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The history of black nationalism and internal factors that prevented the founding of an independent black nation-state.

Kenyatta Jay Fleming
*Clark Atlanta University*

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ABSTRACT

AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES

FLEMING, KENYATTA JAY  B.A. HAMPTON UNIVERSITY, 1992

THE HISTORY OF BLACK NATIONALISM AND INTERNAL FACTORS THAT
PREVENTED THE FOUNDING OF AN INDEPENDENT BLACK
NATION-STATE

Advisor: Dr. Daniel Black
Thesis dated July 2007

This thesis examined the political history of Black Nationalism in America in order to determine those internal organizational factors that have prevented Black Nationalists, specifically of the Black Power Era (1966-1975), from achieving self-determination, with the highest expression being the founding of an independent Black nation-state.

The study was based on the premise that the goal of Black Nationalism was the founding of a Black nation-state for African-Americans. A historical comparative analysis was used to determine what internal factors prevented Black Nationalists from successfully founding a Black nation-state.

The researcher found several internal factors that interfered with the founding of a Black nation-state. Factors which contributed to the unsuccessful movement were the immaturity of Black Nationalist leadership, the abandonment of political programs, shifts
in program strategies, and the antagonism and neglect of the Black Church as an ally in the movement. The conclusion drawn from the findings suggest that there are other internal factors which need further exploration.
THE HISTORY OF BLACK NATIONALISM AND INTERNAL FACTORS
THAT PREVENTED THE FOUNDING OF AN INDEPENDENT
BLACK NATION-STATE

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

BY
KENYATTA J. FLEMING

DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
JANUARY 2008
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Definition of Terms

Black Nationalism- an ideology that promotes black autonomy and control of black institutions that ultimately seeks the establishment of an independent black nation-state with definite geographic boundaries.


Black Power Era- period in history from 1965-1975

Black Liberation- the removal of all forms of oppression that prevent African-Americans from maximizing their potential as individuals and as a nation.

Plebiscite- a United Nations supervised vote to determine the national will and destiny of a people who are identifiable as a separate and distinct ethnic, cultural, and national group.

COINTELPRO- Counter Intelligence Program, a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) program that targeted black nationalists and radical groups to destroy their potential threat to the status-quo of American society.

Black Belt Region- a territory in the southern United States consisting of counties that begin in South Carolina and continue through Louisiana that have historically majority black populations.

Black Power- a term used during the 1960’s and 1970’s to designate the intention of African-Americans to control every aspect of their communities.

Black Church- the dominant religious institution in the black community that promotes the teachings of Christianity.

Inter-Communalism- the interdependence of communities to meet their needs that negates the existence of political-geographic boundaries.

Self-Determination- the ability of a people to determine their own national destiny by controlling the institutions, politics, culture, education, economics, territory, and military defense of themselves as a nation.
ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>BPE</td>
<td>Black Power Era</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRM</td>
<td>Civil Rights Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNCC</td>
<td>Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCFP</td>
<td>Lowndes County Freedom Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPP</td>
<td>Black Panther Party for Self-Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGRRNA</td>
<td>Provisional Government-Republic of New Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNA</td>
<td>Republic of New Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLA</td>
<td>Black Liberation Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAM</td>
<td>Revolutionary Action Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOI</td>
<td>Nation of Islam</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAST</td>
<td>Moorish American Science Temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIA</td>
<td>Universal Negro Improvement Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACS</td>
<td>American Colonization Society</td>
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to establish the political history of black nationalism in America and then ultimately to determine those internal organizational factors that have prevented black nationalists, particularly of the Black Power Era (BPE), from achieving self-determination, the highest expression being an independent nation-state. Since the beginning of African enslavement in what is now the United States of America, there has been an effort on the part of many African-Americans and their descendants to be a free and independent people, having their own land, culture, and government. Each successive generation has attempted to accomplish this goal through various actions, beliefs, and practices that have developed into what is commonly referred to as black nationalism. There have been several movements, organizations, and leaders who have advocated and worked toward the fulfillment of the goal of an independent black state, both in and outside of North America. All of their attempts have failed with the exception of Liberia.

The founding of Liberia serves as the only successful attempt by Africans, once enslaved in America, to establish an independent nation-state. Although Liberia negates
the complete failure of black nationalists to found an independent nation-state, the founding of Liberia was not able to bring freedom, liberation, and national sovereignty to the masses of African people who were enslaved in the south and living as “quasi-free” blacks in the northern and southern United States. As future expatriation—“back to Africa”—movements came and went, throughout various historical epochs, black nationalists, particularly of the BPF, began to argue for their legitimate right to establish a nation for themselves in their most recent-historical ancestral homeland of the southern United States.

Fundamentally, black nationalism seeks to do three things. 1) To continue the tradition of African independence and nationhood that has existed for several thousands of years; 2) To correct the damage that has been done to African-Americans as a result of enslavement, racism, discrimination, and other forms of oppression that has occurred as a result of Euro-American rule; and 3) To provide the opportunity for African-Americans to reach their full potential and maintain their cultural integrity as a people. These three basic premises set the parameters for the work that black nationalists have taken on as the reason for the need for an independent-sovereign nation for black people.

The tradition of African independence and nationhood has been well-documented by historians such as John Jackson, John Hope Franklin, and Cheik Anta Diop. The ancient empires of Khamit, Ethiopia, Meree, and the Sudan date as far back as 10,000 years or more. The West African empires of Ghana, Songhay, and Mali continued that tradition into the pre-enslavement period, along with smaller states such as Hausa, Biram,
Gano, Kano, and Katsena to name a few. Well into the enslavement period, African independence and statehood continued with Akan, Ashanti, and the Yoruba states of Benin and Oyo. Africans enslaved and brought to the United States sought to continue their tradition of independence and nationhood by establishing maroon communities during the enslavement period. These communities served as a constant reminder to the enslaved that they had a right to freedom and independence and were fully capable of surviving, prospering, and governing themselves.

**Statement of the Problem**

Contemporary black nationalists argue that the establishment of an independent black state is necessary in order for African-Americans to overcome the damage done to them as a result of 400 plus years of oppression. The history of African-Americans is one filled with their fight against enslavement, racism, and discrimination. Black nationalists of every era have sought to overcome each of these by separating themselves from whites in order to establish their own institutions and nation where they would be free to govern themselves, practice their own culture, and live by their own laws.

Black nationalists also believe that, in order for black people to realize their full potential and maintain their cultural integrity, they must be able to govern themselves as a nation. Many of the social ills affecting black people, such as black-on-black crime, incarceration, drug abuse and addiction, disease and health problems, mis-education, poverty, and immorality are believed to be the result of a systematic attempt by whites to...
destroy black people and their communities. Contemporary black nationalists since the 1960s argue that white American culture and spirituality are fundamentally opposed to an African world-view and by continuing to exist in American society, African values and mores are severely compromised and destroyed.9

In their attempt to maximize the full potential of black people, black nationalists during the Black Power Era (BPE) began to act on the principles of independence in a variety of ways that had been expressed by black nationalists of previous generations. Malcolm X, who served as a historical bridge between two generations of black nationalist development, was able to synthesize these principles and articulate them to African-Americans so profoundly that he became the ideological leader of black nationalists during the BPE.10 Malcolm X, as national spokesman for the Nation of Islam (NOI) and during his period of separation from the NOI, presented several ideas and programs that he believed were necessary for black people to end their oppression by whites and to move toward the founding of an independent black nation-state. He was a strong advocate of self-defense, which the Black Panther Party of Self-Defense (BPP) made its central focus.11 Malcolm called for the development of independent black political parties that would elect black officials to represent the interests of black people, which was instituted by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) through the founding of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO).12 He supported black economic development through the establishment of businesses and encouraged blacks to support those businesses through their patronage. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) made this a central part of their program during the BPE.13
Malcolm X ultimately believed that black people would have to have their own nation if they were ever to be fully respected and if they were to reach their full potential as a people. The Provisional Government of the Republic of New Africa (PGRNA), founded in 1968, sought to make that expression a reality through their plan to take over five southern states as the homeland of the black nation. Malcolm X also taught that black people had to connect themselves and their struggle for human rights and independence to the world-wide struggle that was taking place in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) advanced this perspective with the organization of the All African People’s Revolutionary Party and Pan-Africanism as the primary objective of this organization.

The majority of black nationalists applied some aspect of Malcolm X’s analysis in their attempt to move black people forward and closer to the ultimate realization of being an independent sovereign nation. In their failure to accomplish the goal of founding a nation, they obviously made mistakes. The interest of this document is to determine what some of those mistakes were and provide an analytical discussion concerning how those mistakes impacted the failure of black nationalists to found a state. So, put simply, the purpose of this research is to outline the history of black nationalism in an attempt to determine the internal factors that have prevented black nationalists, particularly of the Black Power Era (BPE), from becoming a self-determined people who established an independent nation-state for African-Americans.
Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this paper will be Afrocentricity. Kathleen Bethel states that “... the basic premise of Afrocentricity is to study and examine phenomena from the standpoint of Africans as subjects, not objects.”16 In the text *Afrocentricity* by Molefi Asante, Afrocentricity is discussed as a collective expression of a worldview that is grounded in the historical experience of African people.17 It is a worldview that emanates from and is centered in an African cultural ethos that is unique to African and African-American people. As a cultural ethos, Afrocentricity informs, guides decisions, determines behavior, establishes value, creates order, and allows African and African-American people to share a common reality based on a collective consciousness.

Afrocentricity allows one to take into account the traditional cultural, moral, and aesthetic values of African and African-American people and interpret, analyze, and offer criticism based upon an African and African-American value system. In doing so, scholars are able to evaluate the history, literature, and circumstances of African and African-American people through a lens that takes stock of their particular values, aspirations, customs, and history that is uniquely their own. Using Afrocentricity as a conceptual framework allows scholars to study, analyze, and critique African and African-American people with a greater sensitivity, clarity and accuracy. This provides for better research and analysis, creates a better understanding of African and African-American people, and insures that the best interests of African and African-American people are maintained. This has not always been the case with the study of African and
African-American people, who have been traditionally objectified by European and white American scholars. The value of the Afrocentric conceptual framework is demonstrated clearly by Kobi Kambon.

In his article, "The Africentric Paradigm and African American Psychological Liberation," Kambon advances the theory that there is a distinct African worldview that is in opposition and conflict with a European worldview. Kambon states that, "The basic assumption underlying the African American worldview reflects the notion of humanity-nature unity or oneness...the human-nature relationship is defined as an interdependent, inseparable whole."18 From this worldview is developed a value system that places an emphasis on "...inclusiveness, cooperation, and collective responsibility, cooperativeness and interdependence, spiritualism, complimentarity, and understanding." According to Kambon, "The basic assumption underlying the European American worldview is a human-nature dichotomy, organized in a conflictual-antagonistic relationship." From this worldview is developed a value system of "control over nature" or "humanity versus nature" with "...an emphasis on exclusion and dichotomy, competition and individual rights, separation and independence, and materialism and aggression or intervention."19

Kambon, along with other noted scholars such as Marimba Ani, Wade Nobles, Naim Akbar, Chiek Anta Diop, and Asa Hilliard have advanced the theory of an Africentric Psychology/Personality that is rooted in a worldview or cosmology that is opposed and significantly diminished by African subordination and oppression at the hands of Europeans. The history of African-Americans as an oppressed group within
white American hegemony has meant that there has been a gross distortion of the African worldview and absorption of European-American values that are detrimental to the well-being and functioning of African-Americans. In essence, by having adopted and participated in practicing European values, African-Americans have worked to advance the European worldview to the detriment and continued exploitation of themselves.

In applying the African worldview and value system to the political, social, economic, and cultural existence of African-Americans, the ideology of black nationalism acts as a vehicle to advance an African worldview and value system as opposed to a European worldview and value system. Darren Davis and Ronald Brown in their article, "The Antipathy of Black Nationalism: Behavioral and Attitudinal Implications of an African American Ideology," state that "... it is important to consider nationalism as a psychological disposition emphasizing a variety of strategies such as the need for self-determination, self-government, separatism (acquisition of land), pride, and social identity." The two authors state further "A structured belief in black nationalism supports the liberation from oppressive conditions, emphasis on black people acquiring greater control over their destinies and resources, and an emphasis on a distinct Black worldview, culture, and heritage." Black nationalism therefore serves as an ideology that unifies the African worldview and values and seeks to mobilize them into the practical applications of building institutions, combating oppression, controlling resources, instilling pride, self-determination, and establishing and defending a nation.
Utilizing an Afrocentric conceptual framework to study black nationalism as an ideology enhances the ability of scholars to evaluate and provide critical analysis of the various movements, organizations, and leaders from a perspective that is consistent with the cultural ethos of African and African-American people. For example, the evaluation and critique of the factors that have prevented the establishment of a black nation-state can be analyzed using the principles, premises, and values of an African world-view, that should undergird black nationalist ideology, programs, and activities. Questions of leadership, programs, and strategies can be addressed using Afrocentricity to indicate where inconsistencies and departures from those values have occurred and been detrimental to the larger goal of independent statehood. The framework will also make it possible to provide a standard to assess the progress that black nationalists have made toward achieving an independent nation-state. This will also help in determining what areas have been problematic historically and in contemporary times. If, in fact, there is an African worldview and value system that is inherent and relevant to the survival and advancement of African-Americans, then the plans, strategies, tactics, and activities of black nationalists should be reflective of that worldview and value system.

**Methodology**

The method used in this paper is the Historical-Comparative analysis approach (H-C) as outlined by W. Lawrence Neuman in *Social Research Methods*. This approach
allows the study to take into consideration the historical development of black nationalism as a phenomenon among African-Americans and the American social context in which it has developed. Neuman states that the H-C approach was developed out of a frustration that social science researchers had with the existing models that were too static and one-dimensional to address questions such as, “What causes revolutionary politics? How does mass consciousness change? and what caused the failure of a mass political movement in the United States, that advocated greater equality and democracy.”

The H-C approach is also utilized because of the interpretive possibilities it lends. This is accomplished through its focus on culture as it “... tries to see through the eyes of those being studied, reconstructs the lives of the people studied, and examines particular individuals or groups.” This makes the H-C approach very useful in addressing the fundamental issue of this paper, which is to determine the internal factors that have prevented black nationalists from founding an independent black nation-state, by taking into account the historical, cultural, political, and economic dynamics prevalent during the Black Power Era.

The H-C approach also employs content analysis that allows the researcher to examine symbolic patterns in written, audio, visual, and other communicative forms. As a result, the researcher is able to recognize and apply meaning to recurring events, themes, and circumstances that have occurred in the history of the people being studied. Utilizing both primary and secondary sources related to the topic of black nationalism,
the research will be able to outline those symbolic patterns that have shaped and molded the ideology and goals of black nationalism across generations and historical periods. Identifying the symbolic patterns found in the literature provides for a basis to offer criticism, analysis, and solutions that are supported by the content of black nationalist history, rhetoric, and ideology.

In using the H-C approach, a more in-depth analysis can be made concerning the factors that have prevented black nationalists from founding an independent black-state. By taking into account the history, culture, and social context in which black nationalism developed in the United States, the research will be able to operate from a position of objectivity that utilizes the standards of black nationalist ideology, objectives, and programs to critique and analyze individual leaders, organizations, and movements. It is hoped that, as a result, black nationalists and those interested in studying it will be able to delineate the weaknesses and strengths of certain positions, decisions, and strategies in order to achieve the goal of an independent black-state.

Chapter organization

The study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is the introduction which gives a brief overview of the purpose of this document and provides a statement of the problem related to the subject of black nationalism and its role as a major ideological phenomenon among African-Americans. The second chapter is a literature review, discussing what other scholars and historians have contributed to the research on black
nationalism, their analysis and critique of the subject matter, and a discussion of the issues regarding the limitations of the present information concerning black nationalism. The third chapter discusses the history and development of early black nationalism beginning with its genesis in Africa through the founding of the Nation of Islam. The fourth chapter focuses on the impact of Malcolm X on the development of black nationalism during the early 1960s as well as provides insight into the larger black nationalist community of Harlem. The fifth chapter discusses the development of black nationalism during the Black Power Era. The sixth and final chapter provides a detailed discussion of the internal factors that have prevented black nationalists from establishing a black state. This chapter explores specific decisions made by leaders and organizations regarding strategy, ideological shifts, and the disposition of black nationalists toward the Black Church.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of the study is its lack of firsthand accounts from individuals who were involved in the organizations discussed and/or involved in the black nationalist movement during the BPE. Time constraints limited the number of desired interviews. Due to the clandestine nature of many of the activities that took place during the BPE, particularly regarding the Black Panther Party, many of the individuals who could provide detailed information concerning these organizations are incarcerated or are simply unwilling to divulge information that could be used against themselves or their comrades.
Another limitation of the study is its lack of depth into the contextual and circumstantial conditions that existed during each period of black nationalist development. As a single research document, this thesis is limited to identifying a specific area to be discussed which means that, not all areas related to the topic will be given adequate consideration, even though, it is recognized that there are many factors that have contributed to the development of black nationalism and the internal factors that have prevented black nationalists from establishing an independent nation-state.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on black nationalism began with the publication of David Walker’s *Appeal* in 1829. Walker’s treatise on the condition and plight of African-American people serves as a cornerstone in black nationalist literature. It was the first document that spoke of the oppressed condition of African-Americans and presented a nationalist perspective on how to overcome that oppression. Walker states, “Our sufferings will come to an end, in spite of all the Americans this side of eternity. Then we will want all the learning and talents among ourselves, and perhaps more, to govern ourselves.”¹ The principles of fighting against oppression and self-government, expressed by Walker, are two central themes of black nationalism that have permeated each historical period.

Another foundational document is Martin R. Delaney’s text, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered* of 1852, in which he states that Africans in the United States are, in fact, a nation similar to the various stateless minorities in the nations of Europe, and suggests that Africans should seek a national territory.² Both texts identify the issues faced by blacks in their respective periods. They both give statements in support of the need for
blacks to have a nation of their own and to govern themselves as necessary to end their exploitation and oppression by whites.

Although black nationalism continued to grow and foster the development of several organizations and leaders championing the cause of black freedom and independence, it was not until E.U. Essien-Udom published *Black Nationalist; A Search for Identity in America*, in 1962, that the first text appeared which discusses black nationalism as a political and methodological ideology. Essien-Udom's text, however, is limited to an organizational study of the Nation of Islam (NOI), which was the leading black nationalist organization at the time. The text is very informative regarding the history of the NOI and provides insight into the development of its particular brand of religious-cultural nationalism that has achieved longevity, among other things, where other nationalist organizations have fallen by the wayside. Essien-Udom writes from the premise that the major interest and benefit that blacks who joined the NOI obtained was the ability to transform the identification of being "black" as negative into a positive identity. He states that, "The need for identity and the desire for self-improvement are the two principle motives which lead individuals to join and remain in the Nation of Islam". In this context, black nationalism is treated as a means to develop racial pride, self-help, and morality in blacks living in the lowly existence of the urban ghetto and its immoral character.

The limitation of this text stems from its primary focus on one organization without any attempt to contextualize the broader black nationalist movement. Essien
Udom does mention that Marcus Garvey and Noble Drew Ali were black nationalist predecessors to Elijah Muhammad, but does not elaborate on how the two men influenced the development of the NOI. As the first secondary source on the topic of black nationalism, the book’s shortcomings are also a result of the lack of scholarship available at the time.

Two years later, the interest spawned in the media concerning the “black muslims” of the NOI, allowed Alex Haley to publish, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. More than any other life story, the life and times of Malcolm X, inspired a massive expansion in the interest of black nationalism, particularly among the youth. For those who were either too young or unable to witness Malcolm X’s analysis of the African-American condition, Haley captured it in his autobiography. Throughout the text, Haley interwove Malcolm X’s critique and analysis of black life under white oppression. In the autobiography, Haley was able to interpret the facts of history into a message that became the gospel of black nationalism. Many African-Americans who read the book have claimed that it changed their lives forever. Its literary contribution to black nationalism was its ability to present a profound black nationalist perspective in a way that the masses of African-Americans could digest.

In 1966, Imari Obadele published *War in America-The Malcolm X Doctrine*. It is more a lengthy pamphlet than a complete text. However, it is foundational to black nationalist literature. Obadele wrote the document as an organizational guide with a brief segment on black history followed by an outline for the establishment of an
independent black nation in the southern United States. Its contribution to the literature on black nationalism is that it is one of the first documents to connect the revolutionary efforts of Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vessey, and Nat Turner to black nationalist history. Prior to Obadele’s work, slave insurrections and their leaders were not considered part of the ideological or historical development of black nationalism. This was important because it provided a broader foundation for the development of black nationalism that included the military efforts of blacks in the antebellum south to free themselves as a primary step in the process of founding a nation-state.

Obadele’s work also serves as a beginning point for the development of critical analysis in the study of black nationalism. Obadele was, himself, involved in developing a nationalist movement and program; therefore, he wrote in a more persuasive style, which provided an analysis of how African-Americans could achieve national sovereignty. The intent of Obadele to implement a program to carry out the founding of an independent nation-state caused him to write with a different purpose than other scholars on the subject of black nationalism. His critique and analysis stemmed from a desire to make the founding of an independent nation-state a practical reality.

The first text to deal with black nationalism comprehensively was *The Rediscovery of Black Nationalism* by Theodore Draper, published in 1969. Draper presents a discussion on black nationalism based upon its resurgence as a major political ideology during the 1960s. He provides some historical background for the early classical and modern periods, tracing the development of W.E.B. Dubois into a Pan-
Africanist and the issue of skin complexion as it related to Marcus Garvey's nationalist ideas. He also traces the development of the connection between land and self-determination.

Draper had previously written about the Communist Party's view concerning the right of self-determination for African-Americans in the Black Belt (i.e., southern region of the U.S. with majority black populations) which moved him to conduct a larger study on black nationalism. In a chapter titled, "The Land Question", Draper presents an overview of the issues surrounding black nationalists' quest for land. His discussion begins with the early efforts of Paul Cuffe and other emigrationists to establish a land base in Africa and continues through to the identification of black inner-city ghettos and Black Belt regions of the south as colonies by Black Power advocates, such as Stokely Carmichael, Amiri Baraka, and Huey Newton. He points out the various viewpoints of black nationalist organizations and offers some criticism, but does so from an informative perspective rather than an analytical one. For example, he discusses the transition of the Black Panther Party from a revolutionary nationalist organization to a revolutionary socialist organization, emphasizing the BPP's affiliation with white radical socialist groups. Draper, however, fails to elaborate on the significance of the transition or the impact of the affiliation with white radicals on black nationalism or the BPP's success and/or failure.

In 1970, John Bracey, August Meier, and Elliot Rudwick published a collection of primary documents *Black Nationalism in America*. It was the second text to assume
black nationalism as a comprehensive subject. In the preface, Bracey states that, “This is the first collection of documents devoted exclusively to black nationalism, and the introduction is one of the few essays that attempt to lay out a pattern for black nationalism over the sweep of American history.”

The third text to further the serious study of black nationalism was *The Beginnings of Black Nationalism* by Victor Ullman. First published in 1971, Ullman presents historical documentation of the development of black nationalism beginning with the emigration projects of Paul Cuffe and continuing through the work of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The book outlines key developments, such as the emigration movement and the founding of Liberia, the Black Convention Movement of the 1840s and the exploratory projects they commissioned, and the resurgence of the emigration movement after Reconstruction. The text is the first of its kind to organize the literature of the antebellum and post-antebellum periods into an outline of the formative genesis of black nationalism in the United States. Although it introduces the reader to the legacy of black nationalist thinking and activity, it limits itself to a historical overview.

A criticism of Ullman’s text is that he does not include a discussion of the three major slave insurrections and their leaders. Instead, he limits his discussion to the activities and programs of northern free blacks. In doing so, he omits a critical piece necessary to understand black nationalism’s ideological appeal and longevity. As a
result, the text does not represent the full dimension of black nationalism that included armed struggle against European enslavement of African-Americans.

Sterling Stuckey added to the literature on black nationalism, in 1972, with the publication of *The Ideological Origins of Black Nationalism*. Stuckey identifies six historical figures who contribute to the early writings on the subject of black nationalism (i.e., Robert Alexander Young, David Walker, Augustine, Sidney, Henry Highland Garnet, and Martin Delaney). The text publishes writings from all six men and discusses them in relation to the historical context of African-Americans during the antebellum period. Although the writings of these men indicate that they held a great concern for the oppressed condition of African-Americans, only David Walker and Martin R. Delaney’s work expresses the desire for black autonomy. Stuckley identifies the concern these men had for racial pride, moral character, self-determination through industry, and the support for rebellion among enslaved Africans as the qualification for being the patriarchs of the ideological origins of black nationalism. The text is an edited compilation similar to Victor Ullman’s text. It focuses on providing a historical account of the writings of these men and a glimpse of their lives, but does not make the connection as to how their early writings informed and influenced the development of future black nationalists leaders across generations.

In 1976, Robert Williams published *Negroes With Guns*, a short history of the founding and activities of the Deacons for Defense surrounding the incident that led him to flee the United States in 1961. Along with Malcolm X, Robert Williams was
considered the father of modern black nationalism by many black nationalists of the
Black Power Era. He was the first public figure to openly support blacks’ right to self-
defense and follow through with the organizing of a para-military group. The text
highlights the success of Williams and his para-military group in putting an end to the
violence of the Ku Klux Klan that was notorious for terrorizing the black community in
Monroe, North Carolina.

The text *Black Separatism in the United States* was published by Raymond Hall
in 1978. It is a comparative study of several black nationalist organizations (Congress of
Racial Equality, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, Black Panther Party for
Self-Defense, Republic of New Africa, and the Nation of Islam). Hall presents a brief
history of each organization, its ideological position on black liberation and the
development of independent statehood, along with each organizations’ economic strategy
and program. He compares each organization by presenting their particular views and
programs on how to achieve black liberation either through establishing their own
national territory, or at least controlling the economics, politics, and culture of their own
communities. However, Hall provides no analysis. He simply categorizes these black
nationalist organizations as separatist, based upon their stated political and economic
objectives, along with their exclusion of white participation within their membership.
Hall provides the reader with a basic understanding of each organization’s political,
economic, and social program, and demonstrates how they differed and how they were
similar to each other. He does so, however, without offering any criticism or insight into their strengths and weaknesses.

During the 1980s, Tony Martin published his definitive work, *Race First* in 1986, highlighting the life and work of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The text provides a very detailed account of the history and public life of Garvey and the UNIA. Martin does a thorough job of discussing the internal and external circumstances that surrounded the work of Garvey and the UNIA. He presents demographic information on the many organizational chapters of the UNIA that spanned throughout the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa. He also sheds light on the "Back-to-Africa" slogan so closely associated with Marcus Garvey to correct the notion that Garvey intended for all African-Americans to repatriate back to Africa.

James Cone revived the literary interest in black nationalism, in 1992, with his publication of *Martin and Malcolm and America*. Cone does an excellent job of discussing the two polar opposite viewpoints of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. His presentation is fair and insightful, and is one of the first texts to provide an analysis of black nationalist thinking through the experiences and words of Malcolm X. Although the text is not devoted exclusively to the topic of black nationalism, its critique and analysis of the two dominant ideological positions among African-Americans makes it a significant contribution to the literature on black nationalism.

In 1994, William Sales took the discussion further with his publication, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American
Unity. Sales, details the progression of Malcolm X from his days as a minister in the NOI to his independent work as the leading black nationalist theorist of his day. The major contribution of Sales’ work is his demonstration of the link between Malcolm X and the generation of black nationalist leaders and organizations that developed after his death. Sales outlines Malcolm X’s ideas on the issues of land, political independence, Pan-Africanism, and socialism, then proceeds to demonstrate the connection that leaders and organizations of the Black Power Era had to those ideas in the development of their programs and agendas.

The following year in 1995, Abiola Sinclaire published The Harlem Cultural-Political Movements. The value of this text lies in its depth of research on black nationalist history that had been overlooked. Sinclaire makes it a point to bring to light the smaller and less well-known black nationalist organizations that existed during the 1930s-1960s. He traces the history of the Harlem nationalist movement back to the UNIA and gives a history of the men and women who continued the work of Garvey and the UNIA after Garvey was deported. One special aspect of the text is that it provides an account of the social context that existed and aided Malcolm X in developing his skills as an orator, based upon his observance of black nationalist spokespersons presenting their platforms and programs to blacks on the streets of Harlem. Sinclaire demonstrates the connection between Malcolm X’s appeal as a fiery orator and his predecessor Carlos Cooks. The text also presents a wealth of photographs documenting the era.
In 1996, both Wilson Moses and Robert Carlisle published texts on black nationalism. Moses' text, *Classical Black Nationalism*, is an edited compilation of primary sources outlining the early history and literature of black nationalism. Moses documents the history of black nationalism as it developed from the early 1800s through the first two decades of the twentieth century. One of the major contributions of Moses' *Classical Black Nationalism* is that he identifies three distinct periods in the development of black nationalism. According to Moses, the first period is classical black nationalism, which began in the early 1800s with the work of Paul Cuffé, Wilmot Blyden, and Alexander Crummell to relocate free blacks back to Africa, and ends in the late 1920s with the imprisonment of Marcus Garvey and the subsequent demise of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). This period would also be inclusive of the maroons and slave insurrections during the antebellum period, which are not mentioned by Moses. The second period of black nationalism is called modern black nationalism, which begins with the founding of the Moorish American Science Temple, in 1924, by Noble Drew Ali and the Nation of Islam, in 1932, by Elijah Muhammad, and also includes the Harlem and Chicago nationalist traditions that developed in response to continuing the legacy and teachings of Marcus Garvey. The third period is identified as the passing of the torch from Malcolm X to the black nationalist organizations and movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, commonly referred to as the Black Power Era.
According to Moses, another distinction made between the classical and modern period is that the cultural ideals of nineteenth and early twentieth century nationalists were more in line with those of upper-class Europeans and whites, rather than those of native Africans or the black masses. He states that early nationalists were influenced greatly by the cultural aesthetic of high European society, which was devoutly Christian, imperialistic, aristocratic, and militaristic. This was markedly different from the black nationalism born during the Harlem Renaissance, which uplifted the cultural pride that blacks had in both their southern and African cultural roots.

Robert Carlisle published, The Roots of Black Nationalism, in 1996, which goes into greater detail concerning the development of black nationalist movements. Carlisle discusses in detail the emergence of Paul Cuffe and the emigrationist movement that led to the founding of Liberia and continues through the early years of the Black Power Era. The text does shed light on lesser, well-known figures in black nationalist history, such as Daniel J. Flummer and Alfred C. Sam who were organizers of the emigration movement, along with Bishop Henry McNeal Turner during post-reconstruction and into the early twentieth century.

Also, according to Carlisle, the classical period was not only defined by time constructs. He states that early nationalism had an international character due to the influence of the Liberian Movement and Paul Cuffe's repatriation efforts to Sierra Leone. The impact of the Haitian revolution and the emigration and settlement of free
blacks in Mexico and Canada also played a role in giving early nationalist efforts an international scope.

Within the past decade, two major texts on the topic of black nationalism are edited compilations of articles written by various authors. *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast*, published in 2006, and edited by Judson L. Jeffries, presents articles exploring the history of black nationalist organizations during the Black Power Era (BPE). The text includes articles on the Deacons for Defense, the Republic of New Africa (RNA), the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, the Black Liberation Army (BLA), and the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM). Each article gives a brief synopsis of the history of each organization, key figures, and significant events relevant to the historical period of the BPE. The research presented goes more in-depth into the specific ideas and approaches each organization utilized to advance their particular black nationalist program. The research is also significant because it highlights organizations that traditionally have been overlooked in the study of black nationalism. The articles, however, do not present any criticism or analysis of the organizations, their leadership, plans, and/or strategies.

In the introduction, Jeffries offers some criticism and analysis of the BPE. He provides insight into the rejection of Christianity by black power advocates and its consequences when he states that, “. . . Christianity did not play a prominent role in the Black Power Movement like it did in the Civil Rights Movement . . . None of the
commonly known leaders of the movement manifested a positive view of Christianity." He then explains the result of the rejection of Christianity by stating that, "Black Nationalists took the wrong position of heightening people’s consciousness with history and political theory without spiritual-moral development and principals to guide them and maintain a spiritual connection-foundation." Jeffries, however, does not elaborate as to how this impacted the success and/or failure of the Black Power Movement and why this phenomena existed among the many black nationalist organizations.

One of the major reasons for the sparse texts and articles that offer criticism and analysis on the subject of black nationalism is the practice of “avoidance” in academia concerning the topic of black nationalism. William L.Van Deburg makes this point in his edited work, *Modern Black Nationalism--From Marcus Garvey to Louis Farrakhan*, published in 1997. When writing about how the subject of black nationalism is treated in academia he states that “Many U.S. history texts—at all levels—practice avoidance.” The implication is that the topic of black nationalism is, to a certain degree, taboo. This may be a result of its conflicting position with the American establishment and status quo. The subject of black nationalism often challenges the American ideal as being hypocritical when it comes to African-Americans and their status in American society, therefore, it has been avoided as a major topic even in the study of African-American history. Jeffries capsulizes this problem between academia and black nationalism:

Scholarly materials on the Black Power Movement are not as abundant. One scholar has noted that American history texts published in the 1980s, for example, for both secondary-school and college audiences devoted an average between two and four paragraphs, or less than one page, to the Black Power
Movement. The more substantive works on this subject were published long before the movement ended. Consequently, there is no comprehensive analysis of the Black Power Movement.

The current edited works either present secondary historical accounts of black nationalism or primary source information based on organizational documents and individual writings. This has created a problem in the study of black nationalism because the majority of the literature seldom moves beyond presenting historical data and into the realm of critical analysis. This has prevented scholars from being able to create a fundamental understanding of the critical issues faced by black nationalists in their attempt to achieve their goals.

In reviewing the literature on black nationalism, one finds that there is also the practical problem of defining black nationalism. A few examples of definitions given by authors on the subject will illustrate this point. In, Slave Culture: Nationalist Theory and Foundations of Black America, published in 1987, Sterling Stuckey proposes that nationalism is, "... a belief in racial solidarity, self-help, and the idea that Blacks share a common destiny." In 2001, Dean Robinson, author of Black Nationalism in American Politics and Thought, states that nationalism is "... to include both those who favored separate statehood, as well as, self-help identified ‘nationalists’ who supported the more modest goal of Black administration of vital private and public institutions." Raymond Hall, in Black Separatists, writes that "Black Nationalism stems from the idea of racial solidarity, implies that blacks should organize themselves on the basis of their common experience of oppression as a result of their blackness, culture, and African
heritage." E.U. Essien-Udom, author of *Black Nationalism--A Search for Identity in America*, suggests that nationalism is "... the effort of thousands of American Negroes to resolve for themselves the fundamental problem of identity and provide a context for their moral, cultural, and material advancement within the limits set by the American scene." Obviously each author has a personal view of what constitutes black nationalism. As such, almost all activities and leaders who have been involved in the fight against oppression, such as, enslavement, discrimination, racial violence and racial uplift are discussed within the context of black nationalism.

The fight against oppression or the fight for African-American liberation does not necessarily translate, in the author's view, into black nationalism. Wilson Moses gives a more concise definition of black nationalism that helps to determine those organizations, leaders, and movements that developed programs, strategies, and tactics for the purpose of advancing the ultimate goal of black nationalism. Wilson defines black nationalism as "... an ideology whose goal was the creation of an autonomous black nation-state, with definite geographic boundaries, usually in Africa." This is undoubtedly the most concise and useful definition of black nationalism to date as it helps scholars delineate which organizations, leaders, and movements must be examined when one seeks to understand the evolution of this ideology and its accompanying social programs.

Juxtaposed against this definition, a review of the literature also exposes what is not black nationalism. Many organizations, leaders, and activities have been
misinterpreted as black nationalist when they are more correctly defined as black liberationists, who demand freedom from all forms of oppression. The problem of defining black nationalism stems from the logic that if and when black nationalism is achieved, then, black liberation is also achieved. Conversely, the logic that if and when black liberation is achieved, then, black nationalism is achieved is not true, however, black liberation does not equate to independent autonomous statehood. Only black nationalism, by definition, equates to independent autonomous statehood.

In Raymond Hall’s text, *Black Separatists in the United States*, this problem of definition is exposed thoroughly. Hall identifies six sub-categories of black nationalism: cultural, religious, economic, bourgeois reformism (community control), revolutionary, and territorial separation. Only territorial separation meets the criteria of Moses’ definition. This is due to the gross misuse of the word “nationalism”, by referring to activities and organizations whose goals did not intend to achieve an independent autonomous state, but were focused on a particular strategy or tactic to achieve black liberation. All of these organizations utilized similar tactics and strategies, but not all of them explicitly advocated the establishment of an independent autonomous black nation-state.

Those individuals and organizations that have a stated purpose and objective of the realization of an independent sovereign nation governed by black people have incorporated some or all of the other five sub-categories listed above as a means to the ultimate goal of black statehood. This has tended to lead many authors to conclude that
these activities alone are nationalist. This has created a distortion in the study of black nationalism, making the subject too broad and inclusive, thereby limiting the depth with which black nationalism has been studied. Although the organizations discussed in Hall’s text have contributed to the advancement of black liberation in support of black nationalist objectives, an analysis of their tactics and strategies is necessary to determine how they have explicitly and/or implicitly contributed to the advancement toward achieving the goal of an independent nation for black people.

Without a clear definition and subsequent delineation of the tactics and strategies as related to the achievement of the overall goal, it is impossible to offer intelligent criticism of black nationalist organizations and leadership. Dean Robinson corroborates this position: “By understanding Black Nationalism as an affective state, or as any form of racial solidarity, scholars have often glossed over many significant distinctions and outright conflicts among historical agents.”16 The result has been that the literature becomes redundant without providing insight into the problems and issues that black nationalists have had in achieving the goal of independent statehood. If everyone who works to uplift black people can be regarded as a nationalist, then nationalism is reduced to a strategy to resist oppression, instill pride and hope, and build a common bond among black people; this is in no way reflective of the magnitude and objective of creating an independent nation-state, or helpful in determining what has and has not worked and why. It is important, however, to mention that, in the case of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and the Council of Racial Equality discussed in Hall’s text, both
organizations began as Civil Rights organizations fighting for integration and then switched to black nationalists positions during the Black Power Era.

After reviewing the literature on black nationalism, I have discovered serious gaps in the study. The majority of authors deal with the ideology of black nationalism and the historical occurrences related to the development of organizations, its leadership, important events, and the rise and decline of movements. This author was only able to find one comparative study, which was very limited. Raymond Hall, in Black Separatists, gives a comparative analysis of five “nationalist” organizations: the Nation of Islam, Council on Racial Equality, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, the Black Panther Party, and the Republic of New Africa. Although Hall provides information about the history of each organization and why he has labeled them separatists, he provides no comparative analysis of strategies, tactics, or operations that determined the success of one organization versus another.

There are a few studies related to the lives of individual leaders of particular movements that add to one’s scholarly understanding of black nationalist ideology. Elaine Brown provides an in-depth look into the inner workings of the Black Panther Party in her autobiography, Taste of Power, and Hugh Pearson contributes to the inside story of the Black Panthers in his biography on Huey Newton, The Shadow of the Panther. Tony Martin does the same with Marcus Garvey in The Race, and Alex Haley contributes greatly to the understanding of the personal life of Malcolm X. One of the most recently published autobiographies is that of Stokley Carmichael titled, Ready
For Revolution. Carmichael, like the aforementioned black nationalist leaders, takes the reader through his own experiences in the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, but also provides a great deal of critical analysis of the issues and problems faced by organizations and leaders in both movements. As an insider, he is able to bridge the gap between the internal politics of organizations and movements with the external conditions that these organizations attempted to change. For example, he provides the background to the development of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense from his early interactions with Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. The friction that existed between the three revealed a problem among black nationalist leaders in their inability to work through personality issues early on in the development of the Black Power Movement. Carmichael’s personal experience provides fertile ground for new research in areas not yet discussed in the literature. The power-relationships among black nationalist leaders during the BPE is one of many topics that needs more research and discussion. Although limited to the personal lives of individuals, autobiographies reveal and present tremendous insight into issues faced by black nationalists during their respective historical periods. The limitation is that they lack, along with other writings on the subject, in-depth analysis and criticism on the inconsistencies of strategies and tactics employed, long range plans to achieve a nationalist state, and a much-needed explanation as to why organizations have failed to carry out the manifestation of an independent sovereign black state.
What scholars have to date is a history of black nationalism that identifies key movements, organizations, leaders, and events, along with a plethora of commentary on the ideology of black nationalism as it relates to its function and survival in the context of the American political and social systems. An example of the lack of in-depth analysis in the literature on black nationalism is found in Moses' text, *Classical Black Nationalism*, where he speaks of the waxing and waning of the black nationalist movement in the history of African-Americans. Moses briefly outlines the rise and decline of mass support for black nationalism from the late 1700s through the 1960s. He states that there was a protonationalistic phase in the late 1700s, a hiatus in the 1830s, flourishing in the 1850s, an eclipse in the 1870s, an apex in the Garvey Movement, and a comparatively feeble recrudescence in the 1960s. He ties the waxing and waning of mass popular support for black nationalism to the hope and aspirations prevalent at the time for blacks to be included as part of the American mainstream, but says little else on the subject. There is no discussion of how black nationalism continued in the midst of lost mass popular support. What work was continued to advance black nationalism when the majority of blacks were pushing and putting their hopes into gaining entry into the American mainstream, and what factors led to the return of mass popular support? These questions alone deserve detailed analysis to give the subject of black nationalism the respect of being studied from various angles to penetrate the many nuances that have affected its existence as a major component of African-American history, thought, and activity.
Clearly, there is a need for more critical analysis of black nationalism. Delineating the many organizations, movements, strategies, and tactics employed to achieve black liberation is a first step in being able to provide a deeper analysis of black nationalism. The next requirement is to determine the significance of each organization, movement, strategy, and tactic in relation to furthering the goal of the black nationalist objective of independent statehood. In doing so, the study of black nationalism will go beyond identification and definition and begin to explore the reasons for its failure and better understand what is necessary for its success.
CHAPTER 3

THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY BLACK NATIONALISM

In the strictest sense, black nationalism began in Africa. The political, economic, and social history of Africa displays a continuous movement of the rise and decline of various nation-states, beginning with the development of the ancient empires of Meroe, Axum, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Khamit. These early states were characterized by a highly developed centralized authority, usually a reigning priest-king with the support of a priest class acting as spiritual-religious leaders, advisors, governors, and administrators of institutions. The pharaoh dynasties of Ethiopia and Khamit have been recorded to date as far back as 10,000 years before the birth of Christ, and the reign of indigenous African rulers went uninterrupted until the eighteenth century B.C., after the invasion of the Hyksos.

The accomplishments of these ancient nation-states—including Ghana, Mali, and Songhay—have influenced every area of civilization including agriculture, religion, military science, art, and government. The significance of the development of these ancient civilizations with regard to the development of black nationalism is that they provide a foundation and a legacy of national existence and nation building that began
with Ethiopia and Khamit and continued in West Africa where the majority of Africans enslaved in America originated.

The significance of the history of African nation-states and empires to understanding black nationalism in the U.S. has been greatly underestimated. This is very clear when one considers that the majority of authors on the subject of black nationalism made no attempt to recognize that Africans enslaved in America came from long-standing, well-organized nations and how that reality has played a role in the continuing development of black nationalism in America. The practice and motive to be independent and self-governing is rooted in African people’s cultural tradition of nation and empire building. In the majority of literature on black nationalism, it is discussed as a reactionary alternative to the injustices blacks faced in trying to exercise their human and civil rights in American society, without any regard for African people’s inherent desire and proven capability to build a nation and govern themselves. When one considers the cultural and political history of African people, it is only logical that they would seek to continue the tradition of nation building in America, being directed and guided by their traditions of nationhood, rather than by a reactionary motive to escape oppression or failure to be included as equals to whites in American society.

Due to the extensive development of nation building and establishment of national identities by West Africans throughout history, beginning with Ghana before the Christian era and continuing through the enslavement period, Africans enslaved and brought to America sought to continue their traditions of nation building as independent and free people organizing to govern themselves. Clearly, the first step in maintaining a
sense of nationality and independence as political realities was to break away from the physical bondage of enslavement. This is another research topic that authors on the subject of black nationalism have neglected. Black nationalism is rarely related to the resistance and revolting of enslaved Africans against the institution of enslavement. Classical black nationalism begins with free blacks in the north, but there is no corresponding classical period for blacks in the south. A critical piece to the development of black nationalism is the organized and unorganized—but continuous—resistance and revolt against enslavement for the purpose of not only ending their physical bondage, but also meeting a basic requirement of building a nation, which is the ability to defend and maintain freedom.

The defending and maintaining of African freedom in America was the most critical issue for which black nationalist had to find a solution. For enslaved Africans and quasi-free Africans in America, the inability to properly defend and maintain African freedom was a key factor in why there has not been a direct link made between African resistance and revolt against enslavement and black nationalism. With this in mind, African resistance and revolt against enslavement was not only a primary factor in the development of black nationalism, but, indeed, it preceded the possibility of the establishment of a black nation-state by Africans in America. Resistance and revolt against enslavement, more than the convention activities and colonization resettlement activities of quasi-free blacks in the north, served as the foundational root of black nationalism in America.
Enslavement was in direct opposition not only to freedom, but also to nation building. An enslaved people cannot effectively build a nation for themselves; therefore, the first priority in the development of black nationalism was the destruction of the enslavement system and the establishment of resources to sustain freedom and independence in a hostile environment. In order to accomplish this, Africans enslaved in the south resisted and revolted against their enslavement on a daily basis, and those who were successful formed independent families and communities to exercise their independence and organize themselves into the basic elements of a nation—family and community.

The formation of independent families and communities took place in both the north and the south. In the north, the blacks of Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and other northern urban centers acted independently to meet their own needs; to do so, they formed Mutual Aid Societies, built freedom schools, and established churches, all under the guise of a false freedom and while fighting against the injustices that plagued black life. In the south, the line and cost of freedom was not disguised and created an atmosphere for resistance and revolt to develop as an integral part of black nationalist ideology and practice. These independent families and communities in the south were called maroons, but were also referred to as “outlyers” by the United States government. The presence of maroons and outlyers throughout the enslavement period represents the first efforts made by groups of once-enslaved Africans to establish territories for their own independence. The larger and more successful maroons existed in South America.
and the Caribbean, but Africans brought to the U.S. established smaller settlements and communities throughout the south, particularly in swamp areas. The formation of maroon communities serves as the highest level of development of black nationalism in the United States during the enslavement period. Considering that the vast majority of Africans in the U.S. during the antebellum period were either enslaved or nominally free, maroons were the only group of Africans who stood outside of the American establishment and lived as truly independent free people, living by their own laws, choosing their own leaders, and building their own institutions. The five most important features of maroons were: 1) they waged guerilla warfare against the enslavement system, 2) their existence was prevalent throughout the entire enslavement era in the U.S., 3) they checked the absoluteness of white American power and control over black peoples' lives, 4) they provided a tangible existence of African freedom that served as a reminder to both blacks and their enslavers that African people still held on to the cultural tradition of being independent and self-governing, and 5) they were willing to fight and defend their independence.

In *Maroons*, Herbert Aptheker suggests that over 50 maroon communities existed in the U.S. during the enslavement period, from 1672 to 1864. The largest of the maroon communities to exist in the U.S. was that of the Dismal Swamp lying between the borders of southeast Virginia and North Carolina, increasing to a population of 2,500 men, women, and children, some of whom were believed to have lived out their entire lives in the Dismal Swamp. Aptheker goes on to state that, “... a settled life, rather than
a pugnacious and migratory one, was aimed at, as is evidenced by the fact that these maroons built homes, maintained families, raised cattle, and pursued agriculture . . .”

In specific cases, maroons built forts and organized militarily to defend themselves against capture and enslavement, as well as to execute offensive campaigns against the enslavement system.

Vincent Harding provides evidence in *There Is A River* of maroon development beginning as early as the 1650s when reports were made in Virginia of fugitive Africans attempting “to form small armed groups in various sections of the colony and to harass neighboring plantations, at the same time creating bases to which others might flee . . .”

The military, state governments, and local newspapers of the era provide substantial evidence that maroons were a constant threat to white enslavers and to the stability of the enslavement system. As early as 1672, the Virginia House of Burgess urged and rewarded the hunting down and killing of maroons.

In 1768, South Carolina waged a battle against a substantial number of maroons, which included mulattoes, mustees, free blacks, and native Africans. In 1816, the U.S. army dispatched troops against a maroon fort located on the Appalachiola Bay with a population of over three hundred persons.

As late as 1864, an account is given by a Union Army officer that over 500 Union men (deserters) and maroons were raiding and threatening several of the cities in Florida.

The majority of accounts identifying maroons came as a result of maroon activity that became an open threat to the enslavement system. Whites often complained of the existence of bands of maroons who were plundering their plantations, stealing food,
supplies, weapons, and ammunition. Maroons also remained a constant aggravation to the enslavement population due to their activities of recruiting other Africans to join their communities and assist them in fighting against the enslavement system. The statement that maroons were “... at the same time creating bases to which others might flee” supports the idea that maroons were not simply outlaws living as nomads, but were seeking to establish a permanent and defensible independence.

The legacy of African people governing themselves and establishing their independence and control of their own territory was kept alive by maroons. At no point in U.S. history did Africans give up their desire to be free, govern themselves, and establish a nation of their own. For over two hundred years, a substantial number of Africans lived in their own communities, free from the rule of white Americans. Maroons built homes and forts, farmed, raised livestock, had children, elected leaders, formed militias, and even traded with neighboring whites and Native Americans. In essence, maroons practiced the basic activities of an independent people necessary for the development of a nation.

Under the constant threat of war, maroon communities in the U.S. experienced great difficulty establishing a permanent territory and developing large populations. Most existed as small villages and mobile settlements. The existence of maroons provides a great deal of evidence that the principles of nation building that existed in Africa were transported to the shores, hills, and swamps of North America.
Although maroons represent the highest level of independence ever achieved by blacks in America, they were not by far the majority of Africans fighting for freedom, independence, and self-governance. Alongside the development of maroon communities were the continuous efforts of Africans on and off the plantation involved in planned and organized efforts of revolt to overthrow the enslavement system, as well as to establish independence for themselves. In 1740, Africans in Maryland had conspired to “...destroy his majesty’s Subjects within the Province, and to possess themselves of the whole Country.” During that same year near Charleston, S.C., a plot was uncovered by whites in which Africans had planned “...to break into the Charleston arsenal and then take over the city.”

The idea of gaining access to the arsenals and armories and then taking over a specific area became relatively common themes in many of the revolts planned by Africans. It was the goal of obtaining complete independence and wanting to make sure that they could defend that independence that led Africans to conclude that they must “...possess themselves of the whole Country.” In doing so, Africans were demonstrating a sincere commitment to continuing their existence as an independent people, and once they had conceived of controlling a specific territory, the implication is that it would become a national territory for African independence, which could then develop into an African state and nation. It had been done in Haiti and in many parts of the Caribbean and South America. Although it was not accomplished in the U.S., the intent of revolt and resistance was the same as that of those Africans in the Caribbean and South America.
As enslaved Africans revolted against their enslavers and continued to seek out means of gaining their independence from Europeans, they made use of their relationships with maroons. It was recognized among white authorities and enslavers that the existence and close proximity of maroon communities promoted revolts and made insurrections more difficult to defeat.\textsuperscript{14} In the case of the revolts of Denmark Vessey and Nat Turner, these suspicions didn’t go unchecked. It was believed by Governor Bennett of South Carolina in 1822 that Denmark Vessey had enlisted the help of “... about twenty maroons from the same region ...”\textsuperscript{15} and the newspapers around Richmond, Virginia, during the Nat Turner revolt asked authorities if the rebels were connected to the maroons who terrorized North Carolina the previous year.\textsuperscript{16} This is very likely, considering Nat Turner ran away often and spent months at a time living in the Dismal Swamp region of South Hampton, Virginia.\textsuperscript{17} Surely, Turner’s knowledge and long stays in the Dismal Swamp put him in contact with maroons who had made the swamp their permanent home. In developing his strategy for insurrection, Turner had included the option of retreating to Cabin Pond if his forces were unable to conquer and secure the city of Jerusalem and its armory.\textsuperscript{18} It is well known that Nat Turner had no intention of accomplishing less than complete freedom from whites, as he and his men killed an estimated 60 to 70 white enslavers and their families.

The nationalist aims of the three major slave revolts—Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vessey, and Nat Turner—can be seen in the plans made by Africans not only to secure their own freedom, but also to establish themselves as independent of all white authority or law. Gabriel Prosser had intended “to subdue the whole country where slavery was
Permitted . . . .” During the trials and executions of Africans involved in the Denmark Vessey revolt, it was discovered that Monday Gell (considered the scribe of the Vessey plot) had written a letter to President Boyer of Haiti attempting to establish some commitment from the Haitian government that they would “… help them if they made an effort to free themselves.”

Denmark Vessey had plans of making a national territory out of South Carolina or migrating to Haiti. Nat Turner revealed less about his nationalist plans, but it was uncovered that one of the objectives of the revolt was to take over the armory at Jerusalem, Virginia, and continue to move forward until the entire area had been liberated.

Gabriel Prosser and Denmark Vessey, according to the historical record, clearly identified their goal of establishing an independent territory as part of their overall plans. Their plans for African independence reveal that Africans who revolted against enslavement were not simply trying to free themselves from physical bondage, but understood it would be necessary to be able to defend that freedom as an independent people. In British colonial law and American law, Africans were considered a subjugated people, non-citizens, and property of either individuals or the society in the case of “quasi-free” blacks. The option of revolting to destroy America’s economic base and then somehow become a part of the American establishment did not exist. The only options that existed were successful independence or certain death. Africans fully understood the tremendous consequences of a failed revolt. The number of hangings, burnings, and decapitations more than testify of the consequences of a failed revolt, but
they also explicitly reveal the uncompromising stance of whites concerning the illegal nature of African independence during enslavement.

The act of Africans seeking independence was treated as a crime of the highest nature, punishable by death. The fundamental premise was that African independence was against the law. Every level of American society acted to prevent African independence at all costs. To revolt came with the understanding that its success meant independence not only from one’s immediate captor, but also from the society that enforces and condones one’s captivity. With this in mind, Africans who revolted, even on an individual or small group basis, were seeking to establish their independence, particularly during the colonial period and before the northern abolition of enslavement, at the very cost of their lives.

To accomplish the task of successful independence, Africans planned to take over the military control of a territory by capturing the armory and in most cases slaying all the whites. The other options were to retreat to and/or join the ranks of other independent people who offered African independence such as the Native Americans or Haitians after 1804. Again, the goal of revolting against enslavement was independence—not simply physical freedom. Africans who revolted against enslavement did not consider the option of joining the American establishment as free men and women who had defeated their enslavers because they understood that ultimately it was the American establishment, through the use of the U.S. military and courts, who protected and sanctioned their
enslavement. Africans who revolted understood that freedom meant independence, and independence meant the right to nationhood.

Another avenue Africans followed toward gaining independence and self-government was to leave the U.S. and seek to form colonies and settlements in Africa, Canada, South America, and the Caribbean. The colonization work of Paul Cuffe is well documented, and for most scholars serves as the definitive beginning of classical black nationalism in the U.S. Cuffe established himself as a colonizationist and repatriationist in his efforts to promote the return of Africans “to the land of their fathers” as a means of providing Africans with the opportunity to become an independent, self-governing people, and for the upliftment and civilization of Africa.

Cuffe became interested in the idea of emigration for Africans in the U.S. by way of communication with a Mr. James Pemberton, who informed Cuffe of the work being done to resettle Africans from the Diaspora in a British colony on the west coast of Africa. The colony was named Sierra Leone and Cuffe was an avid supporter of “free Africans” from the U.S. migrating back to Africa. Cuffe believed that through commercial venture and the teaching of Christianity, Africans from the U.S. could help to advance African civilization.

Cuffe was a businessman and much of his work toward the advancement of the African race was the result of his seeking opportunities to develop trade between Africans in the U.S. and West Africa. In 1811, Cuffe secured papers from England, allowing him to trade in Sierra Leone. He helped to establish the Friendly Society of
Sierre Leone, which was devoted to commerce, and also established a society in the U.S. to develop correspondence with the African Institution of England and the Friendly Society concerning commercial relations. Through the creation of business opportunities, Cuffe believed he could attract property-holding blacks in the U.S. to consider the benefits of emigration, and “would visit Africa, and endeavor to promote habits of industry, sobriety, and frugality among the natives of the country.”

In 1816, Cuffe would in fact transport 38 emigrants from the U.S. to Sierre Leone in his own vessel and mostly at his own expense.

As a nationalist, Cuffe was most effective in establishing the means by which Africans could be self-sufficient and self-governing. In promoting the establishment of Sierre Leone as a colony for the resettlement of African people, Cuffe believed that Africans could develop industries and international trade that would allow Africans to become economically independent and able to compete in the industrial revolution. To the Friendly Society in Sierre Leone, he advised them “not to give up her [Africa’s] commercial pursuits, for that is the greatest outlet to her national advancement.”

Cuffe understood early in the development of black nationalism that economics was central to the ability of Africans to be a self-governing and independent people.

Although not considered a theorist on the ideology of black nationalism, Cuffe did express views that would later become well-known concepts of black nationalism. He believed that Africans in the U.S. had a duty to the upliftment of Africa, as he was “. . . in duty bound to escort myself to the uttermost of my ability for the good cause of
Cuffe believed in self-government and sought to promote emigration among Africans who, he believed, could serve as leaders in the development of Sierra Leone. Richard Allen, Absolom Jones, James Forten, Prince Saunders, Daniel Coker, and Peter Williams were all leaders of the African Institutions Cuffe helped establish in the U.S. Many of these men were religious leaders of newly-formed African churches. They gave Cuffe an audience of the most educated and wealthy members of the African community in America.

Colonization and emigration appealed to the nationalist aspirations that many Africans held at the turn of the nineteenth century. Africans who had gained their freedom began to realize that America was only committed to its creed of being the land of the free if one had white skin; thus, for Africans seeking independence and self-rule, another area of land was necessary to meet their nationalist objectives.

After the success of Paul Cuffe in transporting 38 immigrants to Sierra Leone in 1816, white deportationists and colonizationists from the U.S. began to consider the colonization of "free Africans" more seriously. In 1817, The American Society for the Colonizing of the Free People of Color of The United States (American Colonization Society - ACS) was founded. Made up of white philanthropists and several enslavers, the ACS turned many blacks against the idea of emigration and colonization. Blacks viewed the ACS as a means of ridding the population of the most dangerous threat to the enslavement system, "free Africans." Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, Africans who publicly supported colonization and/or emigrated under the ACS were severely criticized and considered traitors to their race. So intense was the mood that James Forten, who
advocated emigration with Paul Cuffe, switched his position to anti-colonization with the founding of the ACS.\(^{31}\)

Even with the decline of popular support for colonization and emigration, Africans continued to use emigration as a means of establishing themselves as an independent people. In 1820, 39 families, under the auspices of the ACS, set sail from New York on the *Elizabeth* to West Africa to form what would later become the colony of Liberia.\(^{32}\) Upon their arrival they stayed at Campellar, a settlement founded by John Kizell, who had formerly been enslaved in South Carolina and had emigrated as a founding member of Sierre Leone in 1792.\(^{33}\) Kizell had been authorized to start the settlement, which was founded in 1814. Kizell was instrumental in helping ACS agents negotiate with indigenous African leaders for the land of the Liberian colony.

The white ACS agents died while completing the negotiations for the land sight, and the leadership of the colony fell into the hands of Daniel Coker, who was an emigrant on the *Elizabeth*. Coker was an associate of Cuffe in Baltimore and had emigrated as a missionary with support from the Maryland Colonization Society. After assuming leadership of the colony and receiving 28 more colonists the following year, Coker moved the settlement to Fourah Bay, and then again to Cape Mesurado to distance the colony from any British interference. Liberia was founded in 1822 at Cape Mesurado, but Coker and a few other colonists decided to return to Sierre Leone. Under the leadership of Lott Carey and Elijah Johnson, who had both emigrated with the second
group of colonists, the colony of Liberia began with a total of 135 African emigrants from the U.S.\textsuperscript{34}

The founding of Liberia continued the development of the nationalist desire of many Africans to achieve self-government. In explaining to his associates why he was choosing to emigrate, Lott Carey stated “I am African . . . I wish to go to a country where I shall be estimated by my merits - not by my complexion; and I feel bound to labor for my suffering race.”\textsuperscript{35} John Russwurm emigrated to Liberia in 1830 under heavy criticism, and was burned in effigy by blacks at a national convention for emigrating under the ACS. Russwurm defended his action by stating it was “mere waste of words to talk of ever enjoying citizenship in [America].”\textsuperscript{36} Russwurm went on to become governor of the colony in 1836 and maintained his leadership until his death in 1851.\textsuperscript{37} Later, other Africans with nationalist intentions would continue to emigrate to Liberia, most notably Alexander Crummell and Edward Wilmot Blyden.\textsuperscript{38}

Although many African leaders in the U.S. criticized emigrants to Liberia and saw it as being controlled by white financing and the interest of enslavers in the ACS, Liberia was a tangible reality of the desire and ability of Africans to govern themselves. In fact, Liberia established an early tradition of African leadership, having had a consecutive line of black colonial governors beginning with Coker, Carey, and Johnson and continuing into formal independence in 1848, when Russwurm served as its first president.\textsuperscript{39}

Among those Africans who did not support emigration, nationalism often took the form of rhetoric aimed at inspiring enslaved Africans to revolt against their captors.
There were also many speeches and other written documents which promoted the idea of self-government for Africans in America. In David Walker’s *Appeal in Four Articles* (1829) he states, “Our sufferings will come to an end, in spite of all the Americans this side of eternity. Then we will want all the learning and talents among ourselves, and perhaps more, to govern ourselves.” In 1851, Augustus Washington wrote a letter to the ACS stating that he was in favor of emigration and the establishment of a black state.

However, the most noteworthy statement made on behalf of the nationalist cause prior to 1850 came from Henry Highland Garnet in his “Address to the Slaves.” Memorable for its fiery rhetoric as a call to the enslaved Africans to rise against their captors, the address states “If you must bleed, let it all come at once - rather die freemen, than to live to be slaves.” Garnet gave his address at a national convention in Buffalo, New York in 1843. The most significant aspect of the speech was that it missed by one vote from being endorsed as a collective commitment by the convention attendees. As Robert Carlisle points out in *Roots of Black Nationalism*, in missing the endorsement of the convention by one vote, one can clearly see a movement within the “free African” community toward more militant aspirations than existed in the conventions a decade earlier. Carlisle goes on to state that Garnet’s speech begins to reveal a rift in the leadership of the convention movement between those who would follow the moral suasionist position of Fredrick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison and the more radical position of Garnet. The speech would also signal a transformation in Garnet, who
had opposed emigration early in his career, but by 1848 concluded “I would rather see a man free in Liberia than a slave in the United States.”

After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, emigration regained support among Africans in the U.S. The Fugitive Slave Law put every African living in the north at risk of being captured and re-enslaved. Out of a pure intent to remain free, Africans opted to emigrate to Canada specifically, but support was also given to plans to emigrate to South America, the Caribbean, and to Africa. Emigration to Liberia increased during this period in response to the Fugitive Slave Law, but also in recognition of Liberia’s independence in 1848. The decade of the 1850s saw 40,000 Africans migrate to Canada alone. The increased interest in emigration led to the founding of several organizations geared toward promoting the migration of Africans to Canada, Liberia, and Haiti. In 1851, Lewis H. Putnam organized the United African Republic Emigration Society in New York. In support of his activities, Wesley Jones of Alabama wrote “I trust my brethren will think of this matter and arouse themselves . . . pride be kindled up in their hearts and go to make us a great nation of our own, build our own cities and towns, make our own laws collect our own revenues . . .” The following year, Martin R. Delaney would publish *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States, Politically Considered*, in which he writes that Africans in the U.S. are, in fact, a nation similar to the various stateless minorities in the nations of Europe, and suggested that Africans should seek a national territory.
In 1854, leading emigrationists James Holly, Henry Bibb, Martin Delaney, and James Whitfield called a convention in Cleveland, Ohio. Delaney gave a speech in which he called for the creation of a black empire in the New World, where "the inherent traits, attributes . . . and native characteristics peculiar to our race could be cultivated and developed." The convention commissioned Delaney, Holly, and Whitfield to explore possible sites for emigration. Whitfield was sent to explore sights in South America, Holly went to Haiti, and Delaney began negotiations with Jamaica, Cuba, and a number of republics in Central and South America. The emigration convention was held again in 1856, but no one particular location was endorsed by the convention as home of a new black nation. In 1858, the convention met in Chatham, Canada, in which Delaney won support for his plans to explore the Niger region of Africa. In 1855, Henry Garnet returned to the U.S. after lecturing for several years in England. He formed the African Civilization Society, which stated within its mission the "civilization and christianization of Africa" as its main purpose.

With the return of Garnet to the U.S., a true nationalist camp developed. Emigration was the foremost method agreed upon by its leadership to bring about the formation of an independent African nation for Africans living in the U.S. Although there was some discussion of a land site within the territory of the U.S., the main focus and activities were directed outside the U.S. In 1859, Robert Campbell and Martin Delaney sailed separately to Africa on expeditions to investigate the prospect of resettlement of Africans from the U.S. Delaney first visited Liberia and Campbell went to
the Niger Valley. The two men met in what is now Nigeria and toured the Yoruba country. Delaney and Campbell signed a treaty with African officials “as commissioners in behalf of the African race in America” to settle “in common with the Egba people, on any part of the territory belonging to Abeokuta, not otherwise occupied.” After returning in 1860, Delaney stated, “I have determined to leave my children the inheritance of a country, the possession of a territorial domain, the blessing of a national education, and the indisputable right of self-government . . . .” Delaney never fulfilled his vision of emigration due to the outbreak of the Civil War.

Delaney, as well as many other emigrationists, abandoned the project of searching for a national territory for blacks in the U.S. to close ranks with other African-American leaders in their call for black men to join the Union Army as the most effective and expedient means of destroying the enslavement system, and achieving freedom within the American establishment. The abandonment of the pursuit of a national territory outside the U.S. would severely hamper the emigrationist movement that would re-emerge fifteen years later.

By the close of the Civil War, most African-American leaders hoped the defeat of the Confederacy would mean that blacks would receive the status of full citizenship in the U.S. The promise of reconstruction, indeed radical reconstruction, faded quickly as the compromise to elect President Hayes removed federal troops from the south and left the political doors open to return Confederate leaders to power. The resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and violence against Africans in the south brought back a resurgence of
emigrationist ideas that sought to establish an independent African territory for Africans in the U.S.

Beginning in 1877 and continuing through 1914, there were several emigrationist movements organized in the U.S. Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, who was elected president of the American Colonization Society in 1876, was involved in one of the first emigration movements following reconstruction. In 1877, the Liberian Exodus Joint Stock Steamship Company was formed in Charleston, South Carolina. As white supremacists began to make their way back to power, interest in emigration to Liberia grew. In January 1878, blacks interested in migrating to Liberia began to arrive in Charleston, and in April of the same year, 206 emigrants left for Liberia aboard the Azor. Bishop Turner was a great advocate and supporter of Liberian emigration and stated that “If a line of steamers were started from New Orleans, Mobile, Savannah, or Charleston, they would be crowded to density every trip they made to Africa.”

During the 1880s and 1890s, emigration remained strong among African-Americans in the U.S. The establishment of the Congo Free State led to the creation of the United States and Congo National Emigration Company, which was initially organized by whites, but was turned over to black shareholders when white financial interest dwindled. Benjamin Gaston served as its recruiting agent and toured the southeast and gulf region [United States] to stir interest in emigration. In 1893-1894, the company sponsored three trips to Liberia, totaling 89 emigrants. The International Migration Society sponsored a small steamer called the Horsa with 200 passengers to
Liberia in 1895, and the following year the same organization sent another 321 emigrants.\textsuperscript{55}

The support and response to emigration was so high during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that in 1891 African freedmen from Oklahoma sold their farms and left by train for New York in hopes of migrating to Liberia. Other groups of Africans from Arkansas joined the Oklahoma group in New York, but the expected ship never arrived and the almost defunct ACS found itself in a hostile crisis.\textsuperscript{56} As late as 1914, Alfred C. Sam, a native of the Gold Coast, transported 60 Africans from Oklahoma to the Gold Coast in a ship he purchased by selling shares in the Akim Trading Company, Limited. When he departed from Galveston, Texas, there were 500 African-Americans hoping to migrate upon the ship’s return and another 500 encamped in a nearby town expecting to migrate in the near future.\textsuperscript{57}

Several African-Americans became the victim of false reports, fraudulent promoters, and companies that failed to raise the necessary funds to fulfill their contracts. The large number of blacks who responded to emigrationist propaganda reveals the extent to which emigration was a mass movement. In deciding to migrate to Liberia, the Congo, or the Gold Coast, black people surely had a sense that they were not simply leaving the U.S., but were clearly interested in living under a government controlled and determined by African people. The rhetoric of Bishop Turner and Edward Blyden spoke of African-Americans from the U.S. returning to Africa as a mission to uplift the African
race, provide proof of the ability of African people to govern themselves, and serve as a source of pride to Africans throughout the Diaspora.

Emigration as a strategy to achieve the nationalist objective of creating an independent nation reached its peak at a time when African-Americans had failed to achieve recognition as equal citizens and were seeking to gain protection of their freedom and the ability to be governed by themselves and their own people. Emigration seemed to be the logical choice, but it was not easily affordable. Family circumstances did not always support migrating to a new land, and plans did not always go through. For the majority of Africans who remained in America, nationalism would have to become a way of life, even if there was no tangible nation-state. The nationalism that sprung up to replace the emigrationist movement was designed to correct the lies and theories of African inferiority that had flourished in the mid 1800s and had become a “matter-of-fact” notion among whites by the early 1900s. The nationalists of the 1920s began to focus less on trying to return to Africa physically and more on continuing the cultural traditions of African people and building institutions to support the needs of the community. These men and women believed in the ultimate goal of establishing an independent territory, but their work and efforts are remembered and acknowledged for the cultural mark they have left on the African-American coming out of enslavement and being subjected to mental and physical genocide.

On the heels of the emigrationist movement, another nationalist movement was being born. In 1913, Noble Drew Ali founded the Moorish-American Science Temple in
Newark, New Jersey. Teaching that Islam was the natural religion of black people and that the national origin of black people was Morocco, Drew Ali sought to build a consciousness among African-Americans that identified them as a separate people, with their own history, culture, religion, language, and God distinct from that of traditional Christianity and white American society. He taught his followers that in order “for a people to amount to anything, it is necessary to have a name [nation] and a land.” Drew Ali was so convinced of the need for land and nationality as the basis of progress for African-Americans that “He believed that before a people can have a God they must have a nationality . . .”

In attempting to give African-Americans in the U.S. a nationality, Drew Ali is said to have visited Morocco and received a commission from the King of Morocco to teach Islam to blacks in America. In his teaching of Islam, Drew Ali asserted that the true name of the African in America was Moor or Moorish-American, and that their national origin was Morocco. By 1925, Drew Ali had established temples in Pittsburgh, Detroit, and Chicago. He took advantage of Booker T. Washington’s message of economic development as a key to empowerment and established a number of small businesses collectively owned by his followers.

Shortly after Drew Ali founded the Moorish-American Science Temple, Marcus Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Jamaica in 1914. In 1917, Garvey moved to Harlem, New York, and established the headquarters of the UNIA. Garvey briefly described the mission of the UNIA as one of “uniting all the
Negro peoples of the world into one great body to establish a country and government absolutely their own." Establishing the UNIA as the provisional government of the international African nation, Garvey was appointed president and quickly made an impact upon African-American politics and cultural consciousness. Garvey spoke of both the political and economic necessity for Africans to have their own nation, the significance of Africans knowing their history and culture, and implementing both into their everyday lives.

Five years after Garvey arrived in the U.S., the UNIA reported a membership of several million people in the U.S., Caribbean, South America, and Africa. Garvey was a "student" of Booker T. Washington's in that he also believed in industrial education, acquiring skills, and accumulating wealth as the means of creating progress for African people, but Garvey expected these tools of progress to be directed to the elevation of Africa and its people throughout the globe, and not for the purpose of gaining entry into the American system. Garvey recognized that African-Americans were, in most cases, the most educated and technologically skilled of all Africans and sought to build an army of skilled craftsmen, professionals, and leaders who could go to Africa and use their skills to build Africa into an economically and politically powerful nation-states.

Garvey and the UNIA established two economic enterprises to support the campaign for the redemption of Africa and the nationalist objective of establishing a nation ruled by African people. The most successful was the organization's newspaper, *The Negro World*, which Garvey edited. The other venture was the founding of a
steamship company called the Black Star Line. Many people inaccurately associate the Black Star Line with the notion that Garvey intended to transport African-Americans back to Africa on a massive scale, but more accurately the Black Star Line was to serve the purpose of transporting needed craftsmen and professionals to Africa; it functioned more as an import/export company seeking to establish trade between African countries and the Diaspora.65

The impact of the UNIA and Garvey on the development of nationalism among blacks in the U.S. can be seen in the increased racial consciousness and pride that developed during the late 1910s and early 1920s. The Negro World incorporated articles discussing politics, economics, culture, and poetry that were all written to inspire blacks to take pride in themselves as a people with a long, rich history and culture, along with giving an account of the events and conditions affecting black people and the world from a black perspective. The UNIA also established several auxiliary organizations that promoted and developed the practice of nationhood. The African Orthodox Church, the Universal African Legion, the Universal Black Cross Nurses, the Universal African Motor Corps, and the Black Flying Eagles were all established to make nationalism a tangible reality in the lives of black people.

Garvey faced opposition from other black leaders as well as the federal government for his plan of African redemption. Dubois criticized Garvey as being unrealistic and acting as a demagogue, preying upon the discontent of African-American people with American society.66 The two men often criticized and insulted one another
in an effort to gain prominence as the national leader of blacks in the U.S. Garvey can certainly be shown to have had an influence in the long run on Dubois’ development as a Pan-Africanist, which was developing over time, and after Garvey’s imprisonment (1925) and deportation (1927) by the federal government for mail fraud, a few short years later Dubois would speak strongly of the need for unity among Africans across the Diaspora.

Two years after Garvey was deported, Drew Ali was killed, but his followers continued to develop the religious and culturally based nationalism that he founded with the Moorish-American Science Temple. After the death of Drew Ali, leadership of the Moorish-American Science Temple was assumed by W.D. Fard, but by 1930 there was a split within the organization; two factions developed from the split. One faction remained loyal to Drew Ali and would not accept the leadership of W.D. Fard, who claimed to be the reincarnation of Drew Ali. The other faction followed the lead of Fard, who founded a temple in Detroit in 1930. Fard disappeared in 1933 and another split occurred between those members who believed Fard to be Allah (God) in the flesh, who had disappeared to return to the holy city of Mecca, and another faction who only viewed him as a prophet. Those who deified Fard eventually moved to Chicago and set up their headquarters, with Elijah Muhammad as their recognized leader.

There were other nationalist organizations that continued the legacy of Garvey during the 1930s. The Peace Movement of Ethiopia was founded in Chicago in 1932. The organization campaigned for repatriation of African-Americans back to Africa, and
urged blacks to support a repatriation bill introduced in Congress by Senator Theodore G. Bilbo of Mississippi. The Ethiopian World Federation Council Inc. founded a branch of the organization in Chicago on May 27, 1938, only a year after Dr. Maluku E. Bayen, the leader of the organization, had come to the U.S. to request aid from people of Ethiopian descent during the invasion of Ethiopia by Italy. The goal of the federation was to promote “love and goodwill among Ethiopians at home and abroad, and thereby maintain the integrity and sovereignty of Ethiopia.”

Oscar C. Brown founded the National Movement for the Establishment of the Forty-Ninth State in Chicago during the 1930s. Brown was a lawyer and businessman who believed that self-determination for African-Americans could only be achieved through the establishment of a separate state for black people. The movement, which was mostly political, received very little support as compared to other offshoots of the Garvey movement during this time.

Many of the nationalist organizations founded during the 1930s-1940s did not survive. Outside of the Moors, the Garvey movement, and the NOI, most organizations were of a local character and small in membership. The era of the Great Depression and the coming of World War II placed nationalism in sort of an incubator period. Although there was work being done in the interest of improving and advancing black people as a race, the majority of attention was being directed toward gaining access to the opportunities presented in the New Deal by President Roosevelt, the opening of skilled
positions in the war industry to African-Americans during WWII, and the organization of African-Americans into unions to increase wages and benefits for black workers. Out of this period the NOI was able to continue its development and modestly increase its membership despite the ongoing push by many black leaders and organizations, such as A. Phillip Randolph and the Union of Pullman Car Porters, for integration of African-Americans into mainstream American society.

In 1948, Malcolm Little (Malcolm X) made his conversion to Islam while in prison, after several letters from his older brother who was a member of the NOI and from Elijah Muhammad himself. In 1952, Malcolm was paroled from Charlestown State Prison, and a year later had worked his way up to “. . . assistant minister in Temple Number One in Detroit for his excellent work in recruiting new members.” Malcolm would prove to be the best tool available to Muhammad and the NOI, as he was soon sent out from Detroit to organize temples in Boston and Philadelphia. In June 1954, Malcolm was appointed head minister of Temple Number Seven in Harlem, New York. Malcolm soon joined the many nationalist speakers who occupied the busy corners of Harlem recruiting members and espousing doctrines of black unity, self-determination, and historical and cultural pride. Between 1954 and 1959, Malcolm addressed blacks exclusively, teaching the doctrines of the NOI and giving a scathing critique of the evils of white people and American society, as well as chastising African-Americans for being ignorant of their own history and culture and trying to imitate white standards of beauty and success.
In April 1957, Malcolm became a permanent fixture as an African-American leader in Harlem. In response to one of the NOI members being severely beaten and jailed by police, Malcolm ordered members of the NOI Fruit of Islam (FOI) to assemble in front of the police precinct where Hinton Johnson was being held. Over one hundred members of the FOI were present and as other local blacks got word of what was taking place, the crowd increased to over eight hundred people. In an effort to prevent any violence from occurring, the police began to negotiate with Malcolm. After securing a promise from the police that Hinton Johnson would receive medical attention and that the police officers who beat him would be punished, Malcolm directed the FOI and crowd to disperse and within a few seconds the street was clear, to the amazement of the police.76

After this display of power and leadership, Malcolm became a highly recognized leader among the people of Harlem, and other black leaders in New York began to accept his invitations to appear with him at Harlem street rallies; Congressman Adam Clayton Powell Jr., Pastor G.C. Taylor of Concord Baptist Church, A. Phillip Randolph, and Bayard Rustin were among those who joined Malcolm to discuss the condition of African-American people.77

Along with the ascension of Malcolm came the birth of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), which, indirectly, enhanced and promoted the development of nationalism among blacks in the U.S. As civil rights leaders and organizations pushed for integration and admittance of African-Americans into mainstream American society, the violence, denial, and white supremacy doctrines they encountered provided
nationalists an opportunity to present their agenda of self-determination and independence as the solution to the oppressive conditions of the masses of African-Americans during the 1950s. The CRM mobilized African-Americans to take action politically and economically. The Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955 served as the spark that moved hundreds of African-Americans in Montgomery to act on their own behalf toward achieving their rights as citizens. As the movement moved outside Montgomery, blacks across the south began to challenge the system of segregation and face the unchecked violence and hostility of southern whites. This led nationalists, particularly the NOI, to declare that they (NOI) were the only logical alternative to segregation or integration, based on their program of self-determination and independence from American society. It would be the first time since Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois that the African-American community would be presented with two diverging and conflicting political agendas to achieve black liberation.
CHAPTER 4

THE IMPACT OF MALCOLM X ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK NATIONALISM

As African-Americans entered into the 1960s, nationalists began to criticize civil rights leaders and their activities. Malcolm X represented the dissenting voice against the politics and tactics of the civil rights leaders, arguing that non-violence and a dependence upon white liberal leadership gave power and control of the movement to whites. This was problematic because it was the masses of African-Americans who were being brutalized for trying to obtain their rights as citizens. Nationalists would challenge the doctrine of non-violence as the most effective means of advancing the program of obtaining rights for African-Americans. In 1957, Robert Williams would be one of the first leaders of the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) to abandon non-violence as a tactical strategy to achieve rights for African-Americans.¹

Nationalism during the late 1950s and into the 1960s experienced a slow but steady growth. Both national and international events occupied the attention and activity of the majority of African-Americans. The movement of continental African and Asian people toward independence from colonialism after WWII and the igniting of the CRM created a highly charged political and social upheaval that spanned two decades.
Although the CRM took center stage and had the support of the black middle class and black southern masses from 1955 through 1966, the nationalist movement continued to develop and grow in strength and popularity as many African-Americans began to question integration as a viable social response to the violence, poverty, and oppression experienced by African-Americans. The nationalist movements of the 1950s and early 1960s were overshadowed by the struggle for civil rights, but at the same time the nationalist movement gained support and acceptance as a viable alternative for African-Americans to achieve liberation and independence as a result of the failure of the CRM to deliver freedom and liberation. Indeed, by the end of the 1960s, black nationalism had replaced the CRM as the main ideology whereby African-Americans hoped to achieve liberation, freedom, and independence.

Organizations such as the Nation of Islam (NOI), the Moorish American Science Temple (MAST), and the many offshoots of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) carried nationalism into the 1960s and continued to grow and present their separate nationalist ideologies as they recruited new members, developed empowerment programs, built institutions, and educated African-Americans about their history, culture, and U.S. social-political and economic oppression of black people. All of these organizations were concentrated in the urban centers of the north. Chicago, Illinois, Detroit, Michigan, and Harlem, New York were nationalist strongholds that provided ample opportunity and resources for recruitment, economic development, and ideological support for the nationalist position that a separation of blacks from whites
was necessary to end the oppression of blacks and redeem the legacy of African-American people. The ultimate goal of separation was an independent nation for blacks, but during the 1950s and 1960s, nationalist organizations focused on the more immediately attainable objectives of cultural, social, and economic empowerment.

After the deportation and death of Marcus Garvey, the nationalist movement lost a great deal of momentum in the United States. As the man who led the largest nationalist movement among African people in America, Garvey's persona and prominence on the world stage brought cohesion to his supporters and served as a prime motivating factor for their allegiance to the UNIA. Although there were very dedicated men and women who worked to carry out Garvey's vision after his deportation and death, the UNIA as an organization never recovered. Yet the lessons and principles of nationalism that Garvey taught and practiced continued to be utilized by nationalist leaders and organizations that came after him. These men and women were known as Garveyites and held true to the creed that African freedom, liberation, and independence were the keys to ending the oppression of black people and returning African people to a position of power.

One of the more successful organizations founded after the collapse of the UNIA was the African Nationalist Pioneer Movement (ANPM). The group was organized in the 1930s and led by Carlos Cooks, a long-time veteran of the UNIA. Cooks had strong ties with the UNIA and was reared as a child of the nationalist movement. His father
had been involved in the UNIA in Bermuda, but had decided to leave the movement; however, he encouraged his son Carlos to stay in the UNIA and work with Garvey. Carlos Cooks eventually became a lieutenant in the UNIA's Black Legion at the young age of 19, and went on to head the Advanced Division of the UNIA in Harlem, becoming a very close associate of Garvey. After the deportation of Garvey, Cooks led the Harlem-based organization. Under his leadership, the Advanced Division was involved in supporting the Liberia Act or "Bilbo Bill" sponsored by Senator Bilbo of Mississippi, which supported the establishment of a black state for African-Americans in Africa.³

Charles E. Smith, a member of the Advanced Division of the UNIA, went to Washington, D.C., to solicit funds to go around the country and recruit African-Americans for resettlement in Africa.

Carlos Cooks and the ANPM were at the head of the nationalist movement in Harlem and began to popularize many of the nationalist ideas that Garvey had preached. In fact, many of the well-known phrases of the Black Power Era were actually birthed by Garvey. For example, the ANPM organized early "Buy Black" campaigns as part of their economic development and empowerment program. They held an annual beauty contest called "Ms. Natural Beauty Pageant," which later spawned the slogan, "Black is Beautiful" which became popular during the 1960s and 70s. Along with the "Buy Black" and natural beauty competition, the ANPM continued the UNIA tradition of African pageantry and exhibition with an annual military-style parade down the streets of Harlem. They also organized the Unity Convention in 1959, which, among other things, was designed to "... abrogate the word Negro" in reference to African people.⁴
Although there was no major nationalist movement with regards to mass participation after the deportation and death of Marcus Garvey, black nationalism was steadily developing and growing among the grassroots of Harlem, Chicago, and Detroit. Carlos Cooks was among the “Street Corner” speakers who filled the streets of Harlem on Sunday afternoons “fishing” for new members and appealing to the grassroots members of his community. He, along with dozens of others, taught nationalist ideology and history, commented on local, national, and international events, and promoted their organizations and programs as the best to achieve African freedom and independence. Others in the number were James Lawson, head of the United African Nationalist Movement; Mrs. Bessie Phillips (a long-time nationalist from the 1930s), who organized the Ethiopia Wisdom House of Judah; Charles Kenyatta, leader of the Mau Mau, a paramilitary group for community protection, whose name was inspired by the freedom fighters of Kenya; and Edward “Pork Chop” Davis, who emphasized the need for blacks to develop economic power. The variety of spokesmen and women who took to the street corners on Sunday afternoons created an atmosphere of radical thinking and action in Harlem.

It was this atmosphere that deserves at least a portion of the credit for the early nationalist development of Malcolm X as a black nationalist. One could argue that he was drawn to the teachings of Elijah Muhammad for his nationalist ideological base rather than religious conversion. Elijah Muhammad taught a simple truth that the suffering masses of black men and women in the urban north could identify with, which was “... the Black man must do for self” to overcome the oppression of his enemy
(white people) and be respected by men of other races.\textsuperscript{7} When Malcolm was introduced to Islam, it was wrapped in a distinctly African-American cultural-historical worldview that was nationalist. Malcolm did not know anything about Islam, but related immediately to the nationalist analysis that Elijah Muhammad and his ministers preached in the traditional style of the Black Church. Black nationalism is what Malcolm X taught on the streets and in the Harlem Mosque, but he was not alone; the impact of an active and very competitive nationalist community influenced Malcolm’s development and growth substantially.

In order to appreciate fully the magnitude of Malcolm X on the development of modern black nationalism, it is critical to understand that there was a larger nationalist community of individuals and organizations that existed in Harlem during the time period in which Malcolm X arrived. These organizations and their leaders were, in many instances, in competition with one another. This was particularly the case when it came to recruitment of members on Sunday afternoons. The NOI recruited heavily on Sunday, after traditional church services ended, and it was common for Malcolm and his “fishing team” to promote their program at other nationalist events.\textsuperscript{8}

These organizations were led by men and women who had been the contemporaries and students of Marcus Garvey; they taught that “Africa is the motherland”, “Jesus is Black”, “Buy Black”, “Black is Beautiful”, and declared that it was “nation time” for two to three decades before the phrase would become popular among the masses of black people.\textsuperscript{9} These organizations also worked together (i.e., the
Unity Conference of 1959) and, due to the level of activity concerning African freedom and liberation both internationally and nationally, there was solidarity among those who knew that their views were not accepted by mainstream black leaders or the black middle class.

When Malcolm came to Harlem, in 1954, it was a seed bed of nationalist activity and organizations that addressed many issues relevant to the condition of blacks in Harlem and throughout the United States. Carlos Cooks (who is credited as the man after whom Malcolm X patterned his speaking style) and Arthur Reed spoke about the need for Africans to become economically empowered and to consider repatriation back to Africa in the Garvey tradition. Edward “Pork Chop” Davis was more specific about his economic program, which insisted that blacks needed to control 125th Street, a major shopping and cultural area in Harlem. Davis was an avid opponent of integration and, instead, called for more community unity along with economic empowerment as the means whereby to uplift black people. John Henrik Clark and Josef Ben-Jochonnan were among the cadre of nationalist spokesmen and theorists. Both men contributed substantially to the resurgence of African history and culture among African-Americans in Harlem.

The information and history that was being uncovered and introduced to the masses on the streets of Harlem became a major weapon in the arsenal of black nationalist appeal and credibility. However, no speaker developed the oratorical skill of blending history and politics better than Malcolm X. In many ways, it was Malcolm’s
ability to combine history, politics, and everyday life that made him appealing as a speaker. His analysis of the condition of black people and their relationship to whites was rooted in a historical and cultural perspective that the majority of African-Americans could relate to and agree with.\textsuperscript{11}

Malcolm rose to prominence as minister and then national spokesman for the NOI during the mid-1950s. The NOI, prior to the work of Malcolm, was a small religious sect with ten temples in the United States.\textsuperscript{12} After successfully organizing a temple in Boston, Massachusetts and in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Malcolm was appointed to the prestigious post of Head Minister of Mosque #7 in Harlem in June of 1954.\textsuperscript{13} When Malcolm took the head position of the Harlem mosque, he entered an active and competitive nationalist community. Being the leading spokesman for the NOI in Harlem gave Malcolm access to the largest concentration of African-Americans in the United States coupled with the rigorous and successful program of the NOI for the upliftment of black people, and its location in the media capital of the United States (Manhattan, New York), it would not take long for Malcolm to become the most recognized figure of the “black Muslims,” but also of the nationalist community as well.

The NOI, commonly known in the 1950s as the “black Muslims,” became one of the well-known nationalist organizations of the late 1950s and early 1960s as a result of the work of Malcolm in establishing temples and initiating training programs. Their success at converting incarcerated blacks from a life of crime, drug addiction, and feelings of hopelessness and inferiority into responsible, law abiding, determined, and
proud black people, along with their doctrine of the innate evil of white people and divinity of black people, gave the NOI a status of respect and admiration among the masses of African-Americans that was not enjoyed by other nationalist groups. During street rallies and debates, Malcolm gained attention as the most harsh and truthful critic of whites, black bourgeois politicians, and the Civil Rights Movement’s philosophy of non-violence and integration.

The famous incident that catapulted Malcolm to a position of consummate leadership within the Harlem community was the standoff that took place between the NOI’s Fruit of Islam (FOI), led by Malcolm, and the New York City police. The significance of this event was that it gave the NOI and Malcolm an opportunity to put action behind their words, which was a major criticism of the Muslims as a result of their inactivity in the CRM. The NOI and Malcolm had, up until that time, talked bad about white people and the police, but had never confronted them. By acting to directly challenge the police on an issue of police brutality, Malcolm became an instant hero, and his popularity and leadership placed him in the company of the leading politicians and activists of the era.

There was another incident, or rather an opportunity, that gave Malcolm national attention. It was his appearance on the popular news program, “The Mike Wallace Show.” Malcolm was very impressive during his interview and spoke to Mike Wallace in a straight-forward, hold-no-punches style that made him successful as a recruiter and speaker on the streets of Harlem. For black people, it was a very significant moment.
because Malcolm had the courage and the intellect to tell whites exactly what he thought and felt about them without fear or concern of the consequences. That was not typical of how blacks interacted with whites in the 1950s and early 1960s. When Malcolm called white people "devils" on national television and criticized them for their unjust treatment of blacks, he became a national hero for black people who respected and admired that he was bold enough to speak the truth that they themselves were not. Both black and white leaders were forced to acknowledge his power and authority as a leader of a nationalist organization and popular leader of a grassroots segment of the black community.

As a minister of the NOI, Malcolm made tremendous contributions to the building and organizing of the NOI into one of the largest and most successful nationalist and religious movements in the African-American community. Yet his connection to Muhammad and the NOI both strengthened and hindered Malcolm’s leadership. The NOI platform gave Malcolm a base from which to impact the lives of thousands of black men and women who joined the nationalist organization. At the same time, the religion of Islam and the program of the NOI were peculiar to the masses of African-Americans, who were fundamentally a Christian and westernized people. Malcolm’s political and historical commentary on current issues was his strongest asset when speaking to the black masses, but the internal policies and doctrines of the NOI did not allow Malcolm to exercise his full capability as a major political force, outside of criticizing the CRM and its leadership. The NOI was neither on the front lines of the CRM, nor were they active in generating any overtly confrontational movement to challenge the existing order of
society. There were two reasons given by Malcolm for their lack of direct involvement in the CRM. The religious reason for their political inactivity was that Allah (God) would personally be responsible for the coming judgment and destruction of America, and it was the responsibility of black people to separate themselves from America so Allah could bring about Armageddon. As a nationalist organization, the NOI did not agree with the integrationist goals of the CRM and did not see any benefit in putting their organization or any of its members in harm’s way to achieve goals they ideologically opposed.

This was the circumstance in which Malcolm found himself during the CRM, until his break from the NOI. He was criticizing the CRM, its goals and leadership, but offered no other active alternative to those who were not Muslims and were not members of the NOI. No matter how much “truth” Malcolm told about the evil of white people and the weakness of their African-American co-conspirators, there were African-Americans being beaten and murdered for their efforts to try and change their condition. Malcolm and the NOI never attempted to act on the behalf of the thousands of African-Americans who were involved in the CRM. This was a very difficult position for Malcolm to be in as the leading critic against the CRM and national representative of the NOI. As stated earlier, Malcolm was more of a nationalist than a Muslim, therefore making him more political than religious. This point is made clear when Malcolm states, “Any time I have to accept a religion that won’t let me fight a battle for my people, I say
to hell with that religion.” The CRM was a political movement that had galvanized a large segment of the black community into political action. As a nationalist leader, Malcolm wanted to direct that political action toward the achievement of nationalist goals, mainly land and independence.

On December 1, 1963, Malcolm made a public comment about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and was punished by Muhammad for violating his orders that no minister make any comments concerning the death of the President. Malcolm was silenced for a period of ninety days. Malcolm never completed his ninety-day suspension from public speaking, but opted instead to leave the NOI. The decision to break his ties with the NOI gave Malcolm greater freedom and ability to become more active in influencing the CRM to move in a nationalist direction. The rigid policies and philosophical restraints of the NOI were now removed, and Malcolm began to work immediately on developing a nationalist plan to change the CRM from a fight for civil rights and integration to a fight for human rights and black liberation.

Prior to his break with the NOI, Malcolm began to build bridges between himself and civil rights leaders. In November 1963, Malcolm attended the northern Grassroots Leadership Conference in Detroit. The conference was organized by local civil rights leader Reverend Albert B. Cleage, Jr., in conjunction with the Group on Advanced leadership (GOAL), along with the newly formed Freedom Now Party. At this convention, Malcolm delivered one of his most famous speeches, “Message to the Grassroots.” Within the speech, Malcolm called for unity among the various civil rights
leaders and organizations, encouraging them to forget their differences and focus on their common condition and common enemy as the basis of their unity. Malcolm used the Bandung Conference, held in 1955, among the nations of Africa and Asia (European nations were excluded) as an example of the type of unity that would be necessary in order for African-Americans to be effective in organizing a successful movement in the U.S.\textsuperscript{21} During his speech, Malcolm continued his critique of the CRM’s goal of integration and ridiculed African-Americans for referring to the CRM as a revolution because history had shown that there is no such thing as a non-violent revolution. According to Malcolm, revolution was about gaining control over some land, and, within that context, Malcolm began to refer to a black revolution in which African-Americans were connected to a worldwide struggle against European oppression.

Malcolm had been very critical of civil rights leaders during his days in the NOI, and now he had to work hard to overcome the bitterness his words had created between himself and those leaders, for now he sought to engage them as comrades in the same battle. At the time of Malcolm’s split with the NOI, many civil rights leaders were in the process of re-evaluating their own position concerning integration and non-violence and the nationalist alternatives of black independence and the right to self-defense. One of the most important events that took place to bring Malcolm and civil rights leaders closer to joining ranks was an encounter that the leadership of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) had with Malcolm while touring Africa in 1964.\textsuperscript{22}
John Lewis and Donald Harris of SNCC met with Malcolm by chance in Kenya as the three men were crossing paths on their tour of Africa. Malcolm had already visited eleven countries, many of which Lewis and Harris were also planning to visit. During their meeting, Malcolm expressed the importance of SNCC being in Africa as a necessary step toward gaining the support of African leaders and governments for the “human rights struggle” in the U.S. Malcolm informed the two men that African leaders and people were in full support of the “Freedom Movement” in the U.S., “…but they will not tolerate factionalism or support particular groups or organizations within the movement as a whole.”\(^2^3\) Lewis and Harris were very impressed with Malcolm and his ideas and soon realized, as they toured other African nations, that Malcolm’s ideas had a great impact in Africa and on African perceptions of the CRM and its leaders. Malcolm’s impact was so phenomenal, in fact, that Lewis began to notice that civil rights leaders and organizations were evaluated according to ‘how much’ their ideas and activities were in line with Malcolm’s.\(^2^4\) Conversations between the SNCC delegation and African statesmen and dignitaries also provided a stimulus of change within the civil rights organization, particularly involving the development of relations between Africans in the U.S. and Africans on the continent. SNCC immediately established two positions to develop correspondence and relations with African nations.\(^2^5\)

Malcolm’s ideas and commentary on the CRM and its leaders had a great deal to do with the development of nationalism among the masses of African-Americans and civil rights activists as well. Richard and Milton Henry (Imari and Gaiide Obadele), two
Detroit civil rights leaders, met Malcolm on two occasions during which Malcolm discussed with them the role of land as the primary goal of a revolution and the basis of independence. Imari and Gaide Obadele would later abandon the CRM to develop a nationalist agenda that eventually culminated in the formation of the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Africa. It was Malcolm’s analysis of the CRM, his nationalist plan, and his appeal to the masses that crowned him as the premiere leader of the nationalist movement. The accuracy of his analysis and nationalist agenda would be demonstrated by the plethora of nationalist organizations and leaders that implemented his ideas and plans, after his death.

Between the period of Malcolm’s initial split with the NOI and his assassination, nationalist ideas and programs were considered more and more as the solution to achieving the goals of freedom and liberation among young civil rights workers and leaders. The reason for this was Malcolm’s new capability to provide analysis and begin to develop strategic plans that would solve the problems that civil rights leaders were saying integration would solve. As a nationalist, Malcolm supported the development of black-owned and controlled institutions and organizations to meet the needs of African-American people. To this end, immediately after leaving the NOI, Malcolm founded Muslim Mosque Incorporated as a means of providing a vehicle for Muslims to become directly involved in what was a very powerful and potent political movement with nationalist capabilities. As Malcolm began to develop more as a nationalist, he recognized the need for a nationalist organization that was open to all African-
Americans, regardless of religion, and an organization that could serve as a unity council for all the various nationalist groups. With this in mind, Malcolm founded the Organization of African American Unity (OAAU), modeled after Kwame Nkrumah’s Organization of African Unity (OAU). Through the OAAU, Malcolm was able to shift the emphasis of the CRM from the goal of integration to a nationalist agenda that called for land and independence. Malcolm understood that the success of the nationalist movement depended upon the unity of black people and black organizations. His ideas on establishing unity within the movement among organizations, as well as continuing to provide analysis of the movement’s goals and the means to achieve liberation in the U.S., firmly placed Malcolm as the undisputed leader of the nationalist community.

Malcolm’s analysis, along with the experiences of the CRM, would eventually lead many civil rights activists to take strong nationalist positions after his death. The membership of SNCC was noticeably inspired by the ideas of Malcolm. Malcolm’s ideas concerning the development of an independent political party was put into action with the founding of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in Alabama in 1965. SNCC had decided to develop the nationalist goal of an all-black independent political party as a means of gaining political power and control of the black belt region of the south. One year later, in 1966, SNCC would expel all of its white members and formally adopt the nationalist position of gaining independence through political control of the land black people occupied in the rural south. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) adopted the same position and applied it to the northern urban centers where African-Americans
represented a large percentage of the population.\textsuperscript{30} The expulsion of whites from membership and leadership positions within both SNCC and CORE represented a decisive move to a more nationalist position by both organizations.

Nationalist ideas were gaining popularity among urban youth and black college students in the midst of the height of the CRM, which culminated with the 1963 March on Washington. After the passage of the 1964 Voting Rights Act, blacks in the north and on the west coast began to realize that their condition of oppression was not going to change as a result of new laws. The issues of police brutality, inadequate and unsafe housing, inferior education, high unemployment, and economic exploitation remained major issues facing African-Americans living in northern and western cities.\textsuperscript{31} The mood among the grassroots segments of the black community was that the civil rights leaders and the state and federal governments would not do anything to bring about a positive change, and this resulted in an explosion of summer rebellions for a period of seven years.\textsuperscript{32} Beginning with the Harlem riot in July 1964, the U.S. would experience massive rebellions every summer in its major urban centers through 1970. The most notable rebellions were those in Watts in 1965, Cleveland in 1966, and Detroit and Newark in 1967. Blacks in Detroit and Cleveland were able to combat local police forces effectively enough to have the governors of the two states call in the National Guard.\textsuperscript{33} This, in turn, suggested to revolutionary nationalists that a successful sustained guerilla war was possible against the United States.
In many instances, the outbreak of the rebellions was attributed to pent-up frustrations created by conditions of poverty and “trigger” incidents that served as sparks to ignite African-American frustrations into violent revolts against the established authority of the police and white-owned businesses operating in black communities. Ultimately, the rebellions reflected a conscious effort among African-Americans to be in control of their own communities in order to have greater control over their own lives to bring an end to their oppression. The revolts were an attack against oppression in the black community. Many people anguished over the idea that it was counter productive for blacks to burn and destroy their own communities, but blacks who lived in those communities understood that, in terms of power and control, the communities were not theirs, even though they lived there. The property and majority of businesses and houses were owned by whites and Jews, and it was clear that the police were there to protect white and Jewish interests and maintain the status quo.\textsuperscript{34}

The revolts also reflected a clean break from the ideology of the established civil rights leadership. In particular, young African-Americans had grown impatient with the slow progress, or no progress, of the CRM while continuing to endure the harsh reality of poverty and oppression on a daily basis. Community control and aspirations for black independence replaced marching, voting, and sit-ins; the possibility—indeed the need—for a revolution began to be discussed earnestly among nationalist leaders. Max Stanford, leader of the Revolutionary Action Movement, met regularly with Malcolm on his visits to Harlem.\textsuperscript{35} Robert Williams, although exiled in Cuba at the time, continued to
endorse urban guerilla warfare as a means to give African-Americans some bargaining power toward their liberation. By 1963, Malcolm began to speak more about revolution as he saw it in contrast to what was being called a “Negro Revolution” in the U.S. Malcolm argued that a revolution was bloody and meant to upset everything in its path. Malcolm also discussed guerilla warfare as a viable means to check the violence of white racists, and as a means of neutralizing the police and military power of the state because, as was being proven in Vietnam, whites were unsuccessful in guerrilla warfare. The circumstances of the Watts, Detroit, and Cleveland riots proved Malcolm correct.

The use of violence as a means and right of self-defense was unacceptable to the established civil rights leadership and their white allies. It was foolish and outright suicidal, according to civil rights leaders, for African-Americans to consider the possibility of using violence to bring an end to their oppression. By 1963, African-Americans living in urban centers were neither willing to tolerate white racist violence nor accept the doctrine of non-violence as the most effective method to combat racist violence. Due to the weakening position of integration and non-violence as accepted by the masses of African-Americans, civil rights leaders found themselves out of place as leaders of the masses of blacks revolting in northern and western cities. From this perspective, Malcolm and the nationalists were not able to offer much leadership either, due to a lack of organization and resources within the nationalist movement. Malcolm’s analysis and critique of the CRM and his theory about revolution and guerilla warfare served as an ideological foundation, but outside of the Revolutionary Action Movement
(RAM) group, there was no organizational support offered to lead the revolts and no allocation of resources provided to sustain a protracted guerilla war in the urban centers.

Along with Malcolm’s “philosophy,” the decline of influence among civil rights leaders, and the rebellions of the era, another event took place that solidified and vocalized the transformation of the CRM into a nationalist movement. In June 1966, at a continuation of the James Meredith March in Mississippi, Willie Ricks, of SNCC, began to shout the phrase “Black Power” with his fist being thrust into the air. The mood of the march was extremely militant to begin with, as a result of it being called to continue the march of James Meredith, who had been shot during an earlier march through Mississippi. In chanting the slogan, “Black Power,” which was taken up by Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Toure) in his address to marchers, the tone and intention of the activists changed. The slogan “Black Power” was never identified with or limited to one specific ideology, but it ultimately shifted the goal of the CRM from integration to a more nationalist position of self-determination, independence, and control over the liberation movement of black people. Evidence of this shift was distinctly made when SNCC decided to form the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO)—which became an all-black independent political party after SNCC expelled all of its white members one year later. A month after the founding of the LCFO, the “Black Power” slogan would be heard as a rallying cry in the Chicago and Cleveland rebellions. The masses of black people, particularly young African-Americans, wanted to change the condition of black people immediately. They were not willing to wait for the fruits of long-term integration,
and black nationalism became the answer that would eliminate oppression by ultimately giving black people an ideological and practical outline of the means to establish a nation of their own. The foundation for a nationalist movement had been laid and had all the potential to be successful, but there was one very important thing missing—the leadership of Malcolm X.

When Malcolm was killed, the head of the nationalist movement was severed from the body. Malcolm was from the tradition of the old vanguard of black nationalists who were rooted in the tradition of Marcus Garvey and knew that the success of black nationalism was dependent upon the unity of black people. Malcolm was that unifying force that the younger generation of black nationalists admired and respected. Malcolm was also a statesman who had traveled to Africa to represent the struggle for black liberation and gained support for black liberation among African and Arab leaders. He had been able to bridge the gap and dialogue with civil rights leaders, and was a hero to the grassroots masses and among black Muslims and Christians in America. He was truly a unifying force among the young African-American teenagers and young adults. Without his physical presence, there was no general to lead the army and solidify the movement. At a time when black people were willing to fight for their freedom and independence, the man who inspired them, provided the ideological framework, and the one they believed most capable of leading them, was now dead. In a very profound and stifling way, the death of Malcolm crippled the nationalist movement irreparably.
Malcolm X was also a strategist, and, for many black nationalist organizations, his words, plans, and actions served as the cornerstone of their missions, goals, and objectives. However, without his leadership and unifying presence many aspiring black nationalists of the 1960’s focused on one dimension of Malcolm’s total agenda for black liberation, which lead to the factionalism that he warned against. The year 1966, one year after Malcolm’s death, would prove to be a year of major nationalist growth, organizing, and activism. The birth of SNCC and CORE as all-black organizations, along with the formation of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and the emergence of the Black Arts Movement propelled black nationalist sentiment and programs to the forefront of the black political, economic, and cultural agenda.
CHAPTER 5

BLACK NATIONALIST DEVELOPMENT DURING THE BLACK POWER ERA

SNCC developed the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in Alabama, ran a slate of candidates in the 1966 county elections, but failed to win any of the positions as county officials. SNCC then changed course and moved its headquarters to Chicago, Illinois to expand its program of establishing political control of African-American communities by black people. CORE adopted the same approach toward achieving economic control of African-American communities, envisioning the creation of a black capitalist structure that would lead to economic independence and control of resources in the African-American community. Also during this period, SNCC began to incorporate African cultural standards as a means of developing an African value system in the U.S. This was part of a cultural renaissance that was taking place among African-Americans to develop and institute a new identity and new value system among African-Americans that was distinct from Euro-American culture and values. SNCC specifically began to speak of the need for blacks to develop religion and customs that reflected their African heritage.
This was an added dimension to the overall nationalist movement. Before, cultural nationalism was linked to the religious nationalism of the NOI and the Moorish American Science Temple. Both groups adopted variations of Islamic culture that was identifiable as distinct from traditional western culture practiced by African-Americans. The new cultural nationalism focused more on incorporating traditional West African and some East African cultural practices, such as, clothing, dance, language, religion, and history. SNCC members had moved toward a Pan-African nationalist view and spearheaded the injection of cultural nationalism into the main political thrust of revolutionary nationalism. Maulana Karenga, founder of the United Slaves (US), was a leader along with Amiri Baraka in the development of cultural nationalism as a major component to the overall nationalist movement.

Cultural nationalism is a philosophy of nationalism that advocates African-Americans as a distinct cultural group with a distinct system of values, morals, and ethics, thereby elevating blacks in the United States to the status of a "Nation within a Nation." Cultural nationalists also believed, as a result of African-Americans' experience through enslavement and other forms of oppression for over 400 years, that African cultural values had been severely compromised and, in some cases, totally disregarded by African-Americans who had acculturated to Euro-American values. Cultural nationalists therefore believed it would be necessary to establish and institute a renewed system of African cultural standards and values among black people if they were to develop of a politically sovereign state. Maulana Karenga, based in Los Angeles, California, developed an extensive set of theories and practices, known as Kawaida, that
were meant to aid in the transformation of Africans in the United States from a mostly western-white, worldview-centered people to an African, worldview-centered people with their liberation and the liberation of all African people as their goal.

On the east coast, Amiri Baraka, along with Harold Cruse, Larry Neal, Max Stanford, and Askia Muhammad Toure, were instrumental in the development of the Black Arts Movement (BAM). The BAM began with the establishment of the Black Arts Repertory Theatre-School in Harlem. The BAM was initiated by Baraka and the Theater-School in order to produce plays, teach African history, and introduce continental African customs and languages to African-Americans. The movement expanded into the political arena when Baraka invited Kwame Toure to speak at the Black Arts Festival in Newark, New Jersey, in 1966. The cultural renaissance spread quickly through the BAM and over 800 African-American theatres and cultural centers were established in African-American communities throughout the U.S.

The BAM, spearheaded by those promoting the values of Kawaita, sparked the Black Power Conferences of 1967-1971. In 1967, Baraka and Karenga organized the Black Power Conference in Newark, which took place in the aftermath of the rebellion that had taken place only a few weeks prior to the conference. The conference brought together over 4000 delegates and individuals to discuss the formation, goals, and strategies of the Black Power Movement (BPM), which was decisively a nationalist movement with regard to its focus on self-determination, unity, cultural identity, and political autonomy.
The year 1966 also witnessed the emergence of the revolutionary nationalist organization, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP). The BPP clearly defined itself as a nationalist organization by its tenth point in the organization’s platform: “We want land, bread, housing, education . . . And our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the Black Colony . . . for the purpose of determining the will of black people as to their national destiny.” The platform of the BPP outlined the organization’s goals, but it was their means that gained them notoriety as one of the most militant and dangerous of all nationalist organizations, according to J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI.\(^8\)

The show of force and success the Oakland BPP had in combating police brutality and establishing programs to meet the needs of the African-American community gained the BPP national exposure, and soon chapters were established in Los Angeles, Houston, and Chicago. The east coast Black Panthers, founded by SNCC, consented to the consolidation of all Black Panther organizations to form one BPP headed by Huey Newton, Bobby Seale, and Eldridge Cleaver.\(^9\)

As revolutionary nationalists, BPP members acted as the vanguard soldiers in the struggle to defeat racism, capitalism, and imperialism as the basic components of the American establishment that held blacks in an oppressed condition. As with most nationalist organizations of the period, they adopted socialism as the economic alternative to capitalism. Racism would be eliminated as a consequence of an international proletarian class struggle of the workers against the capitalist interest of imperialist European nations, America being one of them.
The east coast chapters of the BPP were not as confrontational and opposed to the cultural nationalists of the BAM and Maulana Karenga's US. Huey Newton and the west coast Panthers viewed cultural nationalism as inconsistent with the marxist interpretation of a proletarian class struggle against capitalism and imperialism, in which nationality was treated as irrelevant. Newton argued that a return to 11th century West African traditions and customs was pointless with regard to the state of international affairs and revolutionary goals. After being released from prison for the shooting death of an Oakland police officer, Huey Newton and the west coast Panthers began to move away from the nationalist demand of a U.N. supervised plebiscite toward the ideology of inter-communalism, which focused more on the development of coalitions with socialist and communist groups to defeat American and European imperialism. In 1969, the east coast BPP and the west coast BPP split over ideological and internal friction between the leadership.10

The east coast BPP maintained its endorsement of cultural nationalist objectives as being necessary to the complete liberation of African people. The wearing of African garments, speaking Swahili and Yoruba, adoption of African names, and forming alliances with continental Africans remained a part of their nationalist programs. They simultaneously prepared for and advocated the use of guerilla warfare against American police and military forces.

In the midst of the height of the BPP's popularity and growth in the movement, another revolutionary nationalist organization was being formed. After the Detroit
rebellion in 1967, the leadership of the civil rights organization Group on Advanced Leadership (GOAL) decided to dissolve the organization and some of its members, including Imari and Gaidi Obadele formed the Malcolm X Society, which hosted the Black Government Conference of 1968 to pursue the development of a national body.\(^{11}\) The national body would serve to organize African-American people and all nationalist organizations into a provisional government, for the purpose of establishing an independent and sovereign nation for African-Americans in the U.S. As a national body, nationalists of every ideological persuasion were represented. Cultural and revolutionary nationalism were integrated to represent the internal and external means that would lead to complete liberation of African-American people, while maintaining a commitment to the larger international issue of a Third World revolution against imperialism and colonialism. The national body came to be known as the Provisional Government - Republic of New Africa (PGRNA).

The ideology of the PGRNA was revolutionary in that it sought to wage an armed struggle against U.S. police and military forces as a necessary means to achieve the liberation of black people. Additionally, it articulated the necessity of land upon which a nation could be built.\(^{12}\) Unlike the BPP, the land issue was central to the nationalist ideology of the PGRNA. Based on Malcolm’s philosophy that “... land is the basis of independence ...,” the revolution must, then, include the control of land. The founding of the PGRNA represented the fullest expression of the continuation of a nationalist tradition that has roots as far back as the maroon communities. By maintaining a commitment to culture and revolution as the means to effect African-American liberation,
the PGRNA set out a plan not only to establish a separate and sovereign nation for black people, but also to guarantee its “Africaness” by developing a cultural and economic system of values that would transform African-Americans into a New African people.

On April 4, 1968 a few days after the RNA was founded, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. Although Dr. King was not a nationalist and, in fact, represented the ideology of integration and assimilation, his death destroyed the last hope that many African-Americans had for achieving the goals of the CRM. Riots continued to break out all over the country, and the objectives and goals of a nationalist agenda became the main political thrust for many African-Americans. The RNA set out to build the nation that nationalist supporters and leaders had been speaking of for years. Indeed, thirteen years of fighting for civil rights and seeing very little progress had only fueled what Malcolm had been saying all along—“It’s Nation time.” The RNA began the work of transforming this mere slogan into practice.

To turn this slogan into a reality, on March 29-31, 1968, over 500 nationalists from around the country, representing various organizations and themselves individually, gathered at New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan, to decide on the issue of independence for African-Americans in the United States. On March 31, 1968, the delegates elected three officers to a provisional government, named the new nation, created laws, determined the national territory and declared the nation independent (although subjugated and in need of liberation from U.S. authority and jurisdiction). Of the five hundred delegates at the convention, one hundred signed the declaration of independence.
The history of the Provisional Government-Republic New Africa serves as the culmination of nationalist desires to put into practice the rhetoric that had been spoken by its leaders and supporters for several years. As a guideline to follow in their quest to found an independent nation the PGRNA used a booklet written by Imari Obadele titled, *War in America- The Malcolm X Doctrine*. In the booklet, Obadele outlines the theoretical-legal right that African-Americans have to found their own nation. The position taken by the PGRNA was that it was not only the desire of African-Americans to have their own nation, but it was a right that had been denied them since the end of the Civil War. According to the argument put forth by Obadele, African-Americans were never given an opportunity after their emancipation from enslavement to make an informed decision concerning their national status. As a distinct ethnic and cultural group which had been released from bondage, African-Americans, based upon international law, should have had the right to: 1) decide whether they wanted to form their own nation on American soil; 2) return to Africa at the expense of the United States government; 3) be transported to another nation that was agreeable to their immigration; or 4) become United States citizens. Because the United States government had denied African-Americans the right to make an informed decision with regards to their national destiny, African-Americans were not legal citizens of the U.S. and still had the right to determine their national destiny by holding a plebiscite vote.

In determining the location of the new black nation the PGRNA chose the five southern states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Their
selection was also based upon a standard set by international law. According to
international law, if a people have lived traditionally on an area land, if they have worked
and developed it, and if they have fought to defend it and stay upon it, that land is
theirs.15 Historically, African-Americans had met all of the above criteria for claiming
those particular five southern territories.

The PGRNA laid out a well organized blueprint of how the new government was
to function in order to accomplish its goal of bringing to fruition an independent black
country-state. The three offices of President, Vice-President, and Minister of Information
were elected at the founding convention, with Robert Williams serving as President in
Exile, Gaidi Obadele as Vice-President, and Imari Obadele as Minister of Information.
Several cabinet-positions were created and were assigned at a later date. Among those
positions were Ministers of Culture, Education, Finance and Treasury, Defense, State and
Along with these positions, territories where the PGRNA was active were given the title
of Consulates or Government Centers. Consulates were defined as territories that existed
outside the national territory and were located in cities throughout the country (i.e., New
York, Washington D.C., Chicago, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, San
Francisco, Baltimore) and Government Centers were territories located within the
national territory (i.e., New Orleans, Jackson).

After the government structure had been established the PGRNA went about the
work of putting its program into action. The basic plan was twofold. The first thing the
PGRNA set out to accomplish was to inform African-Americans that they were a nation
in fact and had their own government. The PGRNA took on the responsibility of
educating African-Americans throughout the country and preparing for an internationally
supervised plebiscite vote to determine the will of African-Americans with regard to their
national destiny. The PGRNA believed that African-Americans would overwhelmingly
support the PGRNA as their government of choice versus remaining under the
government of the U.S. based upon historical and then present conditions of oppression.

The second thing to be done was to prepare to liberate the national territory itself.
The strategy for liberating the national territory was also outlined in Imari Obadele's *War
in America: the Malcolm X Doctrine*. Imari outlines a process made up of eight
components. The first component is a holding action in the north. Through the use of
underground urban guerillas a situation would be created in which the United States
would be forced to call on its military forces to police urban centers. At the same time,
African-Americans sympathetic to the cause of the PGRNA would be supporting the
PGRNA with money, information, political pressure, and people.

While urban guerillas in the north are forcing the United States to use its military
personnel to police the cities, the PGRNA would be carrying out a major drive to win
African-American control of Mississippi. This would involve a campaign to win the
consent of African-Americans in Mississippi to acknowledge the PGRNA as their chosen
government and take their consent from the United States government. The focus would
be on Mississippi first, but similar campaigns would be carried out in South Carolina,
Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana.

Also in the south, the PGRNA would be prepared to wage "A vigorous military
campaign based on defense of property purchased by the PGRNA and defense of land over which the RNA claims sovereignty by reason of black people: a) having lived traditionally on the land and worked it; b) having fought for the land and clung to it; and c) having taken their consent from the United States and given it to the Republic of New Africa. The fourth aspect of the strategy involved gaining the recognition of the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of New Africa by the United Nations (UN). The PGRNA would also pursue the right of African-Americans to reparations, including money, machinery, factories, laboratories, and land. Coinciding with the recognition of the RNA by the UN is the cultivation of support and the building of alliances with the nations of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and South America. The PGRNA was particularly interested in forming an alliance with China due to their armed-nuclear capabilities, as a preventative against U.S. attacks on the RNA.

Once the first five objectives had been achieved, the PGRNA would set about the business of governing the nation in fact, as opposed to provisionally. The first step would have been to institute state power to improve education, end discrimination and unemployment, and begin to operate industries that would meet the needs of the people and the nation as a whole. The next step would be to create economic unions and a common market between the RNA, Caribbean nations, Africa, Asia, and South America. The creation of an economic union with other friendly nations would then take on the development of economic-political alliances that would form a federation linking the RNA with the black-controlled nations of the Caribbean. This eight step outline served as the guide for the pursuit of independent statehood for the PGRNA and gave purpose to
its governmental structure. Shortly after the founding of the PGRNA the plan was put into action. The events that unfolded after the founding of the PGRNA did indeed test the theory, philosophy, and ideology of this ambitious enterprise into independent statehood for African-Americans.

As one may suspect, during the first three to four years of the existence of the RNA there was a great deal of conflict and controversy surrounding the young government. To finalize their government structure Imari and Gaidi Obadele met with Robert Williams in Dar ES-Salaam, Tanzania in June 1968, to confirm his acceptance of the position as President. Williams accepted the presidency at a press conference held in a Tanzanian hotel. Just as significant as the meeting with Williams, there was an informal meeting that took place between the three RNA officials and several foreign dignitaries. Among those at the meeting were Tanzanian Minister Mohammad Babu and other Tanzanian officials, members of various African liberation fronts, the Sudanese Ambassador, a Chinese attaché, and the U.S.S.R. First Secretary. This was a huge step for the RNA in developing its diplomatic and foreign relations.

However, the tenure of Williams as president was short lived. In October of 1969 the PGRNA had worked to return Williams to the U.S. so that he could begin working as an active president. Williams, however, spent the majority of his time and energy fighting extradition back to North Carolina to face charges for the 1959 kidnapping he had been accused of, which resulted in his self-imposed exile. Williams resigned as president of the RNA by December of the same year. Very little changed with the resignation of Williams, except that Gaidi Obadele became the president and Imari
Obadele became vice-president.

In its attempt to gain recognition as a legitimate government the PGRNA submitted a letter to the U.S. State Department on May 24, 1968, advising the Johnson administration of the existence of the RNA and requesting a meeting with U.S. government officials to discuss reparations in the form of land and money. The U.S. government never made a formal reply. Along those same lines in May of 1969, Gaidi Obadele, Imari Obadele, and Adekoya Akinwole (a.k.a. Herman Ferguson), held a meeting with U.S. Congress Representatives John Conyers, Shirley Chisolm, Augustus Hawkins, Robert Nix, and a representative from Adam Clayton Powell’s office to request negotiations with the U.S. government for reparations.19 The result of that meeting led to John Conyers serving as a liaison for the RNA to the U.S. government. Conyers was the state representative from the Detroit area and had defeated Gaidi Obadele in the 1964 election for state representative.20 Conyers’ familiarity with Gaidi and the RNA provided the RNA with some ability to have their demands heard by U.S. government officials. In 1971, Conyers submitted a request to the U.S. Attorney General for a meeting with the RNA, but never received a response. No U.S. president ever made a formal reply to any RNA request for negotiations.

During the same year, on March 29, 1969, the RNA held its first annual convention at New Bethel Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan. As the convention was coming to a close, a shootout took place between the Black Legionnaires (the security and para-military force of the RNA) and officers of the Detroit Police Department. During the confrontation, one police officer was killed and another wounded. None of
the participants at the convention were killed, but four persons were injured.\textsuperscript{21}

According to the newspaper reports, the two officers, Michael Czapski and Richard Worobec, were on a routine patrol of the area when they noticed several men carrying rifles. As the officers pulled up to the men (Black Legionnaires) to investigate the open carrying of weapons, a shootout began. Officer Worobec stated that he and Officer Czapski were fired upon first by the Black Legionnaires, but this was not confirmed based on the evidence, which included a police recording of the entire incident beginning with the initial observation by the officers of several black men carrying open arms.\textsuperscript{22}

After the killing and wounding of Officers Czapski and Worobec, respectively, Officer Worobec called in for backup. As other Detroit policemen entered onto the scene, they began to fire a total of 84 rounds into the church. Those attending the convention were able to protect themselves by hiding underneath the pews. After the police stopped shooting, they raided the church and arrested everyone present, a total of 147 people.\textsuperscript{23}

Gaidi Obadele had left the convention before the shootout occurred, but upon hearing about it and the subsequent arrest of those attending the convention, he contacted State Representative James Del Rio. Representative Del Rio contacted Reverend Franklin and the two men notified Judge George Crockett that the police had raided New Bethel Baptist Church and arrested 147 people after a shootout between police and PGRNA Black Legionnaires.\textsuperscript{24} Judge Crockett acted immediately, and what he was able to accomplish was unprecedented.
Upon arriving at the police precinct, Judge Crockett set up an impromptu courtroom. He found the police in violation of the constitutional rights of the men and women they arrested. The police had not so much as even created a list of the persons they had arrested, no one had been formally charged with any crime, they were questioning the people and performing nitrate tests without giving anyone their right to have legal counsel present during questioning or testing procedures. The police had also been holding the people for more than seven hours without formally processing them, which was a violation of their constitutional rights. In accordance with the law and his judicial powers, Judge Crockett released all but two of the persons arrested, which the police had formally charged.

Judge Crockett received a great deal of criticism from the Detroit Police Department and several public officials for his actions, but there was nothing anyone could do about it. He was within his full authority to protect the constitutional rights of the persons being held illegally by the police. Judge Crockett had ordered the police either to charge the people with a crime or release them. The police were only able to justify charging two men, and Judge Crockett subsequently released 145 people. The two men charged with the shooting death and wounding of Officers Czapski and Worobec went to trial and were acquitted.

The significance of the New Bethel Baptist Church incident in the development of the RNA is very important. The support that the RNA and its citizens received from black city and state government officials revealed a network of resources that could be called upon to support the new government. It also displayed the level of consensus
among many African-Americans that the nationalist objectives of self-determination land, and independence were not only grassroots based, but the black middle class and professionals also supported these same ideals to some degree, if not by words, at least in action.

In November of 1969, a rift developed within the leadership of the RNA. There was some disagreement concerning the political and military development of the young government. Imari was pushing for the RNA to take decisive action toward moving the government and its operations into the national territory, the south. Imari also wanted to build the Black Legionnaires into a 100,000 defensive force. These two points were not agreeable to Gaidi and several other cabinet members, who held the opinion that the RNA should continue to function primarily in the north. Gaidi did not support the building of a large military force because he believed it would draw too much attention to the RNA as a violent threat to the U.S. and give the U.S. government a reason to attack the RNA before the young government was capable of responding and defeating such an attack. Gaidi and other cabinet members were also opposed to moving the headquarters of the RNA to Mississippi, arguing that it was premature and that there was not enough support in the south for the RNA to be effective in meeting its goals and overall objective.

Gaidi’s position had a great deal of merit. The RNA had not been in existence for very long and they needed to build a firm foundation of financial and political support and achieve recognition as a government prior to moving into the south. The political and financial base of the RNA was in Detroit and other northern and western urban
centers (i.e., New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, D.C., Los Angeles, and San Francisco). There was no base support established in the south and black nationalism had not become a household word among black southerners as it had among blacks in the north. Gaidi was interested in continuing to build on the established northern support for black nationalism, which would eventually lead to a move into the south at a later date. Based on the events and outcome of the “shootout” with the Detroit police, there was strong evidence to support Gaidi’s position. The RNA had support in Detroit from influential black politicians, a powerful judge, well known ministers, and local citizens. Simply put, the RNA was strongly supported in Detroit. The financial support that the RNA could count on to buy bonds and land certificates would come from other black nationalists who were primarily based in the north, as opposed to the south where a strong nationalist movement had yet to be developed. The urban north and west was the hot bed of African-American discontent as displayed by the number of riots that took place in many of the cities where the RNA established consulates (i.e., New York, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, D.C., and Philadelphia). It was from the urban north and west that the RNA found the majority of its citizens and supporters; it was logical, then, that the majority of the financial and political support would come from these same areas.

Imari and those who supported moving south argued that the government needed to function within the national territory. There was a lot of work to be done to win the consent of blacks in the south to acknowledge the RNA as their government of choice. The RNA had specifically identified the five southern states of South Carolina, Georgia,
Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana as the home of the new black nation, although it was subjugated territory. The primary work to be done concerning winning the consent of the people was in the south. Preparing to hold a plebiscite, educating people about the RNA, and gaining their support could not be done effectively from Detroit, New York, or Los Angeles. The work had to be done in the national territory in order for the RNA to build a base of support in the south to fulfill its basic objective of building an independent nation in the south. It was a basic assumption of the RNA that the majority of black people, particularly in the south, would choose to support their own government versus continuing to live under the oppressive conditions imposed upon them by the U.S. at all levels of government. That assumption needed to be tested and worked out by practical and tangible means. Imari was pushing for the RNA to become a government in fact, which meant governorship over a territory for black people. He and his supporters believed that they were ready to take a more direct approach to make the RNA a functional reality.

The disagreement resulted in Gaidi suspending Imari from his post as Regional Vice President and Minister of the Interior. Although the seriousness of the disagreement was played down by Imari in the local newspaper in which he stated, "It happens in governments all the time . . . It's a normal procedure. Cabinet members have been suspended before but just because Gaidi is my brother it has been made to appear there is a rift between us." The "rift" led to the RNA forming a Constitutional Committee which held an emergency election in January 1970 to elect a new president and cabinet. Imari Obadele won the election.
The rest of 1970 was spent laying the initial groundwork to begin organizing and
developing the infrastructure to begin government work. In April, the newly elected
RNA officials met at Cornell University to officially inaugurate Imari Obadele and his
cabinet members. In May, Imari moved the government operations to New Orleans and
by August, the headquarters was moved to Jackson, Mississippi. The move into
Mississippi was accompanied by a national convention and press conference in which
Imari announced, “that [the] RNA is organizing [a] peaceful plebiscite and desires
Jackson and U.S. officials to cooperate and participate.”31 At the time, there was no
response given by the U.S. government or the state of Mississippi concerning the
announcement or move of the RNA into Mississippi. The RNA purchased homes, set up
an office, and began the work of informing the black people of Jackson about the RNA
and its program to establish an independent black nation.

One of the first major projects that the RNA worked on was the purchase of
twenty acres of land from a local black farmer named Lofton Mason, in January 1971.
The land was located in Hinds County about 30 miles outside of Jackson.32 The land was
earmarked for the development of the first new community proposed by the RNA, which
was projected to support 500 families on the land site by September of that year. By
May, Mr. Mason had changed his mind about selling the land to the RNA. According to
the Michigan Chronicle, Mr. Mason said, “... RNA officials agreed to pay him $25,000
for the 20 acre area near Brownsville, then failed to come up with the money. He also
charged that RNA members illegally re-entered his property last Thursday night armed
with guns after he had posted ‘no trespassing’ signs and padlocked a gate leading to the
Imari responded to Mr. Mason's statements in the New York Times claiming, “... that Mason was pressured into backing down on the sale by white men who said they were FBI agents... They told Mason they would burn his house, kill his cattle and poison his water if he went through with the sale to us.” Imari’s statements would later be proven to be correct via the FBI's own documentation of their activities to disrupt any attempt by the RNA to secure land in Mississippi. The deal with Mr. Mason was only one of several attempts by the RNA to obtain land in the black belt.

Concerning the Mason land dispute, warrants were issued by Mississippi Attorney General P.F. Sumner for the arrest of RNA citizens after Mason filed trespassing charges against the RNA. Sumner, along with more than a dozen sheriffs, attempted to make the arrests on the property; however, when they arrived, they found that it had been abandoned. Before leaving, Sumner posted a court order, “... forbidding the RNA to operate in the state or ‘engage’ in any activities that would threaten a breach of the peace.” Sumner called the RNA “dangerous” and a “threat to peace in Mississippi” and stated that the RNA “... will be out of the state in a few days or they will be in jail.” Later that month, Imari was served a Mississippi Court injunction by District Attorney Jack Travis concerning the land dispute which forbade the RNA from entering onto the land.

The RNA did not file counter charges against Mr. Mason with the local court, but instead convened their own legislative body, called the People’s Center Council, to resolve the dispute. In July, The People’s Center Council organized a People’s Court in Hinds County to review the transaction between Mr. Mason and the RNA. The People’s
Court “. . . found that Mason and the F.B.I. were the real swindlers and that they attempted to cheat not only the Provisional Government, but all black people.” The RNA used the land dispute with Mr. Mason as a practical teaching tool to educate the local black community concerning their right to independence and identifying the Jackson-Delta area of Mississippi as a zone of disputed sovereignty that required a UN-supervised plebiscite.

After being served the injunction by the District Attorney, Imari wrote a letter requesting to meet with Attorney General Sumner to negotiate the terms and conditions of the RNA. Sumner replied indirectly to Imari’s request via a local newspaper, by stating that he had no authority to negotiate with the RNA and referred the matter to the U.S. State Department. Sumner stated in a letter written to the U.S. Attorney General that he viewed the RNA’s presence in Mississippi as an “invasion” and an “armed insurrection.” Imari tried to assure Jack Travis and Sumner that the RNA’s work in Mississippi was peaceful and legal, emphasizing that the goals of the RNA were to organize a supervised plebiscite that would allow black people in Mississippi to choose their national destiny and to hold a reparations election. Although the RNA tried to pursue their objectives in a non-confrontational manner, it would become obvious that the state of Mississippi and the federal government viewed the RNA as a threat, both politically and militarily.

The RNA continued to make advances in establishing themselves as a government entity in the state of Mississippi. In June, a permanent headquarters and presidential residence was established at 1148 Lewis Street in Jackson. Three Jackson
neighborhoods had been organized and "reparations captains" had been elected. The RNA held marriage ceremonies for its citizens, taxes were being collected, and there was a strong sense of support from the local black community. Things did not continue to go smoothly much longer. In August 1971, the RNA was involved in a full-blown attack by the state of Mississippi and the FBI. The outcome of the attack was devastating to the RNA’s ability to move forward, but also showed the strength and commitment that the RNA had to overcome extreme challenges and remain focused on the ultimate goal of independence.

On August 18, 1971, at approximately 6:30 a.m., the Jackson Police Department and the FBI arrived in riot gear and a tank in front of RNA headquarters at 1148 Lewis St. to serve three arrest warrants on RNA citizens. Using a bullhorn, the police made the announcement for everyone in the house to come out. There were seven RNA citizens asleep in the house. The police and FBI waited seventy-five seconds, and when no one exited the house, the police began to fire tear gas into the house. The citizens inside the house then began to shoot at the police and FBI. A shootout ensued that lasted for twenty minutes. At the end of the shooting, Addis Ababa "... squat walks out under the three foot elevation... calling Hold your fire! Hold your fire! We’re coming out," and then all seven RNA citizens exited from underneath the side of the house. One police officer (Lt. Skinner) was killed from a gun shot to the head and one police officer was injured, along with a FBI agent. The seven RNA citizens were immediately placed under arrest. The police and FBI had also arrested four more RNA citizens at another residence a few blocks away at 1320 Lynch Street; among them was Imari Obadele, but
no shootout took place.\textsuperscript{42}

The police had arrested 11 RNA citizens who soon became known as the RNA-11. Their names and ages were: Imari Obadele, 41; Hekima Ana (a.k.a. Thomas Norman), 26; Aisha Salim (a.k.a. Brenda Blount), 25; Offagga Quadduss (a.k.a. Wayne James), 23; Addis Ababa (a.k.a. Denis Shillingford), 20; Chumaimari Fela Askadi (a.k.a. Robert Stalling), 19; Karim Hekima Omar Wadu Njabafudi (a.k.a. Larry Jackson), 15; Tamu Sana (a.k.a. Anne Lockhart), 24; Spade de Mau Mau (a.k.a. S.W. Alexander), 22; Tawwab Nkrumah (a.k.a. George L. Mathews), 27; and Njeri Quadduss (a.k.a. Toni Renee Austin), 21.\textsuperscript{43} All eleven citizens were charged with murder and treason against the state of Mississippi with a $25,000 bond for each person, even though four of those arrested were not present at the house where the shootout took place.

The RNA believed that the attack was a conspiracy to assassinate Imari Obadele, along with the other citizens of the RNA. The police and FBI acted under the guise of attempting to serve four arrest warrants, but no warrants were served before or after the shootout. Only one of the individuals who the police had a warrant for was present at either location. The police had served a warrant eleven days prior to the attack on August 7, which was accepted by Imari without any violence. The officer who served the warrant was never consulted by Lt. Skinner or FBI agent Lindberg, the two men who planned the attack on the RNA the night before on August 17. The overall procedure for serving the warrants was out of the ordinary, according to the testimony of two Jackson police officers with five and seven years experience, who had served warrants previously.\textsuperscript{44} A combined total of 35 police and FBI agents were involved in the process
of serving four arrest warrants at 6:30 a.m. According to an RNA document, “The Jackson Police and FBI came prepared for attack... They brought bullet proof vests, helmets, riot guns, gas masks, and service revolvers... They even brought an armored tank...”45 A key witness to the event was Ms. Christina Lundberg, a white school teacher who lived near the house where the shootout took place. Ms. Lundberg recorded the attack after being awakened by gunfire and testified that she thought the police were doing something wrong and had been intimidating individuals. When asked how by the prosecuting attorney she replied, “By a massive show of arms.”46

It was clear to the RNA that the police and FBI did not come to serve warrants, but to carry out a violent attack against the RNA that was intended to kill Imari and those at the 1148 Lewis Street address. According to RNA documents, “The FBI fired gas rockets into the two back bedrooms in the opening salvo of their [raid], and investigators later testified that the most bullet holes were found in the bedroom normally occupied by President Obadele.47 However, the bedroom had been occupied that night by the visiting RNA Midwest Vice President, Hekima Ana, and his wife Tamu.

The RNA had made preparations for just such an attack. They had dug a tunnel under the floor of the house that the citizens hid in during the shootout. This was significant because by 1971, black nationalists had witnessed several police attacks against the Black Panther Party, the most deadly being that against the Chicago-based BPP, in which Fred Hampton was brutally shot to death in 1969.48 The tunnel was created to provide protection and allow for RNA citizens to act offensively by firing back from a secure position. When the police served Imari the first warrant on August 7, New
African guards took it as a sign of a prelude to an attack, due to Jackson police and plain clothes whites keeping the house on Lewis Street surrounded for thirteen hours prior to serving the warrant. There was no evidence that the RNA planned to attack the Jackson Police, FBI, or any other government agency. After the arrest of the seven citizens at the shootout, the only weapon found in the house was a .35 caliber rifle that was later identified as the one fired by Hekima Ana that killed Officer Skinner and wounded the other police officer and FBI agent.\(^{49}\)

Initially, all eleven citizens of the RNA were taken to the Hinds County Jail in Jackson Mississippi, and charged with murder and treason against the state of Mississippi. In September, the RNA-11 were illegally transferred from the Hinds County jail to the State Penitentiary in Parchman, Mississippi. RNA attorneys were able to have the RNA-11 returned back to the Hinds County jail after filing a Habeas Corpus motion.\(^{50}\) The charges were later changed by the state to murder, waging war against the state of Mississippi, assault and battery, and receiving stolen property.\(^{51}\) In November, Mississippi and the federal government issued formal indictments against the RNA-11. Iniari, Hekima, Offaga, Addis, Chumaimari, Karim, Tamu, and Njeri were all charged with conspiracy to assault a federal officer, assault, and conspiracy to possess a machine gun.\(^{52}\)

The seven RNA citizens who were not released on bond remained in the Hinds County jail before going to trial. Hekima Ana was the first to go to trial in May 1972.\(^{53}\) He pleaded not guilty and testified that he and his wife Tamu Ana were awakened by another RNA citizen before the shooting began, and they feared for their lives and fired
in self-defense. The state prosecution presented evidence that Hekima’s palm print was found on the .35 caliber rifle that was used in the killing of Lt. Skinner. The jury found Hekima guilty on all charges, but did not agree on the death penalty, which by default mandated a life sentence. Offagga Quadduss and Karim Njabafudi also received life sentences by the state of Mississippi, and Addis Ababa was sentenced to two concurrent ten-year prison terms. They served their time at the Parchman State Penitentiary. Imari remained at the Hinds County Jail on bonds totaling $75,000 until April 1973, when he was released by the state on personal bond. One month later, he was ordered to stand trial on federal charges of conspiracy to assault federal officers, assault, and conspiracy to possess a machine gun.

After the initial arrest of the RNA-11, there were several other RNA citizens who were arrested and harassed by the police throughout the country. Following the arrest of the RNA-11, ten other RNA citizens were arrested within a two-week period after the shootout. The charges involved traffic violations, disorderly conduct, talking back to a police officer, possession of marijuana, and possession of a concealed weapon. One of the citizens arrested was RNA attorney William Miller who was released immediately after his arrest, but the other citizens were convicted on misdemeanor charges and spent between one and four months in jail. In September 1971, Imari Obadele II, Rayford Johnson, and Cicero Love (all RNA citizens) were arrested in Detroit for the murder of a black police officer. The three men were found guilty on murder charges, but the guilty verdict was thrown out by Judge George Crockett based on insufficient evidence. RNA citizens Kimani Kali, Kojo Kambui, and Gamba Kambui of Michigan were arrested and
found guilty of kidnapping around the same time. In November 1971, RNA citizens Fela Oluntunji, Macheo Sundiata, and Antar Rah were placed under arrest by police in Albuquerque, New Mexico. All three men escaped and hijacked a plane to Cuba. In January 1972, Kwablah Mthawabu, who was serving as Special Minister to the United Nations, was convicted of conspiring to rob a white man and sentenced to 50 years. In November of the same year, the FBI charged Kamau Kambui with “... signing his name incorrectly while purchasing a shotgun,” and he was sentenced to five years at a federal prison in Milan, Michigan. Prior to his arrest, Kamau was continuing the organizing efforts of the RNA in the Kush district of Mississippi (i.e., Jackson and the Mississippi delta region). What appeared to be a general harassment and attack on RNA citizens, soon became known as the FBI’s COINTELPRO program, which was designed not only to eliminate the RNA, but to destroy the black nationalist movement as a whole.

A survey of the history of black nationalism has revealed a very diverse and heterogeneous make-up of the various leaders, organizations, and movements that have taken up the charge of liberating African-Americans from white oppression and to solidify that liberation in the form of a land based territory. Without a doubt there has always been resistance to black nationalist aspirations for independence by the United States government and its state and local authorities, however, the history has also shown that the failure of black nationalists to found an independent black nation-state has more to do with the internal weaknesses and struggles of black nationalists than external resistance.
CHAPTER 6

INTERNAL FACTORS THAT PREVENTED BLACK NATIONALISTS FROM FOUNDING A BLACK NATION-STATE

This chapter will discuss those internal factors that prevented black nationalists of the Black Power Era (BPE), namely the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panther Party for Self Defense (BPP), and the Provisional Government of the Republic of New Africa (PGRNA) from establishing an independent nation-state. There will also be a discussion of black nationalists' neglect and rejection of the black church as central to the failure of the black nationalist movement to found a nation-state. Internal factors are defined as leadership and organizational decisions, strategies, and circumstances that were under the direct control of black nationalists themselves. The author does recognize that there were also external factors, such as COINTELPRO and police violence that also prevented black nationalists from founding a black nation-state, but even in the face of these challenges, black nationalists could have achieved their ultimate goal had internal weaknesses not dismantled them from within.

Specifically, the chapter will discuss and critique critical decisions made by each of the three organizations mentioned above. These decisions include; 1) SNCC’s
abandonment of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, 2) the ideological shift of
the BPP from its support of independent statehood to the ideology of inter-communalism,
3) the decision of the PGRNA to change its strategy from pursuing the takeover of the
sheriffs offices in the black belt south through the electoral process to declaring
themselves a “nation in fact”, and 4) the split between Gaidi Obadele and Imari Obadele
to move the government headquarters of the PGRNA to Jackson, Mississippi. The
decisions reveal some of the weaknesses of these nationalist organizations and the black
nationalist movement as a whole. They are, by themselves, not inclusive of all the
internal factors that contributed to the failure of black nationalists to found a state.
However, the decisions discussed had a major impact on the political direction of each
organization and its contribution to achieving self-determination for black people and
establishing an independent nation-state. The neglect of the Black Church by black
nationalists and its consequences is the final factor discussed and has broader
implications on the failure of the larger black nationalist movement.

Before moving forward into the specific decisions, it is necessary to clarify each
organizations specific position in relation to black nationalism and the goal of
independent nationhood. SNCC began as a civil rights group that later switched its
position on the pursuit of integration to the more nationalist objectives of achieving
political power through the formation of an independent political party that would operate
within the American political system. After breaking away from the CRM, SNCC
advocated for greater black autonomy—which they implemented organizationally by
expelling all their white members, seeking community control of institutions, and
increasing cultural awareness. SNCC never had a formal position on the establishment of a black nation-state, but its members did support the nationalist objectives of self-determination.

In 1966, as part of their ten point platform, the BPP called for a United Nations supervised plebiscite to determine the national will of black people to either establish a nation-state of their own or remain citizens of the United States of America. The BPP never took a decisive stand as an organization in support of founding a black nation-state, although they included a demand for land in their ten point platform as well. The demand for land, however, was considered more for its economic value as a natural resource, rather than for its political value in establishing a separate nation for black people.

The RNA was the only organization that took a decisive position on the establishment of an independent nation-state. Their demand for land was for the political purpose of establishing a separate nation-state for black people. As such, the RNA represents the purest sentiment of black nationalism which seeks to achieve self-determination for black people through the establishment of a separate independent nation-state.

Official positions aside, all three organizations represent the general thrust of black nationalism toward self-determination and independent statehood that was central to the Black Power Movement. Their activities, programs, and leaders clearly reflect a continuum of black nationalists’ aspirations and development. These organizations were part of a larger black nationalist movement that expressed a great deal of support for the
establishment of an independent nation-state, as well as greater community control of institutions, building separate institutions, generating a black-controlled economy, and adopting traditional African culture and values. As a result part of the discussion on the internal factors that prevented black nationalists from founding a nation-state, suggests how these organizations could have benefited from the specific programs and activities of each other toward achieving self-determination and independent statehood.

In 1965, the members of SNCC made a decisive move to break away from the integrationist Civil Rights Movement (CRM) and pursue the nationalist objective of building an independent black political party that would select its own candidates to run for political office. SNCC had the experience of conducting political work in the deep-south based upon their CRM activities that started with the sit-ins and progressed to voter-registration drives throughout the south. After becoming frustrated with the idea of integration and being introduced to the nationalist theories of Malcolm X, SNCC implemented Malcolm’s call for the development of an all black political party that would work to get blacks elected to political office, who would then represent and be held accountable by their black constituency.

As discussed in the text, Ready for Revolution, SNCC was successful at getting a significant number of black citizens in Lowndes County to participate in the development of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO) and ran their own slate of candidates in the 1966 county elections. SNCC had done their homework in choosing Lowndes County as the place to begin their independent political work. Lowndes County was 83% black and had one of the worst reputations of brutality and
racism in the south that made, "... both blacks and whites to shudder..." SNCC spent a year organizing, getting black citizens in Lowndes County registered to vote, providing political education classes, and preparing those citizens who were selected to run for office with the information and skills necessary to perform their duties—if and when they were elected. However, in the end, none of the candidates from the LCFO were elected. SNCC, consequently, abandoned the project after the elections. They did not consider the organizing of an independent political party and registration of thousands of newly enfranchised black voters significant enough to continue with the development of the LCFO. SNCC aborted the project to move its headquarters to Chicago and focus on political development in the urban north.

The abandonment of the LCFO project—the abandoning of political projects which did not yield immediate gain—is one of the reasons black nationalists of the BPE failed to establish a black state. Although SNCC was not organizing specifically to establish a black state, they had adopted the nationalist strategy advocated by Malcolm X of forming an independent political party. At this stage in the development of black nationalist efforts to found an independent state, the creation of a vehicle for blacks to gain control over the politics affecting them in the form of an independent black political party was a step in the right direction. The formation of an independent political party under oppressive conditions is a strategy that many nationalists of other racial and ethnic groups have employed to better position themselves to make the transition to becoming a sovereign people. The intent of developing an independent political party was to increase black political power, which was believed to be one of the means that would
lead to black liberation and future black sovereign nationhood. When SNCC abandoned
the effort after one year, they abandoned the greatest potential that blacks had of
achieving political power in an area that would later be identified by black nationalists as
the territory of the new black state. SNCC also abandoned the people who invested their
time, energy, and faith in the idea that they could liberate themselves by exercising their
political power. Through the LCFO, SNCC had the opportunity to begin developing a
support base for black nationalists to found a black state in the future. This was very
important and strategic to the future of black nationalism because at the time black
nationalism had its largest support base in the north. Blacks in the south were more
supportive of the integrationist efforts of the CRM and not as familiar or supportive of
the rhetoric and programs of black nationalists. It would require a sustained effort of
political education that SNCC had begun in Lowndes County to build support among the
masses of black people in the black belt, who were more familiar with the teachings of
Martin Luther King Jr. versus those of Malcolm X.

SNCC had already experienced that the people were open and receptive to the
ideas of black nationalism by their efforts to form their own independent political party
and their preparedness and willingness to defend themselves, black leaders, and their
movement. SNCC introduced the people to the formal ideology of black nationalism via
the recorded speeches of Malcolm X. Malcolm’s commentary resonated soundly with
the experiences that black people had in the south just as it did with urban blacks in the
north. The combination of a new black social consciousness, SNCC’s political education
process, a practical political program with the human resources to carry it out, were good
indicators of the success that could have been achieved toward advancing an explicit nationalist agenda throughout the southern black belt region.

Instead of continuing the work SNCC left. Rather than staying to build where there was power in numbers and where black people could realistically contend for absolute political power, SNCC opted out for pursuing political power in the urban north where blacks had exercised their right to vote, but were at a numerical disadvantage and had limited access to natural resources, for state development, that were readily available in the south. Also, blacks in the urban north were isolated in small pockets of power that could easily be contained or out maneuvered as they were a distinct minority in the north.9

The reason for SNCC’s decision to abandon the LCFO, and move their operations to the north, was predicated on the perception that the new frontier for Black Power was in the north. After the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act SNCC realized that the Voting Rights Act did nothing to improve the plight of African-Americans living in the urban ghettos of the north. African-Americans in the north already had the right to vote, but were still suffering from extreme poverty and discrimination in key areas of daily life (housing, law enforcement, education, business development, and employment). The leadership of SNCC felt that their efforts had run its course in the south where the major battles to end segregation and the right to vote had been won. Conversely, the outbreak of the urban riots, that began in Watts in 1965 and spread throughout the country for several years, shifted SNCC’s attention away from the south to the north. As SNCC
began to work out its new position as a Black Power-black nationalist organization, the north appeared to be more receptive to the new agenda that SNCC wanted to implement.

Had SNCC continued to build and develop the LCFO from 1965 through the PGRNA’s move south, in 1970, black nationalists would have had a stronger foothold to continue to build from in other areas of the identified national territory (South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia). The experience, lessons, and success that SNCC had could have been replicated by other black nationalist groups or as one black nationalist operation to gain political power and control in the black belt.

This would have also been critical to the success of both the original BPP and the RNA’s plan to hold national-United Nation’s supervised plebiscites to determine the national destiny of black people in the United States. An independent black political party, with its roster of registered voters and other demographic information, would have been essential for black nationalists to carry out a plebiscite vote. An independent political party would have laid the ground work in training blacks to organize local elections, registering people to vote, educating the masses of blacks about their political rights as a national group, and defending black people’s right to self-determination—via the vote. These skills, along with established and experienced organization and leadership, would have made the success of a national-United Nations supervised plebiscite more plausible and possible. There is no way to know how much progress SNCC could have made in those 3-5 years toward moving black people in the south to greater political power and overall organization to achieve the nationalist objective of independent statehood, but it is certain that the work and experience would have
increased black nationalists’ capabilities to succeed in the local political arena and continue that success to the state and national level.

The ultimate failure of SNCC to advance the development of black political independence in the south was due to a lack of maturity and understanding of what constitutes real power. The general membership of SNCC was very young, generally the same age as traditional college students, which explains the lack of maturity necessary to see beyond the immediate circumstances. A higher level of maturity would have allowed SNCC leadership to develop a long-term plan that would have taken advantage of the political activism that had been built-up in the south through the CRM and channeled it into the next phase of black political development. SNCC had witnessed the shift in focus from integration to Black Power which manifested in the form of African-Americans working for black political independence and an overall black nationalist agenda for self-determination and an independent nation.

SNCC, also, did not have an understanding of the patience required for the steady growth of power to take place. The mood and political climate of the south had been changed and there was an opportunity for black people, where they were a majority, to claim political power. SNCC, through the LCFO, had an opportunity to build a firm foundation for Black Power to take root and blossom throughout the black belt region. The work that was necessary to make it happen may not have gained national media attention or propelled young-activist leaders into household names, but the value of the work in making a tangible difference in the lives of black people would have been tremendous.
SNCC was not the only Black Power organization that lacked maturity and understanding. The BPP was also led by very young-militant leaders who lacked the ability to develop a long range perspective on what it would take to fulfill their mission to bring an end to the oppression faced by black people. This lack of maturity expressed itself as over zealousness and in the disassociation of the BPP from the nationalist objective of founding an independent state. In 1966, when the BPP was founded, they were an advocate for the establishment of a black nation and had included the demand for land and a United Nations (UN) supervised plebiscite vote as part of their ten point platform. The shift came in 1968 when Huey Newton officially shifted the BPP political and social position to one of inter-communalism. The shift to inter-communalism focused on the development of political coalitions with various ethnic and racial groups that would work toward a socialist revolution to liberate black people and all other oppressed people as well. In 1970, Newton’s analysis concluded that blacks could not achieve liberation without the support of the white-radical left. He based his conclusion on the changes in the global economic market and concluded that the modern nation-state was obsolete.

This shift in ideology was not simply a matter of choosing inter-communalism over black nationalism as the best method to achieve black liberation. The political and social context of the BPP was significant to the ideological changes the organization experienced. The leadership of the BPP was based in northern California, specifically Oakland, and historically black nationalism had its roots in the south, urban northeast, and midwest. The geographical distance from the historical and cultural roots of black
nationalism gave Huey Newton and Bobby Seale a different view of black oppression that was not influenced as much by history as by current circumstances. Newton embraced and emphasized the revolutionary teachings of Mao Tse-tung and Franz Fanon over those of Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X. In terms of implementation, this translated into the mandatory reading of Mao Tse-tung’s, *The Red Book*, and Franz Fanon’s, *The Wretched of the Earth*, as opposed to the study of Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) and the nationalist theories of Malcolm X. The BPP never instituted black nationalist history and theory as a fundamental part of their program. The BPP placed a heavy emphasis on class as the central issue to black oppression as opposed to race. Capitalism and imperialism were viewed as the ultimate enemies to be defeated in the quest for black liberation. As a result, they rejected the idealism associated with African history, culture, and solidarity that was intrinsic to most black nationalist teachings and organizations.

The BPP’s rejection of African history and culture as relevant to black liberation formed the ideological basis for the friction that developed between the BPP and US (Maulana Karenga’s organization). The BPP’s hostile disagreement with cultural nationalism, which espoused the need for black people to reclaim their African culture, traditions, and history through a variety of programs, emphasizing African customs, religion, language, and art was criticized as being counter-revolutionary. BPP literature was very critical of those who embraced cultural nationalism by wearing dashikis and natural hairstyles, taking on African names, and seeking to incorporate African customs into their daily lives. This was considered counter-revolutionary by the BPP because, in
their opinion, a return to old African culture was not going to liberate black people from their current oppression,\textsuperscript{15} which, according to Newton and the BPP was the result of capitalism and European-American imperialism. Taking this viewpoint into account, not simply as an ideological debate, but one that often-times escalated into violence and the eventual split between west coast and east coast BPP leadership and members, indicates that Newton’s ideological shift had other implications that need to be addressed.

Politically, coalitions with white radicals focused on capitalism and imperialism as the true enemies that had created black oppression as well as the oppression of all poor-working class people, regardless of race.\textsuperscript{16} Ultimately, the shift in ideology changed the goal of land and political sovereignty to the goal of the destruction of the American capitalist system by means of a socialist revolution that sought to take over the means of production from the wealthy ruling class and place them under the control of the working class proletariat in the form of a socialist government.\textsuperscript{17} Huey Newton and the BPP believed this to be the path toward true black liberation.

Black nationalism and Black Power, in particular, were criticized by socialists as being incorrectly focused on race as the basis of black oppression and therefore inaccurate in terms of addressing the root cause of oppression, which was ultimately a class issue. Black nationalism was seen by socialists as being susceptible to the same system of class oppression, especially when some Black Power advocates supported the development of black capitalism to address the need for blacks to become economically independent. The BPP rejected this concept and argued that black capitalism would prove to be just as exploitive of the poor and working class as white capitalism, only
changing the color of the oppressor from white to black. In essence, the BPP believed that black people could not be liberated without a joint effort by all poor and working class people to destroy the Euro-American capitalist system. So, what began as a demand for Black Power in the form of land and self-determination for black people was changed to a demand for “Power to the People” (inter-communalism).

Strategically, this would serve Newton and the west coast BPP because they were, not only seeking to exert leadership as the revolutionary vanguard for the liberation of black people, but to be the leaders of the socialist-revolutionary vanguard of all people. Recognizing that they were far outnumbered by white radical groups, who were focused on the peace movement to end the war in Vietnam and who identified themselves as socialist revolutionaries determined to destroy capitalism and imperialism, Newton sought to build his alliances with them by advocating a purely socialist ideology that he believed to be more applicable to achieving black liberation. This stood in direct opposition to the teachings and ideology of black nationalism, espoused by Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammad, and Malcolm X which, fundamentally, linked independent nationhood to black liberation.

Another area of concern to be addressed in Newton and the BPP’s shift from the goal of self-determination to inter-communalism was Newton’s personal issues with leadership, power, and authority with other black leaders within the black nationalist movement. The antagonism that existed between Maulana Karenga’s US organization and the west coast BPP has already been mentioned, but there were other situations with black leaders that were just as hostile and violent. The suspension of Eldridge Cleaver
and the Harlem Chapter of the BPP, the attack on James Forman, and edgy relations with Stokely Carmichael all speak to the problems that Newton and the BPP had with other black nationalist leaders and organizations who expressed different political viewpoints than their own. The manner in which disagreements and challenges to Newton's authority were dealt with, were at the least intimidating and, at their extreme, deadly. As a result, Newton and the BPP strayed away from the idea set forth by Malcolm X, regarding blacks coming together to form a black revolutionary army, and placed their self-proclaimed identity as vanguard above establishing a cohesive and unified black nationalist revolutionary front.

In 1964, Malcolm X spoke of blacks coming together and forming either an all-black political party or an all black revolutionary army. As mentioned above, SNCC took the lead in forming an all-black political party, which they later abandoned. The BPP took up the call to form an all black revolutionary army. In considering the things that are necessary for an independent state to exist, military capability and preparedness is one key aspect. The BPP played a critical role in galvanizing the young and militant members of the black community and directing their energy and enthusiasm for immediate liberation into a formidable organization.

Founded in 1966, the BPP grew rapidly, and by 1967, had gained national media attention as the most powerful revolutionary-nationalist organization in the United States. By late October 1967, the organization was heavily involved in the "Free Huey" campaign, in which Huey Newton was charged and jailed for the murder of a white Oakland police officer. The trial and imprisonment of Newton increased the notoriety
of the BPP substantially, which caused chapters and membership to flourish across the
country. As membership and chapters increased, so did the arming of young African-
American men and women who claimed the role as the revolutionary vanguard for the
liberation of African-American people. The charismatic young leadership and
disciplined appearance of the BPP inspired black people, particularly the young, to
volunteer their lives and bodies to form an army for the liberation of black people. It was
also a powerful attraction for thousands of young African-Americans who were fed up
with seeing whites brutalizing blacks on television and in their own communities and
nothing being done about it.

When the BPP changed its political and social orientation to one that ideologically
opposed the formation of an independent black state, they removed the greatest potential
and opportunity that black nationalists had in building a formidable military force that
was capable of training and preparing an entire generation of black people to be soldiers
that would defend the nation, its leaders, and people. As a national phenomenon, the
BPP had chapters all across the country and were well-received by blacks in their local
communities, for not only being protectors, but providers as well. Their free breakfast
program and educational program met a sincere need in the black community. In doing
so, the people took pride in the BPP as their new-found heroes who took action to combat
racist police violence against blacks and to work at the grassroots level to become
intimately connected to the community.

In looking at black nationalism as a whole and considering the work of SNCC in
organizing the LCFO and the work of the BPP in building an organized military
operation, the two working together to advance black nationalists toward statehood would have been tremendous. The BPP could have worked alongside SNCC and the LCFO to protect black citizens as well as to import the philosophy and activities of revolutionary black nationalism into the deep-south where black people had the numbers and experience of being at war with the white power structure in the south.

Although Stokely Carmichael and SNCC were aware of the developments taking place with the formation of the BPP, they did not seek to build a collaborative effort. Newton’s only interests in the LCFO was the right to use their chosen mascot—the black panther—as the name and symbol of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Newton and Bobby Seale contacted Carmichael to gain his permission to use the symbol for their organization, but there was no discussion concerning the two organizations working together to advance the overall pursuit of black political power and independence. Shortly thereafter the LCFO was abandoned by SNCC.

Along these same lines the BPP would have provided a powerful resource to the RNA in its initial plan to take control of the sheriff offices of the black belt by protecting black voters, providing training for newly elected black sheriffs and their deputies, as well as serving as sheriffs and deputies themselves. This would have tied the BPP to a source of legitimately recognized police power for the benefit of black people and the movement toward establishing an independent state. The BPP could have also engaged the leadership and the members of the Deacons for Defense, who were very successful at combating white violence during the CRM. The organizational discipline and stealth of the Deacons for Defense would have gone a long way to temper and channel the militant
spirit of the BPP into a powerful revolutionary force. More importantly, the BPP’s militant spirit could have been applied in an area where black people had strength in numbers and a justifiable claim to the land as their national-territory.

However, the relationship of the BPP and the RNA was somewhat problematic. The RNA had embraced cultural nationalism as part of their overall program to build a New African nation. The RNA also held onto their position of establishing an independent nation for black people. Newton did write a letter to Robert Williams expressing a desire for the two organizations to work together despite their conflicting views on independent statehood and cultural nationalism, but no relationship was ever formalized or actively pursued.

The BPP and the Deacons for Defense never had a chance to work together because the BPP did not focus its organizational development in the south, instead focusing its energy on the urban north and west. The Deacons for Defense were a southern based-clandestine group whose purpose was to defend Civil Rights activists as they worked throughout the south. How the two groups would have been able to work out their organizational differences in uncertain. The Deacons for Defense acted solely as a defense organization, where as the BPP was both interested in defense and political development.

The BPP and SNCC were not the only black nationalist organizations to make critical errors in the pursuit of black independent nationhood. Similar to the lack of maturity and understanding of SNCC and the over zealousness of the BPP was the strategic abandonment by the PGRNA to follow through and implement its initial plan of
gaining control of the sheriff offices in the southern black belt. This would have been a first step toward increasing black political power by obtaining legally recognized police power. Initially, Imari outlined a strategy of using the electoral process to get black men elected as sheriffs in counties where blacks could numerically out-vote whites. Imari Obadele in the second draft of, *War in America- the Malcolm X Doctrine*, discusses the change in strategy in the following excerpt,

But the founding of the Republic of New Africa called for revision of a basic concept: in War, written a year and a half before the founding, envisioned that the Malcolmites would work within the governmental framework and state structure of the United States, winning black people, first in Mississippi, to the cause of independent land and power, follow this with election victories (the sheriff’s offices, particularly) within the U.S. federal system, and finally take the black state out of the U.S. federal union at the moment when white power could no longer be successfully resisted or neutralized in its efforts to prevent the creation of a new society in the black state.

The founding of the Republic obsoleted this approach - and this revision of War makes note of that obsoleteness. By declaration the nation has become a fact - though subjugated by the United States.24

The initial strategy was to take over the sheriff’s offices as a means of obtaining black military and police power inside the national territory. Elected sheriffs would have inherited the power to deputize blacks and in the process put an end to police and white racist violence. This would have enhanced the ability of blacks to defend themselves from U.S. state and federal military and police forces when the time came for the RNA to remove itself from the U.S. federal union and exercise its rights as a sovereign independent nation-state.
Once again black nationalists had done their homework and identified the black belt counties of the south to begin their work, specifically in Mississippi. These counties had overwhelmingly majority black populations, as high as 85% in some cases, and the people had suffered under white racism and brutality long enough to support a change in political power to their advantage. This plan, however, was never pursued due to a change in strategy. The 1968 Black Government Conference had declared the RNA a 'nation in fact'. The delegates attending the conference agreed with Imari Obadele and felt that it was either unnecessary or contradictory to pursue police power through the electoral process and at the same time declare the nation independent. They concluded that all that was necessary was for the PGRNA to inform black people that they now had their own nation and to educate them concerning their political right to choose their national destiny by holding a national-United Nations supervised plebiscite. Securing sheriffs offices and being able to deputize black men was replaced by the hype of a declaration of independence without the means to secure or defend it. This was definitely a mistake on the part of the PGRNA.

When the PGRNA abandoned their initial plan to take control of the sheriff’s offices through the electoral process, they gave up a very viable means of obtaining real power, both politically and militarily. In the event that they would have succeeded in one county, or all of them, the police power that they would have obtained would have been a vital tool in eliminating police and white racist violence with black sheriffs and deputies. This accomplishment alone would have ensured the trust and loyalty of blacks in the south specifically, and in the north, as a sign of progress toward gaining state power. It
would have encouraged support for the PGRNA’s agenda for independent statehood with tangible and meaningful results. One can only imagine what the results would have been with black sheriffs wielding the power to deputize black men. The impact is clearly seen when one remembers the role the Deacons for Defense played in protecting civil rights workers and curbing white racist violence.\textsuperscript{27}

Another way to look at the feasibility of the initial plan is to consider the readiness of many black youth in the north to act on their militant beliefs. Just as the BPP capitalized on the desire for black men and women to take up arms in defense of their communities, without any legal authority, the PGRNA would have been able to empower black men and women living in the south, with legal authority. The PGRNA could have used the potential to elect black sheriffs to develop a recruitment campaign for black men and women, living in the north and west, to come to the south to be politically educated, trained, and deputized. This could have been conducted in the same fashion as the federal government’s recruitment and drafting of black men to join the U.S. military to fight in Vietnam. That would have been a powerful demonstration of black nationalists exercising state power as a governmental body.

By abandoning the initial plan to put blacks in power as sheriffs in the black belt, the RNA was premature and over zealous in believing that all that was necessary after the declaration of independence was information, education, and the holding of a nationally supervised election. The sheriff’s office was tangible to immediately affecting the lives of the thousands of black people who lived in any given county of the black belt. It was
an office that the people understood to have real consequences over their lives. The impact of working with the people to put one of their own in a position of legally recognized power and authority would have psychologically and politically empowered the people, and put some substance behind the rhetoric of the black nationalist agenda of independent statehood.

To abandon any plan that was viable to increasing black political power in areas where the impact would have proved beneficial toward achieving black statehood was extremely immature on the part of black nationalists. At that early point in the pursuit of statehood, black nationalists had no legally recognized power and the abandoned program of SNCC and abandoned strategy of the PGRNA were two methods to obtain it. This would also have provided the opportunity for black nationalists to gain practical experience in implementing the various strategies and programs to achieve independence. The ability to achieve the combination of black political and police power was very realistic. Black nationalism was at its height between 1967 and 1970 with the founding of the PGRNA, the holding of national black conferences, the geometric growth of the BPP, and the continuation of revolts of the urban masses. The black nation was poised to receive strategic direction that was based upon the acquisition of real power. The PGRNA had a viable plan that was never implemented, and as a result black nationalists continued to offer more rhetoric and militant posturing than tangible results.

Another example of immaturity and over zealously of black nationalists that contributed to the failure of the PGRNA to establish an independent black nation was the organization’s decision to move the headquarters of the RNA from Detroit to Jackson in
May, 1970. A rift had already developed within the leadership of the RNA. There was some disagreement concerning the political and military development of the young government. Imari was pushing for the RNA to take decisive action toward moving the government and its operations into the south (i.e., the national territory). Imari also wanted to build the Black Legionnaires into a 100,000 men defensive force. These two points were not agreeable to Gaidi and several other cabinet members, who held the opinion that the RNA should continue to function primarily in the north. Gaidi did not support the building of a large military force because he believed it would draw too much attention to the RNA as a violent threat to the U.S. and give the U.S. government a reason to attack the RNA before the young government was capable of responding and defeating such an attack. Gaidi and other cabinet members were also opposed to moving the headquarters of the RNA to Mississippi, arguing that it was premature and that there was not enough support in the south for the RNA to be effective in meeting its goals and overall objective.

Gaidi's position had a great deal of merit. The RNA had not been in existence for very long and they needed to build a firm foundation of financial and political support to achieve recognition as a government prior to moving into the south. The political and financial base of the RNA was in Detroit and other northern and western urban centers (i.e., New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, D.C., Los Angeles, and San Francisco). There was no base support established in the south and black nationalism had not become a household word among black southerners as it had among blacks in the north. Gaidi was interested in continuing to build on the established
northern support for black nationalism, which would eventually lead to a move into the south at a later date. Based on the events and outcome of the “shootout” with the Detroit police, there was strong evidence to support Gaidi’s position. The RNA had support in Detroit from major black politicians, a powerful judge, well-known ministers, and local citizens. Simply put, the RNA was strongly supported in Detroit. The financial support that the RNA could count on to buy bonds and land certificates would come from other black nationalists who were primarily based in the north, as opposed to the south. A strong nationalist movement had yet to be developed in the south at that point. The urban north and west was the hot bed of African-American discontent as displayed by the number of riots that took place in many of the cities where the RNA established consulates (i.e., New York, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, D.C., and Philadelphia). It was from the urban north and west that the RNA found the majority of its citizens and supporters; it was logical, then, that the majority of the financial and political support would come from these same areas.

Imari and those who supported moving south argued that the government needed to function within the national territory. There was a lot of work to be done to win the consent of blacks in the south to acknowledge the RNA as their government of choice. The RNA had specifically identified the five southern states of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana as the home of the new black nation, although it was subjugated territory (i.e., under U.S. federal jurisdiction and military control) The primary work to be done concerning winning the consent of the people was in the south.
Preparing to hold a plebiscite, educating people about the RNA, and gaining their support could not be done effectively from Detroit, New York, or Los Angeles. The work had to be done in the national territory in order for the RNA to build a base of support in the south to fulfill its primary objective of building an independent nation. It was a basic assumption of the RNA that the majority of black people, particularly in the south, would choose to support the RNA as their government versus continuing to live under the oppressive conditions imposed upon them by the U.S. at all levels of government. That assumption needed to be tested and worked out by practical and tangible means. Imari was pushing for the RNA to become a government in fact, which meant exercising authority over a territory for black people. He and his supporters believed that they were ready to take a more direct approach to make the RNA a functional reality.

The disagreement resulted in Gaidi suspending Imari from his post as Regional Vice President and Minister of the Interior. Although the seriousness of the disagreement was played down by Imari in the local newspaper in which he stated, “It happens in governments all the time . . . It’s a normal procedure. Cabinet members have been suspended before but just because Gaidi is my brother it has been made to appear there is a rift between us.” The “rift” led to the forming of a Constitutional Committee which held an emergency election in January 1970 to elect a new RNA president and cabinet.

Imari won the election and the RNA moved its headquarters first to New Orleans and then to Jackson in May, 1970. Gaidi and his supporters seem to have dissolved their
involvement and support of the RNA after the election, whereas, in the past, the two brothers had worked hand in glove to build two previous organizations (i.e., Group on Advanced Leadership and the Malcolm X Society), they parted ways at a pivotal point in the development of the RNA and black nationalism.

The decision to move the headquarters of the RNA to Jackson was strategically a bad decision. As a government, the RNA was barely two years in existence and as Gaidi pointed out the RNA did not have the base support in the south, as they did in the north. That does not discredit the need for more intense work that needed to be done in the south, but that did not require the entire government operation to be moved to the south. What the RNA should have done, to serve the needs of the RNA and the founding of an independent state, is to deploy Imari and a group of RNA government workers to Jackson to begin working more intensely in the south while maintaining the headquarters, intact, in Detroit. The model that the RNA should have used was to view Detroit and the urban north and west as the mother country, in the sense that it was in these places that the RNA had its greatest political and financial resources, along with a solid support base. The south should have been considered a colony where black nationalist missionaries could be sent to lay the groundwork for the development of the south as the national territory. The goal would have been to build up a black nationalist support base that would eventually be able to sustain the existence of the RNA in a violently hostile environment. The Detroit headquarters and the urban areas could have focused on continuing to build on the broad base of support they had established in the north to increase their financial resources and political power. Those financial resources could go
toward funding black nationalist missionary operations in the south and the fund raising activities could serve as a vehicle to continue to build their political power that would give them the necessary influence they needed on a national and international level. By using the mother country-colony strategy, the RNA would still have been able to accomplish the goal of becoming more heavily involved in the national territory while still maintaining its base of power and strength in Detroit.

Once the split occurred, there was a missing link between two vital components of the young government. Gaidi represented the older more conservative and established black nationalist constituency and Imari represented the younger more energetic and militant constituency. The two needed to work together to fulfill the mission of establishing an independent nation-state. Gaidi and his supporters were not willing to take the risks that Imari and his supporters were willing to take in moving south. On the other side of the coin was the fact that Gaidi and his supporters had the inroads to financial and political support that Imari and his supporters did not. Both were necessary to make the government work, the eventual split based on differences in strategy was pivotal in the eventual failure of the RNA to carry out its plans of establishing an independent nation-state in the deep south.

On a broader scale of analysis in determining the factors that prevented black nationalist from founding a black state, one must examine the failure of black nationalists to embrace the Black Church as critical to the success of mobilizing and sustaining a large mass movement among African-Americans. Due to its synonymous relationship with Christianity, and Christianity often being dubbed a pacifist religion on
the one hand and a white man’s religion on the other, the power of the Black Church was either ignored or rejected outright as many black nationalists deemed it responsible for the continued oppression of black people.\textsuperscript{35} Historically, Christianity was the religion whites used to enslave Africans and therefore was viewed as problematic if not absolutely contradictory to the goal of black independence and statehood. Christianity was viewed by radical nationalists as a collaborating theology that supported white supremacy and black subordination. Christianity, as it was taught to black people by whites during slavery and preached to black people by black ministers after slavery was not able to reconcile the doctrine of brotherhood of all men with the political and social oppression that black people experienced at the hands of whites, who also claimed to be Christians themselves. Malcolm X pointed out the contradiction plainly when he stated that when a black man was being lynched and prayed to God-Jesus to save him, he was praying to the same God-Jesus that the white lynch mob was praying to kill him.\textsuperscript{36} In response to this religious assault against black people, and the obvious insanity of praying and worshiping the same God as their oppressor, black nationalists of the BPE embraced Islam and African religious traditions as more consistent with black nationalists goals and objectives, and consequently rejected a viable ally.

The Nation of Islam (NOI) and the following that Malcolm X generated is largely responsible for the acceptance of Islam. The popularity of the “black Muslim” movement brought notoriety to the NOI, by its condemnation of whites as devils and the belief that Allah (God) was going to destroy white people in the coming Armageddon.\textsuperscript{37} The NOI
offered one of the major challenges to Christianity as a religious and spiritual alternative for black people. Islam was also consistent with the Judeo-Christian origins of God and the prophets that black people were very familiar with. Using the traditional preaching style of the Black Church to instill moral character, religious conviction, and the ideology of black nationalism, the NOI chastised black people for believing in Jesus as a “... white blue-eyed devil . . .”, while at the same time teaching and honoring the historical truth that Jesus was racially black. The denial of Jesus as white but embracing him as black is a dichotomy that black nationalists failed to reconcile in order for them to effectively incorporate and acknowledge that the Black Church was vital to the success of the nationalist movement.

The Black Church was founded out of a combination of two spiritual traditions, African ritual-worship and Christian theology. Left to African people the two are not incompatible, but when white and black preachers employed the teachings of Christianity to encourage black people to bide their time on earth for the reward of the afterlife, they were rejected by black people who believed that liberation was to come in their lifetime. As a consequence, religion was divided into black and white, Islam and African culture-religion were black and therefore supportive of black nationalist objectives and Christianity was white and rejected by black nationalists.

The Black Church failed to challenge the hypocrisy and blatant lie held by the white church and white Christians that Jesus and the prophets were white, and black nationalists failed to recognize that the Black Church was aesthetically and culturally
African, and the most powerful institution in the black community. The reconciliation of the two extremes would have allowed the Black Church to assume its proper role of providing spiritual leadership to black nationalists, a leadership necessary in order to address the spiritual and moral soundness of their attempts to found a nation, as well as being able to address the spiritual and moral inconsistencies found within the black nationalist movement.

Another area that played a role in the general neglect of spirituality-religion in the black nationalist movement is the emphasis on the political and economic ideologies of socialism. Socialist and communist political-economic theory was based on John Engels and Karl Marx’s theory of Dialectical Materialism and its explanation of the natural order of the universe and the relationship of man to his/her environment. Engels and Marx were Europeans and their theory was meant to address the issues faced by Europe’s industrial poor-working class, who were being exploited by European capitalists. Black nationalists saw the value in the socialist explanation of how economic forces dictated the societal ills of race, class, and sexist oppression. Yet, Engels, Marx and black nationalists who accepted this analysis of political and economic theory failed to recognize that the history and culture of African-Americans demands recognition of God as a fundamental pre-requisite for an ideology to resonate with black people, who hold spiritual things to be inseparable from their understanding of the world and man’s relationship to God and other men/women. Socialism and communism took God out of the picture and replaced it with sterile calculated reasoning, which went against the grain.
of the African ethos. Black nationalists failed to restructure socialist ideology to be compatible with the spiritual-religious center of black people.

Although black nationalists had a rationale for rejecting Christianity, the rejection of the Black Church and its exclusion from the mainstream of the Black Power Movement was very harmful to the black nationalist movement. This was a critical failure of black nationalists to found a state due to the fact that it prevented black nationalists from developing a spiritual-religious program that was inclusive of the most accepted and successful social-cultural-economic institution in the black community—the Black Church. It is undeniable that the Black Church was instrumental in galvanizing the energy and efforts of black people to build the CRM. As one of the greatest resources for the CRM, the Black Church provided a physical space for black people to organize, discuss and debate issues, devise plans, motivate and inspire people to step outside of their comfort zones, teach people to apply their faith to changing their condition through organized action, and to raise money. The CRM took advantage of the deep spiritual roots of black people that was stored in their collective memory through song, worship style, preaching style, collective suffering and communal support, and built one of the most successful movements in world history.

The Black Church was not altogether removed from the black nationalist agenda as a resource, but black Christian liberation theology was never given the serious consideration that was needed for it to become central to the black nationalist movement. SNCC and the RNA both used Black Churches in which to organize many of their programs and activities. When Stokely Carmichael and SNCC workers first began to
organize the LCFP, they made it a priority to get all the names of the local black pastors and to be introduced to the community through the Church to be 'officially' sanctioned and accepted to do the work of organizing black people in Lowndes County.\textsuperscript{41} The RNA organized its first and second national convention using the Black Church to house its activities.\textsuperscript{42} It seems as though black nationalists believed the Church had a role to play, but it was not a theological or ideological role, due to it being identified as a passive white man’s religion.

In the case of the RNA, the rejection of Christianity may have been the result of a decision not to push any particular religious theology, but to embrace all black people who supported nationhood regardless of their religion. This is problematic because the RNA created ministries to address every area of national activity except a Minister of Religion and Spirituality. Some may argue that the minister of culture would have covered this area, but the Minister of Culture was by definition more inclined toward incorporating and instilling a sense of African cultural values and norms into the process of nation-building\textsuperscript{43}, as opposed to developing a black nationalist theology, religion, or spiritual system that would serve as the guiding cosmology of the nation and black people.

The most salient and pervasive religious norms of black people in America stem from the Black Church. Even the NOI was subject to the influence of the tradition of the Black Church. Elijah Muhammad himself was the product of the black Baptist tradition out of rural Georgia\textsuperscript{44}, and he, along with all his ministers, maintained a call-and-response preaching style, as well as taught his followers from both the Bible and Qur’an.
The songs that became protest anthems in the CRM were transformations of black spirituals and gospel songs well known in the Black Church. The members of SNCC and local black people sang songs of protest, inspiration, and redemption that had the full characteristics of being Black Church songs. The use of prayer to bring those with different points of view together to pursue a common action was employed as a way of instituting group solidarity. Black people’s knowledge and familiarity with biblical scripture was used to give spiritual significance to the movement and to black activists that their work and the liberation of black people was the fulfillment of prophecy, and in the end the success of their activities was in God’s hands as a matter divine will. More importantly the Black Church, as a religious institution, anchored black people in the acknowledgement of a spiritual reality that allowed them to face overwhelming obstacles, including death, to continue to pursue what they knew was right and just.

In ignoring the Black Church as a viable organ to support the black nationalist agenda, black nationalists were not able to reach the masses of black people. The CRM and its leadership used the Black Church and Christianity to inspire and motivate black people to support their movement using a cultural reality very common and familiar to the majority of Black people. Black people identified themselves with the Black Church and Christianity. Black nationalists attacked that identification as opposed to embracing it and making it productive toward achieving liberation and independent statehood. Instead, black nationalists tried to re-orient the masses of black people toward Islam, socialism, and traditional African religion as a way of reconstructing black spiritual-religious consciousness, but they did it in a way that fundamentally opposed the accepted
religious-culture of black people. It was the quintessential act of “throwing the baby out with the bath water”.

Put simply, the internal factors discussed in this chapter as contributing to the failure of black nationalists to found an independent state were immaturity, overzealousness, lack of patience and insight into how to develop and sustain power, and the inability to carry out long term plans and goals. In the case of SNCC their immaturity is displayed in how they approached their work in the south with the LCFO. They were more interested in experimenting with challenging white political domination than developing a solid foundation from which black political power could be obtained, secured, and developed. In their quest to form an all-black independent political party without an overall goal to sustain a consistent movement toward nationalist objectives they stifled the ability of black nationalists to establish the political and cultural base necessary to mobilize the masses of blacks in the south to achieve the nationalist agenda of independent nationhood. Their immaturity led them to pursue the development of a nationalist agenda in the north where they lacked the very basis of power that existed in the south. The CRM had politicized and mobilized blacks in the south and as a result of the superficial progress that was made blacks were receptive to nationalists programs and ideas as the means to end their oppression and develop as a people. As a result of SNCC leaving black nationalists lost a prime opportunity to turn the rhetoric of Black Power into a physical reality.

The PGRNA was much more ambitious and detailed in creating a theory for nationalist development and attempting to put its theoretical assumptions into practice.
Their failure was due to a lack of insight, over zealousness, and impatience on the part of Imari Obadele and his supporters with regard to being more pragmatic and strategically aware of their opportunities to build a solid base for national defense and financial support. Where as, SNCC had began its political work in the south and had established the beginning of a power base with the LCFP, the PGRNA began its political work and had established a power base in Detroit. As a result of being impatient and overlooking the political and economic strength that was centered in Detroit and other northern and western urban centers, to move abruptly to the south without a unified commitment from those in leadership, weakened the PGRNA’s ability to develop and sustain their power and influence among its own supporters. As a result they were left vulnerable to outside attack without the necessary means to fight off the attack and still continue to move forward with their overall objective of establishing an independent nation-state.

The BPP suffered greatly from immaturity in its leadership that manifested in the form of arrogance, over zealousness, and an unwillingness to share power. In Newton’s abandonment of the BPP’s demand for land and self-determination for black people to determine their national destiny and his subsequent alignment with white-leftist radical groups created disunity within the black nationalist movement. Newton sought to establish himself and the BPP as the premier black leader and organization of the BPE by adopting foreign ideologies and theories that he believed applied to the general condition of all oppressed people, without taking into consideration the uniqueness of the oppressed condition of African-Americans and their own indigenous ideologies and theories to overcome that oppression. In doing so, he set himself up in most cases as an adversary to
those who did not agree with his inter-communalist position, and in some instances escalated to violence, which undermined the larger movement. Without question the BPP became the largest and most well-known black nationalist organization of the BPE, yet they were unable to reach their full-potential due to their inability to share power and work collectively with other black nationalist formations. The BPP was critically overzealousness in believing that they were the vanguard of the black nationalist movement which by implication meant that everyone else was secondary to them. Failing to see that they only held one piece of the puzzle to the whole, they failed to fulfill their role as the military wing of the movement to ensure the defense and success of the entire movement.

The ability of a nation to defend itself is something all nations must accomplish. The BPP was the most potent seed of that ability for black nationalists. Newton’s analysis that the nation-state was becoming obsolete and that cultural nationalism was irrelevant and counter-revolutionary was divisive and set off power struggles within the black nationalist movement that were exploited by the FBI’s COINTELPRO program and resulted, often times, in deadly violence. As a military organization the BPP was a key component to the success of black nationalism and its failure. The BPP attracted and organized thousands of black youth to defend their communities and people against the most overt representation of their oppression—white police violence. The failure of the BPP and other black nationalists to properly direct the energy of black youth into a disciplined national military force inevitably caused black youth to project the hate and violence they intended for their oppressor onto themselves, and subsequently, hundreds
of street organizations (i.e., gangs) emerged\textsuperscript{17}, ready to go to war for their own individual turf-land and black nation-gang.

The relationship between the Black Church and the black nationalist movement is still peripheral at best. The NOI and its current leader Louis Farrakhan have worked to bridge the gap between Muslims and Christians as competing religious forces. Cultural nationalism has increased the acceptance of African culture and also helped to bridge the gap between African-American's negative perceptions of African religions and their relationship to the traditional worship within the Black Church. More and more Black Churches represent Jesus as a black Messiah and embrace many of the fundamental principles of black nationalism. However, the majority of Black Churches still cling to an integrationist-accommodationist ideology that supports the status quo, which still remains an issue for black nationalists in generating a mass movement.

Black nationalists of the BPE pushed the desire for nationhood as far as they could and the best way they knew how. Predictably, they made mistakes and paid heavy prices for them. They were also up against a myriad of forces that only practical experience, superior organization, and relentless struggle could have foreseen. The onslaught of COINTELPRO, which exploited the ideological differences and insecurities between black nationalist leaders, was not something black nationalists were well prepared to overcome. The campaign of the FBI and local police authorities to dismantle the black nationalist movement resulted in many black nationalists struggling to fight criminal charges and being incarcerated for long periods of time. As a consequence,
black nationalist organizations embarked on campaigns to free their comrades, who were identified as political prisoners.

For even the most staunch black nationalists, it would seem that the prospect of founding an independent nation today is less likely than it was thirty years ago, but that would be a mistake to assume. The success of black nationalists founding a sovereign nation lies in their ability to correct their internal problems, develop a wholistic view that incorporates every sector of African-American society, develop a long range plan that addresses all facets of nationhood, and meets the needs of its people. It may take several generations to bring the vision of black statehood into fruition, but one must remember the long fight of African-Americans to free themselves from enslavement as evidence of what it will take to make black statehood a reality.
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