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Revisiting Black Nationalist History Worrill's World By Dr. Conrad W. Worrill, PhD BC Columnist

One of the biggest challenges African people face in America is to rejuvenate Black Nationalist thinking as struggle to determine for ourselves, as a people, what is in our best collective interests.

There are far too many African people in this country who think what is good for other people should be good for us. Nothing could be further from the truth. We can only determine what is good for us by reestablishing Black Nationalist thinking and developing a Black Nationalist program of action. This is the missing link to the liberation of African people in America. Let us briefly review the development and impact of Black Nationalism in America.

Black Nationalism is a tradition that emerged in the early nineteenth century among those Black leaders who understood the need for African people in America to develop a national entity as the only solution for Black people in North America, Latin America, or the Caribbean.

These nineteenth century Black Nationalist leaders such as Denmark Vessey, Nat Turner, David Walker, Henry Highland Garnet, James T. Holly, Martin R. Delany, Pap Singleton, Edwin McCabe, and Henry McNeal Turner understood that African people in America were a "nation within a nation" and should organize to collectively struggle for the liberation of Black people in this country and throughout the world.

During this era there were some Black Nationalist leaders, before and after the Civil War, who led movements for people of African ancestry

to leave this country and establish a homeland somewhere else. These proposals included Africa, Canada and the Caribbean. Other Black Nationalist leaders led movements for Black people to control the towns where they lived and others led movements to the western region of this country to establish all Black towns in Kansas and Oklahoma.

The core of this Black Nationalist tradition has been to defeat and overthrow the system of white supremacy, seize control of land (somewhere) and to achieve self determination for the oppressed Black masses. The Black Nationalist tradition has always been opposed to integrations, assimilation, and accommodation as a solution to the problems of people of African ancestry in America. In this regard, Black Nationalist tradition has rejected the strategy and tactics of appealing to the morality of white people and their white supremacy system.

Black Nationalists have been historically clear that people in power don't teach powerless people how to get power. And they certainly don't give power away, even though, when challenged, they may give up some concessions.

As Black Nationalism emerged in the twentieth century, the Honorable Marcus Mosiah Garvey and the establishment of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and the African Communicates League (ACL) became the leading speakers for Black Nationalist ideas and organizing.

Garvey used his varied skills to become one of our true twentieth century freedom fighters. Garvey arrived in Harlem, New York on March 16, 1916. By 1919, Garvey was well established as the President General of the UNIA/ACL that had membership of over three million people with more than three hundred branches in the United States.

Perhaps Garvey's greatest contribution to the upliftment of our people, through Black Nationalism, was his ability to find a formula for organizing African people around the African principle: the greatest good for the greatest number. This was reflected in the First International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World, in Madison Square Garden, in 1920. Over twenty thousand Black people from all over the world witnessed the choosing of Red, Black, and Green as the colors of the Provisional Government.

In this context, Garvey and the UNIA/ACL had established an economic arm, the Negro Factories Corporation, with cooperative stores, restaurants, steam laundry ships, tailor shops, dressmaking shops, millinery stores, a doll factory to manufacture Black dolls and a publishing house. Also, Garvey formed a Steamship Corporation.

The Black Nationalist tradition was continued in the twentieth century through the Nation of Islam and the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, who utilized many of the Garvey and UNIA/ACL organizing tactics and strategies.

It was during the 1960s Black Power explosion that the Black Nationalist tradition reemerged through the influence of Malcolm X, who adopted Black Nationalism as the political philosophy, economic and social philosophy of the organization of Afro American Unity in 1964 after he left the Nation of Islam.

Finally, the Black Nationalist tradition, today, is spearheaded through the African Centered Education Movement. The mass acceptance of Kwanzaa, African Liberation Day, Buy Black Campaigns, the Reparations Movement, and Controlling Our Own Communities Campaigns are all part of the ongoing Black Nationalist tradition.

Without vigorous Black Nationalist thinking and an aggressive Black Nationalist program of action, we will continue to chase false dreams created by our oppressors. We must put an end to this! Once Black Nationalism is understood by all Black people, it will be the foundation upon which the true liberation of people of African ancestry in America will take place.

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