a descriptive value, looking immediately past this attribute to the significant human differences of character, mind and heart.

I saw the people of the USSR facing up to the tasks of removing the ruins of the old and building the new. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, an awe-inspiring creative explosion was under way, touching every aspect of life. From their western borders to the Pacific, the people were mobilized to solve their tremendous problems.

There were four jobs waiting for every available worker. Yes, there were homeless children but homes and work and educational camps were being built for them and they were becoming citizens of their motherland. Here was a people who had found a way to throw the fantastic power of their collective strength into solving the basic problems of living. In the process, the participants were remaking themselves; learning to think and work collectively—for the benefit of all. The remnants of racism and religious bigotry of tsarism was being fought tooth and nail.

I had seen a new man in the making and I liked what I had seen.

WE TURNED THIS UPSIDE-DOWN COUNTRY RIGHT SIDE UP

From *Hands on the Freedom Plow* by Joann Christian Mants, 2010 (*Link to Original*)

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was a grassroots organization that mobilized young people and students in the struggle against segregation and to build Black political power in the South. In Albany, Georgia, SNCC, alongside the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), launched the Albany Movement to desegregate the entire city including bus stations, lunch counters, libraries, and other public facilities. In this chapter, Joann Christian Mants reflects on joining the movement as a teenager, highlighting the bravery of local organizers and the experiences of police brutality, including repeated arrests and time in solitary confinement.

WHEN SNCC CAME TO ALBANY

Every generation has its race to run. We were reared with a calling, in the way that preachers are called. I do believe our commitment to the uplift of our community is our calling; it is part of what we must do. When I was growing up, our grandmothers and grandfathers, our mothers and fathers established criteria for how we were to be, showing us by example in the way they carried themselves. They were very proud people, working for themselves, insisting on ownership of things, on workmanship of things. I saw in them a strength that I think I have inherited. As I look back over the years, I see that the older folk, who were more conservative than the young activists, were radical in their own way—radical to the point of not allowing others to take away their dignity.

I became interested in the Movement long before the SNCC workers came to Southwest Georgia. When I was only eight years old, I followed the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, on the news, watching on a black- and-white television. I saw what was happening there, but I did not quite understand what I saw or what courage it took to take part in those events. But I knew that something was wrong. On the news I continued to hear the words "Freedom Riders . . . Freedom Riders." The only thought that came to my mind each time I heard those words was "I wish those Freedom Riders would come to Albany, Georgia." There were wrongs that existed in Albany, and we needed those wrongs righted. I watched the news religiously, every day, just to see what was happening throughout this country and wishing that the Freedom Riders would hurry up and come to Albany, Georgia.

In the 1950s and 1960s people walked everywhere. One day in 1961, while walking toward downtown Albany with my sister, Lavetta (whom we called "Dear")—I remember it being a sunny, fall evening—I saw Charles Sherrod and Cordell Reagon near the old Trailways bus station. They were crossing Oglethorpe, the dividing line between the white business section of Albany and the black business community. I remember Sherrod and Cordell saying to us with a smile, "Don't forget to come to the mass meeting." I remember that someone had whispered to me, "Those are some of those Freedom Riders," and that they had come to Albany. I thought, The Freedom Riders are here! I felt my prayers had been answered, not understanding that this would be the beginning of a new lifestyle for me and my family and friends. When Sherrod and Cordell came to Albany, I was in the ninth grade, my last year of junior high school. Therefore, I was not sure what I expected from them; however, I knew I was just happy they had made it to Albany. We were going to be free, because the Freedom Riders had come.

The day after my sister and I saw them on the street, they came to my school (then called Carver Junior High School, now Monroe High School), asking students on campus to come to the mass meeting at Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church, which was only one block from the school. I was afraid to go without permission from my mama or my daddy, because we could not tarry after school. So I went home and asked my daddy if I could go to the mass meeting, and he said, "Yes, Sugar." I went to the meeting and thought it was the best thing that had ever happened in my life. I felt that freedom was just right over the hill, not understanding that the cost would

be great and the time would be long.

After that mass meeting, my sister and I would leave school every day and go by the office to see what people had to say, to hear the plans, all the details. We worked in the Movement! The first SNCC office was in the black downtown, called Harlem. At that time it was strange to see the white SNCC folks in Harlem. White people from Albany almost never came to Harlem except to pick up their maids. Seeing people of both races interacting in a friendly and equal way was so unusual that white Albany residents driving by would almost have accidents. Besides, these white SNCC folks walking around with long hair and sandals were a strange sight to southerners. All this was new to my sister and me, too. Sitting around the office and just listening to what everyone was saying was an entirely new experience to us as well.

I remember SNCC workers Charles Jones, Bill Hansen, Charles Sherrod, Cordell Reagon, and others just sitting around and discussing the issues of the day—how would they deal with a particular situation, and what would be the consequences of their actions? My sister and I sort of huddled behind the older SNCC folks, and they sort of patted us on the head as though they thought we were very cute. I was fourteen years old. I kept thinking, This is something else. We are going to be free. I was not sure where I would fit in, what my niche would be, but I knew I would do something. I didn't understand all their words and language then. I was naïve and just wanting to be free, wanting all of us to be free. I continued to listen. I learned a great deal about these strange, new-thinking, new-talking, and new-acting SNCC folk. I continued to listen. Eventually I was able to understand them; some of their ideas became my ideas, and then I was able to create some of my own new ideas and concepts.

This was the summer of 1961. Along came the autumn. Mass meetings were happening weekly, mostly at the Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church and the Mt. Zion Baptist Church. Any time you heard the words mass meeting you would know that meeting would be held at one of these churches. All summer long we had heard many of our local community leaders speak about the injustices that existed in Albany and that plans were being made to find ways to correct these injustices.

After much discussion with the all-white members of the local government and our local leaders—since no agreement had been

reached—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and workers from SCLC were asked to come to Albany to bring up a greater awareness. Dr. King came, but the local authorities still refused to agree to any of the concerns of the local leaders, so the black community was forced to follow through on their plans to march through the streets of Albany.

Those of us who attended the mass meeting were asked to commit to marching—and most people agreed. I agreed, but I knew I had to go through my parents before I could make such a move. I finally got enough nerve to go home and ask my father and mother if I could march with the Freedom Riders. I had heard those Freedom Riders say that we might go to jail, but for some reason the consequences did not register with me. So I still asked Daddy if I could march. He said, "Yeah, Sugar. Lead the line." I believe he said that just to get me out of his way.

THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ME

The next day we met at the church (I think it was Shiloh) and prepared to march. The mass meeting was very high in spirit, and the sun was just about to set. Dr. King presented one of his soul-elevating speeches, and we were ready to face dangers seen and unseen. We were asked to line up and given some additional instructions about what might happen, but we were so ready to move that we would allow nothing to get in our way, not even the threat of jail. I believe I was number six in line—just following my father's instructions—and marching right behind Dr. King. We marched off to downtown Albany and were met by the Albany police. We were told to dismiss or go to jail. No one moved. And off to jail we went.

Mama said that when she saw the news that night, she saw me pass by with all the people who'd been arrested. She didn't know what to say. She knew Daddy would be coming home and he'd count heads. If he didn't see one of us, he'd be really upset. When he came in, they were all sitting by the fire, hoping he would not ask about me, but of course he asked, "Where's Joe [my nickname]?"

Mama said, "She didn't come home." That got him sort of upset, so Mama told him, "I think she's in jail." He said, "She's in jail?" "Yeah, I saw her on TV."

I later found out that he called all of our family about my being in jail. It was the talk of the family. It was degrading for anyone to go

to jail during my early life, and every effort was made to avoid this, but this time jail became almost a badge of honor, because it was related to something that, hopefully, would be for the betterment of all.

I had the pleasure of being carted off to the jail in Camilla, about twenty miles from Albany. The night of our arrest it was estimated that seven hundred people were arrested.

That night in jail was something! It was strange, frightening, funny, and enlightening—all at the same time. People who had never prayed before, prayed. The police harassed us all night long, beating on the doors, threatening us with death. We did not know what to do. That first arrest they packed about sixty-five of us young women into a jail cell made for six people. We had to figure out a way to stay there and coexist. Half the night we told stories, sang songs, and prayed prayers. They shut off the lights, so we couldn't see what was going on or who was in there with us. But God is good; light from the streetlights came through the windows, giving us just enough light to function, and we had a full moon that reflected its light as well. We refused to surrender our dignity for a prison light. We stayed in Camilla County jail overnight and survived. That arrest freed me from a lot of fears, and I knew this would be the beginning of a new me.

The next evening, just before sunset, they loaded us back on the buses and headed us back to Albany. President Kennedy had called the Albany government officials and insisted that we be released. Albany officials said we'd all be considered juvenile delinquents, so they marched us to court and gave us all a record before they released us. When I got out, it was so nice, because Mama gave me five candy bars! I thought, I need to go to jail all the time! Since we had not eaten at all that entire day, I ate all the candy bars at once. I always remember getting this treat of Butternut candy bars and how they tasted so good.

Marches in Albany were happening almost daily. By the time I was sixteen, I had been in jail seventeen times. My sister Dear, who was two years younger than me, and my cousin Maretta, whom we called Deake and who was a year older, usually went right along with me. The most difficult arrest and jail experience happened after I went on a summer 1963 march organized by SNCC field secretary Willie Ricks. Jean Wheeler, from SNCC, was in the line, too. The Albany authorities had told the Movement that we could

not congregate in groups of more than three people, but we marched anyway. At city hall, when we informed the chief of police that we wanted to pray, he told us we were under arrest.

So we all began to lie down and go limp, and the police started to drag us down an alley. We soon named this alley Freedom Alley, because that's the route on which we freedom workers were always taken when we were arrested. There were rocks and broken glass all up and down the alley. Everyone who refused to walk into the jail was dragged over rocks and broken glass and then up several steps. We were asked to get up. Some got up, but I did not. I made them drag me all the way down the alley and then up the steps. My back hit each step, one by one, as they bumped me over them.

When they got me inside, they threw me into a corner. Faith Holsaert of SNCC had been arrested on an earlier day, so she was in jail before we got there. Faith was on the other side of the jail, because they couldn't put "the little white girls" in with us. I remember hearing Faith's voice from the jailhouse as I lay there on the floor of the jail. I hollered something to her.

I continued to sit in the corner, where I sat trying to put my shoes and socks back on. Somehow, my continuing to sit angered two of the policemen so much they punched and slapped and kicked me. And I punched back. They threatened to kill me. They said, "Get up, you black bitch!" I didn't. I continued to sit in the corner on the floor, tying my shoe strings and trying to get myself together. They said, "We'll kill you, you black bitch. You'll see!" I said, "You'll just have to do that, because I will not move." Then they crushed me behind the door, pulled me around by my hair and tried to snatch the rest of my clothes off. One policeman just stood on my legs. Imagine a man who weighs in excess of 230 pounds standing on the legs of a sixteen-year-old! But, through the help of God and a punch to the most sensitive spot on a man, I was able to get him off my legs. He spent two weeks in the hospital, as the sheriff in Camilla angrily told me near the end of my time in jail.

They finally pulled me up to a standing position. Because I had been arrested so many times before, the police went past the booking area, telling the clerk there, "You don't have to book her; we already have all the information we need on her."

We were usually grouped by race and age, but first they threw me into the white-only holding cell. This was the area where Faith was being held. I couldn't see her. I later learned she had been

patted down by several policemen, who isolated and surrounded her. I kept calling her name, and she would speak to me. What the police had done to me upset Ralph Allen, another SNCC worker who had been jailed, so much that he started shaking the bars and yelling. I think he was saying, "Leave her alone!" I thought he would injure himself, so I had to keep telling him, "I am fine. I'll be all right." He was yelling and screaming, and Faith was, too.

I heard the police and the detectives talking, saying, "Keep this one separate from the others." Then instead of putting me in with the girls under eighteen, they put me in the cell with SNCC worker Jean Wheeler, a college student. Albany chief of police Laurie Pritchett refused to keep his jail full of Freedom Riders, so he would send us off to the surrounding county jails. Therefore, I was carried off to the Camilla jail again, where they always held us juveniles, leaving Jean and the others in jail in Albany.

I was transported to Camilla in a police car, alone with the two policemen who had earlier threatened to kill me. We trailed the paddy wagon with all the other students. The police talked about me all the way to Camilla. They talked about how they would kill me. The talk was not just one-sided, though. We had a nice conversation.

When we arrived in Camilla, they put all the young ladies except me in the cell downstairs, and I was placed into what is called the holding cell and then upstairs into solitary confinement. They told me that I was on death row. I figured, "If you gotta go, you gotta go."

I think that a lot of the events I have forgotten I forgot because they were just too destructive. I haven't thought or spoken about when I was in solitary in a long time. I remember there were no lights, no mattress. There was a toilet, a sink, and two bunk beds made of steel, with holes as large as an orange throughout the base. I stayed there for two weeks.

While in this solitary confinement I was offered all sorts of foods—foods different from what the other young women received. I would be given large offerings of rice, fried chicken, greens, peas, but I wouldn't eat any of it. I'd just politely flush it down the toilet. The jailer and the local sheriff said, "If you don't start to eat, you black son of a bitch, we're going to kill you." I said, "I'm going to die one way or the other, so you might as well kill me." I can remember the black trusty in the jail begging me to eat. I refused. I knew he'd been told to tell me that.

Some days later, my younger sister Dear, who was fourteen at the time, and my cousin Deake, who was about seventeen, were arrested. Anybody with the last name of Christian was separated from the rest of the population. Both were put in solitary cells across from me. I could not see out, except there was this little peek hole at the bottom of the door that you could kick out, kneel down, and peek around. I could see Dear peeking out, and I could see my cousin. We would yell to each other, back and forth. We tried to stay in contact with each other as much as possible, but then the jailer covered the hole.

We were harassed throughout the night. Through the doors we could hear threats such as, "We're gonna kill all them Christian bitches." Our thoughts were, If you've gotta go, you've gotta go. Years later I learned that Dear had been touched inappropriately by one of the jailers.

To further intimidate me, they let my sister and cousin go after they'd been there a week. They also would not allow my mama or my daddy to come see me. Finally my daddy went to see the judge and told him, "I am going today. I've had enough of this. I will see her. I will be there in twenty minutes." That day Mama and Daddy were allowed inside the jailhouse; however, they weren't allowed to come to the jail cell. I was led down from the cell to the jailhouse kitchen. We talked for about thirty minutes, and I was allowed to receive some personal items. Mama was able to get everything I needed past the jailer, even those favorite candy bars. My mama and daddy left, satisfied that I was okay, just a little weak from not eating. I did not tell them of the threats, because it would only cause them more worry.

While in solitary I was threatened every day. One day the police put this huge, vicious black German shepherd in the cell with me. I guess I was supposed to scream and yell, but I didn't. In fact, what I did was to turn over like I was going back to sleep. God Almighty must have shut that dog's mouth. He came over to me, sniffed me here and there, and turned around. Didn't do anything to me.

Every day someone would come up to get me to eat. They came with an apple pie, baked specially for me. I politely flushed it down the toilet in the presence of the jailer. They probably thought I would die, because I wouldn't eat anything. But I knew that the young ladies down in the cell below were only offered jailhouse beans. How could I accept anything any different?

About a week into my stay, attorney C. B. King and Dennis

Roberts, a young white law student who had volunteered to come south to work as King's law clerk, came to visit me about sundown. I was just about to go to sleep when I heard the jailer's keys in the door. I didn't know what was about to happen to me this time, so, of course, when I saw them my heart leapt for joy. C. B. sat on the toilet seat and Dennis sat on the steel bunk. The jailer stood in the door, with the dog. To help C. B. I had kept notes in a journal every day of all the things that the police and jailers had said and done to me, so I had written things like "Monday: Officer Such and Such . . ." I had written down what he had said and what I had said. Through the window, I could see the time on the bank clock and I could hear the church bells, so I would write down all the things they did and the date and time. I gave C. B. my notes.

This angered the jailer so much, he said something very derogatory. Dennis respectfully asked, "Attorney King, want me to write that down?" C. B. just looked at Dennis like, Here we all are in this jail, and you are asking me, a black man, if I want you, a white man, to take that down? Boy, you'd better shut up; we're already in enough trouble!

C. B. was very impressed with my note taking. It made his job of information gathering easier. We thought we should encourage everyone who was jailed to keep a journal. Before they left they took my notes and gave me some more paper. After they left I felt a test was coming, and I was right. Several days later the Klan surrounded the jail. I was the only one left in there, so they were there because of me—a little sixteen-year-old girl.

Finally the officers came and took me back to Albany, where local juvenile probation officers talked to me without a parent or lawyer present. There, as at the Camilla jail, they told me that I was being held responsible for punching the police officer. Because of this, they said, I would have a record and would be picked up and taken to some juvenile detention center at a later date.

"HOME OF THE BRAVE"

It was just about sundown. I was leaving downtown Albany after the interview and had to pass Shiloh Baptist Church on my way home. The SNCC workers—or "outside agitators," as the white southerners liked to call them—were all in the church seeking sanctuary, because there had been a massive sweep and arrests

of all the civil rights workers. My daddy, James Christian, and my cousin, Monroe Gaines, were sitting at the back door of the church, under a spotlight, with their guns across their laps. Daddy said, "You go on home, Sugar. You can't stay here tonight."

I had just spent two weeks of constant harassment, no food, no mattress, and now I had to observe my father and cousin sitting with guns, trying to protect the lives of students and others. As I rode off I could see them sitting on the steps of Shiloh, sitting under the light. Both of them had worked all day but planned to spend the rest of the night guarding the church, because the Klan had been circling the church at night. I thought to myself, Oh, what a country; land of the free, home of the brave. My father and cousin are truly "the brave."

Daddy also told me the Klan had gathered for a rally over across Slappey Drive in a cow pasture where the old Slappey Dairy had once stood. It was about seven blocks from where we and our cousins lived on Holloway Avenue. People who lived near the dairy site told my father and cousin that the Klan had called our family names over their microphone, saying they would get us. I hadn't realized all these things were happening while I was in jail. Daddy didn't want me to worry. But Albany was just about at a point of insurrection, or an explosion, one.

THE MOVEMENT PROSECUTED

The Albany Movement was prosecuted by the federal government starting in the summer of 1963. My sister James Zenna, who was nine, and I were subpoenaed by both sides to testify in Macon. We had a good old time. They kept me on the stand for two solid days, trying to get something on the Movement. They would ask me a question, and I would play with them: "Well, your honor, you know, I went to these segregated schools and I don't understand all these words you're using." The judge and the lawyers would have to take forever, explaining.

When James Zenna took the stand, she was so little, you couldn't see anything but the top of her head until they put some phone books under her. Mama had sewn her a pretty dress in that fabric with the little holes in it and a lining underneath. She had a big bow in her hair. The government was saying Joni Rabinowitz had been at this particular demonstration and that James Zenna was holding Joni's hand. We all knew that it was Joyce Barrett

at the demonstration, not Joni. The government kept nine-year-old James Zenna on that stand for two hours, trying to get her to change her story. James Zenna was something else. She talked in this certain, precise way. They couldn't shake her: two hours and a nine-year-old. That was James. She didn't change her story.

Since both sides had subpoenaed us, both sides had to pay us a stipend. We took the money and bought our lunches, then took the rest home and gave it to Mama. After all this, the charges against the Movement were dropped.

INTEGRATING ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL

After the demonstrations were over and most of the civil rights workers had left, we continued to push for our rights. In my senior year (1964–1965) I attended formerly all-white Albany High School with several other black students: Mamie Nell Ford, Eddie Maude McKenzie, Shirley Lawrence, Ruby Nell Singleton, and Annette Powell. It was the worst year of my life.

Our registration—at the board of education instead of at the school— was separate from that of the white students. While we were registering, the principal publicly referred to us as "monkeys." I looked him in the eye and smiled and said, "First day of school, we'll be there." After we registered we went over to Albany High to get our schedules. When we walked on campus, it was like the Red Sea parting—everybody moving back from us. I said to myself, "Lord, the power that we have." The administration had spread us out so that we were each in different classes. To take us to school we had one whole bus—just the six of us. Another Albany High School bus drove right past my house, but we were so special, we couldn't ride with those white students. It took all of my strength to finish that year.

At lunch, when we stood in line, we were spat upon. Seeing how we were treated, all the black women who worked in the cafeteria would give us great heaping plates, saying, "Take another one. Help yourself." We organized ourselves: I would sit at one table; Mamie Nell would sit at another table; Eddie Maude at another, and so on. Since the white students refused to sit with us, we would have many of the tables in that cafeteria. We did that every day for the entire school year. We wore their tails out. They never sat with us. Never. The entire year.

We joined the glee club and sang those white southern glee club songs. Whenever we performed, the white members had to stand very close to us for the songs to sound right. This made them very uncomfortable and made me laugh. Once, one of the biggest football players took pennies and threw them at me, a gesture meaning "Dance, nigger, dance." I turned on him and knocked him straight through the window that was in the hallway near the cafeteria. The administration called me in and said, "We don't fight over here." I said, "I'm over here and I fight. If anyone ever pitches pennies at me again, you know what I'll do." I didn't have any more problems with anybody pitching pennies.

They would have pep rallies at the school in the morning before classes started. If we went and sat in the middle of the crowd, the other students would scatter. We also went to the football games. Our Rev. Samuel Wells, a staunch Albany Movement activist, would take us to every game and sit in the bleachers with us, bless his heart. While we watched the game, people threw liquor, firecrackers, sodas, everything—you name it—at us. Reverend Wells sat through it all with us. We would leave early, before the crowd broke up, to avoid being trapped in the parking lot. We went to every game in town. Every game.

One young white woman became very good friends with Mamie Nell. She would slip away from home and visit Mamie Nell. Somebody saw them together and reported it to the school. The young woman had had a 4.0 grade average her entire high school career, but in the last semester of her senior year, they gave her a 3.5. Her friends had ostracized her. Even her family was criticized. She was expelled from the honor society and put out of the theater club. She lost her scholarships to college. This young white woman was bold, and brave, too. She would call me and we would talk. I told her she had to take care of herself. Do what she had to do to heal herself. She wrote in my yearbook: "No one picks my friends for me."

I saw her sometime later. She asked, "Joann, do you remember me?" I said, "Yes, I remember you." She said, "We had some hard times, didn't we?"

I remember walking out of that school that last day. Charles Sherrod and somebody else came to get me. I was so weak from the hardships of that year, I couldn't walk. They had to hold me up and

help me walk. It had been a fight every day of the year: teachers, administrators, students. My grades were ruined, but I still earned a scholarship to Franconia College in New Hampshire. There I found myself surrounded by rich kids, extremely rich kids, without much on their minds. It was a lifestyle I wasn't comfortable with, so I came back and finished my bachelor's degree at Albany State.

REFLECTIONS ON THE ALBANY MOVEMENT

When I look at the successes that occurred in Birmingham, in Selma, and all over this country, I realize that Albany, Georgia, was the testing ground that gave rise to a number of other movement challenges throughout this country. Some people have said that the Movement failed in Southwest Georgia, but no movement can fail when you can get people to realize and understand that they will not be "slaves" anymore. The story of the struggle has to be saved, kept from being lost, protected and taken care of, by us—the ones who lived it and the ones who will live it. Not by strangers.

There were so many of us young women in everything the Albany Movement did. The women were the leaning posts that everyone depended on. We were the strength of the Albany Movement. We grew up fast in those days. At that time black children didn't have an opportunity to be children. There were too many things we had to take care of.

Being the oldest, I felt grown at an early age. Faith says I had a saying about myself that summer: "Nobody bosses this black woman except my mother, Dessie Mae Christian. Nobody." When I think about my father guarding the church, about Dear and me in jail, my mother going to jail at different times, my sister James Zenna, and even my six-year-old baby sister, Loris, I think the calling was a family thing. When one person got involved, it took everybody else along. I went to jail first, but my entire family soon joined the Movement. One time, Faith and I ended up at home with all the babies from two households, because the mamas and the other older sisters were in jail. In the morning we had to plait everybody's hair and feed them—it was a mess! We had all the babies except Peaches Gaines, who was in jail with her mother and my mother. Peaches was jailed because she had not obeyed an officer. She was about two. Her bond was set at, I believe, $125.00.

As I look back I see that the commitment is there, wherever

I might live. It is a continuous thing, not just for Albany, Georgia. The Movement continues wherever you find yourself. Over thirty years ago I moved to Lowndes County, Alabama, with my husband and three children. When my husband was elected to the county commission after the first black commissioner was shot, I feared for his safety. I feared for my whole family's safety. I still have those old quirks: I look out of both sides of my face so that I can see what's coming from either side. We still part from one another in certain ways, still sit in a certain way, still listen for beeps on the phone. Some things are starting to come along in the county, none without a struggle. The struggle continues, and we will win with patience, perseverance, commitment, and concern, fighting fires one at a time.

I try not to think about some of the horrible things that happened to me in the Movement. I have never shared some of them with my own children, because these incidents are just too destructive. My husband and I didn't want our children to become bitter because of the things that have been done to us. Although they are already adults and we want the calling to continue with them, I believe that when they are more mature, they will be better able to handle these kinds of racial realities. We cannot fight the fires of today without understanding where we have come from.

Reverend Wells had a saying: "We had no army, no navy, no marines, and no air force, just a group of concerned, committed young folks, and yet we turned this country right side up. It was already upside-down; we turned this country right side up."

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Joann Christian married Bob Mants, another SNCC worker. They live in Lowndes - County, Alabama, where they are involved in church activities and have developed after-school educational enrichment programs. For the past twenty years Joann Christian Mants has taught social studies to black and white public junior high and high school students in Selma, Alabama. Her teaching has always been enriched by her experiences in the Movement, which gave her a different perspective in terms of how she taught the social studies curriculum. She and her husband have three children and seven grandchildren.

TOWARDS A THIRD RECONSTRUCTION: LESSONS FOR THE PAST FOR A SOCIALIST FUTURE

By Eugene Puryear, March 17, 2022 (*Link to original*)

Written in 2022, this reading explores the revolutionary potential of the Reconstruction period and the importance in understanding Black liberation as central to broader revolutionary transformation in the U.S. It examines how the dispossession of Black people was foundational to the development of capitalism, and draws critical lessons from the First Reconstruction (1865–1877), the Second Reconstruction (1950s–1970s), and what these reveal about the need for a Third Reconstruction today. Through a study of these struggles, from the lessons, betrayals, and advancements, the text highlights the enduring struggle for liberation and the necessity of a complete restructuring of US society.

"The price…of slavery and civil war was the necessity of quickly assimilating into American democracy a mass of laborers…in whose hands alone for the moment lay the power of preserving the ideals of popular government…and establishing upon it an industry primarily for the profit of the workers. It was this price which in the end America refused to pay and today suffers for that refusal" [1]. – W.E.B. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America

INTRODUCTION

Karl Marx wrote to Lincoln in 1864 that he was sure that the "American anti-slavery war" would initiate a "new era of ascendancy"

for the working classes for the "rescue...and reconstruction of a social world" [2]. The Black historian Lerone Bennett, writing 100 years later, called Reconstruction, "the most improbable social revolution in American history" [3]

Clothed in the rhetoric and incubated within the structure of "American Democracy," it was nonetheless crushed, drowned in blood, for being far too radical for the actual "American democracy." While allowing for profit to be made, Reconstruction governments made a claim on the proceeds of commerce for the general welfare. While not shunning wage labor, they demanded fairness in compensation and contracts. Reconstruction demanded the posse and the lynch mob be replaced with juries and the rule of law. This all occurred during a time when the newly minted "great fortunes" brooked no social contract, sought only to degrade labor, and were determined to meet popular discontent with the rope and the gun where the courts or the stuffed ballot box wouldn't suffice.

The defeat of Reconstruction was the precondition for the ascension of U.S. imperialism. The relevant democratic Reconstruction legislation was seen by elites as "class legislation" and as antithetical to the elites' needs. The proletarian base of Reconstruction made it into a dangerous potential base for communism, especially as ruling-class fears flared in the wake of the Paris Commune, where the workers of Paris briefly seized power in 1871. The distinguished service of Blacks at all levels of government undermined the gradations of bigotry essential to class construction in the United States.

Reconstruction thus lays bare the relationship between Black freedom and revolution. It helps us situate the particular relationship between national oppression and class struggle that is the key to any real revolutionary strategy for change today.

THE NEW WORLD

Like the Paris Commune, the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union, Vietnam and Mozambique, the Reconstruction governments were confronted by the scars of brutal war and long-standing legacies of underdevelopment. They faced tremendous hostility from the local ruling elites and the remnants of their formerly total rule, and were without powerful or terribly well-organized allies outside of the South.

With the status quo shattered, Reconstruction could only proceed in a dramatically altered social environment. Plantation rule had been parochial, with power concentrated in the localized despotisms of the forced labor camps, with generalized low taxes, poor schools, and primitive social provisions.

Reconstruction answered:

> *"Public schools, hospitals, penitentiaries, and asylum for orphans and the insane were established for the first time or received increased funding. South Carolina funded medical care for poor citizens, and Alabama provided free legal counsel for indigent defendants. The law altered relations within the family, widening the grounds for divorce, expanding the property rights for married women, protecting minors from parental abuse… Nashville expanded its medical facilities and provided bread, soup, and firewood to the poor. Petersburg created a thriving school system, regulated hack rates, repaved the streets, and established a Board of Health that provided free medical care in the smallpox epidemic of 1873" [4].*

And further:

> *"Throughout Reconstruction, planters complained it was impossible to obtain convictions in cases of theft and that in contract disputes, 'justice is generally administered solely in the interest of the laborer…' Equally significant was the regularity with which lawmakers turned down proposals to reinforce labor discipline" [5].*

South Carolina disallowed garnishing wages to settle debts, Florida regulated the payment of farm hands, and the Mississippi legislature instructed local officials to construe the law "for the protection and encouragement of labor." All across the South, former slaves assessed the taxable property of their former owners; state after state protected the upcountry farmer from debt, exempting his tools, personal property, and horse and plow from the usurers. In Alabama, personal property tools and livestock were exempt and a Republican newspaper declared that "a man who has nothing should pay no tax" [6].

The school-building push resulted in a serious expansion of public education:

> *"A Northern correspondent in 1873 found adults as well as children crowding Vicksburg schools and reported that "female negro servants make it a condition before accepting a situation, that they should have permission to attend the night-schools." Whites, too, increasingly took advantage of the new educational opportunities. Texas had 1,500 schools by 1872 with a majority of the state's children attending classes. In Mississippi, Florida, and South Carolina, enrollment grew steadily until by 1875 it accounted for about half the children of both races" [7].*

Georgia, which had no public school system at all before the war, had 1,735 schools by 1874. The first public school law in Georgia was passed on the 100-year anniversary, to the day, of Georgia's slave-era law making it a crime to teach Blacks to read and write [8]. In South Carolina, in 1868, 30,000 students attended four hundred schools. By 1876, 123,035 were attending 2,776 schools, one-third of all teachers were Black [9].

The source of this social vision was the most solid base of Reconstruction: the Black workers, farmers, and farmhands. Within the Black population there grew a few men of wealth and the pre-war "free" population provided notable and standout leaders. However, at the end of the day, Black was essentially synonymous with "proletarian."

Black political power made itself felt all over the South in perhaps the most profound cultural turnaround in U.S. history. Blacks—who just a few years previously had, in the words of the Supreme Court, "no rights" that a white man "was bound to respect"—now not only had rights, but exercised power, literally and metaphorically, over their former masters.

The loss of a monopoly on the positions of power vested in either local government or local appointments to state and federal positions was deeply intolerable to elite opinion, alarming them "even more than their loss of statewide control" [11]. In 1900, looking back, a North Carolina Congressman, highlighted Black participation in local government as the "worst feature" of Reconstruction, because Blacks "filled the offices which the best men

of the state had filled. He was sheriff, deputy sheriff, justice of the peace…constable, county commissioner" [12]. One Charlestonian admirer of the old regime expressed horror in a letter: "Surely our humiliation has been great when a Black Postmaster is established here at Headquarters and our Gentlemen's Sons to work under his bidding" [13].

This power was exercised over land sales, foreclosures, tax rates, and all civil and minor criminal cases all across the Black Belt. In Mississippi, former slaves had taken control of the Board of Supervisors across the Black Belt and one-third of the Black population lived under the rule of a Black sheriff.

In Beaufort, South Carolina, a center of the Plantation aristocracy, the mayor, police force, and magistrates were all Black by 1873. Bolivar County Mississippi and St. John the Baptist Parish in Louisiana were under total Black control, and Little Rock's City Council had an on and off Black majority [14].

Vicksburg and New Orleans gave Black officers command of white policemen while Tallahassee and Little Rock had Black police chiefs. Sixty Blacks across the South served as militia officers as well. Integrated juries also appeared across the South; one white lawyer said it was the "severest blow" he had ever felt to have to address Blacks as "gentlemen of the jury" [15].

In South Carolina, Blacks had a majority of the House of Representatives and controlled its key committees. There was a Black majority in the Senate, the Lt. Governor and Secretary of State were Black throughout Reconstruction, and Blacks served as Land Commissioner, on the Supreme Court, and as Treasurer and Speaker of the House [16]. Scottish journalist Robert Somers said the South Carolina statehouse was "a Proletarian Parliament the like of which could not be produced under the widest suffrage in any part of the world" [17].

In Mississippi, throughout Reconstruction about 20% of the State Senate was Black as were 35% of the State House of Representatives [18]. Two Black men served as Speaker of the House, including Isaac Shadd, a militant abolitionist who helped plan John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry. Mississippi sent two men to the U.S. Senate, the only Blacks to serve during Reconstruction in that body. Sixteen Blacks from the South served in the U.S.

Congress.

In Louisiana, a Black man was the governor for a brief period and the treasurer and the secretary of education for a much longer time. Florida's superintendent of education was also Black, along with the Secretary of State.

One Northern observer touring South Carolina summed up the general upending of the social order noting there was "an air of mastery among the colored people." They further noted that whites were "wholly reserved and reticent" [19].

The source of Black power in the South was not simply the passive presence of large Black populations, but their active political organization and mobilization. This took place in a variety of overlapping venues such as the grassroots Republican "Union Leagues," churches, and masonic networks. Newspapers often served as points of political education and influence as well.

> *"By the end of 1867, it seemed, virtually every black voter in the South had enrolled in the Union League or some equivalent local political organization…informal self-defense organizations sprang up around the leagues, and reports of blacks drilling with weapons, sometimes under men with self-appointed 'military titles.' The local leagues' multifaceted activities, however, far transcended electoral politics. Often growing out of the institutions blacks had created in 1865 and 1866, they promoted the building of schools and churches and collected funds 'to see to the sick.' League members drafted petitions protesting the exclusion of blacks from local juries" [20].*

In St. Landry Parish in Louisiana, hundreds of former slaves gathered once a week to hear the newspaper read aloud to get informed on the various political issues of the day. In Georgia, it was said that every American Methodist Episcopal (a predominantly Black denomination) Minister was active in Republican organizing (Hiram Revels, Black Senator from Mississippi was an AME minister). Holland Thompson, a Black power-broker in Montgomery, Alabama, used a political base in the Baptist church as a route to the City Council, where he shepherded into being that city's first public school system [21].

All across the South, it was common during Reconstruction for politics to disrupt labor flows. One August in Richmond, Virginia, all of the city's tobacco factories were closed because so many people in the majority-Black workforce were attending a Republican state convention [22].

Blanche K. Bruce's political career, which would lead to the U.S. Senate, started when he became actively engaged in local Republican political meetings in Mississippi. Ditto for John Lynch, one of the most powerful Black politicians of the Reconstruction era. The New Orleans Tribune was at the center of a radical political movement within the Republican Party that nearly took the governor's office with a program of radical land reform in 1868.

Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina all had "labor conventions"—in 1870 and 1871—where farm workers and artisans came together to press for regulating rents and raising minimum wages, among other issues. Union Leagues were often sites of the organization of strikes and other labor activity.

One white Alabamian noted that, "It is the hardest thing in the world to keep a negro away from the polls…that is the one thing he will do, to vote." A Mississippi plantation manager related that in his part of the state Blacks were "all crazy on politics again…Every tenth negro a candidate for some office." A report from the 1868 elections in Alabama noted the huge Black turnout: "In defiance of fatigue, hardship, hunger, and threats of employers." They stood in the midst of a raging storm, most without shoes, for hours to vote [23].

Republican politics in the South were viable only due to these Black power bases. The composition of these politics required the rudiments of a popular program and a clear commitment to Black political power, and thus a degree of civil equality and a clear expansion of social equality as well. Reconstruction politics disrupted the ability of the ruling classes to exercise social control over the broad mass of poor laborers and farmers.

Republican politics was a living and fighting refutation of white supremacy, in addition to allowing the working classes access to positions of formal power. However outwardly accommodating to capital, the Reconstruction governments represented an impediment to capital's unfettered rule in the South and North.

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF RECONSTRUCTION

In addition to economic devastation, Reconstruction governments faced the same challenges as any new revolutionary regime in that they were beset on all sides by enemies. First and foremost, the Old Southern aristocratic elite semi-boycotted politics, organized a campaign of vicious terrorism, and used their economic influence in the most malign of ways. Secondly, the ravages of war and political turmoil caused Wall Street, the city of London, and Paris Bourse to turn sour on democracy in the South. On top of that, increasingly influential factions of the Republican Party came to agree that reconstructing the South was shackling the party with a corrupt, radical agenda hostile to prosperity.

The Republican coalition rested on a very thin base. While they had the ironclad support of Black voters, only in South Carolina, Louisiana, and Mississippi did Blacks constitute a majority, and even there, Republicans needed some white support to firmly grasp electoral power.

Most of the white Republican leaders were Northerners, with an overrepresentation of Union army veterans seeking economic opportunity after the war. Most entered politics to aid their own economic interests. These would-be capitalists, lacking the economic resources and social connections, sought a political tie and the patronage that came with it, which could become the basis for fortunes. This created a pull towards moderation on a number of economic and social issues that seeded the ground for Reconstruction's ultimate defeat.

The Reconstruction governments had one major problem: revenue. Republican leader John Lynch stated as much about the finances of the state of Mississippi: "money was required. There was none in the treasury. There was no cash available even to pay the ordinary expenses of the State government" [24]. Reconstruction governments sought to address this issue with taxes, bonds, and capitalist boosterism.

Early Reconstruction governments all operated under the belief that, with the right accommodation, they could revive and expand commerce. In particular, the railroad could open the upcountry to the market and encourage the expansion of various forms of manufacture and mineral extraction. A rising tide would

lift all boats, and private capital would provide the investment and employment necessary for the South to prosper. And as such, they showered favors on the railroads in particular:

> *"Every Southern state extended munificent aid to railroad corporations… either in… direct payments… or in the form of general laws authorizing the states endorsement of railroads bonds… County and local governments subscribed directly to railroad stock… from Mobile, which spent $1 million, to tiny Spartanburg, South Carolina, which appropriated $50,000. Republican legislators also chartered scores of banks and manufacturing companies" [25].*

In 1871, Mississippi gave away 2 million acres of land to one railway company [26]. The year before, Florida chartered the Great Southern Railway Co., using $10 million in public money to get it off the ground [27]. State incorporation laws appeared in Southern legal codes for the first time, and governments freely used eminent domain. Their behavior, in the words of one historian, "recapitulated the way Northern law had earlier been transformed to facilitate capitalist development" [28].

Many states also passed a range of laws designed to exempt various business enterprises from taxation to further encourage investment. That investment never showed up, to the degree required at least. Diarist George Templeton Strong noted that the South was "the last place" a "Northern or European capitalist would invest a dollar" due to "social discord" [29].

As investments went, the South seemed less sure than other American opportunities. There were lucrative investment opportunities in the North and West as the Civil War had sparked a massive industrial boom, creating the careers of robber barons like Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller.

The South was scarred by war, generally underdeveloped, and politically unstable from the fierce resistance of white supremacy to the rise of Black power. Major financiers were willing to fund cotton production—which was more of a sure thing—and a handful of new industries, but generally felt the South wasn't much worth the risk. Southern state bonds thus traded at lower values than Northern or Western states, and given the South's dire economic straits, their

supply far outstripped demand for them on the market.

This meant that these investments attracted those "trained in shady finance in Wall St." whose "business was cheating and manipulation," and who were "in some cases already discredited in the centers of finance and driven out…of the North and West" [30].

The old ruling classes grafted themselves onto the new enterprises, using their history and connections to become the board members and agents of many of the companies. Among other things, this meant the new enterprises were controlled by Democrats, who, while happy to exploit the Reconstruction governments, were doing all they could to undermine them and restore themselves to political power.

The old plantation owners were joined in the new ruling class matrix by the merchants and bankers who arose alongside the expansion of the railroad and of the commercial farming economy outside of the Black Belt.

This new "Bourbon" aristocracy quickly emerged as the main interlocutor with whatever outside investment there was. Economic uncertainty only increased after the Panic of 1873 sent the country into a depression. This made the South an even less attractive investment to outsiders and increased the power and leverage of the Democratic elite, who desired a quick return to total white supremacy and Black subordination.

Republican governments, then, had a choice: they could either turn towards this business class and try to strike an understanding around a vision of the "Gospel of Prosperity," with some limited Black suffrage, and thus, expanded social rights for the laboring class, or they could base themselves more thoroughly on those same laboring classes, particularly in the Black Belt.

The political power of the elite still rested primarily on their monopoly of landownership and thus effective control over the most profitable industries. Land reform, breaking up the big plantations, and granting the freedman access to tracts of land would fatally undermine that control. It was a shift that would have curtailed the ability of planters to exercise economic coercion over their former slaves in the political realm and would have inserted the freedman more directly into the global economy, thereby marginalizing former planters' roles as intermediaries with the banks, merchants,

and traders. Among other things, this would strengthen Republican rule, crippling the economic and social power most behind their opposition.

Land, was, of course, the key demand of those emerging from slavery. Aaron Bradley, an important Black leader in Savannah, Georgia became known for holding "massive…public meetings" that were described by one scholar as "frequent gatherings of armed rural laborers," where the issue of land ownership was front and center [31]. "Deafening cheers" were heard at a mass meeting in Edgefield County, South Carolina, when a Republican orator laid out a vision where every attendee would acquire a parcel of land [32]. In the words of Du Bois, "this land hunger…was continually pushed by all emancipated Negroes and their representatives in every southern state" [33].

Despite that, only in South Carolina was land reform taken up in any substantial way. There, under the able leadership of Secretary of State Francis Cardozo, 14,000 Black families, or one-seventh of the Black population, were able to acquire land in just the four years between 1872 and 1876 [34].

Elsewhere, states eschewed direct financial aid to the freedman in acquiring land and mostly turned to taxation as an indirect method of finance. Cash-strapped planters, unable to make tax payments, would be forced to forfeit their land that would be sold at tax sales where they could be bought by Blacks. Of course, without state aid, most freed people had little access to the necessary capital. In Mississippi, one-fifth of the land in the state was forfeited through tax sales, but ultimately, 95% of that land would end up back with its previous owners [35].

Through hard struggle, individuals and small groups of Blacks did make limited footholds into land ownership. In Virginia, Blacks acquired 81-100 thousand acres of land in the 1860s and 70s. In Arkansas in 1875 there were 2,000 Black landowners. By that same year, Blacks in Georgia had obtained 396,658 plots of land worth the equivalent of over $30 million today [36]. Ultimately, however, most Blacks were consigned to roles as tenant farmers, farm laborers, or town and city workers. This placed the main base of the Reconstruction governments in a precarious position in which they were susceptible to economic coercion on top of extra-legal terrorism by their political enemies.

The chief advocates of the showering of state aid and the

eschewing of land reform was the "moderate" faction of Republicans who tended to gain the upper-hand in the higher and more powerful offices. The fruits of these policies, however, sparked significant struggle over the direction of the Republican cause.

In Louisiana, in the lead-up to the 1868 elections, the Pure Radicals, a grouping centered on the New Orleans Tribune—the first Black daily newspaper—nearly seized the nomination for the governor's chair on a platform laden with radical content. Their program was for an agriculture composed of large cooperatives; "the planters are no longer needed," said the Tribune. The paper also editorialized that "we cannot expect complete and perfect freedom for the working men, as long as they remain the tools of capital and are deprived of the legitimate product of the sweat of their brow" [37].

As mentioned, several states had "labor conventions." The South Carolina convention passed resolutions endorsing a nine-hour day and proportional representation for workers on juries, among other things. The Alabama and Georgia conventions established labor unions, which embraced union league organizers across both states, and engaged in a sporadic series of agricultural labor strikes. Ultimately, most of these resolutions would never pass the state legislature.

Nonetheless, they certainly give a sense of the radicalism in the Republican base. This is further indicated by Aaron Logan, a member of the South Carolina House, and a former slave, who in 1871 introduced a bill that would regulate profits and allow workers to vote on what wages their bosses would pay them. The bill was too controversial to even make it to a vote. But, again, it's deeply indicative of the mood among Black voters since Logan represented the commercial center of Charleston. Logan, it should also be noted, came on the scene politically when he led a mass demonstration of 1,000 Black workers, demanding the right to take time off from work to vote, without a deduction in wages, and he ended up briefly imprisoned at this action after arguing for Black gun ownership [38].

On the one hand, this resulted in even the more moderate factions of the Republican coalition broadly to support Black officeholding. Additionally, the unlimited largess being showered on corporations was curtailed by 1871.

On the other hand, the Reconstruction governments were now

something of a halfway house, with their leaders more politically conservative and conciliationist than their base. They pledged to expand state services and to protect many profitable industries from taxes. They were vigilant in protecting the farmer's axe and sow while letting the usurer establish debt claims on his whole crop. They catered to—but didn't really represent—the basic, and antagonistic, interests in Southern society. And it was on this basis that the propertied classes would launch their counter-offensive.

COUNTER-REVOLUTION AND PROPERTY

The Civil War had introduced powerful new forces into the land:

> *"After the war, industry in the North found itself with a vast organization for production, new supplies of raw material, a growing transportation system on land and water, and a new technical knowledge of processes. All this...tremendously stimulated the production of good and available services...an almost unprecedented scramble for this new power, new wealth, and new income ensued...It threatened the orderly processes of production as well as government and morals...governments...paid...the cost of the railroads and handed them over to...corporations for their own profit. An empire of rich land...had been...given to investors and land speculators. All of the...coal, oil, copper, gold and iron had been given away...made the monopolized basis of private fortunes with perpetual power to tax labor for the right to live and work" [39].*

One major result was the creation of vast political machines that ran into the thousands of employees through patronage posts that had grown in size as the range of government responsibilities and regulations grew along with the economy. It created a large grey area between corruption and extortion. The buying of services, contracts, and so on was routine, as was the exploitation of government offices to compel the wealthy to come forth with bribes.

This started to create something of a backlash among the more well-to-do in the Republican coalition. Many of the significantly larger new "middle classes" operating in the "professions" began

to feel that the government was ignoring the new "financial sciences" that prescribed free trade, the gold standard, and limited government. They argued that the country was being poorly run because of the political baronies created through patronage, which caused politicians to cater to the whims of the propertyless. These "liberals," as they became known in Republican circles, increasingly favored legislation that would limit the franchise to those of "property and education" and that would limit the role of government in the affairs of businesses or the rights of workers.

This, of course, was in line with the influence of the rising manufacturing capitalists in the Republican Party, and became a point of convergence between "moderate" Republicans and Democrats. That the Democratic Party was part of this convergence was ironic as it postured as the party of white workers, although in reality they were just as controlled by the wealthy interests, particularly on Wall Street, as their opponents.

Reconstruction in general, and in South Carolina in particular, became central to the propaganda of all three elements. The base of Reconstruction was clearly the Black poor and laboring masses of the South, who voted overwhelmingly for Grant and whose governments were caricatured as hopelessly corrupt. On top of all that, they were willing to raise taxes on the wealthy to pay for public goods for everyone else.

It made the Reconstruction governments the perfect scapegoats for those looking to restrict the ballot of the popular classes in the service of the rights of property. Taxes, corruption, and racism were intertwined in a powerful campaign by the wealthy—in the clothing of the Democratic Party—to dislodge Republican rule.

Increases in taxation were as practical as they were ideological. The Reconstruction states had only debts and no cash. In order to attract more investment, early Republican governments didn't dare repudiate the debt racked up by the rebels. The failure to ignite an economic boom and the lackluster demand for Southern bonds left increasing taxes as the only realistic means to increase revenue to cover an expanded role for public services.

The antebellum tax system had been very easy on the planters. Republicans relied on general property taxes that were increased more or less across the board. In particular, the wealthiest found their wealth—in land, stocks, and bonds—taxed, often for the first time. Their wealth was certainly taxed for the first time at their real

value, since planters lost the power to assess their own property.

The planters, the bankers, and the merchants, or the "men of wealth, virtue and intelligence" in their own minds, organized a vicious propaganda war against higher taxes. They went so far as to organize conventions in the mid-1870s to plead their weak case. South Carolina's convention, which included 11 Confederate Generals, put the blame for the tax "burden" squarely on the fact that "nine-tenths of the members of the legislature own no property" [40].

Their critique wasn't just over tax rates, but what they were being spent on. They depicted the Reconstruction governments as corrupt and spendthrift. These were governments run foolishly by inferior races, which were, in their world, dangerous because they legislated for the common man.

They also linked Reconstruction to communism. In the wake of the war, working-class organization intensified. Only three national unions existed at the end of the war, while five years later there were 21. Strikes became a regular feature of life [41]. Their regularity was such that the influential magazine Scribner's Monthly lamented that labor had come under the sway of the "senseless cry against the despotism of capital" [42]. In New Orleans, the white elite feared Louisiana's Constitutional Convention in 1867 was likely to be dominated by a policy of "pure agrarianism," that is, attacks on property [43].

The unease of the leading classes with the radical agitation among the newly organized laborers and the radical wing of the Reconstruction coalitions was only heightened by the Paris Commune in 1871. For a brief moment, the working people of Paris grasped the future and established their own rule, displacing the propertied classes. It was an act that scandalized ruling classes around the world and, in the U.S., raised fears of the downtrodden seizing power.

The Great Chicago Fire was held out to be a plot by workers to burn down cities. The Philadelphia Inquirer warned its readers to fear the communist First International, which was planning a war on America's landed aristocracy. Horace White, editor of the Chicago Tribune, who'd traveled with Lincoln during his infamous debates with Douglas, denounced labor organizations as waging a "communistic war upon vested rights and property." The Nation explicitly linked the northern labor radicals with the Southern

freedman representing a dangerous new "proletariat" [44].

August Belmont, Chairman of the Democratic National Convention, and agent for the Rothschild banking empire, remarked in a letter that Republicans were making political hay out of Democratic appeals to workers, accusing them of harboring "revolutionary intentions" [45].

The liberal Republicans opened up a particular front against the Reconstruction governments, with a massively disorienting effect on Republican politics nationwide. Among the ranks of the liberals were many who had been made famous by their anti-slavery zeal, including Horace Greeley and his southern correspondent, former radical Republican James Pike. The duo turned the New York Tribune from a center of radicalism into a sewer of elitist racism. They derided Blacks as lazy, ignorant, and corrupt, describing South Carolina as being victimized by "disaffected workers, who believed in class conflict" [46]. Reporting on the South Carolina taxpayer convention, Greeley told his audience that the planters were menaced by taxes "by the ignorant class, which only yesterday hoed the fields and served in the kitchen" [47].

Greeley also served as a cipher for Confederate Secretary of State Robert Toombs, who observed that "reading and writing did not fit a man for voting. The Paris mob were intelligent, but they were the most dangerous class in the world." He stated further that the real possibility of poor whites and Blacks uniting was his real fear in that they would "attack the interests of the landed proprietors" [48].

The liberal Republicans were unable to capture the zeitgeist in the 1872 election. Former Union General and incumbent President Ulysses S. Grant and his campaign managers positioned their campaign as the true campaign of the working man. Nominating Henry Wilson, "The Shoemaker of Natick," former indentured servant, and "friend of labor and the Negro," as Vice-President. They famously waved the "bloody shirt," reminding Northern workers and farmers what they had fought for and linking their opponents to a return of the Slave Power.

However, their challenge scrambled Republican politics and Grant quickly sought to conciliate his opponents by backing away from enforcing the rights of the freedman with force and doling out patronage and pardons to all manner of rebels, traitors, and terrorists. In 1874, Democrats swept the midterm elections, further

entrenching the consolidation of the political power of capital. So emboldened, the 1875 elections devolved into an orgy of violence and fraud. Black Republican leader John Lynch noted that "Nearly all Democratic clubs in the State were converted into armed military companies" [49].

In Yazoo County, Mississippi, a Republican meeting was broken up by armed whites who killed a state legislator. In Clinton, Mississippi, 30 Black people were murdered when bands of white vigilantes roamed the countryside [50]. As one historian details:

> *"What we have to deal with here is not a local or episodic movement but a South-wide revolution against duly constitute state governments…the old planters as well as the rising class of bankers, merchants, and lawyers…decided to use any and every means…they drew up coordinated plans and designated targets and objectives. Funds for guns and cannons were solicited from leading planters" [51].*

That same historian estimates that "thousands" were killed in this brutal campaign [52].

John Lynch, the Black Republican leader from Mississippi, related that, when he asked President Grant in the winter of 1875 why he had not sent more assistance to loyal Republicans besieged by terrorists in Mississippi, Grant replied that to have done so would have guaranteed a Republican loss in Ohio. This is as clear a sign as any of the shifting sands of Republican politics.

Black Power in the South had become an obstacle to the elites in both parties. It was the only area of the country where the "free ballot" was bound to lead workers holding some of the levers of power. Black suffrage meant a bloc in Congress in favor of placing social obligations on capital, a curtailment of white supremacy, and bitter opposition to property qualifications in voting. The very fact that opposition to Reconstruction was cast in "class" terms, against the political program of the freedman as much as the freedman themselves, speaks to these fears.

A solid (or even not so solid) Republican South was an ally to political forces aggrieved by the "despotism of capital" around the country. A solid white supremacist South was (and is) a bastion for the most reactionary policies and allies of policies of untrammeled profit making, which is, as we have shown, the direction in which

the ruling classes were traveling. Thus, Reconstruction had to die.

THE FINAL CHARGE

> *"It was not until after…that white labor in the South began to realize that they had lost a great opportunity, that when they united to disenfranchise the Black laborer they had cut the voting power of the laboring class in two. White labor in the populist movement…tried to realign economic warfare in the South and bring workers of all colors into united opposition to the employer. But they found that the power which they had put in the hands of the employers in 1876 so dominated political life that free and honest expression of public will at the ballot-box was impossible in the South, even for white men. They realized it was not simply the Negro who had been disenfranchised…it was the white laborer as well. The South had since become one of the greatest centers for labor exploitation in the world" [53]. -W.E.B. Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in America*

While Reconstruction was destroyed in the service of the ruling classes, its defeat could not have taken place without the acquiescence and assistance of the popular classes among the white population as well. In the South, in particular, the role of the "upcountry small farmer" was essential.

During the war, these yeomen farmers had coined the phrase "rich man's war, poor man's fight." At first, there was some fear, and some electoral evidence, that poor whites and the newly freed slaves might make an alliance of sorts. Instead, the rift between them widened. The hierarchy constructed of white supremacy relied on inculcating racial superiority in many ways, one of them being the idea of "independence" that made white small farmers "superior" to slaves. They were poor, but at least they were masters of their own patch of land.

The coming of the railroad changed all of this drastically. The railroad opened up the upcountry to the world economy. While it initially seemed like an opportunity, it was, in fact, a curse. Many small farmers dove into cotton production, the one thing financiers were eager to fund. They quickly found, however, that the cost of

transporting and marketing their goods, in addition to the costs of inputs from merchants, made success very difficult, and made it almost certain they would have to resort to credit. The rates of usury were, however, allowed to go high enough that a majority of these small farmers became trapped in webs of debt.

The only way to keep going was to offer one's crop as security for loans, ahead of time—the so-called "crop-lien." From masters of their own realm, these farmers had now become slaves to debt, losing all real control of their destiny and farming to avoid eviction rather than to make any money.

This reality increased resentment at Reconstruction governments, and, given their dire financial situation, created another base of support for those trying to make an issue out of higher taxes. This ultimately helped solidify white opposition to Republican rule behind the planters and their Democratic Party.

As the 1870s turned into the 1880s, this consensus started to crack. The depression unleashed in the Panic of 1873 led to a breakdown of the two-party system as the two parties consolidated their views on how to move the country forward at the expense of workers and farmers. A variety of movements started to emerge, particularly strong in the West, opposing various aspects of the new consensus.

In the 1880s, the movement started to strengthen itself through a series of "Farmers Alliances" that spread like wildfire across the country. The alliances not only advocated and agitated for things like railroad regulation and more equitable farming arrangements, but also organized their own cooperatives and attempts to break free of the unjust state of affairs to which they were subject. The alliances were also major sites of political education where newspapers and meetings helped define and disseminate the economic realities of capitalism and exactly why these farmers were facing so much exploitation.

A Black alliance, the Colored Farmers Alliance, also grew rapidly, ultimately embracing millions of Black farmers. Black farmers, likewise, were getting the short-end of the stick in terms of the results of Reconstruction-era land policies. Despite being shut out of land ownership, Black farmers were highly resistant to returning to the plantations as farm laborers. This led to a rise in tenancy where Black farmers rented the land and took on the production of the crops for a share of the crop that they could sell,

or what is called "sharecropping."

Similar to white farmers in the upcountry, however, this system turned viciously against them. The costs of credit to carry out various farming activities or to cover the cost of goods in the offseason meant that they too, quickly and easily became ensnared by debt. This started to create intriguing political opportunities in the South. Disaffected white farmers started to become interested in the third-party movements representing popular discontent, particularly the Greenback-Labor Party.

The Greenbackers embraced much of the agrarian reform ideas favored by farmers, and added in support for an income tax, the free ballot, and the eight-hour day for workers. In Mississippi, Texas, and Alabama, the Greenback movement found some shallow roots with white farmers who, recognizing the political situation, understood their only possible ally could be Blacks.

Black politics, while in retreat, had not disappeared. The Colored Farmers Alliance was rooted in the same networks of religion, fraternal organization, and grassroots Republican political mobilization that had formed during Reconstruction. It was thus more politically inclined than the Southern Farmers Alliance of whites, which remained tied to the Democratic Party and its white supremacist policies.

Nonetheless, a growing number of Blacks seeking political opportunity sought to embrace the Greenback movement through a process known as "fusion." This meant Republicans running joint candidates or slates with third parties in order to maximize their voting power and take down the Democrats. This led to somewhat of a "second act" of Reconstruction. The Colored Farmers Alliance played a key role in the early 1890s in pushing the alliances to launch the Populist Party, turning the incipient potential of the Greenback Party into a serious political insurgency, but one which couldn't be truly national without a Southern component. Populism united the agrarian unrest of the West and South against the "money power" of the Wall Street banks.

Populists championed public ownership of the largest corporations of the time—the railroads—as well as the communications apparatus of the country. In addition, they advocated an agricultural plan known as the "sub-treasury system" to replace the big banks in providing credit to the farmers as well as empowering cooperatives rather than private corporations to

store and market goods. All of these were ingredients to break small farmers out of a cycle of debt.

They also advocated for a shorter working day and a graduated income tax and sought to link together the demands of urban workers and those living in rural areas, saying in their preamble: "Wealth belongs to him who creates it, and every dollar taken from industry without an equivalent is robbery. "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." The interests of rural and civil labor are the same; their enemies are identical" [54]. This turned the People's Party into a real challenge to the ruling class on a national scale, one particularly potent in Georgia, North Carolina, and Alabama on the Southern front:

> *"The People's (Populist) Party presidential candidate James B. Weaver received over one million votes in 1892 (approximately nine percent of the vote), winning 22 electoral votes (albeit, mostly in the West); in North Carolina, a Populist-Republican alliance took over the state legislature in 1894; Populists and their allies sat in Congress, governor's offices, and held dozens of local offices over the next two years; and scores of Black and white People's Party chapters had been established across the region" [55].*

This success would evoke a wave of terrorist violence against Populists and the Black community writ large that rivaled Reconstruction times and that, in terms of outright election fraud, exceeded it, which can be viewed clearly through the example of North Carolina, and Wilmington, in particular.

The 1892 election, the first time out for the Populists, opened up a new lane of cooperation. White Populists openly appealed for Black votes. "In addition to voting the ticket, blacks sometimes…took roles in county organizations and in mobilizing black voters. Some counties [even] placed blacks on ballots, and blacks were present at Populist rallies and in local Populist nominating conventions" [56]. In Raleigh, Blacks campaigned on horseback and on mule with the Presidential candidate James Weaver as well [57]. The results reflected the campaign: "African Americans voted "en masse" for the People's Party in 1892 in the first and second districts of the eastern part of the state, where the majority of black counties were. Black voters in both Hyde and Wilson counties, for instance, gave

near unanimous support to the third party ticket" [58].

Over the next two years Populists, Black and white, worked with Republicans, Black and white, to hammer out a fusion agreement for the 1894 state elections. This was despite fairly significant differences, such as the rise of Black populism, for instance, which heralded a rise in class differences within the Black community. Nonetheless, they found common ground and swept the elections:

> *"Among other changes, the elected Republican-Populist majority revised and simplified election laws, making it easier for African Americans to vote; they restored the popular election of state and county officials, dismantling the appointive system used by Democrats to keep black candidates out of office; and the fusion coalition also reversed discriminatory "stock laws" (that required fencing off land) that made it harder for small farmers to compete against large landowners. The reform of election and county government laws, in particular, undermined planter authority and limited their control of the predominantly black eastern counties" [59].*

The Fusion coalition also championed issues like "public funding for education, legislation banning the convict-lease system, the criminalization of lynching" [60]. The Fusion government also restricted interest rates to address the massive debts being incurred by farmers and sharecroppers. Most notably, the Fusion governments stood up to the powerful railroad interests and their Northern backers like JP Morgan.

The port city of Wilmington was an important Republican stronghold and had to be neutralized for Democrats to break through the Fusion hold on the state. In 1897, Democrats started a vicious campaign of white supremacy, forming clubs and militias that would become known as "Red Shirts," along with a media offensive.

As the Charlotte Observer would later state, it was the "bank men, the mill men, and businessmen in general," who were behind this campaign [61]. One major theme of the campaign was a particular focus on Black men supposedly "preying" on white women and girls. Physical violence and armed intimidation were

used to discourage Blacks or Republicans and Populists of any color from voting.

As the election drew closer, Democrats made tens of thousands of copies of an editorial by Alex Manley, the Black editor of the Daily Record newspaper. Manley, an important civic leader in Wilmington had written the editorial in response to calls for increased lynchings against Blacks to stop interracial relationships. Manley argued that white women who sought out relations with Black men often used rape allegations to cover their tracks or end a dalliance.

While undoubtedly true, it raised the ire of white supremacists to the highest of pitches. On election day, most Blacks and Republicans chose not to vote as Red Shirt mobs were roaming the streets and had established checkpoints all over the city. Unsurprisingly, the Democrats won.

Unwilling to wait until their term of office began, some of the newly elected white officials and businesspeople decided to mount a coup and force out Black lawmakers right then and there. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of whites, marauded through the streets, attacking Black businesses and property and killing more than 300 Black people in the process. They forced the Republican mayor, along with all city commissioners, to resign at gunpoint. They banished them from the city, leading them in front of a mob that assaulted them before putting them on a train out of town. At least 2,000 Black residents fled, leaving most of what they owned behind.

The Wilmington massacre destroyed the Fusion coalition. All over the state, fraud and violence had been used against the Fusionists to no avail, but, as evidenced by the example of Wilmington, there was little chance of rebuilding ties of solidarity.

The same can be said for the populist period more generally. While Populists certainly have a mixed record, at best, when it came to racism in the general sense, it's undeniable that the Populist upsurge opened up new political space for Blacks that had been shut-off by the two major parties. Further, it did so in a manner that was ideological much more commensurate with the unrealized desires of Republican rule.

So, in North Carolina and all across the South, Populists were crushed in an orgy of violence and fraud. Racism was a powerful motivating factor in Southern politics across this entire period. This

racism, however, did not stop large numbers of whites from entering into a political alliance with Blacks. The anti-Populist violence has to be seen in this context as a counterweight against the pull of self-interest in the economic field.

TOWARD A THIRD RECONSTRUCTION

Reconstruction looms large in our current landscape because so much of its promise remains unrealized. The Second Reconstruction, better known as "the sixties," took the country some of the way there, particularly concerning civil equality. It reaffirmed an agenda of placing social claims on capital. It also, however, revealed the limits of the capitalist system, showing how easily the most basic reforms can be rolled back. This was a lesson also taught by the first Reconstruction.

The history of Reconstruction also helps us to understand the centrality of Black Liberation to social revolution. The dispossession of Blacks from social and civic life was not just ideologically but politically foundational to capitalism in the U.S. The Solid South, dependent on racism, has played and continues to play a crucial role as a conservative influence bloc in favor of capital.

Reconstruction also gives us insight into the related issue of why Black political mobilization, even in fairly mundane forms, is met with such hostility. The very nature of Black oppression has created what is essentially a proletarian nation which denounces racism not in the abstract, but in relation to its actual effects. Unsurprisingly, then, Black Liberation politics has always brought forward a broad social vision to correct policies, not attitudes, which is precisely the danger since these policies are not incidental, but intrinsic, to capitalism.

In sum, Reconstruction points us towards an understanding that "freedom" and "liberation" are bound up with addressing the limitations that profit over people puts on any definition of those concepts. It helps us understand the central role of "white solidarity" in promoting capitalist class power. Neither racism nor capitalism can be overcome without a revolutionary struggle that presents a socialist framework.

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