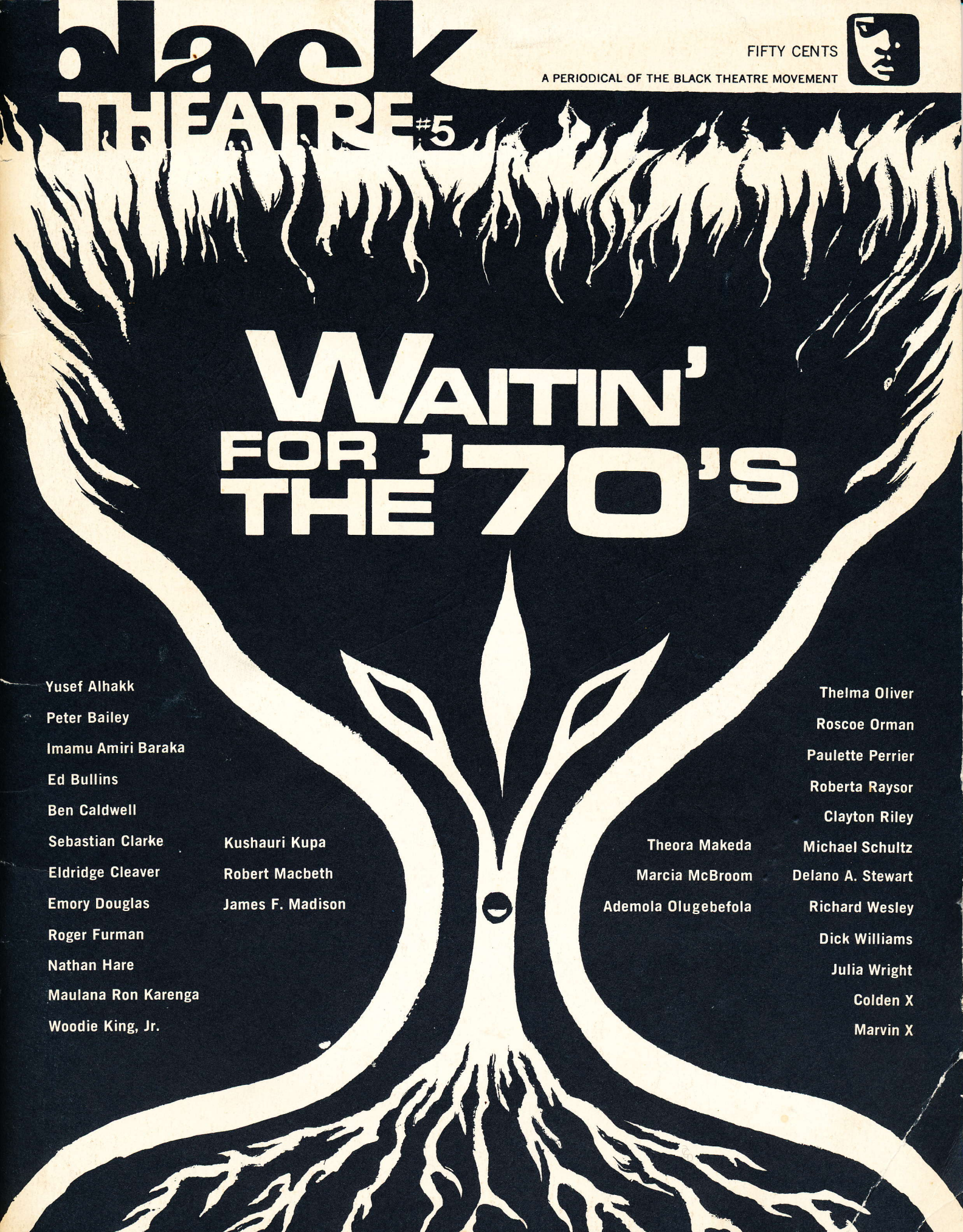
black THEATRE #5

FIFTY CENTS

A PERIODICAL OF THE BLACK THEATRE MOVEMENT



WAITIN' FOR THE '70'S

Yusef Alhakk
Peter Bailey
Imamu Amiri Baraka
Ed Bullins
Ben Caldwell
Sebastian Clarke
Eldridge Cleaver
Emory Douglas
Roger Furman
Nathan Hare
Maulana Ron Karenga
Woodie King, Jr.
Kushauri Kupa
Robert Macbeth
James F. Madison
Theora Makeda
Marcia McBroom
Ademola Olugebefola
Thelma Oliver
Roscoe Orman
Paulette Perrier
Roberta Raysor
Clayton Riley
Michael Schultz
Delano A. Stewart
Richard Wesley
Dick Williams
Julia Wright
Colden X
Marvin X

A Community Art Institution takes on responsibility for the creation and presentation of images which are vivid enough to activate the minds of the community audience to considerations of their everyday existence from points of view consistent with that community's place in history and its efforts toward the future. This is called "the raising of consciousness". It is the purpose of art.

Robert Macbeth

NEWS

CONNECTICUT: THE HILL ARTS THEATRE / NEW HAVEN

The Hill Arts was conceived in response to the obvious need of the Black community of New Haven, Connecticut, to more actively express its Afro-American culture and to more effectively communicate the issues that dominate life in the ghetto.

We are proud to be a part of the growing movement toward Black identity, culturally and educationally, through the art of Black theatre.

Our first project toward building a Black theatre was the renovation of an abandoned warehouse at 35 West Portsea Street, into a 5,000 sq. ft. theatre which is also made available to individuals and organizations whose objectives are in alignment with ours.

In March of 1968, we gave our first production, *Dutchman,* by LeRoi Jones. It presented a remarkable display of talent and generated interest in the Black community of New Haven. This production provided evidence of Black theatre's potential impact and encouraged Hill Arts in the adoption of its objective to create a small full-time professional theatre company utilizing local talent.

In June, 1968, using a full cast of neighborhood people in white masks, we presented *Day of Absence,* by Douglas Turner Ward, a satirical rendition of what happens when all the Blacks leave town for a day.

The success of *Dutchman* and *Day of Absence,* both playing to more than 1,000 people and both held over for additional performances, brought Hill Arts an invitation to play a Summer Theatre program at the Longwharf Theatre, home of New Haven's white repertory company. Invited also were the Black Arts Theatre, the Yale Drama School, and some local artists. A consciously integrated company was formed and produced works relevant to the racial and political crisis. As a result of working with experienced theatre people that summer we were more equipped to conduct our own theatre upon returning home in the fall.

Our first presentation was *The New Blacks,* arranged and directed by German Wilson, who originated Nashville's Princely Players.

In the Spring of 1969, we presented *Experience Blackness,* a combination of programs combining cultural exhibitions in Black history, music, poetry, and original drama productions.

Three of the original productions offered in *Experience Blackness* were written and directed by our present director, Robert Blount. Bob, one of the first to enter Hill Arts, has talent, and a desire to write Black experiences. He has also excelled as an actor.

Kelly Graham, our assistant director, is another community resident and is a prime example of talent too long neglected. Never having been onstage before he has, nevertheless, performed well as an actor. In our neighborhood he is recognized as a person with potential.

The summer of 1969, we conducted a workshop utilizing all interested community residents. From this activity we achieved our first goal and formed our resident theatre company. All thirteen members have been working voluntarily since summer, 1969, and are enthusiastic about entering the new year (1970) with our proposed schedule: Douglas Turner Ward's, *Happy Ending,* Yusef Iman's *Praise The Lord,* Jimmy Garrett's *And We Own The Night,* and *Growin' Into Blackness,* by Salimu.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: BLACK ART IN THE LORTON REFORMATORY WASHINGTON, D.C.

I am an inmate of the Lorton Correctional Complex and for two years I have been attempting to establish a Black theatre here within the institution. It has been a struggle that I have enjoyed because the theatre and my love for it have been the only things that have enabled me to retain some degree of sanity and to have hope where it is non-existent.

Formerly, we were called the Lorton Black Theatre but have now decided to call ourselves the Inner Voices. We had our premier performance on December 22, 1969. Our presentation was a one-act play I wrote entitled, *Xmas In Time.* It was the third play I have written, but the first I have ever seen through to production.

The Inner Voices is a newly formed creative expression group. We write all of our material, which consists of poems, plays, skits, short stories, etc. We deal with the various social ills, with prison life, and with the reasons why men commit certain offenses. Our productions appear in a format that is both educational and entertaining in hopes that we can reach the Brothers and blow some of the dust off their minds, so we can get our thing together. We are a group of men who have had very little exposure and experience in the theatre. Even though we are in confinement, there is a lot that we can do, and want to do, and we feel that we can best contribute through the theatre.

So much is happening in the Black theatre, which we have needed for a long time, and we want to be a part of the happenings because we are some of those to whom "the happenings" have happened to.

Rhozier T. (Roach) Brown

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Rhozier T. (Roach) Brown

LOUISIANA:
THE DASHIKI PROJECT THEATRE / NEW ORLEANS

If audience response is a valid indication of a theatre's success and popularity—as, indeed, we believe it to be—then the Dashiki Project Theatre is rapidly becoming New Orlean's most popular theatre. One season was completed (the Summer of 1969) and (as of this writing) the second season is in progress. We have already received enough invitations to repeat last season's shows and to do a second season from its repertory alone.

The repertory include's Errol John's *Moon On A Rainbow Shawl* (adapted by N. R. Davidson, Jr.), *A Hand Is On The Gate,* as arranged by Roscoe Lee Browne, and Jean Genet's *The Blacks.* Each of these productions ran for two weekends. Other performances were done by invitation elsewhere in the city. Seemingly, the theatre could have maintained itself on the success of *The Blacks* alone. This production ran during the sweltering summer months in an un-air-conditioned auditorium and audiences increased with each performance.

The cast also travelled to Lafayette, Louisiana, and to Waveland, Mississippi to perform *The Blacks* for a Methodist youth group. It also performed at Xavier University and at Dillard University. A Xavier student remarked, "I think all Black people should see *The Blacks.*"*

A similar popularity greeted the original production of *El Haji Malik,* which was premiered in a half hour version, then finally to a full length version as found in *New Plays From The Black Theatre,* edited by Ed Bullins. This play had three productions at Dillard and one at Xavier. Each time it was performed the response from Black people was electric.

To open the second season, Dashiki Theatre presented an Afro-inspired fashion show called, *The Beautiful People* (Watu Wazuri). A collection of fashions was divided into four categories: *Authentic, Roots and Slavery, The New Breed,* and *The Genteel Black.* Significantly, the most popular was *Roots And Slavery.* The fashion categories were accompanied by original dances choreographed and performed by the group.

An important revelation of the fashion show was the enthusiasm of the public for Black-inspired fashions. Indeed, a problem was encountered in pricing the fashions reasonably enough for the average Black man while at the same time pricing them high enough to prevent whites from buying them all before Black people with less money had a chance to place orders. Another problem was the fact that a fashion show is too expensive and too time-consuming for a theatre group to engage in. Thus a decision was made against doing future fashion shows in order to concentrate on productions.

After *El Haji Malik* the scheduled season includes, John Pepper Clark's, *Song Of A Goat,* Kingsley B. Bass Jr.'s, *We Righteous Bombers,* and Lonnie Elder III's, *Ceremonies In Dark Old Men.* If time and finance permit, we will also do Ed Bullins', *How Do You Do?.* Also, N. R. Davidson has promised something exciting and significant for the future.

(During Summer, 1970), hopefully culminating from a children's workshop to be run by the Dashiki Project Theatre volunteers, a children's play, written by the director, Ted Gilliam, will be offered. The play, *What You Say? (or, How Christopher Columbus Discovered Ray Charles)* was written in the summer of '69. The play is a satire based on comedian Flip Wilson's "Columbus" story and calls for large groups of children—all Black—to play roles of Africans, Indians, and Europeans. Otherwise, the Dashiki Project Theatre is hoping for an angel of whatever pigmentation to come along and present us with enough "dust" to afford us a permanent theatre.

Dashiki Project Theatre
November 18, 1969

* The editors of *Black Theatre* magazine do not think that *any* Black people should see *The Blacks.* Jean Genet is a white, self-confessed homosexual with dead, white Western ideas—faggoty ideas about Black Art, Revolution, and people. His empty masochistic activities and platitudes on behalf of the Black Panthers should not con Black people. Genet, in his writings, has admitted to seeing himself as a so-called "nigger." Black people cannot allow white perversion to enter their communities and consciousness, even if it rides in on the black of a Panther. Beware of whites who plead the Black cause to their brothers and fathers who oppress us; beware of Athol Fugard of South Africa and Jean Genet, a French pervert; disguised white missionaries representing Western cultural imperialism. Black people, in this stage of the struggle, have no use for self-elected "niggers." (Ed.)

Comment:

In October, 1967, the New Lafayette Theatre, at its former Harlem location, 132nd Street and 7th Avenue, that was destroyed by fire, presented Athol Fugard's *Blood Knot* as an earlier production.

Kushauri Kupa

LOUISIANA:
THE DILLARD UNIVERSITY PLAYERS / NEW ORLEANS

This season, as last season, the Dillard University Players Guild plans a bill of relevant Black drama for its predominantly Black student body. Last season, the Guild produced *Moon On A Rainbow Shawl* concurrently with the Dashiki Project Theatre and directed by Ted Gilliam. The next production was an evening of one-acts for the Second Annual Afro-American Festival of Arts. The plays were: Dorothy Ahmad's *Papa's Daughter,* Ed Bullins' *Clara's Ole Man,* and Jimmy Garrett's *And We Own The Night.* This production was later performed at Southern University in

New Orleans by invitation.

The new season opened in November, 1969, with a very successful production of Ronald Milner's, *Who's Got His Own.* A white reviewer, mistaking audience recognition for indecorous behavior, criticized the students for "bad" behavior because they were so verbal in their reactions to the play. He chose to commend the "sexy" young Black actress, completely ignoring the more difficult achievements of some of the actors. He did, however, manage to find the play "perceptive . . . although dealing with the soul problems of Black folk." (As if students should be dealing with someone else's problems.)

In January, 1970, the Guild will produce a bill of one acts again, including Ed Bullins' *The Gentleman Caller,* Ben Caldwell's *First Militant Preacher,* and Ron Milner's *The Warning.*

Other scripts are being considered for at least two productions this season. The problem is that the Guild faces the circumstance of having the good Black scripts hoarded by white agencies and white-oriented Black theatres. The New Lafayette Theatre is an exception, and is to be commended for being a true Black theatre. TOGETHER!

PERTINENT QUESTION: When are more "Black" college drama groups going to wake up and cease supporting white hang-ups in white plays and confront their own?

The Dillard University Players
November 18, 1969

MINNESOTA:
ABOUT BLACKARTS MIDWEST

Our overriding concern is awakening, restructuring and sustaining the nationalist consciousness of Black people. It is with this stated goal that we make the departure from what is generally called Theatre (sick, white art) in America, in that our productions are not designed for entertainment in the usual sense of the word.

We take the aesthetic position that art and morals are the same thing and that Western art is for homosexuals and deathfreaks, and that the Black man is the owner, the maker, the Cream of the Planet Earth, God of the Universe.

We fully understand that although our position may seem strange in terms of our position in America and the consciousness of our people, we are fully in tune with and moving toward the same aesthetic that we had before our arrival in America—(and that is) the African humanism and cosmology that manifests itself in our lives (even today). Not the art that is removed from life, but an art that is a vital part of life and shows itself in many ways by the way we talk, walk, gesture, dress, etc.

Our present touring format consists of approximately a four-hour performance, including plays, improvisations, poetry, our African dance troupe, dancers, and jazz music. Plays currently under production are: *Black Mass, It Has No Choice, Top Secret, Sometimes A Switchblade Helps, Mission Accomplished, Militant Preacher, How Do You Do?, Blackbird, Insurrection,* and others as yet unnamed.

In addition, at colleges we generally run a three to four-hour long workshop with Black students *before* our performances, explaining the principles behind Black Art, distributing information, talking about Black magic, dealing with their own particular educational needs, giving our booklists, and, in general, "coat pulling."

After the performance we meet again with Black students and deal with whatever particular *political* problems, organizational problems, or just plain Black problems that are present on their campus and in the Black community in general.

Colden X, Director
Blackarts Midwest

MISSOURI:
THE AFRO-AMERICAN CULTURE CENTER AND THE NYEUSI UJAMAA THEATRE OF GREATER KANSAS CITY

The Afro-American Culture Center, located in the North East community of Kansas City, Kansas, addresses itself to Kansas City's Black community and its coming of age in the quest for self-determination and Black awareness. The center is focused toward serving the Black community and emphasizes the interrelatedness of political and cultural revolution.

We have begun on a shoestring budget. In fact, we have no funds at all, but with a lot of dedicated brothers and sisters who have a real commitment to the Black community, we have begun to make strides. In March, 1969, we presented our community with some of our endeavors in a program entitled, *A Happening In Black.* It was an achievement in itself for our city generally attracts only whites to events dealing with Blackness. This event showcased Black creative talent in the areas of painting, sculpture, fashion, music, theatre, and Black literature.

Only through the efforts of committed Black artists and other concerned members of the community were we able to pull this affair off. The sisters of all ages prepared soul food for our concession stand; the brothers shuffled furniture and equipment around and worked out technical details; the youth of the community distributed posters and flyers, and assisted in decorating. The artists of the community gave the gifts they had to offer freely and without anticipation of renu-

Collage by Ademola

meration—in short, the entire community worked its collective ass off. Kansas City Black people are indeed beautiful!! We have a long way to go yet, but interested people are coming forth with funds and other contributions to speed our growth and development.

Our existence is relevant only as long as we can be aware of the needs of our Brothers and Sisters. We want to create a climate in which every Black person can recognize his worth and heritage and become the Black kings and queens we really are. We want to create a climate in which Black creative genius can thrive on every level. Most importantly, we want to create a climate in which Black people can grow.

Those of us who are involved in the Center recognize that we cannot do the whole job; we cannot go it alone. But we also recognize that cultural revolution is tantamount to the success of the political revolution and it is to this end that we dedicate ourselves. We speak to ourselves and to the Black community in artistic forms that are relevant to our life style. We have thrown out preconceived notions of what art is, and it is on that basis that we shall continue to create for functional change, mutual growth, and collective understanding and cooperation.

Within the framework of the Culture Center here in Kansas City, we have organized the Black Writers Workshop. The workshop has been in existence for about six months now,* and we are already drawing much interest from other Black writers and similar groups around the country.

The Black Writers Workshop consists of eight dedicated Black people. We are preparing our first book of poetry for publication by the last of February (1970). We feel that our writing standards are quite high, even though we are still growing in our understanding of ourselves and are constantly searching for the best and most uncomplicated ways to express our individual artistic value.

We believe that truth and simplicity go hand-in-hand. If we are to wage and win a revolutionary fight in this country, then we, as Black people, must make sure that we can communicate among ourselves. Our poetry, our essays, plays, paintings, and languages must be relevant to the masses of Black people. Without a complete re-definition of poetry, drama, visual arts, etc., we will eventually find ourselves mouthing and projecting the same meaningless rhetorical bullshit we have historically been forced to accept as art.

For this reason, we as a Black Writers workshop, as well as individuals, are dedicated to utilizing the language, thoughts, experiences, and lifestyles of our *own* people. We have found that in doing this, we need no longer be frustrated in the attempt to mimic the writing styles of the great American-European literary heroes. We have found the direction that will lead us to becoming valuable and valid artists. We will be able to fully and effectively express ourselves and use the words, thoughts, and images that are within *us*.

Wilbert E. Rutledge, Jr.,
(Director)
Afro-American Culture Center

* This article was written in the Fall of 1969.—Ed. note.

NEW YORK: AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIO FOR ACTING AND SPEECH

One hundred and twenty-sixth street in Central Harlem is probably one of the last places where one would look for a growing, if not exactly financially thriving, theatre. It's a block full of reddish-tinted brownstones which are found all over the community. The theatre is located on the top floor of the very familiar Elks building. Like Black Theatre groups everywhere, the Studio faces the imposing task of figuring out ways to draw in the Black masses.

It takes hearty breathing and strong legs to walk up five floors to reach the studio, but when you get there, you find an 81-seat theatre that—though in need of improvements—compares favorably with other theatres.

The Studio's location has an interesting theatrical history of its own. It was once the home of the now defunct American Negro Theatre which sent many of its former occupants on to "glory." Recently, in the three years that the Afro-American Studio has been located there, it has been the scene of some interesting and, in some cases, good theatre. Among the plays that have been done there by members of the Studio have been *Amen Corner, Dutchman, Ododo, Day of Absence, Roots,* and *Takin' Care of Business.* One of their best productions, in which they combined drama, dance, poetry and music was *Where It's At, A Black Theatrical Event.* Their productions guaranteed "a unique evening offering a kaleidoscope of ourselves reacting to our environment in our own way." Everyone I met who saw the production agreed that the Brothers and Sisters backed up their guarantee.

Ernie McClintock, the director of the studio, emphasizes that their program and selection of plays are made with the students in the theatre group in mind. "We are not a professional theatre group," he says. "None of our students are paid for their work. They are all studying how to be good Black actors and our staff offers them professional training in such things as vocal technique, body movement, karate and speech. We also insist that they do some comprehensive studying of Black political and cultural history." The Studio is dedicated to providing "quality theatre training and productions within the Harlem community."

For three years, despite several major crises—mostly financial—they have provided an example of how determination, sacrifice and getting down to the nitty gritty can keep a theatre group alive in Harlem. It has often been a precarious existence, but they have reached the state of rightfully being called a Harlem theatrical institution. Besides plays, they have free public lecture-discussions and monthly exhibitions featuring paintings and photographs by contemporary Black artists and photographers.

Director McClintock and the Studio have been accused of not being political enough despite the fact that all their productions are by and about Black people. They aren't necessarily revolutionary productions and non-revolutionary productions, although both tendencies in the Black theatre movement need to be encouraged and supported and both need to develop theatrical forms which will appeal to the Black masses.

For an inexpensive fee, you can study acting at the Afro-American Studio and for an inexpensive price, you can see their productions. The introduction to their prospectus reads, "In the Harlem community there should be a place where an aspiring actor can study under a planned curriculum with an emphasis on Afro-American Culture and History." In my opinion the Afro-American Studio is one of these places.

Peter Bailey

NEW YORK: THE AFRICAN CULTURE CENTER OF BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Leading the way for Black theatre in western New York is the African Culture Center, situated in the heart of the Black community of Buffalo, New York.

The African Culture Center has presented a number of Black revolutionary plays in the last year. Its young executive director, Ed Lawrence, feels very strongly that Black theatre is what is needed in the Black community. "Black theatre can and must contribute to raising the consciousness of our people throughout the Black community in this country," he says. "But," he adds, "Black theatre has yet to attract the attention of the grass roots to the degree that it must."

Let's face it. Every playwright imaginable has been heard from except the Black playwright. It is time we listen to him. What he has to say is relevant to the problems our people face in this society, and can be a guide toward national liberation. Through our writers, dead minds can be resurrected to the reality of the existing situations.

The African Culture Center premiered with an original play, *Perry's Mission* by Clarence Young III. It was directed by nineteen-year-old Jonathan Wilson, a drama major.

Mr. Wilson works closely with Mr. Lawrence, and over the summer of 1969 directed such other plays as: *And We Own The Night,* by Jimmy Garrett, and *Taking Care of Business,* by Marvin X. Other productions have been, *Clara's Ole Man,* by Ed Bullins, *The Job,* by Ben Caldwell, and *The Dutchman,* by LeRoi Jones.*

* Ed. Note: Traditional name; Imamu Amiri Baraka.

NEW YORK:
THE BED-STUY THEATRE
OF BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

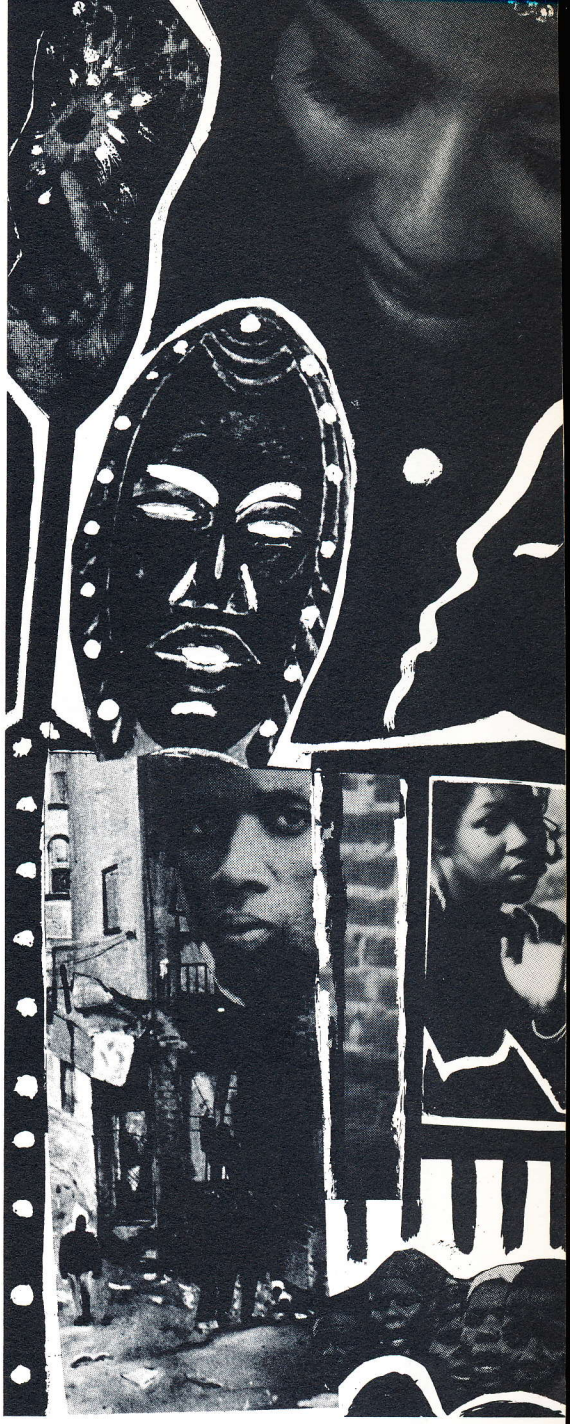
BED-STUY THEATRE, INC., exists for the development of young talent on a professional level and to provide the community residents who cannot afford same to see professional caliber productions. These services are offered to the entire mid-Brooklyn community (Fort Greene, Bed-Stuy, Bushwick, South Brooklyn, Williamsburg, Brownsville, East New York, and Crown Heights).

During the summer of 1969 we offered free courses to youths through age 19. This was made possible by a summer grant from O.E.O. In the fall of said year, we operated acting classes at our theatre. Presently we are one of the sponsors of a Theatre Opportunity Contest. The contest will provide at a cost of $750.00 each scholarships in each category for the ten most talented actors, playwrights and set designers/builders. Provision has been made for placement in an accredited college or entry level positions at the end of their study.

Free performances have been done for P.S. 87 in Ocean Hill-Brownsville for the Sumpter Street Block Association, on the streets and in the parks during the summer, for Kings County Hospital, etc. At our presentation held at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, 200 youths, who had never seen a professional theatrical performance were given tickets to attend. In our theatre, neighborhood children and adults have seen free performances. Welfare groups, Task Force groups, and others unable to pay are given tickets to attend.

The above-mentioned are some of our activities. We are not now receiving any funds for the furtherance of same. It is hoped that the Brooklyn community's generous assistance will help defray the cost of providing these badly needed services.

Delano H. Stewart,
(Executive Director)
Bed-Stuy Theatre



Collage by Ademola

NEW YORK:
BROWNSVILLE LABORATORY
THEATRE ARTS INCORPORATED

The Brownsville Laboratory Theatre, Inc. is an outlet for youths and adults to express the lifestyle, spirit, and history of our people through drama, poetry, dance, music, and other art forms. The Laboratory is structured to operate a theatre and music and dance workshop. Its purpose is to implement the following activities:

1. To write original drama and poetry for performances along with the works of established playwrights and poets.
2. To create dance and choreographed scenarios using primordial, modern and related dance disciplines.
3. To provide a culture center for community participation and identification with creative arts and crafts.
4. To inspire, teach, and train individuals for professional, technical, and administrative positions in the arts.

The program areas are:

DRAMA

Drama stimulates the participant's understanding of his world, develops individuality and group identification, inspires creativeness, and broadens the perspective of life.

MUSIC

Vocal and instrumental music are taught to inspire community participation.

DANCE

As a medium of exercise and self-expression, dance is taught in a manner that is meaningful and culturally beneficial to the participants and the audience.

OTHER ART FORMS

The application of the aesthetic principles of all art forms is fostered. These applications include, but are not limited to, costume and set designs, painting, karate, sculpture, and the industrial arts.

James F. Madison,
(Executive Director)
Brownsville Laboratory
Theatre Arts, Inc.

WASHINGTON: BLACK ARTS / WEST OF SEATTLE

Perhaps it would be cool if we give some specific understanding of Seattle's Black Arts/West, by first running down a little history. Black Arts/West was previously known as the Performing Arts Department of the Central Area Motivation Program. (In Seattle, "Central Area" is a synonym for Black community.) It began May 1, 1967, with one desk, two staff members, and $10,000 donated by PONCHO. A huge all-day Gala was performed on June 4th, and during July and August an original dance-drama was put together and performed. The original director resigned mid-March, 1968.

The second year, PONCHO's grant was for $7,500, and we were funded again for a summer-youth program. We offered instruction to Black youth in crafts, music, dance and drama, with a display and performance at the end of August. A new director, Douglas Q. Barnett, who is still on the job, was hired, more plays were performed, including some full-length major productions; a Black Film Festival was held which included a special guest appearance of Woodie King with his films from the Film Workshop of Mobilization Youth and a film-making workshop was begun. In April, 1969, we moved into a small theater. Then PONCHO notified us that they could not fund us for our third year. But the Seattle Repertory Company gave a benefit performance of *The Blacks* for us and we received $1,200. On May 23rd we officially opened our theater, called Black Arts/West (after the late Black Arts/West of San Francisco), with a production of two of Ed Bullins' plays, *Electronic Nigger* and *A Son, Come Home.* Since then we have been open Friday and Saturday nights and have presented plays by Ben Caldwell, Ossie Davis, and Imamu Amiri Baraka.

Our more powerful things were original, mostly improvisional productions working from a loose outline written and performed by the New Group Theater (an independent Black owned and operated drama group, functioning under the aegis of Black Arts/West). These shows have proven to be our powerhouses and form the bulk of our travelling shows, which come under the control of the New Group Theater. Another tradition which we have started and would like to continue is the performance of plays written by Brothers and Sisters in the community. Some of the plays done under this section include *Da Minstrel Show, Days of Thunder, Nights of Violence, Guerrilla Warfare* by Bro. K. Curtis Lyle, and *Poor Willie* by Bro. Aaron Dumas, as well as *Black Power Every Hour,* a collage of Black revolutionary poetry, music, dance, and drumming, arranged and directed by Sis. Ana V. Thorne.

Last year's summer program included daily two-hour classes in African drama and film-making, in which the students were paid from funds from the O.E.O. summer program. The youths in the program, some returning for the second and even third year, did performances at playgrounds (which drew some static from the Park Department because some white people didn't like what we were doing on *their* beach in *their* neighborhood), and the Seattle Pop Festival (which electrified the over 30,000 people who saw us over the three-day period, with some of the biggest names in the white rock and Black rock blues fields, i.e., Charles Lloyd, Bo Didley, Ike and Tina Turner, Chicago Transit Authority, Santana, etc., as our competition). Plus the fact that we were relegated to a meadow at the other end of the big stage—equivalent to the old 'back of the bus' days—and then to add insult and injury, they came and asked us to turn our sound system down, we were giving them and all of their thousand dollars worth of equipment too much competition! And still we were baaad. Still we were very funky. Just how funky was brought to everyone's attention when, after getting no requests, they—the people running the show—had to put us on the big stage. The H.N.I.C. of our program, Bro. Douglas Q. Barnett, talked to Bro. Diddley, and Bro. Diddley very graciously gave us the last ten minutes of his show to do our thing. And we did it. (Righteously.)

Several of us have also taken part, as actors or stage crew, in the regular productions of Black Arts/West. Since the end of the summer, about half of us have been in the theater every day after school—dancing, doing lighting and sound, answering the phone, sweeping, and washing everything from dishes in the kitchen to mirrors in the dressing room. Until recently, we weren't getting paid, either. So what we did, we did to help to keep our Black thing going, alive. We of Black Arts/West have done a masterful job of surviving with almost no money from any outside source, anywhere. The liberators of the Afro-American dance group (comprised of Black youths who just stayed on when school started) have done two benefits, one in late October, 1969, and the other in late February, 1970, which is a total of four nights of downright funky dancing which has contributed close to $1,400 to the dance group and theater.

At the beginning of the year we received $19,000 in Seattle Model Cities funds, the first significant amount of federal funds we have received. In order to fulfill federal guidelines, part of the money must be used to make our building multi-purpose, so the lobby will be renovated to display Black paintings and sculpture. The rest of the $19,000 will pay the H.N.I.C.'s salary for a year, add a staff member, Sister Lorna Richards, pay utilities, make necessary repairs to the building, and cover standard operational expenses. There is no provision, however, for rent, production costs for plays, or expansion of our program. To take care of these things more and more things are being done every day to increase our contact with the Black community. The NAACP has established a traditional theater party on the first weekend of our openings; Madrona Elementary (a neighborhood school) PTA has bought out the house for

Collage by Ademola

a show, and just today there was talk of sending out complimentary tickets to all Central Area business men, and civic, religious, and fraternal organizations for our dress rehearsals.

As we stated before, we survive with the aid of Model Cities money, but we have to survive, even if we are not funded after this year runs out, so we feel it is of primary importance to build strong community support, so that we do survive—just in case.

Survival assured for this year, we plan to open our season with *Wine In The Wilderness* on March 20th, to be followed by *Last Man Out, Who's Got His Own, Big Time Buck White, Slave Ship, The Reckoning, El Hajj Malik, The Message, The Streetcorner, The Thieves,* and *You Gon Let Me Take You Out Tonight Baby?*

Remember, as the Head Nigger In Charge, Bro. Douglas Quinton Barnett, teaches us (of Black Arts/West): "A theater without a community is a theater without expression, and vice versa." Lasima Tuchinde Mbilashaka: "We shall conquer without a doubt."

Bro. Magere Taalmu,
the warrior/scholar
Black Arts/West

THE YARD THEATRE: JAMAICA

> Black Art initiates, supports, and promotes change. It refuses to accept values laid down by dead men. It sets its own values and reinforces them with hard and/or soft words and sounds.
>
> Maulana Ron Karenga

Jamaica, an island whose beauty definitely surpasses that described in the travel folders, yet bathing in a sea of American imperialist oppression is just about drowning in Euro-centric values. Its moneyed middle class hardly takes the time to utter "save me" but instead jumps into the nearest ark and splits to America, Canada or England. The Rastafarians who realize that it was only because of slavery that they came to Jamaica are leaving for Africa/Ethiopia either physically or mentally/spiritually. A few brave folk refuse to say "uncle" to Sam and John Bull and have started instead, in the words of Marina Maxwell and Edward Braithwaite, "to search for an alternative tradition" (to the European culture which has been force fed down West Indian throats) i.e. to search "for a new and real West Indian aesthetic." The search is being carried on in all arenas; Marina Maxwell is doing it in Theatre.

Let us not forget the rigid class structure that keeps Jamaican society divided today; the whites are at the top, passing-for-whites next, the different shades of yellows and browns rainbow through the middle on down to the Black man at the very bottom. These distinct classes never meet except to exploit whoever is directly below them in the class structure. *(Same as in the other Harlems all over the world, Yu kno...)*

Sister Marina has been dealing this structure some steady blows. She has opened her yard up to all Afro-Jamaicans who, like her, recognize the eternal ties: through Africa, their North American experience, and their very Spirit. Marina calls what takes place at the Yard Theatre a secular ritual. It certainly is not a "play" by most definitions. She invites musicians, poets, neighbors, Rastafarians, who act out, react and interact in the ritual.

"The Yard Theatre is an attempt to place West Indian the-

atre in the life of the People—it is free, it is open to the street where people can stand and hear, come in or leave. It is an attempt to find West Indian theatre and to find it in the yards where people live and are," says Marina.

Carnival is common to all the West Indian islands and South American countries. Its pace is set by the throb of the drum, be it steel or skin covered; it is a throb, Marina feels, that is set to the heart-beat of all Black people. She sees Carnival as a West Indian folk art and utilizes this yearly occurrence as a vehicle in her ritual, *Play Mas'*, which is very loosely structured. Like Jazz the people in it duet and chorus, etc. with the "audience" interacting if and when they feel like. The story of *Play Mas'* opens as three men prepare a huge butterfly for Carnival. They are oblivious to the predicament that imperialism and neocolonialism have placed them in. Their knowledge of the other Third World people who share their misfortune is just about non-existent. These Third World people drift in and out of the scene telling tales of their struggles: Afro-Americans in the U.S., South Africans against Apartheid, and Vietnamese against U.S. aggression. There are revolutionaries in it too who *only talk* a good game—no follow through. The story ends with the butterfly, which symbolizes the beauty that Black folk can create for themselves, unfinished. It is unfinished as is our liberation struggle.

Play Mas' along with the other happenings in Marina's yard are sensual/gut/all touching experiences rather than cerebral ones. It is a very real experience to behold as the moon and candles in calabashes light up the yard instead of electric flood lights. Sister Marina begins by pouring a libation and making a "veve" (Haitian symbol of the Voudon gods). The drums start beating in step with the heart-beats of the Black people intimately drawn together there in the sacred secular ritual as they bring back their myths, rituals and magic. They move away from Europe and towards home. In the words of Jamaican poet Basil Smith:

I am a blood claat Ethiopian,
Sufferer,
Exile
Held by the
many chains of bondage
in the land of Babylon.

But Hear ya,
any time mi dance
mi know
seh mi no born ya,
an anytime ah dream
mi know seh
mi nah dead ya,
for I shall return
in body or in spirit
to the land of my fathers
and the bosom
of my own
Black God.

It's a good combination—the *Play Mas'*, in the Yard Theatre, and in the yard, Black people, searching Black people, looking for a way to change things. This combination produces an all-encompassing something: a new/ancient-ritual/play-information/involving vehicle in which one reaffirms one's dedication to the Struggle. Shouldn't this be what theatre is all about? West Indian or otherwise????

Paulette Perrier

MEXICO: BLACK ART IN MEXICO

By MARVIN X

"There is not one artistic activity that can be separated from the life of the people," says Pedro Enrique, a Black Venezuelan, who is the leader of a Black theatre group in Mexico. The group is composed of Brothers and Sisters from throughout the Western hemisphere. There is Ceireilo, also from Venezuela, Julia Marichal from Cuba, Yoya Afrochoco from Colombia, Beverly Collins from New York, Albertina Tamayo and Miguel Delgado from Mexico. The group performs the poetry, songs, and dances of Afro-Americans, i.e., Africans living in the Americas.

Pedro, who writes and arranges most of the material, is regarded as an expert on the poetry and songs of Black people in South America. He stated: "All art of the people is ultimately related and is inseparable from the productive life of the people. An artist cannot use his art as an excuse for not acting politically and militarily. He must be willing to do all those things."

One of Pedro's poems is *Tu Abuela Donde Esta*, or, "Where Is Your Grandmother." Many Black people in South America do not believe they are Black, especially in Mexico, even though they may often have a Black grandmother hiding in the kitchen when company comes!

HATARI*

The 3M Company, a corporation of totally unscrupulous beasts is on a "Black Is Profitable (and dumb)" rampage. They have just written Black Theatre magazine along with several other artists and writers from the Black community for unconditional all-encompassing *rights* to our writings, paintings, etc., while offering us payment which must have come out of their petty cash box. They have recently distributed several new books which are really photo copies of old books by now dead Black authors. (We don't know how much money these dead Black folks' families made off the deal but if 3M holds true to form we're sure they didn't treat these dead Brothers any better than they are treating the live ones.) Several years ago they tried all kinds of maneuvers to get to copy *all* of the material kept at the Schomberg (Library) Collection in Harlem (one of the most thorough and beautiful and totally BLACK libraries in the world). But Harlem people refused to let them in. O.K. Let's stay together, Black people.

* Hatari is Swahili for danger.

The United States of America has no right to try me as I am not a citizen of the United States, having renounced my so-called citizenship December 7, 1967 in Toronto, Canada because the U.S.A. has, by action and inaction, deprived me and my Brothers and Sisters, the 30 to 60 million so-called Negroes, better known as Asiatic Black People, of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

I say I renounced my so-called citizenship, for just as wood can remain in water for ten years but never become a crocodile, even though I was born in these hells of North America, it was never my desire to be a U.S. citizen. My U.S. citizenship was forced upon me and my people by the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which has *made* us U.S. citizens in name only, the right of self-determination was not given to us, consequently we have enjoyed the status of free slaves ever since, for the world knows we have never been treated as first class citizens.

Now the U.S.A. has the arrogance to find me guilty of refusing induction into the racist, fascist army of America—to fight in the most savage war in history, as U.N. Secretary-General U Thant has described it. Not only is it against my nature and religion to fight someone who has not attacked me, but even asking me to serve, with prison as the consequence of not serving, is a violation of the 13th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution which supposedly abolished slavery and involuntary servitude.

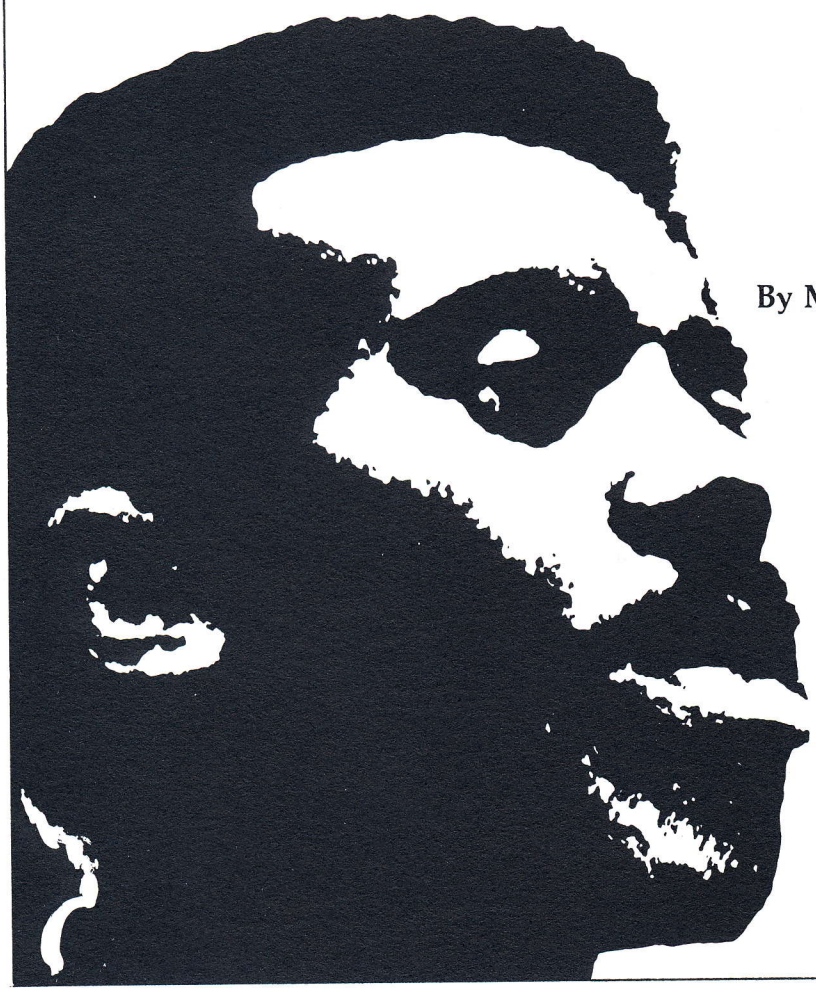
I also maintain that the U.S. Government has no right or authority to try me since I was kidnaped in a conspiracy between the U.S.A. and the British Colony of Honduras and brought within the jurisdiction of the U.S. courts against my will and in violation of International Law.

Finally, since I am not a U.S. citizen, in fact, never was a U.S. citizen, and have no desire to be a U.S. citizen, I demand that the U.S.A. deport me at the earliest possible date to the country of my choice, either to the Cooperative Republic of Guyana, the Republic of the Sudan, the United Arab Republic, the Democratic Republic of North Vietnam, the People's Republic of North Korea, the People's Republic of China, or the Republic of Cuba.

I further demand the immediate release of all political prisoners held in the numerous jails and prisons of America: All Black prisoners are political prisoners—Blackness is the most profound political reality in America!

Peace Through Prolonged Struggle,

Marvin X Jackmon
San Francisco County Jail
September 9, 1970



STATEMENT

By Marvin X Jackmon

Drawing by George Ford

LAFAYETTE THEATRE OPENING NIGHT—1936

THE NEW LAFAYETTE THEATRE

By ROSCOE ORMAN

Black theatre, as it exists today, is no more or less defined than our present state of existence here in this crumbling Western grave. The demands made upon all Black people are ever increasing, as we must prepare ourselves for whatever the future may hold in store. The New Lafayette Theatre, along with other serious groups and individual Black Artists, is faced with the task of confronting the times with a continuing flow of sincere and meaningful work which can reflect with clarity and insight the ever changing reality of the Black Consciousness.

As we moved into the Christian year 1970 there were new impending forces at work in the universe which demanded the greatest discipline on our part towards our work. Spirits were low, as the winter months are always hard on us (being from a much warmer place), and physical health problems, due to bad heating facilities in the theatre, held up the continuity of the work to some extent. We were in the beginning stages of preparation for our second "ritual," an effort outside of the "play" form of conventional theatre. In this one we were to "Raise The Dead And Foretell The Future," a task which in pure spiritual terms, far-out-distanced anything we had attempted thus far. We had to reach deep into our personal and historical consciousness in an effort to project our collective vision into a future reality of our own creation, one which would "inspire the dead to rise, the lost to sing, the spiritually crippled to dance into the Black Future . . . As One."

Among the many things that were learned or reaffirmed through this experience, was the fact that Black Art is its own criteria of excellence, and therefore, any individual standards for criticism are invalid, especially since the *real* art is the group experience that occurs during any particular performance, which, of course, must vary each and every time it is done. So, the "critic" (if there is such a thing anymore) must first ask himself, "what happened?" Once he has come to some reasonable conclusion about that, then he may proceed, if he wishes, with "now, was that a worthwhile experience, and why?" But why bother, my brother? No

Black people of any large consequence are influenced by theatre reviews anyway. They will come to the theatre usually because somebody said, "man, that movie was mean."

Our current production, *Duplex—A Black Love Fable—In Four Movements*, was one of the meanest "movies" you ever seen. As in other pieces constructed by Brother Bullins, the theme is Blackness, love: the life-forces that move us through the universal occurrence of everyday struggles with death, foolishness, fear, pride, anger, and violence. The people dug it very much, and so did we. One brother dug it so much during a Sunday matinee, that he decided to walk into the play and live there for a while, which he did. Until he was politely escorted backstage by one of the characters in the play, he was completely "captive" to the spell of Black Art.

As of this writing, we are in our last week of performances of *Duplex*, after which, we will take a brief rest, and then begin working towards another kind of experience, which is as yet undefined beyond the tentative title, "A Black Time." It is set to open in late August.

Over the past year or so a beautiful working relationship has developed to enhance the artistic aura and achievement of the New Lafayette. The brothers of Nyumba Ya Sanaa Gallery and Academy Of Arts And Studies have joined and aided Brother Macbeth and company in creating the visual imagery necessary for complete fulfillment of the artistic intent. Brothers Ademola Olugbefola, Bill Howell, and Abdul Rahman, who worked together along with others of their fellow artists for some ten years, are now responsible for all of the art work and design concepts in and around the theatre. Needless to say, their contribution has been immeasurable. The same can also be said in respect to our high priests of sound. Over the past year, Chief Bey (who doubles as an actor), Nadi Qamar, Naji Mulia, Sonny Morgan, and Richie Landrum, all accomplished musicians in their own right, have developed, with the actors, a sense of group playing, unprecedented in terms of freedom and capacity for pure expression in a theatrical setting. All of these artists, musicians, painters, designers, along with the Brothers and Sisters of the Acting Company, in coming together and working on a basis of pure human effort, hopefully will reaffirm in the hearts of our people the essence of our Blackness, so that we may meet the difficult times ahead with foresight and vision.

New Lafayette Theatre
June 27, 1970

Woodcut by Taiwo Shabazz

Woodcut by Ademola

ADEMOLA'S STATEMENT

The burden of injustice is a blessing to the strong . . . A curse to the weak . . . Its existence provides the necessary incentive and undeniable momentum for the miracle of the new world.

Mask of the sacred poro society is the catalyst for revelations of the sacred forgotten dreams of the beginning . . . The blessing of eternal life.

The Rhythm of our everyday lives is a facade of unusually effective complications and hangups. Our downbeat dictated by society, upbeat rendered strengthless by our lack of humbleness. The scourge of fire, the joy of laughter, the regal concept of the Black panther, the faith in our diversified array of idols brings about the contemporary rebirth of Jungle Rhythm No. 2 . . . Harlem.

The eight wives of Shango . . . The rebirth of the colors of life, love and pseudo reality. As my ancient spirit caresses the riches of beginning realities, the existence of Egyptia's radiant aura encompasses the myth of Shango's eight queens—mothering, laughing, caring, dancing, working, loving, surviving in glorious rhythm under the sun, under the moon, as Shango continues on his search for the road to eternal life . . . the search for reality.

The miraculous blessing of fertility is but a prelude to the glorious anxiety and victorious entry into the womb of life.

Be it Nefetiti, Cleopatra, Egyptia, my mother or you, the unmistakable grandeur of the Chin line in days of sunshine, chaos or strife marks the Black Queen as a diamond among coal.

Ademola Olugebefola
August 27, 1968

Photo by James Belfon

CHANT

By IMAMU AMIRI BARAKA

Women move, shuffle, slide feet, head down, across, turn back across
across across, head down, then thrown back, cross, cross, front circle
'round, hands wide at hips spread them moving up in front before them
shuffle around; make a circle shuffle arms stiff out front, almost
touching their sisters' shoulders.
They begin to hum . . . Hmmm Hmmmm Hmmmmm Hmmmmmm Hmmmmmmm Hmmmmmm
They drop one arm, wave it straight out in front . . . Hmmm . . . stiff armed
almost touching . . . Hmmm Hmmmm Hmmmmm Hmmmmm Hmmmmmm.
Men now come out as women complete circle humming shuffle
offstage arms one arm flaps then the other arm flaps at side on off.
Men, arms crossed in front on stomach shuffling same step. Humming
endless back and forth down across, then circling 'round with long hum.
Raising arms still crossed to eye level, then down. In rhythm up to
eye level, wave still crossed side to side and shuffling.

Drawing by Ademola

Women calling from side stage:
"God God God God God God
Devil Devil Devil Devil Devil Devil"
Fall out in circling line 'round in back of men. Long circle Hum. 
Shuffling repeat "God God God / Black truth Black truth Black truth.
Help us move. Help us move. God Black truth God Black truth God
Black truth God Black Light Truth. Help us move."
Women's arms spread suddenly open . . . "Ahhh" (in actual ecstasy)
"Ahhh"
Men raise crossed arms to eye level
Arms suddenly part / Shuffle continues
Women turn go opposite way 
meet go around outside of men inside circle humming: 
"Black man's nation
Black man's nation
Black man's nation
Black man's nation
Black man's nation"
Screams Screams from men Cries from men
"Black man's nation / Black man's Nation / Black man's nation . . .
Black man's Nation . . . (NATURAL SOUNDS OF ALL THINGS FROM ALL PLAYERS)
(FOREST SOUNDS)
Where is
Where is
Where is . . .
Circles going in opposite directions in humming chant. Hmmm Hmmm Hmm Hmm . . . 
". . . the Blackman's nation . . ."
Women: Where is . . . .
Men: Black man's Nation
Women: Where is
Men: Black Man's Nation
Women: (in growingly shriller tone): Where is
Men: Black Man's Nation / Black Man's Nation / Black Man's Nation
Where is
Black Man's
Nation
Hmmm
Hmm
HMMM Screams Screams Screams - - - - Cries from men
Women: Black Man's Nation / Black Man's Nation
Men's arms flying free and recrossing as they shuffle
Line stop and face each other W⋮ ⋮M

In and Out / Lines move In and Out
"Ahhh W M
Ahhh W M
Ahhh W M
Ahhh" W M
"Hmmmmm W M
Hmmmmm
Hmmmmm
Hmmmmm"
(NATURAL SOUNDS FOREST SOUNDS)
ALL STOP - - - - BARAKA FREEZE - - - - MOVE - - - - STOP
(In Background, "We're A Winner")
Move, shuffle, around, pointing to sky
Breaking out of chain
Breaking out NO back in form

Talking of Black Art, Theatre, Revolution and Nationhood

The following interviews were taken over the past year in Algeria, North Africa at The First Pan African Cultural Festival and in Manhattan and Harlem.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Peter Bailey	Marcia McBroom
Imamu Amiri Baraka	Thelma Oliver
Ed Bullins	Roscoe Orman
Ben Caldwell	Roberta Raysor
Eldridge Cleaver	Michael Schultz
Emory Douglas	Clayton Riley
Roger Furman	Richard Wesley
Nathan Hare	Dick Williams
Woodie King	Julia Wright
An Algerian student	Voice from the Audience

PART I — 1st PAN-AFRICAN CULTURAL FESTIVAL

ACT I

BULLINS: I'm working at The New Lafayette Theatre in Harlem. I also edit Black Theatre Magazine, and I have worked with Eldridge Cleaver at Black House in San Francisco.

I'm extremely happy for an Afro-American Center here in Algiers, and that I was invited over by the Algerian government as an individual, but there isn't a Black American delegation to the festival, that I know of, which is working in the cultural sphere of Black America, and that makes me a bit disappointed. But just getting here to North Africa and meeting again with Eldridge Cleaver, coming with Black American artists, and talking and seeing the interest of the Algerian people and the other African people here, well that has raised my spirits. Seeing all this and then knowing of the Black political struggle, the Black cultural and artistic struggle now being waged in America at this time. . . . We have to revolutionize our culture, the Black culture in America, and hook up with the third world and our Black African brothers. And this is like one step, and Eldridge and the Black Panthers and the other Afro-American brothers here in Algiers at this time are helping in this, and I'm very happy to be a part of this historical moment and to see that it's being done.

CLEAVER: I think that one of the things that makes this very singificant is the presence of Black people from Babylon who are here in Algeria, who are not endorsed or sponsored by the capitalist-imperialist government of the United States, because there has always been the government-approved concept of culture before, but we understand culture to be part of the totality of the expression of ways of a people; the ways of people subject to Fascist pig suppression can only be pro-revolution. And this view-point wouldn't be put forward ordinarily. Since being in Algeria we see the credibility gap loom larger than the Atlantic Ocean, a gap that's created by the U.S. Information Service, UPI and the Associated Press. But a very urgent need, I think, has been typified by past relations between Afro-Americans and people on the African continent before, and there's a very great need for a clear understanding of what's happening on both sides of the water, and that this could never be done with the government, under the auspices of the government of the United States, that is.

. . . . . .

BULLINS: Pan African, as I understand it, is a synonym for Afro . . . African unity, including all of Africa

and the African peoples, wherever African people exist. And I think in these times, that Pan Africanism should have like a special meaning to it, meaning communications among African people. I think that this is one of the reasons for this conference that we're playing a part in—communications in a broad sense of the . . . the widest sense, the cultural sense which includes everything in the totality, as you said, Eldridge, a few minutes ago. So seeing many of the people from Pan Africa, and their participating together in Algeria, in this 1st Pan African Cultural Festival, in a revolutionary situation, will hearten other people in other countries, other people of African origin, in their revolutionary struggle. And so Pan Africanism in this context right now has a very positive and a vital and a real type of meaning, because it's being displayed in the streets of Algeria that we're walking through, on this very evening.

. . . . . .

HARE: I personally think that revolution or any collective social act moves forward in stages, even though the stages may differ from place to place and from time to time, and that we have to recognize things on this basis, and I think that what Brother Bullins was talking about, when he mentioned the meaning of culture, that culture is a part of the struggle of man to cope with whatever conflicts or contradictions, conditions, etc., he encounters, whether with his environment or with other people. We're talking about the question of culture for what? And if we want to reclaim the past, and to go back to a day(?), and glorify the spurious achievements under oppression, then that's a negative cultural approach, and it can bog us down in that first stage forever. So I think that it's very fine to look to cultural activity as revolutionary, and that we have to move towards the unification of people on the basis of a struggle, on the basis of oppression, which is the common commodity. We cannot . . . (indistinct) . . . actually the single, monolithic problem, like racism or economic or whatnot, but when you do that you set one criterion as being all inclusive and you . . . you mutually exclude one . . . (indistinct) . . . to think beyond his own circumstances. So I think that we have to realize that because we have racist oppressors, non-racist oppressors, racist non-oppressors, and non-racist non-oppressors. And so consequently we have to . . . seek to . . . (indistinct) . . . and try to move together; even though we keep our own basic unity wherever we are. We still have to recognize that it's not absolute, and that we have to also seek . . . (indistinct) . . . and give help to those in other places, and this is what has been the beauty of the summer (?) here to me, as I said earlier, is to see the Algerians, of a different hue and culture and circumstance, in particular be so enthusiastic about the plight of Blacks, say, in the United States or in Africa, whatever.

So Pan-Africa has never observed . . . the particular divisions of Africa, but has moved beyond that, too, to unite all the people who are stuck with a common problem of oppression, and especially in the sense that I think that (indistinct) the American move to dominate the rest of the world, and this is why I think that the Black Americans can play a great role there, because they are right there . . . (indistinct) . . . in the horse's mouth, so to speak, to try to bring this thing to a conclusion, a just conclusion.

. . . . . .

BULLINS: Yes. Addressing myself to the question of African culture, I was happy to attend the opening session of a symposium on African culture, its realities, its role in the liberation struggle, that was sponsored by this festival. And papers were sent by many African heads of states. President Senghor of Senegal sent in a paper, and I'll paraphrase from it because I didn't write his message down in completion. African culture is a dialogue between Black Africa, Arab Africa and the Berber culture. It's an intermingling, of all African cultures, separate cultures, mingled into one thing, and it's inspiring . . . just acquainting myself with these concepts and seeing the concepts in practice, like I have and form some groundwork, to pick the best of what I've seen here, the best of the intermingling, and take it back in my head to racist America, take it back and attempt to achieve a revolutionary Black American culture. . . . And by taking the best . . . that I can from Africa, and the best . . . which is in me as an artist and the culture that I draw upon, the Black American culture, oppressive true, and producing this in plays, in films, and creating media . . . pushing for, like the total revolutionization of the culture, as (indistinct) does for the Black Panther Party. When it's time to paint a gun, a gun should be painted and put in the hands of the people who should identify with these symbols. So it's creating symbols, the way of the Black artist is, on the stage, in books, on the street. You know, if it goes down in time, the things we have to run down, and we have to like run down to people some images of guns and death, that'll be the artistic activity then, but the total activity of . . . the artists or whoever's involved is what I'm concerned in, and . . . in coming here and acquainting myself with some aspects of the African culture that I've heard, you know, about, read about, related to, has been very beneficial and very revolutionary for the Algerian govenment to bring Afro-Americans here, and I hope that all of us will go back and work in our separate and united ways to like produce, create that is, for we are creators, revolution.

. . . and that, I think, is the true role of the revolutionary Black artist and I've seen this reinforced by meeting other Black revolutionary artists from wherever Black people are here in Algeria.

. . . . . .

CLEAVER: We have seen some examples of what we could call frankly apolitical culture, but that we notice that those countries who are struggling for liberation, identification, struggling to lift the boot of the oppressive bloodsucking people, those countries' culture is very vividly reflected . . . reflects the attitude of struggle, struggle and more struggle, and it's not an endless array of thinking (?). So . . . folk dances or singing and dancing, because we would call it in Babylon the happy, singing darkies, singing "Old Black Joe" and "I wish I Was In the Land of Cotton." Now (indistinct) . . . so it's very evident to us that those people who are actively engaged in

the struggle for lifting imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, fascism, the culture is very reflective of the struggle, because theres been an attempt, worldwide attempt, by the agents of imperialism, the U.S. Information Agency and (indistinct) groups to divorce the question of culture from politics, to approach the whole thing metaphysically, and there are those opportunists, Afro-Americans and Black Africans, who are obviously dogmatists and imperialists and opportunists, subjectivists (?) in one way or another, and would only capitalize off this . . . what they feel is the igonrance of the masses. But it's quite evident here (in Algiers) that we have a political approach, a very political approach, and a class approach, and of the class . . . working class here relates, that the whole country here relates to the struggle of Black people, it relates . . . it relates to the culture of Black people in America when it's presented in a . . . just in a general (?) manner.

7/24/69

ACT II

BULLINS: 1969. We're sitting at the Aletti Hotel in Algiers. I'm here with Sister Thelma Oliver, an actress, singer and dancer from New York, and Sister Oliver has been gone from the States for a number of months, having traveled extensively through Europe and she is now for the first time on the continent of Africa, and we're going to talk about her intentions to go into Africa, sub-Sahara Africa, and discover many of the rituals, the mysteries, the pageantry of African spectacle, performance, drama, music and dance.

OLIVER: Wow, you sure make it sound like something way out.

BULLINS: Well, to us it's . . . I guess it's commonplace, our being . . . in the field of Black Arts, and intentionally trying to discover and relearn those things. Where do you first intend to go?

OLIVER: Well, I'd like to start in Nigeria. And I'd like to work my way through Ghana and Senegal, and that's all.

. . . . . .

BULLINS: What things do you want to see in the countries?

OLIVER: I want to feel the people, you know. I want to . . . to just get to know the land, and Africa has been like a dark continent, for me, according to what they've been telling me for so long. I want to throw a little light on it for myself. And I've met quite a few Africans, you know, in the States and especially in Europe, but I know . . . that inside of Black Africa is something that is probably very difficult to explain . . . even for Africans to explain to me. You know, they say, "You just have to go. You just have to go and see for yourself." . . . but I don't want to spend time in the major cities, because major cities are the same all over the world. I want to move into small towns and small villages and just feel out the people. I want to find out as much as I can about the art and the culture and the rhythm and the religion and the dancing and the . . .

BULLINS: And you intend then to use this in your work when you get back.

OLIVER: Well, I don't know to what extent I'll use it or even how I'll use it. I kind of romanticized at one point and thought, yes, you know, I'll be taking back all kinds of marvelous things to use, but I don't even . . . I don't know. I just don't know what I will find, I don't know what I will get out of it, and I don't know to what extent I will be able to use it. But I do know that . . . just by going there, I will be expanding myself, and that of course . . . will be in my work. I don't know how much of a direct transfer I will be able to do or even will want to do, once I get there.

BULLINS: Now we met here at the First Pan African Festival of the Arts, here in Algeria, and since that time we've seen a number of performances from various countries. Would you like to speak about some of the performances, theatre performances, dance and . . .

OLIVER: Well, frankly I haven't seen as much as I had hoped I would see, you know. I was kind of hoping that there would be performances going on from ten o'clock in the morning until twelve o'clock at night, you know. But from the things that we have seen I was most impressed with Senegal. Senegal presented a theatrical piece; it was sort of pageantry. And for me it was one of the most complete forms of theatre in terms of its use of all the realms of the performing arts. You know, the drama, the comedy, the mime, the music, the dance. It was so beautifully integrated and . . . so rhythmic. The rhythm never stopped, the melodies never stopped, from conversational speaking to just a little something of a stringed instrument. You know, the melody never stopped, and it rose and fell and dipped and swooped around and just took me on a merry trip, and I tell you, it was really an inspiration. I saw another piece from Niger that was not quite as captivating for me. It was more of a traditional piece. And not handled with the same kind of imagination that Senegal did. But I'm just thrilled to be seeing theatre, African theatre, Black theatre that is done by Africans in Africa about Africa, you know, and whatever level that they're on . . . what I think it should be isn't really important, you know. The thing is that they are working in theatre, they are making an effort to communicate and to discover themselves in that medium. We don't know very much about African theatre, but from what I understand, there is a very, very long history of African theatre, not just the ritual and the dance as we know it, not just the rhythmic chants and ceremonial things as we know it. That there has always existed a theatre, you know, in which actors performed and told plays and did . . . and did things. But that's something that we have been kept very ignorant of, and now I think Africa is going through a transition from their own kind of presentation of a play into more of a European type form, you know.

I feel that the transition is very rough for some and kind of forced, and therefore not really natural, you know, but we have to go through those changes, I guess.

BULLINS: Yes. Speaking of the lost or the hidden African theatre, do you feel that we Black theatre workers who discover this lost tradition, those ways of working, can bring them back to Afro-America and revitalize some aspects of Black theatre in America?

Photographed in Algeria

That Black theatre in America is going through its most strongest period, but there's still a lot of work to be done with it. But do you feel that, you know, our discovering the African thing can help us?

OLIVER: I think it most certainly can. I think any discovery that we make about ourselves, in terms of history, of culture, of tradition, of our ancestors, is going to be of a help. Sometimes it takes a long time to be able to get rid of all of the things that we have learned, and that have been imposed upon us by Western civilization to get to ourselves—you know, to get to that part that is basic. And I think all that we can discover about Africa can be of a big help to us. Not that we rest there, not that we duplicate that, not that we go back there, merely that this is also a part of all of the things that go into making the Black American theatre as it is. See?

BULLINS: Yeah. Along with your self-discovery, your artistic searching and your scholarly approach to finding indigenous theatrical forms here in Africa, you're also a political activist—political activist in the way of working here in Algeria at the Afro-American Center which has been set up, working with Eldridge Cleaver and the Black Panther Party. . . . Would you care to discuss some of that?

OLIVER: Well, my political awareness has come, really, very recently, and I would say within the past three years, I have become really kind of aware of the political situation in terms of how the system is working and how we are being manipulated in this system. I am for revolution and I am just beginning to understand the workings of revolutionary organizations. I have never been involved with an organization before, I have never really walked the picket line. That is, this hasn't been my thing, you know. But I am interested in the political revolution and I'm interetsed in terms of how . . . how the art can best serve that. I don't like the dividing lines, you know, of this is political, this is artistic, this is social, this is economic. Somehow I feel that they are all fingers on the same hand, you know, and that my understanding of all of the areas will aid me in my doing whatever I want to do through art, in terms of the revolution.

My working with the Afro-American Center here in Algeria is the first time that I've been affiliated with a political organization, and it certainly has been an eye opener. You know, I have learned a lot about what exists in the States, I've learned a lot about the thinking of this particular revolutionary group, in terms of how it feels the system is best to be combatted, and what have you.

BULLINS: The last time I saw you, before you left the States, was in New York at Town Hall, at a benefit for LeRoi Jones. How do you associate that experience with this political experience? I mean, an evolution of your coming through . . . from America through Europe to Africa, and encountering some of the same political forces, in that complete cycle?

OLIVER: Well, I would say that was kind of a beginning and it was sort of the first chance that I had to be able to express myself through the art into a political situation. I'm . . . I'm glad LeRoi is free, you know. I'm really glad that he is free. And I'm

glad that all of the efforts to free him have . . . have succeeded. That was for me just a part of the whole thing, you know, a part of the whole working, a part of the whole coming under . . . a kind of an understanding, this sort of beginning to see, beginning to see, and I think my coming here to Europe and away from the States for awhile has given me a chance to check it out from another vantage point, from another point of view, to be able to get out of the immediate pressures that are there long enough to be able to see what is happening, and also to be . . . to talk to people from all over the world and see that it . . . where it's happening all over the world, you know, check out the whole pattern.

BULLINS: Yeah. How would you view the status or position or the condition of the Black artist in Europe? You've been all over Europe.

OLIVER: Well, I don't think that there are very many, if any, Black artists in Europe. There are quite a few negro artists that are there, but not many Black artists that are there. Most of the artists that I have run into are still hung up in the kind of capitalistic approach to art. They're out to win their own popularity, they're out to do their own thing and to permeate through the white class, the middle class, the bourgeois class, and to become someone that is famous and has a long car and lots of Cadillacs and things like that. That seems to be the ideal approach for most artists. And I have spoken to quite a few that have been there for ten and seventeen years, artists that came over . . . Oh, in the early fifties, when Black people in Europe were very rare specimens and were just eaten up, and these people were given a kind of a feeling of being somebody that they had never experienced before in the States, and now, though, because there are so many Black artists that have come over, they're not as . . . as much of a . . .

BULLINS: An oddity?

OLIVER: Right. They're not as much of a rarity as they were before. So they're beginning to feel the pull and the revolutionary movement that is happening in the States and they're confused, you see. They're confused and they're being tugged in two or three different directions. And I've had so many of them say to me, "I'm afraid to go back. I'm so afraid to go back. I'm afraid that if I go back, if I walk through Harlem, that I won't belong there and that people will look at me and I will look at them, and . . . I just won't belong." And they're really afraid, though there is this desire to go back now, because there is an identification that is existing there that is stronger than the false one that they were hanging onto in Europe.

BULLINS: Yeah. I was in London last summer and the Black artists . . . some of the Black political groups, myself, and a number of West Indian brothers organized a benefit for LeRoi and for Obi Egbuna, a Biafran playwright who's in London and was put in jail then by the British government for making statements against the police that were said to be seditionist, because the London police belong to the English government, to the queen. Also, part of the benefit funds were to go to Wole Soyinka, who is reportedly imprisoned in Nigeria.* And we got large cooperation amongst the Black people in London from many seemingly diverse groups—from West Indians, various African groups, from the East Indian groups, and from many of the revolutionary movements headquartered in London. Michael X (Michael de Freitas), who was one of the backbones of the organizing, and myself called the event *A Third World Benefit for Three Black Writers.* Before that happened there was a myth in London that you couldn't get those particular Third World peoples together over a single issue. But the key was that Stokely, Stokely Carmichael who is here at this festival now, came to London the year before and electrified their imaginations. . . . through the popular press, of course, and more important, through direct contact with Michael X's movement of West Indian people and others. And the benefit was a great success in terms of turn-out and so many Black people showing up in London. Even Sammy Davis, Jr. showed up and performed for the people after considerable duress from Michael and his people . . . and it had a considerable unifying effect. And a feeling pervaded that the Black artists, wherever he is, will answer that appeal from the people, you know, when it's made to him or he's confronted by it, especially on his own doorstep, though at the base of that feeling you may discover naivete.

* Wole Soyinka has since been released.

ACT III

DOUGLAS: My name is Emory Douglas. I'm the Minister of Culture of the Black Panther Party. My job is to get out literature, such as posters and newspapers, to observe pictures which are made on us about the Black Panther Party, and to attend all rallies, so that I can give an analysis and take a position and explain to people what revolutionary culture is all about. And because of the situation today, where people are being oppressed by the U.S. government, the Black Panther Party says that the only culture worth keeping is the revolutionary culture.

The Black Panther Party says that all culture should be subordinate to your politics, in that if your culture is not subordinate to your politics, the politician will be standing alone and he will be talking to himself and he will be talking to the walls. And we say that the only way to free Afro-Americans is to not think about only Afro-Americans—we must think about all Africa and all oppressed humanity.

Therefore, our revolutionary culture starts with trying to find ways of stopping the indecent housing, our culture starts with trying to get a better education that exposes the true nature of that racist, decadent society of the U.S. government. And also with the slogan, *All Power to the People,* making it become a reality. But we understand that if you are to have a revolutionary culture that you must have guns to back that up. (applause) That is why the Black Panther Party says that the guns belong in the hands of the people instead of the hands of the few who are oppressing us. And that is why, when you see our posters and our ministers, we always suggest a gun, because as Huey P. Newton,

the Minister of Defense of the Black Panther Party says, "All of our people are slaves or are subjected to slavery at any given time."

So therefore, we say that a revolutionary culture is the only culture worth keeping. We do not believe in cultural nationalism, because cultural nationalism in America would be the same as being a part of the oppressive system that is oppressing all the people. (applause) Because when you talk about cultural nationalism you're talking about a bourgeoisie culture. Because it is very clear that the United States is culturally nationalist, and if we were to be cultural nationalists ourselves, we would be propagating the same thing as the U.S. imperialists. Therefore, we are revolutionary nationalists, revolutionary nationalists with a revolutionary culture, which transcends our community, because then all the people, all the working people, the proletariat of the world, begin to unite around certain problems, the problems which are all the cause of the U.S. imperialists. And there's not too much more that I can say, except all power to the people and all the cultural (indistinct) of the revolutionary culture.

(applause)

BULLINS: I'm Ed Bullins, an Afro-American writer, mainly known for my plays and my work in theatre, and also I edit *Black Theatre* magazine out of Harlem. Presently, I'm working at The New Lafayette Theatre in Harlem, which is a community theatre in the center of Harlem, to bring theatre to Harlem and to revolutionize the consciousness of the Black people in Harlem through theatre.

I started working as a revolutionary artist at Black Arts/West, which was an offshoot of LeRoi Jones' Black Arts Theatre in New York. Black Arts/West was centered in the Fillmore district of San Francisco, and we put on such plays as *Flowers for the Trash Man* by Marvin X, *How Do You Do, A Minor Scene* by myself, and *The Dutchman* by LeRoi Jones.

After the Black Arts/West was finished we began The Black House with Eldridge Cleaver, Marvin X, Willie Dale and myself. Black House was a community revolutionary organization that worked in the political sphere, headed by Eldridge Cleaver, and in the arts, Black revolutionary arts, that I worked with Marvin X on. And also it became the San Francisco headquarters for the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. During that time, we held a benefit in San Francisco in May of 1967 for the Black Panther Party and for Huey Newton of the Black Panther Party. Also during that time, LeRoi Jones came out to the West Coast and worked for the Black Communications Project with George Murray, past Minister of Education of the Black Panther Party, Jimmy Garrett, Marvin X, Eldridge Cleaver, and other Bay Area Black Artists and activists. Consequently, at The Black House internal struggles resulted in clashes between the so-called Cultural Nationalists and the political ideologists, and the house fell, aided by the pigs jailing Marvin X and myself. After our release through the efforts of LeRoi Jones most of we Black Artists migrated to the East, over a period of time.

After coming to New York I was able to arrange another benefit for The Panthers in May of '68, in

Photographed in Algeria

New York, and concurrently I started *Black Theatre* magazine and worked at the New Lafayette Theatre, and very briefly, at LeRoi Jones' Spirit House in Newark. And since being in New York was able to put on some revolutionary plays, being that our Black Theatre Art is revolutionary in the most vanguard and profound sense, since it revives the spiritual and conscious centers of the Blackman. We have done *We Righteous Bombers, The Electronic Nigger, In the Wine Time* and others.

And I feel that in a time of revolutionary struggle the Black artist should be assisting the Black revolutionary struggle, if he is understood and allowed to do so, creating forms and offering stages where revolutionaries, such as The Black Panther Party, and other revolutionaries throughout the struggle, can speak and can run down what they have to run down to aid the people in the revolutionary struggle. I see no conflict between the Black people who work in the cultural-artistic field and the Black people who work in revolutionary politics, because we're all working for one thing, or say we are, and I'm very willing to step aside and let the Black revolutionary politicians do what they have to do in the revolutionary political sphere. We Black Artists are very much together, and I'm willing to let the Black Revolutionary Politicians get themselves together, and I'm willing, as a Black Artist, to aid them in any way I can.

And to conclude, that I believe as a revolutionary artist, that the revolution has to go on in the minds of the people concurrently with the revolution going on in the field, in the street, in the community, and art should be functional, it should be for the people, and when it's not, it's bullshit. And I agree with Brother Emory, that when it's time to show a gun . . . a gun should appear on the poster, on the stage, in the film, or in your hands.

(applause)

CLEAVER: My name is Eldridge Cleaver, I'm the Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party. This morning I received a phone call from our chairman, Bobby Seale; he was calling from Oakland, California, from the United States, and he said that the District Attorney of New York State has stated on television and over the radio that within 48 hours he was going to have every member of the Black Panther Party in the State of New York behind bars. (whistles) Now this . . . this is slightly alarming, as a cause for concern, but you have to take it with a grain of salt, because this particular pig is known for lying. (applause) I think it does serve to point up the difference . , . I think this telephone call serves to clarify the difference between what is happening here in Algeria, where we are participating in this cultural festival, and what's happening in Babylon. (applause)

In Babylon we're involved in a struggle for survival, and here we are conducting an Afro-American Center, so that we feel torn in two. On the one hand, we're up tight about what's happening right now in Babylon. On the other hand, we are very delighted with what we've experienced here in Algeria. All of the problems that we have of communication, like having to have two people to say what one person wants to say, but we still are more than willing to go through whatever changes we have to in order to communicate, because we realize that one of the things that is keeping people oppressed is their inability to communicate with each other.

So that means to us that we must be willing to go to any lengths in order to bridge the gap. If that means that I have to learn how to speak Arabic, then I will . . . (applause) . . . because I get mad when people are talking and I know that they're saying beautiful things, because I can see the reaction of people. So that there are many mistakes that can be made by the inability to understand exactly what we're saying to each other.

So that until we learn Arabic, or until you learn to speak the oppressor's English that we speak . . . that's the language that we speak, this is the only language that we have left, so that will have to do. (applause) We've been very delighted with the people who've come down to look over our Center and many times people will come up and point at something and ask us what that means, and we find ourselves stumbling around learning sign language all over again. But we're willing to do that because just our coming here, bringing the materials that we brought here, and maintaining this Center here is part of our struggle. This is a continuation of our struggle.

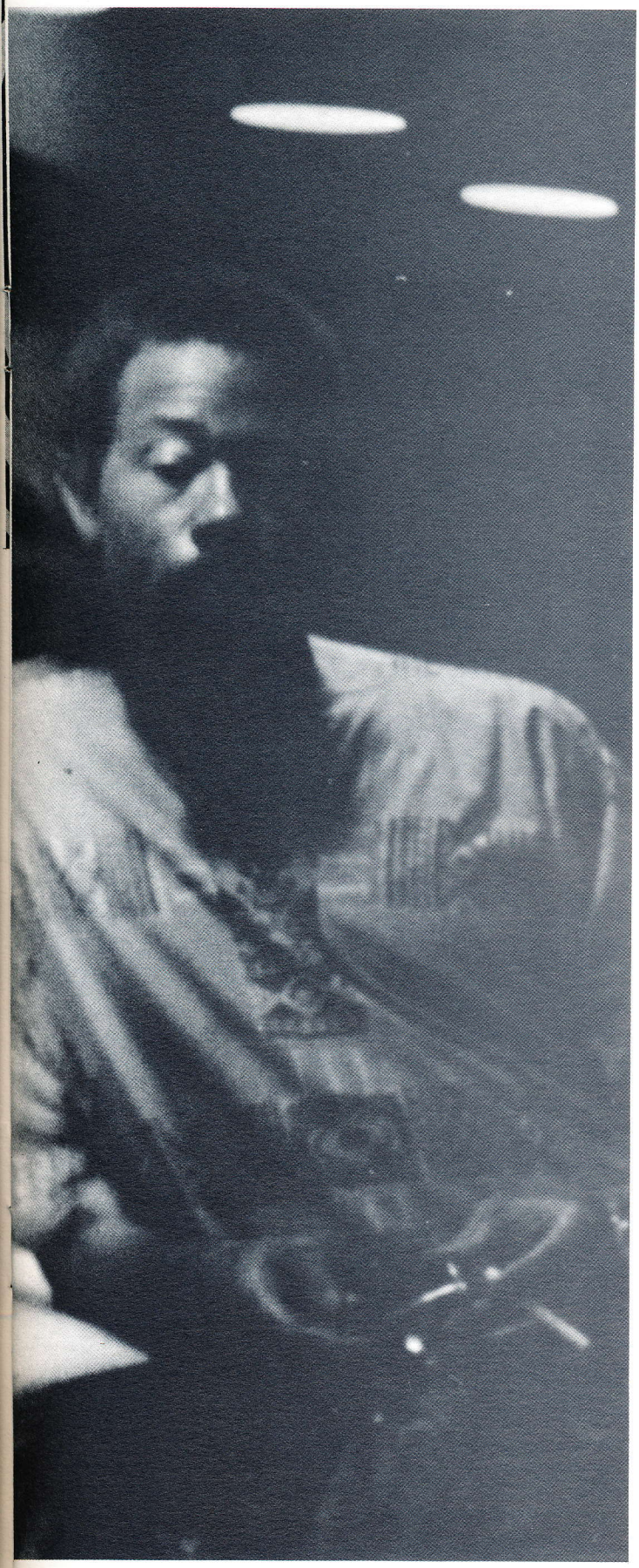
We did not come over here to have fun or to go to a party. We came over here to do what we can to communicate to you what's happening in our struggle in the United States, and to learn what is happening over here and what have been the successes and what have been the failures and what are the dangers that we must be aware of. And we could go on talking, but we have a panel here and we can deal with it in terms of questions and answers.

(rallying cries and applause from audience)

. . . . . .

ALGERIAN STUDENT: We understand that The Black Panther Party is interested not only in the struggle of the Black people of the United States but all of the oppressed people of the United States, whatever their color may be. And among the questions that we've raised, there are some that are questions of principle, especially when we talk about the fight against capitalism and for socialism. And we feel that it's not enough just to publish a program in which there are some statements which are confusing. We think that it's our duty to raise those points which are necessary to clear up the confusion.

CLEAVER: When we began to spread our program throughout the United States, we encountered the same confusion amongst people there. The result is some very (indistinct) education and we overcame those problems and now people understand our position and we all work together and we're making progress on that. And out of all of the charges that have been made, the only charge that I think that we could be guilty of that has been raised here, that is that we have taken too long to come back over here to Africa to explain what we're doing in Babylon.



Photographed in Algeria

Recently, you may know that a very high member of our organization resigned; speaking of our ex-Prime Minister, Stokely Carmichael. He resigned from our organization, and amongst the charges that he hurled at us was specifically that he could not approve of our alliances with white organizations. So it seems kind of strange that on the one hand we would be denounced by him for having these alliances and then we come here to be questioned and attacked for not having them.

. . . . . .

CLEAVER: The Black Panther Party understands that all the people in the United States are oppressed people, that white people and Black people, Mexican-American people, Puerto Rican people, are all oppressed by the same ruling class. But this ruling class uses various policies in order to exploit and control the various sectors of the society. And towards Black people it uses the policy of racism and they organize the oppression and the exploitation of Black people around their color. So that we (indistinct) that this is where we not only have to attack and fight against capitalism, but also against this specific policy of racism that they use towards us.

ALGERIAN STUDENT: We also agree with what's just been said. It's obvious that the authorities are trying to set up a differentiation between the different ethnic groups, the different communities that live within the United States, in order to keep them divided. But what we want is to see that through the program of the Black Panthers, through what they do, that they achieve this demystification of what the public authorities are doing.

We said earlier, and I'm sure too that there are Black people in the United States who are capitalists, who are not in agreement at all with this program, who are even for the using . . . sending of Blackmen to Vietnam to fight the war. In that context, is it then just to say that we want, as they do in point number 6, that we want all Blackmen to be exempt from military service?

CLEAVER: I think it's perfectly just to say that, because we were addressing that program to Black people. I would not like to give the impression that this piece of paper . . . is the only instrument that we work with. But this program is the basic document of our organization and it's designed to appeal to the people that we're trying to organize. And as the people come into our organization, they are processed through a political education course and in these courses we avail ourselves of all of the material that we are able to get our hands on, a lot of material that deals with the entire literature of revolutionary thought.

So I would think that we probably would read the same books that you've been reading. If you want to talk about the books that we've been reading, you can do that.

ALGERIAN STUDENT: I would like to ask you to let me continue my intervention, so that then we can have questions from other people in the audience, so that Cleaver can then reply locally to all the questions that are raised. I will continue, then, to speak about

the program itself, and not about the books that we have read . . . the same books that we might have read.

MARCIA McBROOM: (from audience, indistinct at first) . . . because right now in America, more than ever before, Blacks are just realizing that we are one people, and it's this . . . for this reason that we must first say Black people. This is what we need to hear. Then after we get into . . . (indistinct)

ALGERIAN STUDENT: I just want to end what I have to say and then I'll give the floor to others.
(shouts from audience, Pandemonium)

. . . . . .

BULLINS: I'm not a member of the Black Panther Party, but I have worked with them. I must tell you that in the streets and the ghettos of Black America I have seen them jailed, I have been to jail myself, I have seen them shot, I have visited them in the hospital and in prison, I know of their revolutionary work. I do not relate entirely to their program. It is words on a paper. But I relate to the spirits and the hearts of the men. And I do not take any theoretical . . . make any theoretical quibbling about this program. I accept the program as I accept the men, as a political reality. And until I stop supporting the men, I will support the program, and I cannot support anyone wherever taking a theoretical stance against the program that he hasn't seen put in practice. I would rather invite the theoreticians to come to America and die with the Black Panther Party members as Black Panthers are dying in the streets. Blackmen are being killed systematically in the United States. This is no time to quibble about theory or position. The time now is to work for the cause of revolution.

(applause)

JULIA WRIGHT: I've translated a lot tonight, but now I would like for once to say something on my own. I want to talk to you about Malcolm X and about a trip he made to Ghana and about an interview he gave to the Algerian Ambassador in Ghana. He saw the Algerian ambassador in Ghana and the Algerian ambassador in Ghana asked him to explain the situation in the United States, which he did. After having listened to Malcolm X and his explanations, he then asked him a question. The question he asked was: "You see, Malcolm, I suffered. You see, Malcolm, I struggled and I was hurt. But after having struggled and waged a battle, I . . . you still look at me as a white man. Where, Malcolm, do I stand in your theory of Black revolution?" "You see, comrade, Malcolm replied, and this is in a text which has never been published in French, but should in actual fact be published, he replied, "I've been on this continent now for three or four months, and this is the first time that I have no longer used the very narrow terminology of Black Nationalism." And that is why we today from The Black Panther Party, who wish to be the spiritual heirs to Malcolm X no longer use the narrow term, Black Nationalism. (applause)

ALGERIAN STUDENT: (tries to speak, is shouted down by audience, then does continue) We want to end by saying that we support the struggle of Black people in the United States, we support the struggle of all people in the United States who are struggling against the capitalist system, and we didn't come here to attack anyone's program. On the contrary, we appreciate the courage of the Black Panthers, because even before they came here we knew about the suffering they'd endured, we knew all about the police repression, etc., etc., etc. What we wanted was just to contribute to clarifying what the real situation is in that country, what the program is of the Black organization, in order to better understand. And in that way we hope to contribute to strengthening the struggle against colonialism, and wherever we are, whatever the situation . . . (applause) . . . and wherever we are and whatever the situation requires, whether it's in America, in Vietnam, in Latin America or elsewhere, we'll take up the gun, if it's necessary. And therefore we'll conclude by saying long live the struggle of the Black people, long live the struggle of American progressives, long live the struggle of all people against American imperialism . . . Down with American imperialism.

(applause)

Photographed in Algeria

PART II — BLACK THEATRE: "A Forum"*

KING: Ladies and gentlemen, our panel tonight is on "Black Theatre, Its Critics and Its Audience."

On the panel we have Dick Williams, Ben Caldwell, Ed Bullins, LeRoi Jones, Peter Bailey, Clayton Riley and Roger Furman.

IMAMU AMIRI BARAKA (LeRoi Jones): I would like to first say that my conception of art, Black Art, is that it has to be collective, it has to be functional, it has to be committed and that actually, if it's not stemming from conscious nationalism, then at this time it's invalid.

When I say collective, that it comes from the collective experience of Black people, when I say committed, it has to be committed to change, revolutionary change. When I say functional, it has to have a function in the lives of Black people. It has to have a function in the world, not the kind of useless artifacts that white art is, museums are full of useless artifacts, that the people go to, to be stimulated from one plane of lethargy into another plane of lethargy.

When we are talking about art that is functional, that will make you actually want to be committed, and that speaks from the collective consciousness, unconsciousness. It seems that in recent years, since the first time that Black Art was talked about, Black theater and so forth, which was a nationalistic spirit, it was founded in nationalism; it wasn't founded as some kind of bullshit excuse to be a movie star or any kind of reason other than nationalism. The need for Black people to express themselves, for their minds to expand, for them to create forms that would express the totality of their vision and project a new nation. That's why it was created.

But we find now that a lot of people who were opposed to nationalism are the very niggers who are making it, because of the struggle that the nationalist artists went through. A lot of the same niggers who, as Welton Smith says, "Sell Black for a quick fuck,"—and that's a poem, that's why I quoted it—are the very people who are making it out of nationalism, so that certain negroes here in the Village, on the East Side and so forth, around the country, they can get fellowships or theaters or positions in academies or they can get their little corny plays produced for the first time, just because the white boy has to make Black relevant in the contemporary world and because of what nationalists are saying to many of these integration minded niggers, you know. They get a chance to run out their little sickness, you know, because they are Black, but all the time saying black don't have nothing to do with it. Even though that's the very reason the white boy dragged him out from under the carpet in the first place.

So we say that Black Art has to be committed to Black revolution, otherwise it's invalid. It has to be an expression of the Black man trying to free himself. Just as everything else we do has to be. And if it's not about that, then it's nothing.

That's all I have to say.

(applause)

BULLINS: The name of this panel is, I understand, "Black Theatre, Its Critics and Its Audience" and someone said, new audience. Which gets me to thinking that Black theatre has never had a new audience. The people, the Black people, were always its audience and it always had that, the Black people.

And it's only been like Black artists had been controlled in the past, and they had trouble getting to their people and many of us today are correcting that because we are with the people and the people are in the theaters and listening to what we have to say and looking at our visions as revolutionary Black artists.

So the Black people are the Black audience. Which gets to the critic, because I've never thought too much about the critic's role in relationship to Black theatre. I, like many other people, read reviews avidly, but I really don't know, except for talking to a coterie of people, a very esoteric little group, whether this is a valid endeavor, criticizing Black plays, hopefully for Black people.

Because, if the work is valid, then the people know what you're saying, and Black people really, don't come to the theatre because they read a review. That isn't our way, it has never been. I would like to bet, to make a stiff bet, that nine out of ten of you here are in this room because someone said, "Hey, LeRoi Jones or Ed Bullins or some Black people are down here and they're going to be talking. So let's go down and check them out."

Nine out of ten of you, you know . . . somebody was coming and he said, "Come on along." And that's the way it goes in our community. Outside of the continent of Africa, there is very little, very little truly Black theatre, so, consequently, there is so little Black theatre, that in the white theatre consciousness, they cannot even conceive of what Black theatre artists and workers are about.

Now, the Black people, once they get inside the theatres, they recognize what it's about. But they haven't, and I don't think they will, develop a sort of attitude to go to a play behind reading a Black or white critic. This isn't to put critics down. I say this superficially, I guess they have a value and a use, if they find out what it is, but then it will be something else they're doing. Maybe call it Black criticism, or esthetic dynamism or dynamics or something else, you know, which might mean standing for something active. They could say, it's just like you're running down soul, who is just rapping, but whatever it is, it has to be an indigenous form for the Black people. It would have to come out of the whole rhythm, the whole psychology, the whole revolutionary and progressive thrust that we're going through, socially and psychologically, and what we're getting to, is not in terms of a small concept of theatre or, a western concept of art; what we're getting to is rebuilding and restructuring the world.

Now, as it has been, in the world for Black people, there only exist Black people. And it has been historically, anything else in the Black people's world has been the enemy, the oppressors and everything that is negative and detrimental to Black people.

* Called together by Woodie King, Jr., at The Gate Theater, Lower Eastside, Fall '69.

So what we are doing, and it is only a part of the revolution, only the part of the nation building, of recreating the universe, what we are doing in this is taking Black people from one place and taking them to another and showing them many possibilities, many possibilities for that final thing. I don't know how anyone can really criticize something like I just described. I mean that, after certain things happened in certain periods of history, people have come along and written books like the "Koran" and books like that, but that's like a record of a sort of spiritual drive and momentum of a people to achieve true spirituality and oneness with themselves. That's what we, the Black people now are doing, achieving oneness, and we artists, we're doing it. Some of us are doing it in the theatre and I know that other Black artists will be doing it in other ways, because the West is doomed. The west is doomed. The west is doomed. Anytime that artists of a nation, the artists, the creative spirits of a nation turn on that nation to destroy it, from its roots on out, that nation is doomed.

I am a prophet of America's doom and I think all Black artists are those prophets.

(applause)

So I don't know how that can be criticized.

(laughter, applause)

You know, the audience knows what we're about. The audience knows what we're about.

Thank you.

KING: Can we hear from Mr. Peter Bailey from Ebony and Jet magazines?

BAILEY: Well, first of all, I would like to say that I agree with Ed that a Black critic has a different responsibility, if you are going to use that term, just as I feel that the Black playwrights have a different responsibility than the white critics and the white playwrights.

I think that when I go to see a play in Black theatre, I am really concerned, I would say that my major concern is the image that the playwright portrays to Black people. I have gone to see some plays where I thought the acting was really great, but you know, I didn't like the image that was being portrayed because I think that it's all right for a playwright, a Black playwright to show the absurdity that Black people find themselves in—some of the absurd things that they do—because of the situation in this country, but I also feel as though the playwright should also show why the people are in this position. I have been to see one play that I know, that's on Broadway now by—no, it's Off Broadway, by a Black playwright, where this does not happen.

I didn't even know the playwright when I saw the play. I never heard of him before, but I saw the play and I found myself laughing at some of the things they were saying, because that cat could really write, but I felt uneasy and I felt maybe I was just being paranoid because a lot of my friends think that I am paranoid on the subject of what kind of image they're portraying. This cat was just one big put down after another on Black people. He never showed why.

And then, I later read an interview with this playwright in the *Times* and read some other things about him, and I realized why I felt the way I did. My feelings about that play were correct, that rather than showing the absurdities from the viewpoint of someone who is hoping that by showing Black people this, that something good will come out of it, I got the feeling that this particular playwright was contemptuous of Black people. The interview I read in the *Times* convinced me that this is where he is at.

So, I think that this is one of the things that—when I go see a play—that I am looking for. How do they handle the image of Black people? I think the Black playwrights have a responsibility. There is constant talk that Black people—that we, we're a nation, that we're in the state of becoming a nation, that we are a nation and I think that it's a time that Black playwrights begin to show, you know, what this new society or this new nation would be like, on stage, so people could see.

Currently there is a lot of showing things as they are rather than also showing what they can become or what they will be, you know, if the nationalist ideology becomes the dominant ideology among Black people. And I feel that this is also something which, when I see a play, that I am interested in and hope that Black playwrights, directors and the people who are involved in the theatre, will take into consideration.

When we talk about Black theater, we've got to find out why Black theatre has not yet reached a larger audience. When you go to Black plays, and I've been going quite regularly in the last couple of years, you practically see the same people every time.

And why? One reason why is because theatre in this country as a whole has a kind of a snob thing about it and one of the people I know, you tell them you're going to the theatre, even if you are going to a small Black run theatre in Harlem or any other Black community, they think you've got to put a tie and jacket on. This is an obstacle, to developing a Black theatre audience—of getting the audience into the theatre, because you've got to overcome this type of snob appeal that the theatre has always had. I think that despite the talk about Black artists and Black people in theatre, that Black theatre, basically, is still a somewhat inner group type of thing. You see the same people going to all plays all around the city, whenever they have seminars, you see the same people there and I think that this is a sign that we obviously are not reaching a larger audience and that for the Black theatre to survive you are going to have to begin to draw more Black people, you know, into the theatre.

. . . . . .

KING: Now, we're going to hear from Brother Dick Williams.

WILLIAMS: I don't really know where to begin. You know I cannot define Black theatre as theatre that is controlled by Blacks, theatre that is directed to Blacks, theatre that comes out of Black reference, theatre that is designed to unite a disunited people, to bring them together and to raise the level of awareness to a point where they can break some of the

Drawing by George Ford

psychological bounds that make them regard themselves as unworthy.

There are two or three different schools on the image thing, you know, like whether we should present ourselves as we are or whether we should extend ourselves and give direction to the Black revolution or whether we should substantiate what's happening. I don't know any Black person that's substantiating what's happening today.

I think that we are doctors, we are lawyers, we are artists, we are engineers, and we are scientists, and we are also winos, and we also are street cleaners and I think that, you know, any concept that evolves —that is designed to disunite people, I am sort of against.

My biggest thing with critics is that, you know, most of the reviews that I read are hung up in an uptown, downtown syndrome, I call it. I guess the supposition being, the case being that you can't do valid theatre downtown, you know.

Well, I'd like to ask where uptown do you perform? I mean, it takes a building. It takes money. It takes an audience to maintain a theatre. With my play,* I tried to move it uptown and I couldn't find nothing. Bob Rantier is still looking for a suitable place to present what I think is valid work. You know, we can't all rush in—on Ed and Bob and ask them to move over and stop doing what they're doing while other people do what they do.

I think that it is the substance in a play and not the location, the substance in a play. I don't make distinctions between Black people in terms of economic levels and in terms of professions and in terms of whether they wear long hair or are . . . (laughter)

. . . or wear dashikis or wear Edwardian clothes or whether they're doctors or whether they're brick layers, the same oppression that hits a person who is of a high professional level hits the street cleaner and hits the garbage man. It hits the wino. It hits any person that I think is Black.

I would like to see more weight placed on the substance. I mean, of a thousand Black people, 400 Black people—and if a play directs itself to those 400 Black people, I don't care what the white critics think about it. I don't care about what the 600 white people feel about that play, when they walk out. The important thing to me is that it comes from a Black reference, that it's directed to Black people and that it's done honestly and I think for any play, you know, I don't care who does it or whether it's a philosophical play or non-philosophical play, whether it's a play of one nature or a play of the other, it has to engage an audience, it has to hold an audience. I've seen some of the most profound words thrown to hell because the production itself was lacking, you know, and I think that as a Black artist I can, you know, prove myself in the group—and I would like to see us unite and work closer together. They've got a saying out there, "Black people can't get together." You know—and that's something that has to be transcended, I think, before we can move anywhere. We're trying, I think, to get back to our references, get back to the paths of our existence and they've grown, the paths, the walks have grown high with weeds, four hundred years of weeds and it's difficult to find your way sometimes. You've got to find a path that you cannot see and being spiritual people, I think that we'll, if we keep searching, if we keep plugging, if we keep fighting, then we'll find those paths that will begin to make theatre what it can be and that's a celebration of the Black spirit, a celebration of the Black will, a celebration of the Black strength, the Black endurance, the Black will to be.

I don't think that we're a new people that spontaneously burst forth in the last few years on this earth. I think we're here as a result of our forefathers taking a whole lot of shit so that we might live, that we might survive, that we might grow strong and that we might today stand up.

And we're here today, so we need to stand up today. Right?

(applause)

KING: Next, we hear from Mr. Michael Schultz, Director.

SCHULTZ: . . . As a Black director, I feel that what is first and foremost in terms of Black theatre is that the Black artist must always be true to his own visions. It stems from his experience in the world and with his fellow men. If he is true to that vision, it's very difficult for him to fall into what we know today as the theatre of the Western world, because that is the theatre that tries to escape from truth and reality. And it is a theatre that the true Black artist is diametrically opposed to.

Black theatre. I agree with Dick and Ed and LeRoi, that not only do we as Black people need to seek

* The original off-Broadway production of "Big Time Buck White," directed by Williams.

unity but we, as Black artists, must learn to stop wasting our time in divisiveness and start putting that energy into true creation so that we can really carry out the dialogue with our people.

(applause)

As a Black director, I would love to do the works of all the Black playwrights that exist: Ed, LeRoi, Douglas Turner Ward, anybody who has anything to say about any aspect of the Black condition because I believe that it's valid and viable and it's necessary for us to talk about it and listen to it.

The theater must be revolutionary. Yes, if it is truthful it will be revolutionary. But the theatre must reach for more, more than revolution. I do not want to be restrained by anyone telling me what I should say as an artist or to whom or for what. I must say what I have to say and hope that it remains truthful.

The Black audience is an ever increasing one and like the Black theatre it has a great potential, but you will never see the audiences that you'd like to see unless we are saying something that you want to hear, as an audience. Unless we are saying something that really is going to make you more aware or make you care or make you think.

The Black critic, as Ed said, has to really reevaluate his standards of criticism, merely because he is dealing with the phenomenon, the Black theatre that is very different from any theatre that he knows, and until he learns to do that, I think the Black critic will not function effectively.

Primarily, this is because there are very few critics in the white world, period, that function effectively, and we have to learn to see things in a totally new way. And evaluate them that way.

(applause)

BARAKA: I just want to say before we get away from those two points that I heard, you know, like a sanitation system before it gets to be piled too high. First of all, about Black theatres being in the community and what not, the reason that we say Black theatre should be in a Black community is because the theatre is not just singing and dancing things for abstract—you understand—money is being made, you know.

A theatre is an institution that not only is an economic device for making money, but it creates a whole image of a society, and it draws talented people towards it, it draws minds and visionaries towards it. If you have a theatre off in the white community and this is all this is, is a white community, then you are drawing minds, visionaries, talent, to this and making this a center for thought. What you are doing is taking people, taking your minds, your soul spark, your creative energy away from where you live and putting it off for somebody else and making their lights work while our own communities are dark.

(applause)

Now, that's one thing.

(applause)

Now, the second thing, the other thing that I want to say about, saying not down by revolution, when we say that, we mean a value system. We mean a value system that's beneficial to Black people. Now, individualism is an illusion, you know, like it's a white boy's society.

(applause)

You know, but it ain't a Black person's need, you know, because what we need is actually not to be individuals but to be collective, we need to practice a little umoja, unity, we need to be one community, one collective body, we have to have one head, two sets of arms, a heart, a soul—we need to be one thing.

Now, I can see you not wanting to be told what to do by white people, white producers, but the artist must represent the will, the soul of the Black community, it must represent the Black man as a large body, that's what a nation is. It must represent the national spirit and the national will. Theatre can't be some random exercise in finger popping. It has to represent the striving of men to try to raise themselves to a new level of thought, and it's not—I mean, we don't talk about theatre down here, or theatre up there as an idle jest but because it is necessary to pump life blood back into our community—that's what we're talking about.

We're talking about artists raising the community.

(applause)

And I don't mean that just to put anyone down, but to clarify what we're talking about, and one of the reasons that people go off and try to build theatres in these little okey doke communities is the fact that there are Black people there who need to be touched, who need the spirit that the artist is supposed to provide, you understand, and that's what it is. I mean, it would be hip to come to a theatre, you know, where you've got a built-in audience who comes there, God knows, and a lot of times we wish we could do that.

But the fact is that our nation, our people, are out there, like you say, with no path and the artist has to be right there in the center to provide the path and provide the heart beat for them, otherwise who is to provide it? Julia? And Bill Cosby? You understand?

(laughter and applause)

KING: Clayton Riley of the *Manhattan Tribune.*

RILEY: I feel doomed already. I am the critic for *The Liberator Magazine* which is, perhaps, more important. There seems to be something about the word criticism that implies something negative. I think people conclude that anything a critic writes about anything is necessarily bad.

And that isn't true. Obviously, I think Peter (Bailey) has said this, in a sense, before, it is an attempt, first of all, to dispense information, to tell people that there is a theatre, first of all, and I am talking about the difference between what criticism has been and what some think it can be.

Criticism, on daily newspapers is nothing more than cheap advertising; it's the cheapest advertising the theatre has. You write a review and you have an automatic ad for thousands of people in New York City to know that something is being presented.

Now, if you take that another step and say that

criticism for Black theatre is simply a way of dispensing information and telling people that something actually exists, if, possibly, they don't have another way to find out about it, if you assume that word of mouth takes a lot of time, in some instances, if you accept the fact that whether or not all Black theatre should be done in Black communities—is not being done that way now, so that people can't stop one another on the street corners and say, "You should go to The Lafayette," for example, or to Ernie McClintock's theatre or something like that because it's right around the corner.

The fact that people have to find out what is being done, and the plays that are being done, and many people, perhaps not all the people in this room, but many people did find out that those things were being done because of what some people wrote.

The real negative quality of criticism, I think, is that most critics don't do anything else in the theatre, Actually, playwrights should be critics. Directors should be critics. Actors, actresses should be critics. Criticism shouldn't be isolated from the theatre the way it always has been. The fact is that critics have never been a part of any theatrical community. Obviously, you see that Peter and I are not a part of this community in this room. Not only because of what people have said but because of the way people have reacted.

The fact is that if Peter and I are critics and other things as well, if we were playwrights, if we were actors, if we directed, if we played more than a critical role or reviewer role in the theatre, then possibly people can begin to think there is something more to criticism than exists in the daily newspapers or in the weekly magazines or whatever.

The other thing is that I'd like to say, and then I'll stop, because I am very nervous, as you can see, is that I think people have to start to think about something else in regard to theatre and that is just how important the theatre is. I don't really think it's very important. The fact is, I don't think criticism is really that important either and I think in that sense I may agree with some of the other people, but I don't think theatre criticism is very important because I don't really know how important the theatre is, in 1969, in terms of what it does and in terms of what it can accomplish.

Possibly we should start to think that there are other things that need to be done right now. Perhaps five years from now, ten years, twenty years from now, the theatre will be important or will be important again if it ever has been important but I think I go to the theatre perhaps as much as anybody in this room and in the last two years, the thing that continually is a question for me is whether or not there is any relevancy at all to people performing in a theatre, with the intention of getting other people to do something because I don't think that has happened, I don't think people do things or accomplish things because they've been to the theatre.

I don't think people participate in activism, be it revolutionary or otherwise because they've seen a play.

(applause)

KING: We'll hear from Mr. Ben Caldwell, and then Mr. Roger Furman.

Woodcut by Abdullah Aziz

CALDWELL: I told Woodie I didn't have too much to add to what has already been said. I agree with most of it and disagree with some of it so I would rather you hear from Roger Furman first and then go into the questions and find out what the audience has to say about critics, about Black theatre and about playwrights.

FURMAN: I think we've heard everything, all the metaphors, we've heard the prophets, we've heard the revolutionaries in the theatre. I have yet to see Black theatre have lines around it—like the legitimate theatre, like the Apollo Theatre. Many a night I have stood out there and said, "Gee, look at this. If I can get some girls to shake their behinds and take their bras off, we might do that."

We, The New Heritage, and you might not have heard too much about it—we've been up there about five years now—we've been solely supported by Black people. We've gotten no grants. We've been sponsored by Black organizations, by young students from Columbia. We've been down to Brandeis in Boston. We've gone out to Stamford, Connecticut, we've been out in Bed-Stuy a few times. We've just been all over and so slow and sure—it has been Black money that has built our theatre.

We have a loft now, on 125th Street, in the same building that Olatunji's in; we're right across from him.

This has been a very slow process. We haven't had anybody with the charisma of a LeRoi Jones or Ed Bullins to pack them in, but we are doing theatre, Black theatre, because we're Black people, and we—

(laughter)

No. I am very serious. I am not putting nobody down. I am very serious in what I am saying. We've discovered a Black playwright. We've been working like hell to get people in there. We went on the street. We went to bars and have given out free passes in bars. We've been in pool rooms. We've been all over the community. We stood on street corners and gave people passes—"with just $1.00 you can come in to see a play."

And we've yet to pack the 500 seat auditorium up there in I.S. 201, which we work out of. When we're sponsored by a Black organization, of course, they're selling tickets to make some money, so they'll go out and sell some tickets.

Now, whether or not we're saying anything so dynamic that we're going to make people leave the theatre and pick up a gun and say, "Let's go kill Whitey," we haven't done that yet. Now, I haven't seen any—maybe the plays are being written now. And I've seen these they're very interesting plays, but I still didn't leave or see anybody go get a gun. But Black people will have to come together. We have no choice.

If we're doing theatre, it's going to be Black theatre. We're not going to do a rehash of Broadway plays, because it just won't work anymore. It just won't work. So whether we agree with some of the radicals, or whatever word you want to call them, we have no choice but to do theatre for the people and my only plight is how to get the people into the theatre. This is my only plight. I am a good director. I am a damned good set designer. I am almost a genius.

(laughter) (applause)

But I still haven't discovered—and like the gentleman said here, I know everybody here. I've seen them come to the theatre over and over. I go to the Lafayette. I have seen them there. I go over to the N.E.C. I see them there. I go to somebody's little hole in the wall, I see the same people. In fact, I talked to a woman for two hours one time. I thought she was my neighbor. Somebody I had seen in the theatre before, she turned out to be.

So it's just a handful of people and there's not enough Panthers or radicals to break the box office. We have a loss. We have to pay $300 a month, and we miss the rent one time and that man, you know what to call him, is going to be there to put our ass out—chairs, seats, scenery, flats—right on the street.

So, to sit and talk and to say how beautiful it is, unless I can write a novel or do something to get some extra money—all the people in my company are working like hell. They are all workers, they have no money. We put in our own dues to pay the rent, to get the lights on, to get our scenery, to get the scripts mimeographed off, and we even pay our authors royalties—we have the nerve to give somebody a royalty—

(laughter)

So I don't have the answers. I am looking for them just like everybody else sitting out there, so if anybody has the answer, I am willing to write it down tonight. Thank you.

. . . . . .

BARAKA: I don't think that's news to anybody. But I don't think that should turn us around. And some of the brothers who have theatres, you know, what I mean, who are actually more frightened to do Black people's work than they are to do, you know, a lot of other people's works. They get a theatre and then they'll nut on you. You understand? They'll get a little space and they'll nut on you. You can't get in there neither. You see, so it's got to be a value system that's the same. Like a critic is valuable if he has the same value system as the writer. If we are like one people and we have the same values, then what he says is valuable to me, because it's going to be in tune with what I think anyway and he can point out things that I didn't do. You see. But if he has a totally different value system, if he's representing Euro-American, Judeo-Christian, you know—decadism.

(laughter)

Then he speaks of something that I've done or Ed's done, it's a totally different thing. It don't relate. Like the white boy says about a play like *Jello*. "This is a terrible play and it's a racist play, and it's doing this and that and it's horrible." Then you take it out on the street and people laugh at it, you know, Black people think it's funny because it's a different value system. A lot of the people who own theatres have different value systems, even though they might, you know, be colored.

(laughter)

They have different value systems, and we still have to build theatres in our community. We still have the responsibility for building our own community, because our communities are ourselves. You can't slip out of your community, go down and be getting knowledge, like they say, and then slip back in your own community.

You have to be creating your own community, because your community is yourself, you see. A nation is like a man, it's like a big person. If your brain is down on Second Avenue and your body is on 125th Street, you're in trouble.

(laughter)

. . . . . .

VOICE FROM AUDIENCE: Well, all I am saying is that there must be room in the Black community for negroes, Swahilis, Watusis, niggers, colored—whatever we are—I love every Black brother whether he is an Uncle Tom or a Watusi or Judeo-Christian or an Atheist or what not, because unless he can communicate and find some kind of ground, and I think the basic ground is survival, then we're not going to survive. So we are going to need the theatre. We're going to need the various Jews we've got. And until we can see clear enough to unite and defend ourselves and develop, and I think that Brother Williams really hit the point when he pointed out that he wants to do his thing and his thing differs from somebody else's thing, and Brother Shultz said that he wants to express himself so that if the theatre is going to perform a function, it's going to help build the revolution, you've got to be more than this. You've got to go to the community and we have to use somebody's synagogues, somebody's church, and you have to get a public playground and any other place, so that people will know that there is a theatre, different from the T.V. crap that we get.

The T.V. people have no difficulty getting Black people to an audience. Julia has a little bigger audience than we have here tonight and I think that we've got to be thinking in terms of attracting some of this audience.

. . . . . .

BULLINS: I'd like to say something before the next question. I think a majority of the talk tonight and the questions, and the whole dialogue, if there was any dialogue, has been extremely irrelevant. We really, as Black artists, are not really talking about what we should be talking about. We're talking around things. As Black theatre artists, I think, and as Black audience and as Black critics—at this time, one of the things—one of the most important things, among many important things we should be concerned about, is how to take Black theatre out of the hands of white people. How to take Black Art out of the control of white people and bring it back to the community.

I mean, you make apologies for not coming into the community. You make apologies for being in there, but I think as Black artists, we should learn how to come together and form our own institutions, our own vehicles and corporations, to take our talents and give them to the people and to like have something to build upon.

This is one of the things that we are trying to do at The New Lafayette in Harlem. Not only is Black theatre needed, but Black publishing companies, Black film companies, Black radio companies, Black communications that so a Black person never has the excuse that "he had to go some place else and work." Or a Black artist, he has to do something else because he wasn't offered, as much. I mean, if you want to do it, you can. A Black artist can, like the first four theatre companies I worked with were started on Black money because it was my own money and half of those theatres were in store fronts, which did my first ten plays.

Drawing by Ademola

PART III—BLACK THEATRE DISCOVERS THE NEW LAFAYETTE

BLACK THEATRE: April, 1970. I am speaking with two members of the New Lafayette Theatre of Harlem. They are Roscoe Orman and Roberta Raysor. First, Brother Orman.

Brother Orman, how do your experiences as an actor with the New Lafayette Theatre differ with past acting experiences on your part?

ORMAN: Well the main difference . . . is in terms of the intensity of involvement at the New Lafayette Theatre, for all of us, who are actively involved on a full time basis, in terms of developing a way of life. Developing a whole new consciousness for Black people. It goes beyond anything that I've experienced before in theatre, in that there's more . . . to everything we do than just the act itself.

The total involvement . . . requires that every person be . . . committed to what . . . the initial idea behind everything is. Which mainly depends upon . . . the kind of leadership or the kind of direction (that) is manifested. Never before, in any of my experiences, has there been a kind of strength of conviction and artistic . . . ability as . . . I'm experiencing now with . . . my brothers (and sisters) in the New Lafayette Theatre.

BLACK THEATRE: I've noticed that the New Lafayette Theatre . . . seems to have developed a relationship among its members based on a kind of tribal-like existence. Do you think that that's a . . . fair description, or would you like to elaborate on that description?

ORMAN: Yes, I think the term "trust" is accurate in . . . describing . . . the . . . group relationship at the New Lafayette Theatre.

Over the past two to three years, most of us have been involved in the exploration of our art form—which is theatre. We began this exploration within ourselves . . . Towards the expression of ourselves to each other and ultimately to our people. Before we . . . did our first production . . . at our theatre we spent more than a year together—those of us who are the acting company—working very intimately . . . towards . . . the kind of trust and artistic freedom that we've arrived at now.

It's a very essential thing, not only for the Black artist and the community of Black artists, but the community of Black people, because we are only the expression of . . . our people.

We are only . . . the inner voice, in that sense. There's no difference between us and anyone else. Except that what we do require that we be . . . consistently . . . concerned . . . and . . . directed towards the expression of . . . our people.

We are only . . . the inner voice, in that sense. There's no difference between us and anyone else. Except that what we do requires that we be . . . consistently . . . concerned . . . and . . . directed towards the expression of the spirit and soul and life of our people.

BLACK THEATRE: Yes, but . . . hasn't this trust, this growing into each other, this communal existence, hindered your relationship with other people?

ORMAN: Only seemingly so. Only for those people . . . who, on the face value of what they see, in . . . our relationship . . . negate any kind of validity, or any kind of truth involved in it.

Those people who react that way, react out of fear because in . . . this environment they're not used to . . . having to deal with . . . anything quite so open . . . so honest. The . . . people that we have around us . . . have grown . . . towards a fuller understanding of what . . . that relationship is all about.

We must all bind ourselves around our Blackness. Around the fact that we are one people with a common experience, common language, common situation, (and) common enemy. When we understand that then the relationships that we have one to another will then change accordingly.

BLACK THEATRE: I see. In view of all that you've said, about the interrelationship of the people in the Company, and in view of . . . some of this . . . some of the statements that have been made in terms of what Black art is, what it should be—for instance, elsewhere in this issue are some statements about Black art made by Brothers and Sisters in the political and socio-cultural spectrum of the Black community—and I wonder how does your experience at the New Lafayette Theatre make you view Black art? How do you view Black art in terms of what you've learned about yourself and in terms of what you've come to understand about human relationships within the New Lafayette Theatre?

ORMAN: Well, my view of Black art has become more and more an internal view, in the sense that from deep within myself, I've learned to understand everything. I've learned to understand who I am. And in understanding who I am, I can understand who WE are, and where we are, on this plane of existence.

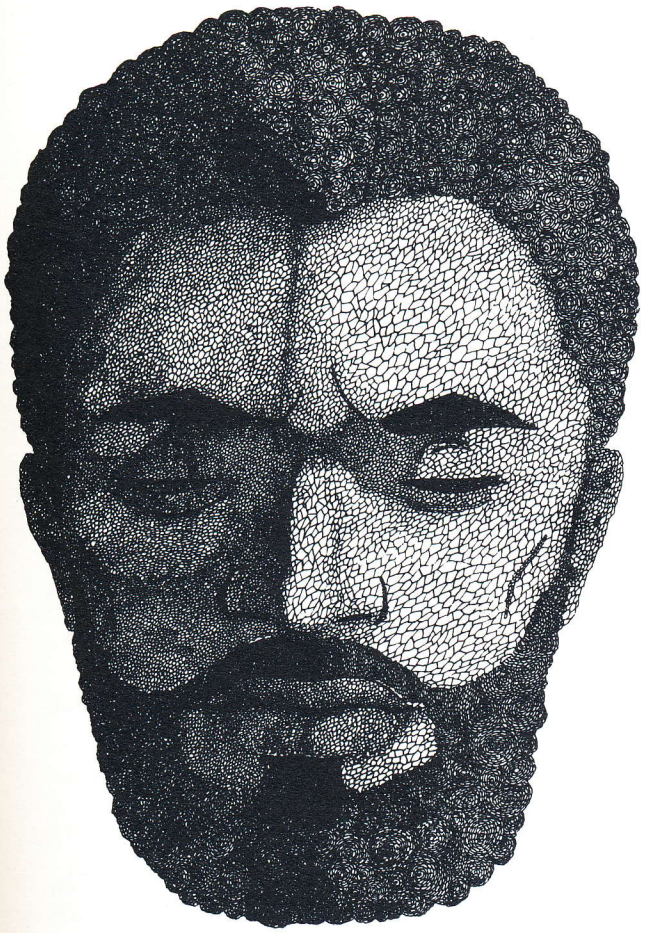
And also in this physical world. 'Cause in understanding the inner world (the real world) then the physical world becomes very clear, very apparent; you recognize it for exactly what it is. You understand what the whole system, that most of this world revolves around, is all about.

You understand the nature of it—it has a beastly nature—it has a nature designed by the white beast who has devoured, and continues to devour, the majority of the life on this planet.

As Black people, we must come to this understanding with ourselves first, so that we can then clarify where we are, in what condition we are in, and what we can do. What we must do to preserve life. And to continue life as we know it.

Black Art for me is the continuation of life. It is . . . well, I could say the highest form of demonstration for life, in the sense that Black theatre, specifically, is a group of people working towards a consciousness, a collective consciousness which has a heightened reality beyond what is outside in the streets.

Of course, it is only a reflection of what is outside in the street, because that is where the life is; the life of our people is in the streets, in their homes, in the churches, (and in) the schools. And we bring all of that . . . all of that energy . . . we focus it to one point. One force of energy into our temple, our theatre, which is really only a temple



Drawing by G. Falcon Beazer

of the mind, because wherever we do it, that will be the theatre. That is where all of the consciousnesses collect. Wherever Black people are, wherever they are aware of truth, are aware of themselves in any context, together, then that is Black theatre.

BLACK THEATRE: Do you see Black Art in a political context? Do you see it as art that must, for instance, prepare the audience for the violent revolution, or prepare the people to leave the theatre with a kind of consciousness that might allow them to take off mid-town Manhattan?

ORMAN: No.

BLACK THEATRE: Do you see that as being a necessary function of Black Art?

ORMAN: No, I don't.

BLACK THEATRE: Why?

ORMAN: Well, from a true Black consciousness and awareness of ourselves and the world, politics, sociology—all forms of Western science, Western ideology, become irrelevant.

The only thing that Black theatre could—should—concern itself with at this point is the collecting of the Black consciousness of our people. In other words, we can't concern ourselves with anything that relates itself to physical confrontation with white people. At this point we perceive that their whole culture is . . . their whole civilization is . . . crumbling. It is ready to fall. It will fall hard. It will fall fast. The rate of acceleration of hysteria in their civilization is increasing hundredfold every day.

It doesn't behoove Black people to become involved in that hysteria at all. Any adaptation of political—

BLACK THEATRE: It behooves Black people to become involved.

ORMAN: It doesn't behoove Black people at all to become involved in anything designed by white people. Any kind of consciousness that is designed by white people. Political, sociological, economical . . . yes, economical (LAUGHS) that's the crux of their whole system. 'Cause the political context is only a tool used to . . . to . . . uhm . . . ahhh . . . to . . . tch . . .

UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: . . . from running around? . . .

ORMAN: . . . well that's not what I was going to say. I was going to say that it's a tool of white people to manifest their economic control. Their political-military arm is their gun and their big stick with which they beat people upside the head. So that they can have shiny stones. You know? That is their ultimate goal. The ultimate goal out of their education . . . their medicine, even. Their whole existence is based on shiny stones.

The accumulation of material wealth—all of that is a fantasy; it has no reality in the Black world. That is the main thing which must be understood by Black people; with that understanding we then discard all those frames of reference: political and so forth.

BLACK THEATRE: And you see Black Art as being useful in teaching Black people to discard themselves of these totally "irrelevant" frames of reference?

ORMAN: I see Black Art, at this point, as the prime force in building this awareness.

Of course, eventually, as we build a nation, as we build the consciousness, you know, in the temple of the mind, all other forms of art will then relate to our *own* way. To our *own* concepts of involvement.

We then find that life is much easier when we do it our own way. We don't have to have banks, you know. We don't have to have this and that. You know—things! All of the many seemingly intricate parts of Western civilization are unnecessary for people to live in. Not only are they unnecessary, but they are destructive.

Destructive forces and devices used to manipulate people. Now, in the development of our nation we will find a much more simple, more human way of existence. Whatever things must be developed will be towards the continuation of our people. They will be built around life. They will all be focused around the continuation of life. And at this point, as I said, Black Theatre most purely is significant of all this.

Now, Black people intuitively understand all of this. I'm trying to use words to describe an awareness and understanding which goes beyond words.

Therefore, anything that I say will be short of what it is. So you know I guess that with that clarification there may be some enlightenment as to what the nature of, for instance, our relationship in the New Lafayette Theatre is about. The people within the New Lafayette Theatre.

It goes beyond anything which, you know, some people may call a clique, or ingrown group. You

know? It's just the opposite of that. Unfortunately, you know, some of our people cannot perceive that; the majority of our people, of course, understand it immediately. That's why they continually come back to our theatre and join in the experiences. They sense the good vibrations that exist among us and within our sphere. I would say to all brothers and sisters who are involved in building any kind of awareness or any kind of anything designed after white concepts, or white symbology or theology, any of those things—stop! Stop and check yourself out. Stop and just be with yourself. Just be with Black people. Try to understand (that) it goes beyond any of those fabrications that you may feel are necessary for our development. All of that is to be escaped. All of it, 'cause those are the real bars. That's the real imprisonment; the slavery that we are experiencing now. It's a mental, spiritual enslavement. It has happened to us without us even realizing it. We sometimes say to ourselves, "What is this all about; what is life all about?" And we wonder. We go through all our lives never knowing because we're in somebody else's fantasy. We're in somebody else's world.

Our minds exist in our everyday activity: Going downtown, doing that thing; bring home our "bread" and . . . living, believing in that. Only because we don't realize that there's anything else to believe in. That there is life outside that consciousness.

Deep, deep in our inner souls we know that there's life and that there's death. There's the living dead. There are living dead people. If we try to be like them then we too will be dead. We will never be fulfilled. Never be truly fulfilled as people. Nothing we can do for or with them;—'cause you understand that any thing we do politically we do about them. None of that can be relevant to the building of the Black nation.

BLACK THEATRE: Well, Brother Roscoe, surely you must realize that you might receive very strong and vehement argument on some of what you just said. I wonder, how would you deal with someone who would argue from the standpoint that non-confrontation with whites and the disregard for materialistic values is unrealistic.

ORMAN: Well, anybody who wanted to offer strong argument against anything that we do at the New Lafayette Theatre, I would say, "Do something better."

I would encourage any brother or sister who was seriously involved and dedicated toward Black life, the fulfillment of a Black nation, to do it. Don't talk about it, you know.

If they want to argue points with me or with any of the other people who are doing what we do, the best argument that they can offer is something real. Something which they have done which either negates or sheds new light upon something we have done.

Again, as I said, no words that I . . . that I . . . say really can describe what it is. Beyond the act of building, growing, learning, becoming a Black nation.

BLACK THEATRE: Thank you, Brother Roscoe Orman. And now, we turn to Sister Roberta Raysor.

SISTER RAYSOR: Let's see. I've studied art, painting, and things. I was thinking of becoming a commercial artist, first. It was for the money, but it wasn't very artistic, you know, it wasn't very expressive, or whatever you want. . . .

An artist goes into a thing to express himself. I mean that's what I thought. To say, "Well, here I am; this is me."

I got as far as I could go in that. I never really liked. I heard about NEC (workshop) and did one thing (play).

I went to high school with Roscoe (Orman) . . . Art and Design (High School) and I heard that he was in a play up here (HARLEM) in the old theatre (at 2225 7th Avenue). And I came to see it with a girlfriend from Design. And I met Bob and them . . . and they said, "Well, you're at NEC?" I said yeh, you know, and I came to the (New Lafayette) workshop. And that's how I got started with the people here.

BLACK THEATRE: How did your association with the New Lafayette change your view toward art?

SISTER RAYSOR: Change my view?

BLACK THEATRE: Well, did that have anything to do with changing your view?

SISTER RAYSOR: Oh, you mean about commercial art. Oh no, that (commercial art) wasn't my thing, in the beginning. No, I'd changed my view a long time before that.

But meeting Roscoe again, here with the New Lafayette with Bob (Macbeth) and Ed (Bullins) was a whole different thing. It was very interesting. It was like it was supposed to be . . . you know . . . It was supposed to happen. It wasn't like NEC. NEC was downtown. See, this is, like, a different theatre. This is, like, a life theatre. This is a thing you would do . . . because it's . . . it's not just for the money; it's for the spiritual thing, for your whole life.

That's what art is like. To me. Art is life. It's like musicians that play music, and as they play it they were starved, but they . . . would have to play it; that's the way it is, with this theatre group.

And any theatre group is supposed to be like this . . . and it's combining them, the musicians, and the painters, and the actors, and the writers—it's like a perfect body.

BLACK THEATRE: Brother Roscoe pointed out that the interrelationship between members of the New Lafayette was . . . natural, it was human, and we threw in the word "tribal," as well. Do you feel that way, or . . . ?

SISTER RAYSOR: Yeah, I think that's the way it is. It's all these things. I can't say any more about it. It's just the perfect thing. Like a creation by God, or something. It's like a creation . . . a perfect creation. . . . And tribal, yeah, people in the beginning called it clannish and clique-ish, or whatever, you know, because they couldn't, uh . . . people wanted to know how you get in. And you say, well, you come to the workshop. See, some people weren't interested in the workshop, they just wanted to act. What they call "act."

I don't believe there is such a thing as acting. I mean, there is such a thing as *acting*. But then there is another thing, which doesn't have a name,

yet, and I think that's what we do here; or try to do.

Now like this . . . all the theatres that act . . . you know . . . you learn how to . . . to raise your eyebrows and look startled and tremble . . . but if you get out there on the stage and act like you "act" then you're not acting! That's what you gotta do. You've gotta not "act". Get on the stage and not "act".

And it's a thing . . . it's just the thought; it's not something I can really explain in words. But it's something you can see when you watch people. When you watch people act on stage and act off stage.

BLACK THEATRE: Have you found for your own purposes, though, that that the art that you do here benefits you as a person, both spiritually and . . .

SISTER RAYSOR: Um-hum. Yeah. I couldn't imagine what I'd be doing if I left this theatre group. I don't think I would join any other theatre group. I'll probably go back home and . . . and paint . . . I'd . . . I'd retire.

(LAUGHTER)

BLACK THEATRE: Retire?!

SISTER RAYSOR: Yes, I think I'd retire. From the theatre.

(LAUGHTER)

BLACK THEATRE: Do you regard your participation as an actress in the New Lafayette as part of the broad culturo-political-uh, er—onslaught being made by the Black artists of America?

SISTER RAYSOR: (LAUGHING) Well, ah . . .

BLACK THEATRE: I'll put it another way . . .

SISTER RAYSOR: Probably so. But put it another way, again.

BLACK THEATRE: How do you see yourself fitting in the Black revolution?

SISTER RAYSOR: By being around. And I try to be truthful, and honest. And try to do away with all the fantasies that people have been putting into my mind since birth. And by doing that, I'm part of the revolution.

BLACK THEATRE: For the publication known as the *Black Troop,* you once wrote an article on the Black Woman's role in the Revolution. You raised some rather controversial points in there, you know. There are a lot of Black women who would argue very much with you about what you said, because you seemed to feel that Black women shouldn't participate in the Revolution in terms of being right up there on the front line.

SISTER RAYSOR: No.

BLACK THEATRE: Well, why would you feel that way? Why would you say "no" when there are so many . . .

SISTER RAYSOR: 'Cause I felt the way a lotta women feel, you know, (INAUDIBLE, MICROPHONE MADE CONSTANT NOISE) . . . else because you're frustrated, you don't know what to do.

You know, and you want to do as much as you can and the most you could do, you think, would (be to) give your life to the revolution. You know, gonna fight side by side with your man.

But that's not the way . . . that's not what you have to do. What you have to do is be a women. And have babies (LAUGHS). Be women for the men. So the man . . . men . . . let the men be the men, because that's where the problem is too, in the Revolution. That the men weren't allowed to be men. And the only way they can be is if we be their women. And fighting side by side with them is not going to help. . . . It's not going to do . . . the women are doing things now . . . talking about what? Women's rights? And equal rights. And well, what are the names of the groups and organizations starting now? That stuff is all a fantasy. (LAUGHS) All part of the white people's sick, crazy fantasy.

That's what they do. Because the men are faggots, and the women are all . . . you know . . . want to be men. But that's not our revolution. Our revolution is for women to be women; men to be men, and that's going to make it (the revolution) stronger. That's the natural way.

The secret is nature. The secret is doing it the natural way, 'cause like it's always the right way.

BLACK THEATRE: Then that little philosophy there, doing things the natural way, uh . . . is like the . . . what? How shall I say? It is the point from which . . . all . . . all of the art at the New Lafayette flows?

SISTER RAYSOR: Hmmmm.

BLACK THEATRE: Is it true that at the New Lafayette, Black Art is viewed as being a natural thing which flows out of the natural juices of Black people?

SISTER RAYSOR: Um-hum, Um-hum.

BLACK THEATRE: And then is presented upon the stage?

SISTER RAYSOR: Um-hum. And here at the theatre after a while you stop saying . . . art . . . because it's just a part of this life . . . not this Brother does this, and this Brother does that; it's just the thing they do.

And like, when somebody else comes in, and says, oh, you know . . . and they mention art, and they mention, oh you know, a painter, or a musician, or . . . but here . . . everybody plays music (SHORT LAUGH), everybody does something artistic someway or another.

Everybody does it, so it's like—life. And that's natural, and all Black people have it. All Black people have power that they don't even know about.

But it's just being hidden and being covered up. It has been covered up from the beginning.

BLACK THEATRE: Are you a poet, as well?

SISTER RAYSOR: (LAUGHS) See, that's the thing! That's the whole part of our life. I'm not going to say I'm a poet or an artist. I'm a Black woman and . . . there are many Black women all over the world like me. I'm just finding out who I am. And there are a lot of people that don't know who they are, yet. And when they find out, they can do anything. Anything that they want to do.

Blackness

DEATH LIST

By ED BULLINS

Dedicated to The Palestine National Liberation Movement (Al-Fatah) and its striking Military Wing (Al-Assifa Forces) acting in the Occupied Palestine.

Blackman: early thirties. Clean-shaven. Deliberate movements, direct, precise tone of voice.
Blackwoman: mid-twenties. Afro.

A dark space. Table, several chairs. A Malcolm poster upon a wall.

Red light slowly up on a BLACKMAN cleaning a high-powered rifle with telescopic sight.

BLACKWOMAN enters:

BLACKMAN (Clearly, to himself): Raymond Pace Alexander . . . Judge, Court of Common Pleas Philadelphia, Pennsylvania . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Margaret Belcher . . . President, National Association of Negro Business and Professional Clubs, Inc. . . . Enemy of the Black People.

James Booker . . . Consultant to Kerner Commission . . . Enemy of the Black People.

BLACKWOMAN: So you're going to kill them?

BLACKMAN (Ignores her): William H. Bowe . . . International Secretary-Treasurer, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Shirley Chisholm . . . U.S. Congresswoman, 12th District, New York . . . You have no male equivalent . . . Super Tom. . . . Super Nigger woman traitor to the Black nation of America and our Third World brothers and allies . . . Black people had such hopes for you . . . you Goldberg lover . . . and you'll not even know why you'll die.

BLACKWOMAN: I know that your revolutionary triad has been chosen to destroy these people . . . but does it have to be you who pulls the trigger? . . . Isn't there another way?

(BLACKMAN ignores her throughout her speeches and remains preoccupied by his preparations)

BLACKMAN: LeRoy Clark . . . International Vice-President, United Furniture Workers of America . . . Enemy of Black People. William L. Clay . . . U.S. Congressman, 1st District, Missouri . . . Enemy of Black People.

John Conyers, Jr. . . . U.S. Congressman, 1st District, Michigan . . . Enemy of Black People.

BLACKWOMAN: I believe in revolution. I even go along with terrorist tactics and strategy . . . But you are preparing to murder more than sixty Black people . . . or negroes . . . whatever you want to call them.

BLACKMAN: Earl Davis . . . Minority Affairs Director, Committee on Political Education, AFL-CIO . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Georgia M. Davis . . . State Senator, Kentucky . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Walter G. Davis . . . Director, AFL-CIO, Department of Education . . . Enemy of the Black People.

BLACKWOMAN: Don't you understand that they believe that they are right? . . . They're old. You read that statement that they made in the Sunday, June 28, 1970 edition of the New York Times. They signed that stupid statement in support of Israel . . . That's where their names were noted by the Central Revolutionary Committee as Enemies of the Black people and marked for extermination as reactionary Black elements by our urban guerrilla teams. And you were chosen as triggerman . . . for a very special reason.

BLACKMAN: C. L. Dellums . . . International President, Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Charles C. Diggs . . . U.S. Congressman, 13th District, Michigan . . . Enemy of the Black People.

William Gary . . . Administrative Assistant to the President, International Union of Electrical Radio & Machine Workers . . . Enemy of the Black People.

BLACKWOMAN: They're a different generation . . . just as you at thirty are different from the younger brothers who are twenty and twenty-five . . . You read what the old leadership mistakenly believe . . . "We are also

moved by the ideals of democracy and social justice, ideals which we have struggled to achieve in this country and which we firmly believe the United States must uphold in the Middle East. In our opinion, the United States can best stand by these ideals by unequivocally guaranteeing Israel's security." . . . These people are old, ignorant, idealistic and reactionary . . . but they are still our people . . . in the most profound sense . . . we must reach out and help them or ignore them and go on with the revolution . . . but must we murder them as well?

BLACKMAN: Hugh M. Gloster . . . President, Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia . . . one of the first to hip me to Afro-American literature . . . a man who I respected and admired as a Blackman who had vision to pass on his knowledge to we Black generations who followed him . . . a man who I once thought was Black . . . in the best traditions of Black thinking and vision . . .

(HE slams a shell into the gun and pulls the bolt back and forth noisily)

. . . Hugh M. Gloster . . . Enemy of the Black People.

BLACKWOMAN: No, no! This thing is twisting you, making you something that I don't recognize. Something that doesn't see me any longer.

BLACKMAN: Simeon Golar . . . Chairman, N.Y.C. Housing Authority . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Ernest Green . . . Director, Joint Apprenticeship Program, WDL/APREF . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Richard Hatcher . . . Mayor, Gary, Indiana . . . maybe you could have done something at one time . . . really been something to Black people in the most Nationalistic sense . . . but you have exposed yourself for what you are . . . an Enemy of Black People.

(HE spills out several boxes of shells and stands each bullet in a row as HE speaks each name)

BLACKWOMAN: The people you are about to kill are uninformed . . . they're old, opportunistic negroes . . . and react like that group has always reacted. They won't believe that the standard of living in the Middle East is steadily rising. They don't realize that the citizens of Algeria and Morocco have higher standards of living than Black Americans . . . and that Algeria is a revolutionary socialistic nation that won its freedom from France through revolution as the Black Nation must do here in the United States . . . In Algeria such things as education, health services and some housing are at a very nominal rate . . . while Morocco is a monarchy . . .

BLACKMAN: Augustus F. Hawkins . . . U.S. Congressman, 21st District, California . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Dorothy Height . . . President, National Council of Negro Women . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Vivian Henderson . . . President, Clark College, Atlanta, Georgia . . . Enemy of the Black People.

BLACKWOMAN: They *believe* in democracy . . . something that Black people have never had and never will have . . . unless it has an African basis . . . African Socialist Democracy . . . One-party "dictatorial" states are the best way for African peoples at this stage of their development, if the governments are progressive and revolutionary and not the boot lickers for Western imperialism . . . In progressive nations the people agree on who is best to run the country and those people are voted into office. That way there is more unity, more common purpose. It is how Blacks will obtain political power throughout America. With a unified party behind you, backed entirely by the people, there is only victory in sight.

BLACKMAN: Aaron E. Henry . . . President, Mississippi State Conference NAACP . . . Enemy of the Black People. Norman Hill . . . Associate Director, A. Philip Randolph Institute . . . Super Tom and Enemy of the Black People. William R. Hudgins . . . President, Freedom National Bank of New York . . . a so-called Black Capitalist . . . no words will describe my contempt for you, Hudgins . . . you snake! It will be a pleasure putting a bullet through your brain . . . Your entire class will meet this end . . . I swear it as a Revolutionary and Black man.

BLACKWOMAN: These tired, complacent half-scared negro men and women refuse to believe that the mid-east struggle is a racial conflict . . . that is tied ultimately to our racial conflict and that they are aiding the Black people's enemies by allying themselves with Zionism, the C.I.A., South Africa and the West. But have some compassion for them, if you can, brother.

BLACKMAN: John H. Johnson . . . Publisher, Ebony, Jet, Tan and Black World . . . You are an extremely dangerous and resourceful stooge, Mr. Johnson. Dangerous to Black people and resourceful in acquiring a place at your master's feet, the whiteman. You have poisoned Black people's minds for decades with skin-whitener-straightened-hair-bad-body-odor ads. You have aided niggers in seeking their most depraved desires . . . to be second-class slaves! . . . with your best-dressed-nigger-of-the-year articles, and your richest-nigger-parasite-of-the-decade features, and your greatest-Uncle-Tom-in-Show-Business reporting . . . You'll have an extravagant funeral, I know.

BLACKWOMAN: Brother, my man, my Black lover/husband/warrior, we have been in this struggle together since before I can almost remember. We've been beaten and maced; clubbed, jailed and persecuted; we've prayed in, sat in and stayed in. We have buried our brothers in revolution and seen others stolen away into exile and prison. And now we take up the gun. Is this all we can end with? Death? the killing of our elders and the training of our youth to be murderers. Is there not another way? A way that we might see the end of this revolution in our lifetimes or else win some concrete goals that the following generations can build a foundation for the future upon? A way that points to the East, that points to the future and not towards the vast cemetery of the West?

BLACKMAN: LeRoy R. Johnson . . . State Senator, Atlanta, Georgia . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Vernon E. Jordan . . . Executive Director, United Negro College Fund . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Thomas Kilgore, Jr. . . . Senior Pastor, Second Baptist Church, Los Angeles, California . . . Enemy of the Black People.

BLACKWOMAN: How many shed tears for Ahmed Evans? Not many and the brother may never again see the light of day, though it is doubtful whether the brother pulled the trigger . . . Must you be a martyr . . . revolutionary or otherwise, Brotherman? . . . Revolutionary suicide some may call it . . . versus reactionary suicide . . . but it all means suicide. It's all death. And survival does not mean death or suicide . . . it means surviving for the future . . . But I am a woman . . . and we women know nothing of revolution and death, or so you tell us, as we stand behind you, dressed in black.

BLACKMAN: Martin Luther King, Sr. . . . Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia . . . When my sights train on you, old man, tears will fill my eyes with the memory of your deluded, dead son . . . The Peace Nigger . . . but I know my duty.

BLACKWOMAN: Your duty! Your duty! . . . Where did you get that from? Who taught that to you? . . . What whiteman's ideological system have you swallowed from his library and twisted it in your fantasies of power, manhood and identity?

BLACKMAN: John Lewis . . . Executive Director, Voter Education Project . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Arthur C. Logan . . . President, United Neighborhood Houses . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Marion Logan . . . Secretary, Southern Christian Leadership Conference . . . Enemy of the Black People.

BLACKWOMAN: There's nothing that I can say, I know. You have your orders, you know your duty . . . But do we have to murder our own people?

BLACKMAN: William Lucy . . . Executive Assistant to the President, American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Louis Martin . . . Vice-President & Editor, Sengstake Newspapers . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Frank C. Montero . . . Assistant to President, Tishman Realty & Construction Corp. . . . Uncle Tom and Enemy of the Black People.

BLACKWOMAN: After the deaths . . . Malcolm, King, the little girls in Birmingham, Featherstone, Lil Bobby, Hampton . . . and all the rest . . . after the deaths we all knew that we had to go underground. We all knew that the revolution had changed in character . . . and the choice a few of us made for the immediate present was to carry on a national urban offensive war of terror. Our group agreed upon this course of action.

BLACKMAN: Ronnie M. Moore . . . Executive Director, Scholarship, Education and Defense Fund for Racial Equality, Inc. . . . Enemy of the Black People.

John Morsell . . . Assistant Executive Director, NAACP . . . Enemy of the Black People.

John H. Murphy . . . President. Afro-American Newspapers . . . a man who could do so much but wishes to only kiss white America's ass, lick its boots, exploit his position for selfish bourgeoise ends and continue to ruin the minds of our people.

BLACKWOMAN: We knew that we had to engage in guerrilla activities. Bombings, assassinations, espionage . . . Our targets were the pigs, of course, their facilities and selves, and those devils who enter our communities by day to exploit us, to investigate and administer to us or to use our bodies and spirits for their gratification . . . then steal out by nightfall . . . were moved on when they couldn't escape fast enough . . . and they were dealt with severely . . . Also our targets were government service agencies, like the post office, the transportation system, banks, utilities and industry . . . and their counter-revolutionary negro tools and slaves who are our most hated enemies of the Revolution and the Black people.

BLACKMAN: Eleanor H. Norton . . . Chairman, N.Y.C. Commission on Human Rights . . . Before I kill you, Eleanor, I'm going to ask if you love Blackmen.

Frederick O'Neal . . . Actor! . . . Ha ha ha ha ha ha . . .

(He begins packing a green, cloth knapsack, slowly and carefully. The bullets first, one by one, then binoculars, first-aid kit, emergency rations, water, several books, etc.)

BLACKWOMAN: I have a joint . . . At least we can share that before you go. You're not puritanical, are you? You don't mind if I get high?

(She takes out a hand-rolled cigarette from her pocket and lights it)

BLACKMAN: Peter Ottley . . . President, Local 144 Hotel, Hospital & Nursing Home Union, SEIU . . . Enemy of Black People.

Basil A. Paterson . . . State Senator, New York . . . Black opportunist . . . You think of yourself as a Jewish subject, don't you Basil? New York goes to Goldberg and Israel, and you get yours handing over the Black folks to Zionism . . . There's a bullet here with your name on it that's going to burst your heart, big man.

(Blackwoman hands cigarette to him. He ignores her)

BLACKWOMAN: There's nothing I can do now except wait, huh? Just wait. Do you think that what you are going to try and do will change anything? Now I'm not being pessimistic but will it change anything, really?

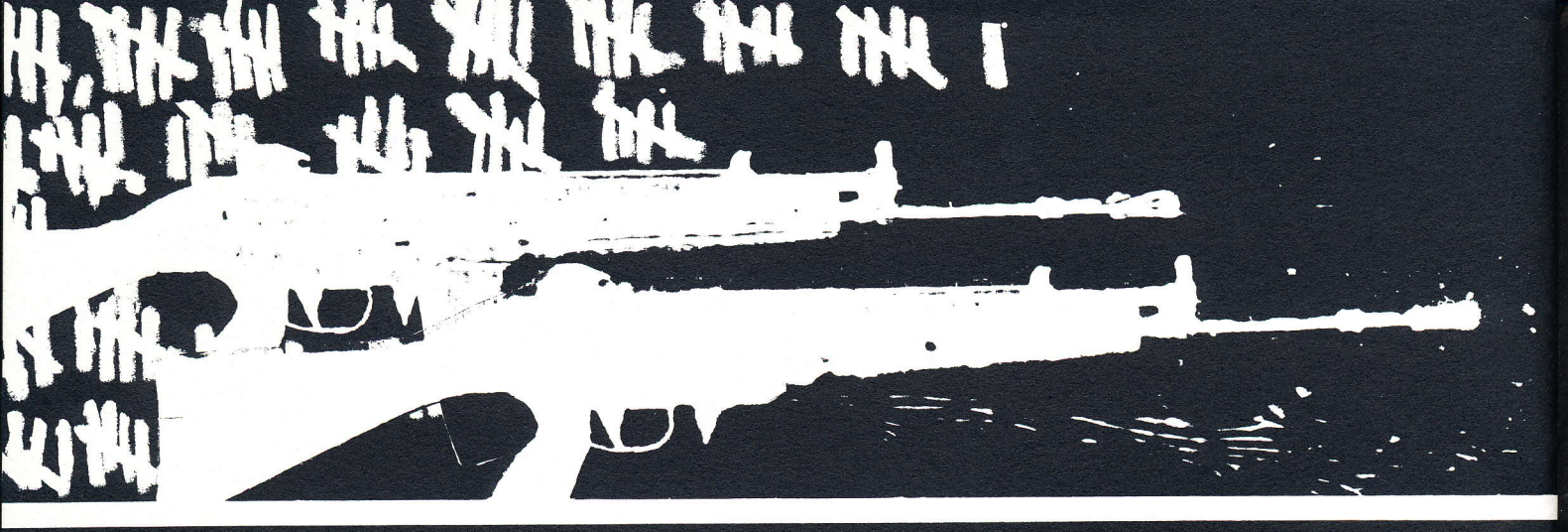
BLACKMAN: Ernest M. Pharr . . . Editor, The Atlantic Inquirer . . . Another negro journalist and Enemy of the Black People.

Channing Emery Phillips . . . President, Housing Development Corporation . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Robert E. Powell . . . Vice-President, Laborers International Union of North America . . . Enemy of the Black People.

BLACKWOMAN: When did you lose hope, my man? When did you begin to reside in death? When did suicide and murder and destruction become your ideology? You once fought your Black brothers and their white allies. for the sake of your ideology but now you hardly speak of it. Have your ideas changed so radically that they are now incomprehensible? . . . That would be a break-down in revolutionary communication, wouldn't it, brother? Today you only oil and clean your gun and prepare to kill. You only wait for orders to murder and destroy.

BLACKMAN: A. Philip Randolph . . . Vice-President, AFL-CIO . . . an old disillusioned . . . morally and mentally twisted man. One of the shining colored hopes of the left, the lost left, once remembered long ago in the myth of the unknown to me thirties . . . now a tool of the C.I.A., Zionism and Nixon . . . You fell so far, Blackman. You and many of your generation are in historical tragedy of monstrous proportions to Black people that we may never recover from. I am going to put you out of your misery and and erase your image from the living reality of Black people.



BLACKWOMAN: There are some Black people, you know, some who seek the future. Some who believe in the nation. Some who wish to move into the new world. Some who conceive value systems, Black value systems and live them as new revolutionary Blackmen and women. There are some who have not surrendered to death or its impulses to be a white thing of destruction. Yes, my brother, my man, my husband, my lover, there are those who will truly raise the dead and foretell the future in our times. Actual Black nation-builders. But not you, killer. Can't you turn your head away from the West for a second and gaze into the rising sun of the future?

(Sighs from the Blackman. Deep. He takes the marijuana cigarette and drags deeply.)

BLACKMAN: Jackie Robinson . . . Chairman of the Board, Freedom National Bank of New York . . . Mr. Jackie Robinson . . . hah . . . I had a teacher once in a school that I long ago went to in another life, a teacher named Miss Cohen who I was uncontrollably in love with, being that I was very young, years before puberty, and love was a fresh experience with me. A teacher named Cohen with white white skin who said that that day was special, in fact, was the greatest in my young negro life because Jackie Robinson had been admitted into the major leagues of baseball. Cried, she did. I won't lie to you. My greatest day, she said. And I remembered that day . . . for years, for centuries of altering life I remembered . . . even though I hated baseball . . . but that had been my greatest day hadn't it? Miss Cohen had cried for me . . . Then on another day, when I was older, but still innocent, when I was centuries away from Miss Cohen with her white white skin, almost long forgotten, and in another place, one day I met Jackie Robinson . . . and found he was a nice man, not someone who should make anyone cry, however sensitive their nature . . . So now I have learned that those painful, tragic days in which you discover some wisp of truth and reality, that those painful unbearable days are truly your great ones.

And today reality demands that I destroy you and your kind, Mr. Robinson.

BLACKWOMAN: Join them. Join them and become one with them. Put down your thing of death. It is too heavy for you. Put down the ways of the whiteman, turn your back on the beast, the devil. Do not take up his ways.

BLACKMAN: Bayard Rustin . . . Executive Director, A. Philip Randolph Institute . . . I can see the pain and fear of the recognition of your betrayal of Black people in your eyes, but it will not blind me when I pull the trigger to extinguish your blindness, fraud!

(Blackwoman and man exchange the cigarette. Music begins to play, Black music. Lights alter, allowing blues and purples to mingle with the red)

BLACKWOMAN: It's a new world that we Black revolutionaries of the mind and spirit are creating, brother. I am only a woman and I cannot speak of it as I should. But the brothers await you. Do not fear or distrust them. If they seem different, it is only because they are getting closer to our Blackness. Come enter the new world with us.

BLACKMAN: Horace L. Sheffield . . . Executive Vice President, Trade Union Leadership Council . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Arthur D. Shores . . . Member, Democratic National Committee, Alabama . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Asa T. Spaulding . . . Owner, Spaulding Consulting and Advisory Service . . . Enemy of the Black People.

BLACKWOMAN: Who entitled you to designate the enemies of the Black people? Because they don't fit into your narrow conception of what Black people should be doing and representing. All Black people are Black in one way or another, brother. Can we afford to lose any? Can we afford to destroy and alienate our own? Will your destroying them unite the Black people? Will it?

BLACKMAN: Marcus Stewart, Sr. . . . Editor, The Indianapolis Recorder . . . Negro journalist . . . is there any more to say?

Carl Stokes . . . Mayor Cleveland, Ohio . . . We Black people put our hopes in you, and found that you are powerless, as we are powerless . . . and now that you have turned on us we resort to the power of nothingness . . . to the power of Zero.

(He slams the filled clip into his gun)

BLACKWOMAN: We, he says. We . . . well, I've had my say. Don't know if we have had our say but I've had my say. Wouldn't you say that I have said as much as I could to you?

BLACKMAN: Louis Stokes . . . U.S. Congressman, 21st District, Ohio . . . Enemy of the Black People.

C. L. Tandy . . . Publisher, Indiana Herald . . . Enemy of the Black People.

Gardner Taylor . . . Past President, Progressive National Baptist Convention . . . Nigger preacher . . . most all of them are Enemies of the Black People.

BLACKWOMAN: Do you think this will shut them up? Do you think killing them will keep them from going to the people they love, the whiteman? Do you think of it? Well you're wrong if you think that your killing sixty of them or even ten times that amount will shut them up. They have kissed a lot of ass to get where they are. They have become the personifications and embodiments of Uncle Thomas Wooly Heads. They will kill, destroy, imprison you and your revolutionary brothers totally if you move against them. They have the Black police on their side as well as the whiteman. There's no one on earth more vicious to a Blackman than a nigger who is threatened by the Blackman of losing his imaginary place beside the whiteman. Beware, my Blackman. Think of your condition and history. Do not underestimate negroes as you have done with whitemen. Niggers were taught to kill by the supreme killer of the Universe, the white/beast/devil.

BLACKMAN: Jesse H. Walker . . . Executive Editor, New York Amsterdam News . . . A misguided negro that has a large segment of Harlem in his grasp. He must go quickly.

Wyatt Tee Walker . . . Pastor, Canaan Baptist Church of Christ . . . A chicken lickin', pork chop grabbin' Enemy of the Black People.

William J. Walls . . . Bishop, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church . . . He will die by my hand and have a sign hung about his neck: Enemy of the Black People!

BLACKWOMAN: Blackman, I could say that you are insane, but we are living in insane times, and you are only one of a numerous invisible, Black army that waits and watches the actions of your fathers.

(Blackman has completed his packing. Sound of gunfire, sirens and revolution.)

A brother of poetic nature once said that the metaphor of our times is revolution. Are you a poem of death, my blackman? How will you feel after murdering your father? His name is on your list. He is a prominent, reactionary negro who was once a raving militant and radical. The thirties, forties, fifties and sixties were so long ago, my man. Is it life you seek by assassinating the man who sired you, who protected, educated and loved you? Is this your revolution? I know that you believe that the future will correct everything, if and when it rebuilds the destruction that you have sown, but can it diminish this act that is against nature, against Black life?

BLACKMAN: Roosevelt Watts . . . Executive Vice-President, Transport Workers Union . . . Enemy of the Black People.

BLACKWOMAN: Are you not the true enemy of Black people? Think hard now. Are you not the white created demon that we were all warned about? Is it far more than superstition that you accuse me of to say that you are our greatest threat to survival now, in these times?

(Blackman begins to leave)

BLACKMAN: Robert Weaver . . . President, Bernard M. Baruch College, New York . . . Nothing will save you, Weaver . . . Not your position, money or your delusions.

Roy Wilkins . . . Executive Director, NAACP . . . I am going to enjoy takin' you off, ole Roy . . . you've been a Tom too long.

Thomas G. Young . . . Vice-President, Local 32B, Service Employees International Union . . . Enemy of the Black People.

BLACKWOMAN: Wherever you go, think of me. Whatever you do, remember what I say to you, what I feel about you. And know that I'll be here waiting . . . if and when you return. I am your woman . . . your Black woman . . . even though you have no ears, words or mind for me. I love you and wait for you . . . and that is our only hope for the future . . . Remember what I say, my man. That is our only hope. You with me . . . and me with you . . . and we together with our children and brothers and sisters as the nation.

BLACKMAN: Whitney M. Young, Jr. . . . Executive Director, National Urban League . . . Last on the list . . . I might be sorry when I finish with you, Whitney . . . But I'll try and make it painless.

(Blackman exits.

Sounds outside rise; gunfire, scream.

Lights return to red, with the Sister standing over the table with head lowered, fingering and tapping to the beat of the music the lone shell left by the Man)

BLACK VOICE OFF: *(Half screaming)* NO. . . NO . . . IT CAN'T BE . . . IT CAN'T BE!!
(A single shot)

BLACKNESS

All inquiries should be addressed to The New Lafayette Agency, 2349 Seventh Ave., Harlem, New York, N. Y. 10030. Phone: 862-2460

Excerpts from: THE SKY ABOVE AND THE PEOPLE BELOW

By THEORA MAKEDA

A discourse explaining how the mystic circle of religion, astrology, astronomy, mythology and symbolism produced a deeply entrenched social order.

On all the continents and on all the islands around the earth, ancients believed that the stars in the sky mirrored the lives of every man and woman. In the beginning, most of the Blacks obeyed the Laws of Nature. But the few who failed to keep and obey natural law performed degenerate acts and were responsible for throwing Nature out of balance. Thereafter, each time certain un-natural things developed in a tribe, or nation, the masses came face to face with mystical problems which threw them into a state of confusion.

Symbolic religion and science were blended together with existing reality and in a gigantic manner began to change the order of things in all the ancient cultures around the world. Magical rites evolved into the dreaded scientific power threatens the entire world today. Religion is clearly interwoven into the science of astrology and astronomy, as well as mythology and numbers.

The order of the universe is represented by numbers which includes the fertilizing nature of earth beings. All earth beings are governed by numerical relationship in everyday affairs. The round earth has four directions, two poles (north and south), a center marking called the Equator and latitudes and longitudes, as well as other markings.

Astrology has four fixed signs, four mutable signs, four cardinal signs and four elements. The Trinity is represented by the number three. Man and woman and their first offspring, or any offspring is represented by the number three. John the Revelator wrote about the number of the Beast, as well as the Seven Churches, the Seven Seals, the Seven Trumpets and the Seven Stars. The author of the book of Job wrote about the Pleaides Cluster of stars in the sign of Taurus and the star Arcturus in the sign of Virgo. The author of the book of Job also wrote about the Constellation of stars enshrined in the sky as Orion and the Hunter, as well as known mythological figure. The mythological figure Hercules is represented in the sky by a cluster of stars and has a number. In fact, everything has a number as well as a name.

The early system of measurements and calculations to explain the universe was in well-defined terms, expressing mathematical laws. These laws became tied in with a growing system of symbolism that linked the facts of the sky above and the earth below, in relationship to time, people, places and things. They symbolised the stars, planets and constellations to represent Gods, heroes, heroines and various things upon the earth. The colours of the stars and planets were calculated to correspond with and represent each other in subtle ways to influence the thinking and lives of people upon the earth.

In the Greece that Homer wrote about during the 9th century B.C., some Greeks called their Sky God Uranus and called their Earth Goddess by the name of Gaea. This was a religion that popped into action around the time of the Trojan War. In today's world, astrologers and astronomers say that the planet Uranus represents violence and sudden action, or changes.

Many people are familiar with the story of Lot in the bible, who fathered a son by each of his two Canaanite half daughters. Through Lot's son, Moab, there came into being the God called Baal. The Supreme God Baal had a companion Goddess called Ashtoreth, the Supreme female Deity. Baal and Ashtoreth were compared with the Sun and the Moon. At other times, they were called by the names of the planets Jupiter and Venus. In time, that religion too began to influence and even control the habits of the children of Keturah and the grandchildren of Hagar and many other original inhabitants of the land of Canaan who lived in those treacherous days.

Baal-Moab had his double expression in the name of Baal-Molech, the supreme deity of Lot's second son Ammon. The Fire-God Moab, or Molech, was linked to a period of time in mid-December, which was a period of general license and immorality, when sex acts and crimes were committed as a ritual of worship to their Sky God Saturn. At that time, the Planet Saturn was called the God of seedtime and harvest. This was a horrible mystery that is seldom understood.

The so-called great Pyramid in Egypt was said to be a symbolic mountain, or Pole Star, marking the center of the world. There were some thirty-odd pyramids of varying sizes built in the general area of Egypt and the lower Sudan. Each had a pointed top that reached towards the sky. Sacred Towers, better known as fortresses were built to symbolise Mountains. Watch Towers were built in the same manner. Even today, churches have steeples and towers which are a carry-over from the olden days of spreading religion. In Europe, old castles and fortresses had towers. Most towers were erected to house soldiers and for other religious purposes. The Tower of Babel is probably the most publicized. Certain mountains rising out of the Earth towards the Sky have been linked to Sky-Gods. Even today, Mt. Kilimanjaro in Kenya, East Africa, and the mountains of the Moon in the Congo area, seem to be of special mystical importance to some people.

The measurements and rhythms of the Celestial Moon divide the measurement of time into hourly cycles; three-day cycles; seven-day cycles, and twenty-eight-day cycles. Each twenty-eight days represent a Luna Month. The Moon along with the Sun govern the ocean tides. Some writers claim that women are incomplete because they are symbolised by the Moon and the changing phases of the Moon. It is also claimed that the Moon represents castrated men.

Science states that the Moon is like a barren dead body. Mythology contends that Prosephone, the Goddess of the Moon, and the underworld are equivalent to death. On the other hand, there is an interesting parable in the Bible which says that the Woman being chased by the Dragon is clothed with the Sun, with the Moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars upon her head. The twelve stars have been said to represent the twelve signs of the Zodiac. In astrology and astronomy, the Dragon's Head and Tail are linked to the Eclipses of the Moon. Draco the Dragon is a string of stars near the present North Pole Star, called Polaris. Many centuries ago there was a star in the Tail of Draco the Dragon, known as the North Pole Star. It was called Thurban. At that time, an opening in the great Pyramid focused upon the Pole Star, Thurban.

If the Moon is a dead body, why rush to the Moon? Isn't tampering with the Moon likely to cause a tidal wave of some kind? Is that what science wants to do, and if so, why? Science says that the Moon waxes, wanes and disappears, because it is subject to the universal law of frequent change. If the changeable Moon represents fertility and is recognized as the typical heavenly body governing the rhythms of life, then what about the Sun? Should not the stationary Sun represent fertility and life even more so? Besides, there are countless numbers of stars and a few roving Planets credited with influencing the rhythms of life too.

The biblical allegory about the woman, clothed with the Sun, and being chased by the Dragon is food for thought. It does seem that the attempt to spread birth control around the earth is the hand of the Dragon. To interfere with the birth of children is like tampering with the Sun, the Giver of Life! Since all the children born on the earth must surely be conceived during the 12 signs of a given year, somebody wants to destroy, cripple and hurt the offspring of the woman clothed with the Sun. So whether we are impressed by science, religion or politics, in all things which concern the values and destiny of Black people, sex is the tap-root. To Black people, one thing is certain, Black men must find a way to protect, love and cherish their homes and families, as well as provide for Black women and their offspring. On the other hand, more Black women must learn to respect, as well as love, their Black men. Both men and women need to give their children the attention they deserve and teach them the things they need to know. All Black people need to unite to protect their birthrights, their survival and their growth. That is the kind of religion we need.

Today we have come face to face with the events that are joined to the symbolic language of Mythology, Astrology, Astronomy and Religion, as well as the code of numbers and names. These are the mysteries we must surely understand in order to be Free.

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, THE COMPASSIONATE, THE MERCIFUL
A LETTER TO ALL BLACK PEOPLE

Salaam, Brothers and Sisters,

I pray this letter finds all of you in good health and under the protection of Allah. For only Allah can protect us from the evils that plague the earth.

I have been attempting, through my art (music and playwrighting), to awaken Black people to the vast capabilities and powers that I know (due to Allah's grace) we possess.

I am sorry to say that I have not been very successful. The devil has tempted and captivated a lot of our Brothers and Sisters and no matter how hard I try, I just can't seem to make them see "the way." (El-Islam) But since I have faith in the holy scriptures and hope that perhaps a few Black people will awaken, I continue to fight and to spread the word.

A few other Black musicians and myself absolutely refuse to take Black Spiritual music into bars and grills and clubs that serve alcoholic beverages. A drunk is in no condition to listen to the scriptures. Primarily jazz clubs have this type of "drunken" atmosphere and would do well to hire "musical performers." I am not a performer. I consider myself a teacher and a soldier. I am a teacher of the Holy Scriptures (The Quaran, Rig Vedis, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Hadith, Ju-Ju, and my interpretation of the Bible) and I am a soldier of Allah who is dedicated to the destruction of all evil.

As we all know, the white boy is the manifest form of the devil. Just as the Black man is the manifest form of Allah. The devil uses the white boy as a tool to do evil acts and Allah uses us to counteract the evil and to do good and virtuous deeds. Unfortunately all Black people have not submitted to the will of Allah. There are some Black(?) people who have gone over to the side of the devil. These are the people who are holding up the revolution. We can't persuade them to join us (we've tried) because they are afraid to jeopardize their jobs (with the devil) and their cars and homes (in the suburbs) or their education (in white schools). Some Brothers disagree with me on this issue, but I see no alternative but to liquidate all "negro" elements in our society.

I believe that by going over to the side of the devil they actually become the devil, and we should execute them like the devil. Some Brothers, like Stokely Carmichael, say we should try to bring all these lost Black people back home. I believe this is futile and to attempt it is a waste of time (although I attempt it anyhow). The so-called negro is defeating our cause. He is holding up the revolution and preventing us from taking over this country. I believe that all negroes who aren't aware of their spirituality and divine nature should be taught. And I try to teach them. But if they turn a deaf ear and rebuke the teachings as nonsense (as I have had negroes do) then I believe we should execute them. Some Brothers say "give them time; give the negroes time and they will come across." I say we don't have time to give to negroes. Allah has given us a predetermined time in which to return and those who are lost and still living in sin at the appointed hour will remain eternally confined within the walls of hell. Severe indeed is the punishment of Allah. And that is just as it should be for the rewards of Allah are blissful beyond description.

Allah has given us prophets (Muhammad, Khalil, Isa, John Coltrane, and many others), and each prophet has shown us the path of righteousness. Are these prophets to die in vain? When are we going to avenge the assassination of Malcolm X? I say NOW is the time. The longer we wait the more Black people the devil will get control of. Besides, the devil isn't waiting. "Church bombed in Birmingham kills many Black children," "Newark's Central Ward is invaded by the National Guard," "Hundreds of Black people murdered in Watts, Harlem, and Chicago riots," "Black families are left homeless as Detroit burns to the ground," and I could go on and on. But the point is that the shit has already started. Actually the shit started when the first shipload of devils landed on the shores of Mother Africa. We were (and still are) highly civilized people. The white savage barbarians who were fresh out of the European caves took full advantage of our peaceful nature. By nature we are peaceful but I believe we must pick up the gun and fight before we can ever live in peace again. Violence is all the devil knows so violence we shall give it. Bismi Allah. In the name of Allah we have to launch the Jihad (Holy War). The Arabs in the East are doing this now in their struggle with Israel who of course is supported by America.

Our Arab brothers in the East and our Black brothers in South America and in Mozambique are depending on US. We are the only ones who can help them. The Afro-American Black men are in a better position to strangle the American beast than Russia or China. Both these and other countries have atomic rockets and ballistic missiles aimed right at them which will be fired at the first sign of aggression. But we are inside the beast. We can "guerrilla war-fare" this fuckin' country right to its knees. The white man, being materialistic and not

spiritualistic, definitely is not going to bomb his precious business buildings. That would be to our advantage.

But our greatest victory will come when all Black people unite and chant "Allahu Akbar." If this happens there will be no need for armed confrontation. The revolution will be over. The devil exists as a threat only in our minds (bodies are shed like old clothes and new ones are acquired) and if all our minds were devoted to the worship of Allah then the devil would be powerless. The devil gets all of his strength from us. He tempts us with his wealth and some of us accept. By doing so we give the devil energy and strength and consequently become weaker. I also have been tempted by the devil in the form of record contracts, club dates, and wealth to last me the rest of my life. All of which I, of course, refused. I will not sell them my Black Energy; my Black Immortality. They have bought off quite a few so-called Black militants, but I realize that I am much more wealthy than all the gold on Earth. Nothing is more precious than the Grace of Allah. Oh, what a Glorious day it will be when all Black People realize this. We will be on our way home. Allahu Akbar.

Your fellow warrior,
Yusef Alhakk

SI(G)NS OF THE TIMES

To be. We want to be. & everything we do must con-tribute to-wards the Expanding of our consciousness . . . the sterile/deadness of *any other thing must be REjected/CONdemned* . . .

"Cotton Comes To Harlem" is the lie of life that's being pro-jected by Hollywood's whi/te money-makers (& the/ir $$$$ motivated negroes) on/to the minds of Black people all over the world: Be beholden to the morality/values of a dead whi/te people's sick creation/s . . . the death of life.

The film is an adaptation of Chester Himes' novel of the same title . . . & Bro. Himes has re-vealed in an interview with novelist John A. Williams concerning his detective novel pre-occupation/s: "I haven't created anything whatsoever; I just made the faces black, that's all . . . I was just imitating all other American detective story-writers." (Mickey Spillane in black face is what he created.) REvealing the fundamental intention of his (Himes') art: to entertain a hedonist people who've always conceptualized the lives of Black people as being exotic/mysterious. Chester Himes made what bread he's made . . . pro-posing no change (in those works).*

The film of his novel is the same. It does not move us to *any place,* except laughter's cheap entertainment & the perpetuation of the society as it conforms to the Evil-Eyes. The visionless. "Cotton" is a tale of a Black preacher who cons Black people in/to paying the/ir laboured-for money to re-turn to Africa. This up-dated version of the film is supposed to EMbody the contemporary elements that have headlined the world's papers—militantism/political rhetoric . . . that kinda thing—the SIGN/s of our time—but (it) fails to communicate the idea of *reality* in a post-1965 setting . . . Blacks *cannot* be taken on that bullshit trip anymore. Just dig Harlemites these years. They are not moved.

Some white hoods rob this preacher-man . . . & in the process of escape a bale of cotton is discovered lying in the street, & this changes the direction of the film. Everybody. is looking for this cotton which con-tains $87,000. Finally, having been discovered by an old Black man who sells it, then re-buys it on the promptings of Mr. Preacher, there is an abundance of in/trigues.

In the pursuit of the cotton a Mafia-type whi/te dude comes a-huntin', confronting & frightening the old man who's already passed the bale of cotton on/to Mr. Preacher's ally, a "militant" dashiki-clad brother. This brother rescues the old man from the harshness of the whi/te mobster: "What are you doing here, *white man?*" . . . then he turns to the old man, the mobster running, a/way!: "Is that Black enough for yuh?" & that's the corn & shit. Is a reflection of masqueraders who adorn our world, pro-jecting "militant" words/lines to horri-

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* Chester Himes is not a Black Mickey Spillane. On the contrary, he is one of the most significant living Black writers in the world. When he was younger, while he lived in America and was at his writing peak, the white literary establishment discouraged his writing novels of Black life (*The Third Generation, The Primitive,* etc. Check out John A. Williams' interview with Himes in Amistad I). White people literally drove one of our greatest literary minds from the country, as they did Himes' predecessor, Richard Wright, and later, James Baldwin and Eldridge Cleaver. The Gravedigger and Coffin Ed detective stories were begun in Himes' later, declining years, when the man was worn and tired and in need of a payday. But yet, within the work a profound social consciousness is apparent and a set of values are operative which Black people can relate to and learn from because it is theirs. Himes has taught untold numbers of young Black writers how to write of Black urban life here in America. It is no empty statement to say that the Black man-in-the-ghetto can discover more Black imagery to stimulate his mind and imagination in regards to Black urban repression styles than a million Black Panther poems. In the film situation of "Cotton Comes To Harlem," produced by Sam Goldwyn, Jr., Himes wisely refused to go near the project. In talking to Woodie King recently in Paris, Brother Himes shook his head and said, after being asked if he's coming to Harlem to see what "they" were doing to his creation: "No! No! No!" (Ed.)

fied white people in order to tighten-up the/ir bread hustle.

There's some other shit that's worth mentioning: a whi/te cop says to his baad negro colleague, Coffin Ed/Grave Digger (that's where they belong: Coffin laying in the Grave!), the film's negro detective heroes, "Be cool, brother." That's it. They're moving in on it too . . . utilising our speech to cool us out, dig it. New York's 5,000 Black cops are threaten/ing to use the murder-weapons they wear against the/ir white colleagues if they don't end the/ir savage & brutal attacks on innocent Black prisoners. NY has a problem on its hands. The Brothers off the block are engendering fruitful dialogues with the/ir historically used Black assassins. The possibility of the utility of these armed Brothers as an arm of the Revolution will be ascertained, finally, if the brutality suffered by Blacks under the hands of whi/te racists are prolonged . . . One thing is certain . . . The Black policemen are *listening*.

So "Cotton" is bullshit Hollywood employing the/ir media wth/in the historical context of brain-whitening, to contain the natural sun-energies of Black people. The film moves a/round, un/til finally, the cotton-bread finds itself on the stage of the Apollo where cop-beaten, half-dead preacher, Calvin Lockhart, attempts to incite the audience to do a/way wth Coffin Ed/Grave Digger ("white girl" Raymond St. Jacques & tom-boy Godfrey Cambridge). But the hip Black audience only splits on him—they didn't even want to touch him, to have revenge for the/ir stolen money. Just walked out (to lunch) on him!

Ossie Davis, who has been constantly associated wth such vulgar concerns as Hollywood & the/ir designs, has finally won his rewards. Director. (Now he has officially attained the status of that other dirty wog, Sidney Potter. Now we'll see them fighting for the job as the best creator of Hollywood's madness.)

Davis, at times, despite this nightmarish creation, has proven to be an actor of tremendous talent—as exemplified in his powerful performance in "The Pawnbroker." To add his name to this awful corny trite Yacub-like creation un-conditionally RE-inforces his pro-jected tendencies as an opportunist. This is where he wants to be. Davis has perpetually spoken abt his un-questioned dignity. Yeh. That is not questioned wth/in the context of where he has directed his energies & talent. That's where his *dignity* is at.

But an/OTHER direction is being forged . . . Black Arts/Films are slow/ly coming in/to being . . . speaking to the needs & desires of the Black community.

Go on, niggers of accommodation,
justify yr wrong-evil doings. Judgement
Day is al-most come.

II

A fragile attempt at disseminating Black consciousness thru song-dance/poetry-words encompassing our memorial situation . . . to CO-mmunicate a desire for us to *release* our lives' horror . . . on this planet.

But it failed. The derivatives are manifold. This attempt tho appreciated & understood . . . did not attain the un-limited height/s of its potential/s . . . did not get to our deepest feelings, e/MOTION/s . .

The NBT group did not seem to pro-ject the unity of a U-nit . . . a one-ness/entity . . . It was too fragmented, too loose . . . & consequently communicated the feeling of UN-practice . . not REvealing to the total sensual-e/MOTION-al Black audience who they desired to unify that they were to-gether, the EMbodiment of the/ir pro-jected/s.

The NBT came on . . . a mammoth collection of Black people, preaching: "We are an African people/ We have come to REclaim our power." It seemed tragical/farcial that the NBT shd attempt to CO-mmunicate this profound idea in a Jewish-owned business concern—the Apollo Theatre. Altho the victims of this SIGNificant contradiction they refused to be belittled . . . working hard to establish something . . . SIGN/s of some-thing to come . .

On they went: "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child/A longway from Home" . . . the audience i-dentifying/responding to the meanings of these *hurtful* words . . . They applauded & a few screamed the/ir understanding.

NBT moved on . . . to brief/fast skits . . . EXposing the ills of our living deaths—drug fiends, woman beaters, negroes . . . like the wig/fried haired woman who screamed at those "Americans" parading as Africans: "All you African people talking about Africa—(I) wake up next morning—roach in my cornflakes, my welfare check ain't come, can't pay my rent . . . If you niggers can give me some money you can have me." A Black man in the audience responded: "All-right, mama, talk to me!" . . . people were laughing & getting in/to it . . . Later this same negro woman is con-verted to Black!ness! thru an oversimplified process of knowyrself talk—abandons her wig & western clothes & joins the Africans. This was extremely naively executed . . . & did not answer the profound questions she posed abt money.

The fundamental idea was con-veyed by the NBT players—but I am convinced that it did not *move*

THE BROTHERS—
Woodcut by Gaylord Hassan

the audience to action as James Brown wd (if he'd done what they had) . . . for precisely as the NBT came off . . . & on came Little Richard—fried hair, dressed up like the monkeys on TV advertising Tetley's tea bags, teasing & "insulting" the audience . . . they wd have walked out or booed him . . . OFF! if NBT had achieved the necessary emotional effect they intended to. But the niggers screamed & stomped & loved every gesture & word of that sad nigger.

They (the NBT) tride to utilize the knowledge of our emotional history—in terms of the inherent religiosity of Black people, but it failed, simply out of a lack of a *plan*. As I mentioned before the players weren't to-gether, the/ir range of experience too limited, & (they) came over shallow & sometimes absolutely dumbly empty.

If Black artists want to move Black people thru this art-form they will have to minimize the over-abundance of words, pure negative rhetoric, obviously articulated (for "consciousness"), & apply themselves to studying the acts of people like JB . . . or even corny Little Richard, a dead man.

SEBASTIAN CLARKE

A SEASON IN THE CONGO
A Play by Aime Cesaire

Translated by Ralph Manheim and
Directed by Wayne Grice
Produced at the Harlem School of the Arts
Community Theatre . . .

Aime Cesaire, a Black man from the island of Martinique, a countryman of Franz Fanon, and a Black playwright, poet, essayist, and journalist, has written a historical play about Patrice Lumumba and the Congo Civil War. The play is very important not only as a work of art, but as a historical lesson in colonialism and neo-colonialism.

The central figure in the play is Patrice Lumumba. He is shown in the beginning as a salesman hustling beer in the marketplace. He is also shown advocating independence from the Belgians at the same time. He rises to a position of importance in the new government formed in 1960 when the Congo gains its independence from the Belgians after 50 years of colonial rule.

Cesaire manages to extend politics from Brazzaville to Brussels, and from New York's U.N. back to Elizabethville in Katanga Province. The play takes a dramatic form which flows and shifts through time and location, covering two years and thousands of miles. The play shows the growth of neo-colonial influence as manifested by some niggers such as General Joseph Mobutu, Moise Tshombe, and Ralph Bunche. The end result of this wheeling and dealing by niggers and take-off artists (Belgian bankers, Dag Hammarskjold, missionaries, and mercenaries, for instance) is the assassination of Lumumba, the betrayal of the nation to the European interests, and the fragmentation of a potentially powerful force on the continent of Africa.

This play is educational in many aspects: It enlightens the audience to the (situation in) the Congo, it provides a lesson for us here in the Black colony of America, and it gives us insight into the present situation in Nigeria.*

Cesaire has succeded in making "art" in play form both functional and relevant to Black people. Wherever the oppression of white racism, white capitalism, and white colonialism prevail, *A Season In the Congo* abounds.

MIKE MATTOX
13 November 1969

Note: A subsequent production of *A Season In The Congo* was presented during this past Summer in Greenwich Village and again did well.

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* At the time this article was written, the Nigerian Civil War had not yet ended. (Ed.)

THEATRE BLACK AT THE HENRY STREET PLAYHOUSE

At the Henry Street Playhouse in the Lower East Side area of New York City, an ensemble group known as THEATRE BLACK, under the direction of Anadoula, dramatised in convincing fashion the Black experience here in the wilderness of North America. Their style and delivery demonstrated a great understanding of their work and revealed a great deal of preparation on their part.

The production was entitled "Destination Ashes," and entailed music, dance, and poetry. The company is composed of twenty actors, dancers, and musicians. They work very well together and the result is a very entertaining and highly educational evening in which our history and lifestyle is chronicled and revealed to us through poetry, song and brief vignettes. The performances were good and imaginative. Audience reaction was on the appreciative side, although now and then there was a lot of shifting around in seats during a few lags in the work here and there. This was because there seemed to be too many somber moments in the performance. Many times, these somber moments were not put over very well and the audience became bored, rather than saddened.

THEATRE BLACK was organized by Anadoula in Cleveland during the late 1960s. They have grown tremendously over the years and there is no reason to believe that this growth will not continue. At the present time, THEATRE BLACK is based in New York where it is hoped that they will continue their work and will continue their development as a Black Theatre company.

KUSHAURI KUPA
19 June 1970

THE POETS & PERFORMERS AT KIMAKO'S

Look out, y'all, the Poets & Performers are back. Bad as ever. No foolin'. Their secret, if they have one, is that they are all actors as well as poets. Consequently, they not only read their poetry, but act it out as well. This is a tremendous help because it adds so much to their work. The poetry seems to come alive. You find yourself really getting caught up in the happenings if you don't check yourself. (Which you shouldn't, if you hope to get the spirit.)

There was a new member this time around. Norman Matlock was replacing Bill Duke, who is in the touring company of Imamu Amiri Baraka's play, *Slave Ship.* Matlock fit very well. His poetry had wit, bite, and contained some good lessons of life, as did all the work that night.

Saundra Sharp is still dropping "cold shots" on shaky Brothers, but tempered her sharp wit with some beautiful romantic things. Donald Green still delivers much of what he has to say in a low-keyed way, but look out! Those silent types are always the "smokers." Brother Green was no exception. Jackie Early is somethin' else too. Jackie Early don't take much jive, you see. She's the sister who stands with her weight all shifted to one leg, hand on hip, lips pursed and eyes just cutting you in two. Much of her poetry seemed that way too. Her poetry was straightforward and truthful.

The content of the work contained lessons of life, survival, and the revolution. It was all very well done, and quite enjoyable. A polished quartet, The Poets & Performers get better every time I see them.

I look forward to seeing them at work again.

KUSHAURI KUPA
21 June 1970

AKOKOWE (INITIATION)

The Negro Ensemble Company, in collaboration with a group of Brothers and Sisters from the Homeland, presented an evening of songs and poetry from the lifestyles of African artists. Most of the presentations were very enjoyable, but unfortunately these were all in the first half of the program. The second half was filled with poetry that hinged on African impressions of New York City and other American cities. In addition, the second half featured a very long segment in which various American proverbs were matched by similar proverbs from Africa. It all seemed as though the African Brothers and Sisters were trying to prove to the whites in the audience that Africa is not so "strange" after all. I did not enjoy the second half, at all. It clouded my view of the program as a whole.

I don't know, maybe it's just that I cannot help but feel that the Brothers and Sisters at the NEC have lost the spirit. They just don't seem to have that exuberance any more. At one time they had this tremendous energy that could brighten even the most dreadful script, but lately . . .

Have the Brothers and Sisters truly lost the spirit?

KUSHAURI KUPA
23 June 1970

Woodcut by Gaylord Hassan

Drawing by Ademola

THE BLACK MAGICIANS

There's a heavy now conjur-gang goin' around up in the Bronx . . . know Hodari, Barry Wynn, Leal Henderson, Belen Escalara??? They're all into it; they're part of the group known as The Black Magicians. And they got spells by conjur-woman Martie Charles and two real, as life, witch doctors, Oyamo and Ben Caldwell. The magicians have been putting on plays (really spell-breakers) in the street and at the Third World Discotek. They say they're trying to exorcise the (d)evil still among Black Folk which keeps men from their women, children from teachers, and Black People from their ultimate possibilities.

Third World which will be their theatre is a wond-OUR-ous place in itself. It's a discotek for and by Black people. You walk into the Third World and you walk into a space full of spheres, and galaxies. All around you are fluorescent globes and hundreds of star/planets. You get accustomed to this wonder-world, you start digging the collective spell of The Black Magicians when with little warning, i.e. no speeches of the "We are gathered here together to see, etc." vain, the lights come up on a desk, a coat rack and the sign "Employment Office." There's a devil (Brother in whiteface) behind the desk asking ridiculous questions of a brother who is trying to find a job to support his wife and family. The Brother is given the run-around from employment office, to welfare office, to jail (when he helps take off a Jew), to court, back to the employment office (he got off for good behavior) back to welfare, and on and on. The Brother at one time begs the devil at the employment office to give him a job "like your job—saying 'no jobs' "!

But Ben Caldwell is a spell breaker. He sees the trap we are caught in, and in *Run-Around* clearly takes away the shields that have been used by whitey to mislead us. He uses the same white character to play the employment officer, welfare worker, judge and lawyer. They simply change their coats and change their signs, but it's the same guy—*really*. And there's a brother hanging out on the corner telling the unemployed brother (and us) that we got to make the changes we need. We can't be sitting around playing whitey's game when he's got all the cards and changes the rules as he goes along. Ben Caldwell tells *Run-Around* in a funny way like he did the *Militant Preacher*. We get the message.

Oyamo put somethin' on us. First there was a pretty prologue. A Black woman and Black man speaking the truth: how they really feel, digging each other, how they really want to be with each other. Then Bap!! We're transmitted back to where we are now. Where we don't really say what we mean. Where the devilish situation that we live in prevents us from being the lovers we were meant to be.

The play starts with a fight scene, between man and wife, definitely scenes we've experienced ourselves. Each one calling the other all kinds of "mother-fuckers." In the midst of this fight the husband sing/talks a kind of blues-song-plea-explanation about why we are where we are—until he gains his way back into his house which his wife has locked from the inside—so he can kick her ass. But you know they're in love, and they "ain't goin' no where" away from each other. And Oyamo shows you that we've got to make a change.

The Lovers' theme, which all Black Men and Women seem to be caught up in, was recently experienced at the New Lafayette Theatre in the *Duplex: A Black Love Fable in Four Movements*. If we look at the audience reaction to the *Duplex* and *The Lovers* this "battle of the sexes" is a spell which many Black people want removed. . . . . Push!

Sister Martie Charles conjured up a vision called *Job Security*. The vision: what is really going on in the schools. She showed why and how our children's minds are brutalized, how callous and cowardly the adults, who are in a position to better the school situation, are. Why teachers sell our children out—for the little shiny stones, cars, suburban houses. How their jobs are regarded only as security for obtaining those shiny stones dangled in front of them by the devil. It's part of the white devil's spell to entrance us. Sister Martie Charles knows it.

The *Job Security* vision centers around Ella, a school girl who has been accused of stealing candy from the teachers' room. As she attempts to reenter school following her suspension for the theft she encounters several teachers and a parent-aid. None of them are really concerned with the child's welfare. Even the teacher who first appears to befriend the child admits that she is selling the child short by sending her to a class that is taught by an incompetent teacher. Returning from an errand, Ella overhears the teachers admit that it is because of job security that they are willing to sell out our Black children. Ella then takes matters into her own hands and poisons the faculty of the school. Although the over-30 Brothers and Sisters winced at the deaths, i.e. kids don't really do THAT!—poison their teachers. Answer: but they do beat them up every now and again, curse them out and etc. the younger Black folk in the audience got the message. It is the same message which was recently expressed in the Cultural Revolution in China: those who are not with us are truly against us.

At first I thought that Sister Charles' solution was too severe or somewhat unreal. But once I realized that the children, in the audience, understood the contradictions between what the teachers say and what they do and that they must overcome these difficulties I began to understand something about her magic. If it takes a death-vision to clear away the fog, to trigger the spiritually crippled into positive action then a real magician will give you a death-vision. Black people need to denude all the institutions that affect Black lives, take away all the hocus-pocus so that we can know what is really being done to us. Then we can do something about it.

The Black Magicians didn't have or need a stage or an elaborate set. They plan to be a mobile theatre. They plan to bewitch with their words, their spirit and themselves. For . . . . . .

> We need magic
> now, we need the spells, to rise up
> return, destroy, and create. What will be
> the sacred words?
>
> (LeRoi Jones) Amiri Baraka

1. Job Security . . . . . ?
2. Run-Around . . . . . ?
3. Love . . . . . ? ? ? ?
?

Paulette Perrier

Middle Class! Black? at the Bed-Stuy Theatre

Middle Class! Black? by Herbert Campbell is the latest production at Brooklyn's recently formed Bed-Stuy Theatre. Delano Stewart and the brothers have done quite a job of converting their storefront location into a home for Black theatre (sets, lights, seats, etc. which ain't easy if you ain't got no dust). Another thing which impressed me was the composition of the audience. Next time you go to a Blackhappening, check out the people in the crowd; if the performers have managed to draw old and young alike, then they're into something. The night I went to the Bed-Stuy there was not only an assortment of young Black princes and princesses, but also several old Sisters from the church. Like we said before, whitey the only one with a generation "gap". . . .

The play, Brother Campbell's first effort, was on the whole, good. The beginning was particularly slow but after I got into it, I became absorbed in the life of the Saunders family, one of those "respectable" negro families who've "made it" and then split the ghetto to hide out on the "Island" (Long Island).

J. T. Saunders, his wife, Mary, and daughter, Linda, are the "middle class Blacks" whose lives are upset by the murder of J.T.'s "militant" brother, Tyler. The Northern Saunders are then forced to go down South and retrieve the Southern Saunders whose lives are now also in danger and bring them to the safety (chuckle) of the North.

J.T. takes the situation well in hand and literally plans the lives of his relatives. "I'm the one needed to guide this family in the right direction!" He says over and over. But his parents, Big Joe and Mama Sue, and his sister-in-law, Althea, are strong, real people and Big Joe says: "I been knowen white folks for sixty years and they don't change!" And I can still see Mama Sue in the dim light of the dream/nightmare scene that ends the play saying: "Won't have nothin else to live for; no husband or no son. You don broke yur daddy's heart. Won't have nothen else to live for—yeah son, I'll go that old folks' home an' be real good. . . ."

The play ends when J.T.'s dream becomes a fascinating strobe lit nightmare. "Change nigger!" Althea, his sister-in-law, is shouting. "Black men won't even see you in the streets soon, boy!" Big Joe is warning. And finally, even his daughter, Linda, admits: "Yes, you trained me, Daddy, but so well that I can't fit in either the Black world or the white!"

Definitely some brainfood, wouldn't you say? Ed Ellison (J.T.) and Bernard Ward (Big Joe), both professional actors, are the strongest in the play, but everybody does a dynamite job. I look forward to a long life for the Bed-Stuy Theatre.

Liz Gant

Black Art at the Kuumba House, Newark

A new Black theatre group in the New York metropolitan area, the Kuumba House Theatre of Newark, New Jersey, presented a Black Arts festival spanning

BURDEN OF INJUSTICE—ADEMOLA OLUGEBEFOLA

two weekends at the Rutgers University center on the university's Newark campus. Included in the wide ranging performances were the works of poets Imamu Amiri Baraka, Jayne Cortez, Edward English, Nikki Giovanni, Roi Hill, Brother Panga, Sister Avotcja, and Sonía Sanchez. In addition, music was provided by a group entitled The Ovations. Two one-act plays by Joseph White, "The Leader" and "The Hustle," were also performed by a guest group known as OPERATION WE-CARE And THE PRIESTS, a trio of poets from Kuumba House Theatre, rounded out the evenings.

The poetry covered everything from love-to-drugs-to-revolution. For the most part, it was all very good. Imamu's work, of course, was out of sight. It is one thing to read his work, but to see him and hear him read it is quite another. The Brother is simply an artist—"a bitch with his shit," as the Brothers say on the block. Beyond that, there is not much more than can be said of the Master Poet, as he is known in Newark.

Unfortunately, in my opinion, none of the other Brothers who read approached Imamu in his mastery of the art of poetry. To be sure, it was the Sisters—Cortez, Giovanni, Avotcja, and Sanchez, who seemed to understand what poetry was all about. Their imagery was beautiful, and the messages they conveyed were valuable lessons of life, love, and survival of The Nation. The young Brothers were hung up on seeing to it that their poetry was "relevant," and so they filled much of their work with a lot of political rhetoric, which is cool. (Don't get me wrong.) But if you forget to couch that political rhetoric in the slick veil of art, the work becomes so strident, so propagandistic, so corny, and ultimately succeeds only in turning off the audiences for which it was intended. This is only an opinion, but one which I think is valid. The Priests have the makings of very good poets, but they going to have to understand that the mastery which they seek over their art will come only when they apply themselves to the disciplines of art as diligently as the political clichés that they have memorized so well. Most of the work recited could be described as calls to nationhood. The Sisters' work was received better because theirs was less strident and showed human warmth. The Brothers, with the exception of Imamu and Edward English, a self-styled "vagabond" poet, came on like gang-busters and tried to overpower with political clichés.

The two plays by Joseph White, *The Leader* and *The Hustle*, are very good works. Both are ideal for street theatre productions, and as one-act plays, they are just what the doctor ordered for those small Black theatres that are in search of scripts that do not require elaborate sets or large casts. They are humorous and enlightening. Brother White's insights into the decadence of Western life are the meat in both plays, and those who are not hip to America can get real education from both plays.

The Leader is the story of a jive time preacher who is so conceited that he spends most of the day standing in front of a mirror in his office, asking: "Who is the most powerful Black man in America?" Of course everyone around him assures him that he is. "The Leader" is the head of an organization that is designed to help the Black man, but we soon recognize that "The Leader" is interested in his own prestige . . . and a white woman. He admits in the play that his people could go to hell as long as it is understood that he is the most powerful Black man in America, and as long as he has the love of his white woman to sustain him. Needless to say, this admission leads to his downfall, which is quite funny. On the negative side, I thought some of the scenes ended too quickly, thus necessitating too frequent scene changes that broke up the pace of the play. Overall, the work was very functional and Joe White looks like he is going to be another addition to the ever-growing list of outta sight Black playwrights in this country.

The Hustle, White's second play, was just as good, and any further praise of Brother White's abilities would only be repetitious.

The Kuumba House Theatre looks as though it has the makings of a very strong theatre unit. I wish them success. They have the talent, brains, and dedication, it would appear. And their two-weekend Black Art program has gotten them off to a good start.

KUSHAURI KUPA
26 June 1970

MAGIC/AL DELIGHT(S)

Oyamo's creation/s . . . Bignigga & Chumpanzee . . . presented under the auspices of the Henry Street Settlement (one of the many concern/s of the versatile Woodie King, contributing editor to Black Theatre) were brief reflection/s on our e/Volving consciousness, engaged as we are in creating a total Black a/wareness/vision of the U-niverse... the primary concern of Black artists/priests in/Volved in protracted war-fare wth the Beast . . .

"To win the minds of our people" is what Oyamo's creation/s were stating. 'Bignigga' conforms precisely to the title of the play—a made-it nigga, well-dressed money-maker who boasts to the mixed audience (the Lower East Side is where the theatre, St. Augustine's New Federal, is at; Blacks & Puerto Ricans) that he has made it: "I earn $80,000 a year. If most negroes were earning the money I am making there would be no negro problem," instructing us that the acquisition of those neurotic people's disease, symbol of Death, is how we can get our "freedom."

"Shoe-shine, boy!" is what he shouts confidently to the seemingly "degraded nigger" as many of us put lip service to. The brother is playing his tape, grooving to pure rhythm/sounds, making life possible wth our music, the sound of Life. Kids pass, hear the un/contained rhythmic sensation/currents & dance, the brother joining them, boogalouing! while the deathly nigger-tom stands, freaked-out!, un/able to articulate his outrage.

The kids split, dancing out the/ir e/motion/s, while the brother re-turns to his task, al/most oblivious to the nigga-tom's insults & constant denigrating remarks, RA/ising the volume to James Brown prophetic: "Money won't change you/but time will take you OUT." A cop, on hearing the RA/ised volume of the tape's soul-ing muzik, attempts to lower it, wthout our brother's consent/permission. The brother stops him; the crazy cop tries again, this time the nigga-tom cools him, saying: "I will talk to him." What he meant was that he *knew* the language in which he cd communicate wth this lowly nigger, meaning that this lowly nigger was completely un/able to comprehend the complex nature of the speeches of "educated negroes."

The tom goes in/to his act, to no avail. The cop turns it off, violently; the brother turns it on; the cop attempts to turn it off, again, but is *stopped*—hand to neck, (he) draws the cop's pistol, falls to the ground & let him have it—three soul-ful shots, dead! Then he splits . . .

The nigga-tom, a/mazed: "I've just seen blind murder." Waits, looking at dead body, while the cops move on/to the set, finds him, & he goes in/to his lines: "I'm a good negro. A decent negro.". . .

This brief instruction satisfied a need, but con/tained production flaws. Badly directed, too loose, not communicating the profundity & total reality-potential of the writer's work, but . . .

"Chumpanzee" makes up for it. Beautifully directed by Bill Charles, to-gether. The tiger whi/te man who comes frm a tradition of entrepreneurs, & *loves* the taste of chumps, poor niggers. He stalks his prey, the weak & defenseless, man/woman/child, & eats them,

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un/til he comes up/on a real-life brother . . . who beats the whi/te faggit to wth/in an inch of his life, dead . . . This was executed sensationally artistic & highly effective, the lights flickering & giving the shock-feel of slow-motion . . .

The brother having spanked whi/te, splits, leaving these words for us: "I didn't give him all of my strokes!" . . . the audience laughing & enjoying it, un/derstanding where Oyamo was coming frm—BLACK!

Woodie King who seems to be initiating art-ventures on various fronts, like I mentioned before, was the prime creator of this project which was staged in the basement of the St. Augustine church. Woodie King's 'New Federal Theatre' is a good effort, creating a center in a community that has little else, stimulating the blank minds of a political un/conscious, giving us Oyamo's bold in/sights, but (he) seems to be the embodiment of all the worst contradictions inherent in some Negro intellectuals who "are in/volved" in Black creativity. King is now directing that cracker-writer's play—Tennessee Williams' 'Suddenly Last Summer.' Total schizophrenia!

But as Patrick Griffith has observed, "Black people are the supreme judges". . . ultimately we will have to be numbered & judged frm the position of Black people's total feelings, e/Motions . . .

Get to that, Negroes!

SEBASTIAN CLARKE

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the world speaks
and we find our selves
where are we, where were we, find our
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and we blind, on low adventure, for centuries now we don't even know
the name
of the game
the world speaks, my ears
buzz
your ears, beautiful dreamers
let em open up too
get a buzz on off knowledge
a knowledge buzz
find out what is and what was
history a slow walkin shiny suit wearin dude
will tell you a story you might cant do without
—
The world speaks
are we in, can we listen to these tunes
can we know why they mouth is pointed at a star whose us
can we, shinin, can we, turnin slow and slow, can we feel from know
whose words, if words can have a truly owner, a owner
other than everything. When the yes, the world, speaks
and your ears opened up listening describe a brightness like the magic drum
of invisible wings, yes, fly fly, the world is rapping, get down with it,
listen
Thas the truth
oh, the truth
our worshipped name, yeh, for speakin a listener grows
oh, said true true true, the truth
was speakin
like a nice song
you know
like a very very nice song

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