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Capitalism, Marxism, and the Black Radical Tradition: An Interview with Cedric Robinson

It is the task of the radical critic to illuminate what is repressed and excluded by the basic mechanisms of a given social order. It is the task of the *politically engaged* radical critic to side with the excluded and repressed: to develop insights gained in confrontation with injustice, to nourish cultures of resistance, and to help define the means with which society can be rendered adequate to the full breadth of human potentialities.

Cedric Robinson has embraced these tasks. His work explores the relationship between our social order and its negations, particularly Marxism and the Black Radical Tradition. He has examined this relationship in historical, political, and philosophical terms with an orientation that is as comprehensive as it is anti-authoritarian.

I interviewed Robinson by e-mail in January 1999. ~ Chuck Morse

In the conclusion of Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition you write that "the evolution of Black radicalism has occurred while it has not been conscious of itself as a tradition." Your writings (especially Black Marxism and Black Movements in America) are attempts to introduce a level of self-consciousness to this tradition. Why is this important now and what do you hope this can offer to the development of Black radicalism and radical movements generally?

My work is in a sense notational - reinscribing historical experience - for a political objective. Present generations must know, at the very least,

what has been known in order to achieve greater clarification and effectiveness. Just as Thucydides believed that historical consciousness of a people in crisis provided the possibility of more virtuous action, more informed and rational choices, so do I.

At the time I was writing *Black Marxism* and *Black Mass Movements* I felt strongly that Black nationalism as it was being pursued by spokespersons like Stokely Carmichael and Louis Farrakhan was a failed enterprise. As a peevish and perverse inversion of the political culture and racialism which had been used to justify the worst excesses of the exploitation and oppression of Black people, it served as a fictive radicalism, a surrogate mirage of the Black struggle. So both of these works, politically, were written to address the miscomprehensions and conceits of Black nationalism in historical terms: to examine how our ancestors responded to the seductions of this construction of the struggle and their visions of the future social order.

Black Marxism is not a chronological narrative of Black radicalism but a dialectical analysis of the development of racial capitalism, Marxism, and Black opposition. What is it about the Black Radical Tradition that requires this method of analysis?

There are several rationales for the employment of dialectical analysis to the Radical Tradition: they relate to the subject matter, to the audience, and to the method itself.

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IAS GRANT AWARDS

The Institute for Anarchist Studies (IAS) annually awards \$6000 in grants to writers whose work is important to the anarchist critique of domination, have a clear financial need, and whose piece is likely to be widely distributed. In January 1999, the IAS Board of Directors was pleased to award a grant to the following individual:

\$2000 to Samuel Mbah for his book *Military Dictatorship and the State in Africa* (co-authored by I.E. Igariwey). This book will utilize an anarchist critique to analyze military dictatorship

on the African continent. It is intended to follow up their previous book, *African Anarchism: The History of a Movement* (See Sharp Press, 1997).

Mbah and Igariwey will use libertarian analytical tools to lay bare the problems of military dictatorship. They will demonstrate that military dictatorship is a logical, if perverse, extension of the state system (despite liberal and state socialist criticisms). They will also show that overthrowing military dictatorship does not remedy the

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**PERSPECTIVES ON
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Institute for Anarchist Studies Update

We anticipate that 1999 will be an exciting year for the Institute for Anarchist Studies (IAS). In addition to awarding grants and publishing this newsletter, we have begun a concerted effort to strengthen and expand the Institute.

Specifically, we intend to raise \$10,000 for the IAS endowment by the end of the year. Although building the endowment has always been a priority, we are making an extra push because we are eager to enhance the IAS's durability and to establish the financial basis necessary to increase our grant awards and fund additional projects in support of anti-authoritarian social criticism.

Building our endowment is essential to this for two reasons. First, when our endowment reaches a certain size it will produce a significant annual income that we can use to fund our present grant program, thus freeing us to raise money to increase our grants and/or other initiatives. Second, as a defensive measure, it is important to build the endowment because its annual income will provide a financial safety net for the IAS should it ever be needed (one that will enable us, for example, to continue awarding grants even if we confront a financial crisis).

Our intention to increase the endowment by \$10,000 has its origins in two very welcome and related events. Last November an extremely generous IAS supporter pledged to donate \$8000 to our endowment upon the success of our 1999 fundraising campaign. In response to this exciting pledge we have decided to increase the amount of money we intend to raise for the IAS this year in order to place a greater percentage of fundraising income into the endowment. We have thus set a \$10,000 1999 fundraising goal and have designated \$2000 (20%) for our endowment. The combination of these sources will result in a \$10,000 addition to our endowment.

I am happy to note that Perennial Books of Conway, Massachusetts - long time IAS supporters and distributors of high quality radical literature - have stepped in to help us meet our 1999 fundraising challenge. They have not only pledged to continue making books available to IAS donors but have also expanded the list of available titles from eight to forty-eight (please see the insert accompanying this issue). In addition, they have increased the discount they offer to IAS donors by five percent: now all IAS supporters contributing \$25 or more will receive a twenty percent discount

on Perennial's entire stock.

We hope that everyone who values radical scholarship will help us meet our 1999 fundraising goal. It is the generosity of comrades around the world that has enabled us to award \$6000 in grants every year, publish *Perspectives* biannually, and build a small but growing endowment. It is this same generosity that will enable us to build the IAS's organizational strength, increase our grants, and offer other contributions to the development of radical social criticism.

It would be hard to convey our enthusiasm for the future without mentioning some of the developments that have occurred since the last issue of *Perspectives*. We completed our 1998 grant cycle with a \$2000 grant award to Sam Mbah for his *Military Dictatorship and the State in Africa* (see page 1). I am also excited to report that Will Firth and Melissa Burch have recently completed their IAS supported projects and that Paul Fleckenstein has just published his. We anticipate the completion of many more IAS sponsored works in the near future (see page 3 for details).

The IAS's 1998 fundraising campaign was also a great success thanks to the generosity of IAS supporters. Their contributions allowed us to exceed our \$9200 fundraising goal by \$700, enabling us to award another set of grants to talented and committed radical writers, publish two issues of *Perspectives*, and build the IAS endowment by \$1315. We are very grateful to everyone who made this possible. The fact that we met and exceeded our 1998 goal (and every fundraising goal we have set thus far) is a testimony to the continued vitality of the anarchist tradition of mutual aid.

The IAS has developed a track record of significant contributions in its three years of operation. We are excited to build upon this and believe that with careful planning, hard work, and the support of allies that we will increase the IAS's long-term strength and our ability to support the development of radical social criticism and ideals of freedom.

~ Chuck Morse



Study Groups

Study groups have always been important to the left, although their purpose and structure has changed as the left has evolved.

An awareness of the history of study groups can help us develop contemporary educational and political strategies. The excerpt reprinted below gives an overview of study groups in the Old Left, New Left, and the Women's Liberation Movement. It is reprinted from Revolutionary Theory by William Friedland (et al).

Serving a variety of purposes at different times, the study group demonstrates a combination of organizing, recruiting, and mobilizing concerns. The way in which study groups have served these functions has varied considerably in different contexts.

The Old Left

Particularly within the vanguard elements of the Old Left, the study group was viewed as an important educational and training device for recruitment. Consideration of the way Lenin defined the character of the vanguard organization [...] shows how this conception of organization requires intermediate training grounds within which people can be educated and tested prior to admission to the revolutionary party.

Members of Old Left organizations such as the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, or the Socialist Workers Party functioned in a variety of broader organizations such as unions, public protest groups, and "front" organizations. Within such wider public environments revolutionaries sought to identify individuals who might be potential members of their group. Attempts would then be made to bring such people into study groups and other similar organizations where their education could be furthered and they could be tested through their participation in various kinds of activities.

When an individual appeared to have some potential, in the initial phases he or she was referred to as a "contact." As individual study group members became better known, often because of their participation in the group and in actions undertaken by the group, a person would become considered a "prospect," that is, a prospective member. With the continuation of activity and study, an individual might apply for or

be suggested for membership.

At all stages, from contact to member, the educational development of the individual was considered of first importance. Since the vanguard concept requires a highly developed cadre of professional revolutionaries, the capability of individuals to understand and apply revolutionary theory and experience was regarded as vital. The study group constituted a major entity within which this educational process could unfold.

Old Left study groups would typically set out a course of study in the marxian classics. [...] The specific works to be studied varied according to the experiences and capabilities of the students and the skill of the study group leader in recognizing how fast students could be moved into the more abstract and difficult revolutionary works. At all times, the going might become too difficult for some participants or they might find themselves in political disagreement and drop away.

Old Left study groups would often turn to current ideological issues and, in particular, the kinds of issues that delineated the specific organizational concerns of the study group sponsor. Trotskyist groups, for example, focused much discussion on the Russian Revolution, its degeneration, and the character of Stalinism. As students became sophisticated with ideas and with the special language of revolutionary analysis, the study group would move to works of increasing difficulty.

Study groups, in and of themselves, were inadequate preparation grounds. Participants, as they developed knowledge and sophistication, would be asked to translate their information into concrete action. This might range from being called on to distribute newspapers at some factory gate to representing the organization's viewpoint within one's own union. Sophisticated people were expected, in turn, to bring new contacts into the periphery of the organization and perhaps help to organize new study groups. The study group thus served the function of education, but individuals were expected to translate their new knowledge into concrete strategies for action before they could demonstrate their worthiness to belong to the vanguard organization.

The New Left

Many aspects of Old Left study groups were reproduced in those created by the New Left in the

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IAS GRANT UPDATES

Melissa Burch has completed her project, *Autonomy, Culture, and Natural Resources in the Neo-liberal Age*. It has been distributed to non-profit groups and community resource centers in the US, Nicaragua, and Mexico. The chapter on southeast Mexico has been condensed into a small booklet and will be published and distributed by ACERCA (Action for Community and Ecology in the Rainforests of Central America). It will also be used as a study tool accompanying the Native Forest Network video about Chiapas. She was awarded \$800 in January 1998.

Paul Fleckenstein published his project on contemporary municipal development policy and practice in Burlington, VT (initially entitled "Civic Space and the Anarchist Dream"), as two articles in the September issue of *05401*, a Burlington based magazine. These articles are entitled "Most Livable Carnival" and "Felines, Felons, Foe: Who Decides Which Way This Town Will Go?". He was awarded \$500 in January 1997.

Allan Antiff's book, *The Culture of Revolt: Art and Anarchy in America*, is under consideration at University of Chicago Press. An article based on chapter five of his book, entitled "Cosmic Modernism: Elie Nadelman, Adolf Wolff, and the Materialist Aesthetics of John Weichsel" is forthcoming in the *Archives of American Art Journal*, March 1999. He was awarded \$1000 in January 1997.

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What's Happening: Books & Events

Two new books promise to broaden our conception of the anarchist tradition as well as its influence upon twentieth century intellectual life. Carl Levy's forthcoming anthology, *Gramsci and the Anarchists*, treats Italian anarchism from the beginning of the century to the rise of fascism, charting its relations with Antonio Gramsci and the Turin-based Ordine Nuovo group. This book will deepen our understanding of Gramsci as well as the history of anarchism (320 pages, NYU Press, 1998). German readers will want to explore Lou Marin's *Ursprung der Revolte: Albert Camus und der Anarchismus* (trans: *The Origin of Revolt: Albert Camus and Anarchism*, 328 pages, Graswurzelrevolution, 1998). Marin argues that anarchism shaped the essence of Camus's response to the Algerian War of Independence. It draws upon his lectures on anarchism, contributions to anarchist journals, and lifelong contact with the French anarchist movement. It concludes with a discussion of contemporary efforts to rehabilitate Camus as an anarchist.



Gramsci

There is a growing body of literature on the nature and significance of radical social movements at the end of the millennium. Bill Weinberg's forthcoming *Homage to Chiapas: The New Indigenous Struggles in Mexico* will make an exciting contribution (288 pages, Verso, August 1999). This book focuses on contemporary social and ecological activism throughout Mexico, with an emphasis on the South. It looks at popular struggles against Pemex (the state-owned oil company) in the state of Tabasco; an Indigenous uprising against plans for a giant computer complex and golf course in Tepoztlan; the Zapatistas; the Ejército Popular Revolucionario (EPR); and the 'War on Drugs' as a post-Cold War counter-insurgency model. A forthcoming anthology by John Womack, author of *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*, studies movements in this region from a different perspective. *Rebellion in Chiapas: An Historical Reader* (288 pages, New Press, March 1999) looks not only at the five years of conflict since the Zapatista's 1994 uprising but also at 500 years of struggle and uneasy accommodation be-

tween Chiapas' primarily Mayan population and the Spanish conquerors and criollo landowners. For a perspective on dissent in another continent and social context, Spanish-readers will want to consult *Lucha Autónoma: una Visión de la Coordinadora de Colectivos (1990 - 1997)* (196 pages, Librería Asociativa 'Traficantes de Sueños', 1998). This book contains interviews, pamphlets, theoretical texts, and debates from the autonomous movement in Madrid.

Contemporary movements have a living heritage in the older revolutionary tradition, one that still demands serious study and explication. Proficiency in Italian is necessary to appreciate one of the most comprehensive efforts in this regard. At more than a thousand pages, Giampietro Berti's *Il pensiero anarchico: Dal Settecento al Novecento* (Trans: *Anarchist Thought from the 1700's to the 1900's*) is quite literally a massive contribution to the history of anarchism with a special focus on its Italian strains (1030 pages, Piero Lacaita Editore, 1998).

Although anarchists were among the most courageous and intransigent opponents of European fascism, there is very little historical work on their efforts. Two forthcoming publications from the Kate Sharpley Library (KSL) will help rectify this problem. This spring the KSL will release a pamphlet on Italian activities entitled *Anarchists Against Fascism* (various authors). They will also release a translation (by Paul Sharkey) of Michele Corsentino's biography of Michael Schirru, an Italian-American anarchist executed in 1931 for planning to assassinate Mussolini. Both works will be available from AK Press.

Two new publications will nuance our understanding of Japanese anarchist history. Victor Garcia's forthcoming pamphlet from the Kate Sharpley Library, *Three Japanese Anarchists*, examines Ōsugi Sakae, Taiji Yamaga, and Kōtoku Shūsui (available from AK Press). Bakunin's 1861 visit to Japan is the subject of a fascinating new article by Philip Billingsley entitled "Bakunin in Yokohama" (pp. 532-570, *International History Review*, September 1998).

Nigel Anthony Sellars's *Oil, Wheat, & Wobblies: The Industrial Workers of the World in Oklahoma, 1905-1930* offers a critical appraisal of an important dimension of American radical history (320 pages, University of Oklahoma, 1998). Sellars analyzes the IWW's role in Oklahoma from the

IAS on the Web

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<http://home.newyorknet.net/ias/Default.htm>

founding of the union in 1905 to its demise in 1930. He describes IWW efforts to organize migratory harvest hands and oil-field workers in the context of a broad social history of Oklahoma labor. He examines the relationship between the IWW and other left and labor groups and uses court cases and legislation to explore government repression of the IWW during World War I. He concludes with the IWW's decline after the war. He suggests that its decline should be attributed more to the union's failure to adapt to postwar technological change, an attachment to outmoded tactics, and internal policy disputes than to political repression.

Although historical work on anarchism continues to grow, it has lost one of its enthusiasts: we are saddened to note that Jerome Mintz, author of *The Anarchists of Casas Viejas*, died on November 22, 1997 in Bloomington, Indiana after a long struggle with leukemia. His final work, *Carnival Song & Society: Gossip, Sexuality and Creativity in Andalusia* (256 pages, NYU Press, 1997), explores important facets of cultural life in one of the regional centers of the classical anarchist movement.

Anarchism has always had a productive relationship with the arts, especially the visual arts, and Richard Porton's forthcoming *Film and the Anarchist Imagination* will help unravel one of its dimensions (320 pages, Verso, April 1999). In this comprehensive survey of anarchism in film, Porton deconstructs cinematic stereotypes of anarchists while offering an account of films featuring anarchist characters and motifs (from the early cinema of Griffith and René Clair to Ken Loach's contemporary work). This is set in the context of a broad examination of the tradition of anarchist thought (from Bakunin to Bookchin). The relationship between anarchism and film continues to unfold thanks to Argentina's Fundación Alumbra, who will release two new films this year. *The Strike of Loonies* is a documentary video by Mariana Arruti examining the anarchist led strike of the Ship-Building Workers Federation in 1956, known as "the longest strike of the century." Their next documentary will study Argentine anarchist Severino Di Giovanni and his group around 1930.

The "Biblioteca-Archivo de Estudios Libertarios" will contain a good deal of information about the Ship Builder's strike, Di Giovanni, and other aspects of Argentina's rich anarchist history. This archive was recently opened by the Federación Libertaria Argentina, an anarchist organization dating back to 1935. They are presently cataloging and organizing their material, which in-

cludes massive amounts of books, pamphlets, photographs, and other items collected over the years. Please contact them to consult their collection at: Biblioteca Archivo de Estudios Libertarios, Brasil 1551, (1154) Buenos Aires, Argentina, Email: Fla@siscor.bibnal.edu.ar.

Several upcoming events will provide great opportunities to meet friends and discuss contemporary radical politics. Anarchists from around the world will browse literature tables and participate in discussions at the *Fourth Annual Bay Area Anarchist Book Fair* on March 27, 1999 at the San Francisco County Fair Building in Golden Gate Park (contact Bound Together Books for information). Anarchists from Argentina and other countries will gather at this year's *Encuentro Anarquista* on April 1-4, 1999 in Córdoba, Argentina. There will be a broad discussion with a focus on the theme 'Mechanisms of Domination/Mechanisms of Freedom.' For information contact Mariano Ceballos 2867, El Trebol, Córdoba 5010, Argentina, Fax: (54-351) 465 9720, email: granco@usa.net. The Institute for Social Ecology will mark 25 years of radical education and activism at the *25th Anniversary Celebration Gathering* on August 20-22, 1999 at the ISE. There will be workshops, seminars, and social gatherings (contact the ISE for more information). The second *International/Interpolis Conference on The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism* will take place on August 27-29, 1999 in Plainfield, Vermont. This working conference follows a previous meeting in Lisbon, Portugal and is held for those interested in discussing and advancing libertarian municipalism (contact the International Organizing Committee, Burlington-Montreal for information). *The 27th Annual Reunion of the Friends of Ferrer Modern Schools* will take place this September, most likely at Rutgers University (for information contact the Friends of the Ferrer Modern School). French Speakers will want to attend the International Symposium: *L'Anarchisme a-t-il un Avenir? Histoire de Femmes, d'Hommes et de Leurs Imaginaires* (What is the future for anarchism? The History of Women, Men, and Their Visions) at the Université Toulouse on October 27-29, 1999. This conference will draw upon anarchism's past, present and possible future to explore answers to the question 'What does it mean to be a revolutionary in the 21st century?'. For information contact: GRHI, colloque Anarchisme, Maison de la recherche, Université Toulouse-le Mirail, 5. Allée A. Machado, 31058 Toulouse cedex, France. email: jf.soulet@wanadoo.fr or atelierlib@aol.com. Web: www.multimania.com/atelierlib/toulouse.htm ~

EL LOKAL

El Lokal is a self-managed, anti-authoritarian cultural center and meeting space located in Barcelona's old quarter.

Founded 10 years ago, El Lokal runs a library holding more than a thousand books on anarchism, anti-militarism, sociology, ecology, feminism, libertarian pedagogy, and anti-psychiatry. It is also a resource for publications, documents, and reports from current campaigns against multinationals like McDonald's, the movement against Maastricht, and other activities taking place in Catalonia. The library is open and available to the public.

El Lokal also organizes talks and debates and offers their space to radical groups in need of a meeting-place. The following collectives can be found there: Collective Against the Death Penalty and for Mumia Abu-Jamal's Freedom; the Zapatista Solidarity Collective; and the Assembly of Barcelona's Youth who Refuse Obligatory Military Service (Insumisos).

El Lokal also sells anti-authoritarian books (emphasizing independent publishers) and produces *La Lletra @*, a quarterly anarchist periodical, with the Libertarian Athenaeum of Reus.

For information, please contact El Lokal at Calle de la Cera, 1 bis, ground floor, 08001 Barcelona, Spain Ph: 34-93-329 06 43, Web: www.pangea.org/ellokal

~ Eva Garcia

**CEDRIC ROBINSON:
BIOGRAPHY**

Born in Oakland, California in 1940, Cedric Robinson's radical convictions were first nourished by his grandfather whose radicalism had compelled him to flee from Alabama to California in the late 1920's.

These convictions became practical when - as a high school and then university student in California's Bay Area - Robinson joined other Black radical students to struggle against campus authorities and the iniquities of American foreign and domestic policies.

His activist engagement found a complement in a rigorous commitment to study, inquiry, and critique. He received a BA in social anthropology from the University of California at Berkeley and completed his graduate work at Stanford University in political theory. He came to the University of California at Santa Barbara with his wife Elizabeth in 1979, five years after the birth of their daughter Najda.

At UCSB Robinson has served as Director of the Center for Black Studies; the chair of the Political Science Department; and then chair of Black Studies. In addition to academic work, Robinson is a community activist in the Santa Barbara area where, among other things, he hosts a TV news program entitled "Third World News Review."

When asked to identify individuals or thinkers who have had the greatest influence upon his work, Robinson cites his grandfather, Winston White-side, C.L.R. James, and Terrence Hopkins.

Capitalism, Marxism, and the Black Radical Tradition:

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The Tradition's first stage of development is oppositional, i.e. the negation (resistance) of the negation (slavery); the response to the attempted cultural alienation and the effected physical, geographical and social alienation of slavery.

But slavery itself must be understood in a new way by readers familiar with the melodramatic and Eurocentric narrative of slavery as the capture, impressment, and exploitation of primitive peoples. I attempted to intrude upon the familiar construction of slavery as a superior culture overtaking an inferior culture. This narrative is hegemonic and must be ruptured.

In order to present this to the readers it is important to recognize the cultural history of the enslaved, but this is not easily done. The Black Radical Tradition is not a biological reflex, but a reconstitution of historical, cultural, and moral materials, a transcendence which both transfers and edits earlier knowledges and understandings among the several African peoples enslaved.

The dialectical method is well suited to these tasks.

In Black Marxism you point to a distinctively 'African consciousness' that informed the commitments, insights, and politics of Black radicals. What is this consciousness and what is its importance for Black radical politics?

I believe that the historical struggles in Africa and the New World culled some of the best virtues of their native cultures. One such virtue was democracy, the commitment to a social order in which no voice was greater than another (I wrote about some of the precedents for this regime in *The Terms of Order*).

This alternative to hierarchy also produced a critique of political order; and during the anti-slavery struggles, it achieved a rather sophisticated critique of the rule of law. And the core and tributaries of this moral philosophy were what Greek classicists term the transmutation of the soul. So, from the center of a world view in which the reiteration of names (an African convention in which the name of a recently deceased loved one is given to the next child born) reflected the conservatism and responsibilities of a community, the resolve to value our historical and immediate interdependence substantiates democracy.

This heritage gave Black Radicals many things. For example, it gave them an ability to retain the value of life, a fact that had many consequences, such as presenting restraints on the use of violence as a political instrument.

In analyzing the contributions made by W.E.B. DuBois, C.L.R. James, and Richard Wright to the Black Radical Tradition you highlight DuBois's emphasis on the peasants' revolutionary role, James's critique of the Leninist party model, and Wright's emphasis on the cultural dimensions of revolutionary politics. These observations have been constitutive of the anarchist tradition and, to a lesser degree, libertarian socialism. Do they create a unique common ground upon which Black radicals and anti-authoritarians from other backgrounds can meet?

What these anti-authoritarian traditions have in common is that they confront and show the necessity of avoiding certain conceits which follow from the general theory of revolution in Marxism.

One conceit is class; another is determinancy; and another is the stage-construction of history. As Amilcar Cabral argued thirty years ago, class is not a world-historical phenomena enveloping the histories of all peoples; and culture and consciousness are as powerful in determining choice and behavior as the material reproduction of a society. Finally, the discrete stages of history which Marx borrowed from the Scottish Enlightenment of the 17th century hardly corresponds with any human history, even European's.

However, I do not believe that it is necessary for a convergence of these traditions to take place. They are all assaults on the same social and political authority. We should remember, for example, that the Russian Revolution - despite its reconstruction as a consequence of the Leninist party - was the result of many different revolutions (revolutions for which Lenin or Trotsky had no responsibility or theoretical understanding). The Tsarist regime did not collapse under the weight of a single force.

Black and other radicals originate and articulate distinct histories which converge and diverge depending on historical circumstance: this was James's conception of the confluences of the Haitian slaves and the French peasantry, etc.; a historical correspondence which was broken by the time Frantz Fanon wrote of French colonialism, French workers, and the colonized subject. These histories of radicalism are neither determined nor dictated by the world-system, merely given local impulse.

Marx believed that a communist society could only emerge from the European working class. Black radicals and others excluded from world-historical significance by Marx confronted this claim and produced important insights into the nature of capitalist development and revolutionary agency. Are these insights developed by

An Interview with Cedric Robinson

Black radicals distinct from those generated by similar confrontations among other peoples?

What is similar is the historical tendency to succumb to the seductions of nationalism on the premise that Marxism is essentially Eurocentric. It is as a response to the denial of historical agency within Marx that many non-western radicals have often thrown themselves into nationalist projects. (Although many recent movements, such as the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, are no longer concerned or consumed by that problem.)

But confrontations with Marx's historical vision are also shaped by the social context in which they unfold. The Black Radical Tradition emerged in the belly of the beast, in a setting where physical and cultural problems were very immediate and the surveillance of Black radicals was omnipresent. Black radicals thus took slave society, colonial, and post-colonial society at its word and attempted to subvert in on this basis. Whereas Chinese Marxists, for example, saw capitalism and the West as an invasive force coming from without. The Chinese revolutionaries never conceded to the West its self-definition, and thus had a different relationship to Marx's historical vision.

The relationship between the West and Africa, mediated by the development of capitalism, is central to your discussion of Black radical politics. However, at a time when capitalist firms are increasingly globalized and various non-western economies are major factors of the world economy, the 'West' plays a more ambiguous role as a center of capitalism. How does this change the character of Black radical politics?

Changes in capitalism have produced changes in Black Radical politics and they also provide new opportunities. For instance, racial capitalism in England and the US exposes the instability of race categories. In England, where South Asians are Black as well as Africans and West Indians, this creates an opportunity for political alliances which were never anticipated by capitalism.

However, Marx and later Marxists were enthralled with the notion that capital would organize the world into a single order and then the proletariat would inherit that ordered world. I have never conceded the notion that the West has ordered the world in a rational whole: no coherent order, no singular whole, has ever been forged under the authority of capital and the unifying language of world systems theory simply does not capture the chaos of capitalism.

For the purposes of liberation, it is not

necessary for Black radicalism to shadow or reiterate the world-system. There will be no proletarian armageddon with capitalism. Centralism is anathema to revolutionary change for the courage, resolve, and intelligence necessary to defeat oppression issues from different historical and cultural sites.

I believe it is necessary for the Black Radical Tradition to remain focused upon the cultural legacies that have provided for its strengths. The Tradition is most powerful when it draws on its own historical experiences while resisting the simplifications of Black nationalism. This protocol allows for the emergence and recognition of other radical traditions, drawing their own power from alternative historical experiences.

In Black Marxism you argue that racism is integral to the development of capitalism. However, given the emergence of various Asian economies (including 'socialist' China), it appears that capitalism has taken on a much more multi-cultural character. Has the relationship between race and capitalism changed in fundamental ways and, if so, what does this imply for a radical, anti-racist politics?

When we inspect the expansions of capital in Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, etc. we discover racial protocols. These are encrusted from much earlier histories (for example, a thousand years of slavery in Korea).

What is important to remember is that capital never develops according to pure market exigencies or rational calculus. Whatever the organization of capitalism may be and whoever constitutes its particular agencies, capitalism has a specific culture. As Aristotle first revealed, capital accumulation is essentially irrational. And as was the case in his time, race, ethnicity, and gender were powerful procedures for the conduct of accumulation and value appropriation.

You describe a dialectic between Black radicalism and the larger social order in which Black radicalism gradually evolves, understanding itself more deeply and articulating a more incisive, revolutionary critique. However, revolutionary, anti-capitalist commitments are far less prevalent in Black politics and theory today than a decade or two ago. What does this indicate about the evolution of the Tradition as a whole?

I do not believe that the Black Radical Tradition is at a low point. For example, there are vanguard movements in the Tradition: think of the

Continued on next page ...

CEDRIC ROBINSON: SELECTED WORKS

Black Movements in America. New York: Routledge, 1997.

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"Race, Capitalism, and the Anti-Democracy" in *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. by Robert Gooding-Williams. New York: Routledge, 1993.

"In the Year 1915: D.W. Griffith and the Whiteness of America." *Social Identities*, Vol. 3, No. 2, June 1997.

"In Search of a Pan-African Commonwealth." *Social Identities*, Vol. 2, No. 1 Feb. 1996.



... Robinson Continued

reception of Nelson Mandela in the US after his release from prison. He became a marker for the advance of the Black Radical Tradition as a whole in the minds of many Black Americans. On the other hand, local conditions in places like the US have not produced such world historical individuals in recent times.

But the world is dynamic, constantly changing, constantly creating new possibilities (see, for instance, how far revolutionary agendas were pursued by youth gangs in Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco in the post-Civil Rights era). All over the US, Black Radicalism is manifesting itself in urban churches, in theory (i.e. doctrine) and practice (i.e. volunteerism). What will be the next phase, when the rule of law becomes transparently farcical, the Christian right achieves its fascist perfection, and the State acquires a predominantly carceral posture towards the majority of Blacks, Latinos, etc.?

The conflicted relationship between intellectuals and popular movements is an important theme in your work. Does the emergence of high-profile Black Studies departments (at Harvard, example) and the popularity of writers such as Cornell West, bell hooks, Henry Louis Gates Jr., etc. mark a new stage in the relationship between Black intellectuals and movements?

Hegemonic control of Black Studies is as important to capital as any other field of knowledge production. The selective breeding of Black intellectuals in this country is even older than the appearance of the philanthropic Black colleges of the late 19th century; and the necessity of dominating Black knowledge production finds a template in the Gunnar Myrdahl enterprise in the years of World War II.

However, Black Studies is revolutionary in its political and historical origins and intellectual impulses. To paraphrase C.L.R. James, who insisted that Black Studies was the study of Western Civilization, Black Studies is a critique of Western Civilization. This is all too apparent in one of the first articulations of radicalism by David Walker in 1829. Modern slavery, Walker demonstrated, was not like Ancient Mediterranean slavery; modern Christianity could not oblige a Just God; education had to have a revolutionary emancipation as its central virtue, etc. So at those sites of its inception,

Black Studies was seen as preparatory to re-articulating justice and the Good.

The Tradition is by now well prepared to defend itself against attempts to colonize it: after all Black revolutionists were working with George Washington Carver at Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee preserve. Imagine the contradictions!

As a new and controversial development in the analysis of ethnicity, what role do you think 'Whiteness Studies' can play in fighting white supremacy and what are its limitations?

Whiteness Studies deconstruct and decenter whiteness, showing that it is an artifice, that it has a history and one that does not go back very far. The best of the work (like George Lipsitz's *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*) is an extension of radical Black Studies.

Although it is currently in fairly progressive hands, problems could emerge. For example, it could be used to challenge the very existence of Black Studies. It could lend itself to arguments such as: "we've gone too far: we've had Black Studies, now we have White Studies, what we need to do is prosecute a universal American identity". Or, in the same vein: "if you can't give us resources for White Studies then the you shouldn't provide resources for Black Studies." These are possibilities.

The American University integrates people into the capitalist social order and is also the primary setting in which radical social criticism is (currently) developed. How has academia helped or hindered your work as radical social critic?

The academy is indifferent if not hostile to Black Studies. Since WWII the University has become very dependent upon state support and Black Studies has remained outside the pale of this support. For example, the most well funded research on Black youth are essentially police studies. Racism simply remains a powerful break on Black Studies and research in the academy.

The hostility and indifference to Black Studies makes collaborative work very difficult. So, too often, serious work is done in the singularity of private labor. This has presented difficulties for me and many others working in the field. This obstacle frustrates not only individual efforts but also the development of Black Studies as such.

Given the distinctions you have made between Marxism and the Black Radical Tradition, how do you define your own political commitments?

What name do you give to the nature of the Universe? There are some realms in which names, nomination, is premature. My only loyalties are to the morally just world; and my happiest and most stunning opportunity for raising hell with corruption and deceit are with other Black people. I suppose that makes me a part, an expression, of Black Radicalism.

Please tell me about your forthcoming book, The Anthropology of Marxism: A Study of Western Socialism?

This work attempts to extricate the history and origins of socialism in the West from Marxism. This requires moving beyond the chronological constraints imposed by Marx (socialism can only follow capitalism, etc.) and suggesting a more open epistemology of socialism. In a sense I revisit familiar sites (Hegel, Kant, Engels, etc.) only to mark forgotten and suppressed work (e.g. Hegel's study of British political economy) in order to proceed to the unexpected richness of the history of socialist visions and pursuits.

Please tell me about future projects you have planned.

My next project concerns the American racial imagination formed from and cast through American films. This is another attempt to get at the social imagination, particularly how it relates to the changing construction of Blackness.

As someone fascinated with culture and its potentialities, interrogating film is another means of determining how popular cultures contest with mass cultures; the latter being stories about the world and human experience which are manufactured for the masses by elites. Aristotle once wrote that the many are wiser than the few. In the best sense of this observation, the conflict between social history and popular cultures, on the one hand, and induced memories of the past on the other may be the most important site of analysis in a civilization whose technicians can now design virtual reality. Under these changed circumstances it becomes even more imperative that we can distinguish authentic (historical) radicalism from imagined radicalism. ~

African Anarchism: Interview with Sam Mbah

African Anarchism: The History of a Movement (See Sharp Press, 1997) by Sam Mbah and I.E. Igariwey is the first book-length treatment of anarchism and Africa. The authors argue that anarchism provides a coherent framework with which to comprehend and respond to the multiple crises afflicting the continent. I met with Mbah on November 4, 1998 at the beginning of his North American speaking tour. ~ Chuck Morse

You state that "the overall tendency in the development of human society has been toward social equality and greater individual freedom." Do you share Marx's belief that capitalism is a progressive development in world-history and a necessary precondition of more adequate social forms?

The Marxist position is not completely accurate. Capitalism was a progressive development during its own epoch: it provided the grounds for the radicalization of the working class, which was not possible under feudalism and definitely a step ahead. It was based on this that the struggle against capitalism and the state-system intensified. However, I do not think every country or society must pass through this process or that capitalism is a precondition for human progress or development.

I also do not think that human history is predictable or can be tied to sequences developed by historians and writers. I believe that the capacity of ordinary people in a given society is so great that it can almost propel them to take destiny into their own hands at any point in time. It does not have to wait until capitalist development has taken root or the working class has been formed. The peasantry, for example, can also take destiny in their own hands if their consciousness is raised to a certain level. I do not believe in the compartmentalization of history into stages: I believe in the capacity of the ordinary people to struggle on their own and free themselves at any point in time.

Your book is grounded in anarcho-syndicalism, a tradition derived primarily from European historical experiences. What distinctive contributions can the African experience make to anarchism as a whole?

We attempted to point this out in our book. Although anarchism is not complete without the Western European contributions, we believe there are elements of African traditional societies that can be of assistance in elaborating anarchist ideas.

One of these is the self-help, mutual aid, or cooperative tradition that is prevalent in African

society. This society is structured such that there is reduced individualism and a collective approach toward solving problems and living life: reduced to its essence, I think that is what anarchism is preaching.

African traditional societies also offer some things we should learn from. For example, leadership - especially in societies where feudalism (and thus chiefdoms) did not develop - was horizontal and diffused, not vertical. Almost everybody in a given community or village took part in decision-making and had a say in anything that involved them. Even the elders would ordinarily not declare a war against the next village except if there was a consensus, which was really the binding force of African society. Also, the extended family system, in which your nephew could come live with you and your wife, is definitely something we recommend to anarchism. So, these are areas in which we think that African ideas could also be incorporated into anarchism. These ideas are enduring, almost in human nature as far as Africa is concerned.

The inability to combine a coherent critique of the state and capitalism with a critique of racism has exacted an enormous toll on anarchism. In what sense must an analysis of racism and white supremacy complement a class analysis?

The capitalist system we inherited thrives on the exploitation of workers and other non-dominant classes and also exploits racial differences. It has instituted a permanent racial dichotomy among workers, where there is a group of privileged workers and another, not so privileged group. There is a double exploitation: an exploitation of the working class in general and an even greater exploitation of the non-white working class. This was not properly addressed even by Marxism, because it assumed a unity of interests among the working class without reference to the specific kinds of exploitation and deprivation faced by workers.

Racism is a key factor in this world and any working class analysis that seeks to deny this is only being escapist. Racism is simply endemic in capitalism.

It is for workers to comprehend this, as a basis for unity within their own ranks and to move forward. This must be recognized by anarchist activists and social movements, so as to integrate blacks and whites to face a common enemy, which is capitalism and the social relations of production that it puts in place. ~

SAM MBAH

Born in 1963 in Enugu, Nigeria, Sam Mbah embraced anarchism shortly after the collapse of the Soviet Union while studying at the University of Lagos. Like many radicals, he entered a period of deep political reflection after the breakdown of the Eastern Block, one that prompted him to re-examine his previous Marxist commitments and ultimately led him to the anti-statist, anti-capitalist politics that is anarchism. North American publications such as *The Torch* and *Love and Rage* were especially important to this process.

Mbah currently makes his living as the Lagos correspondent for Enugu's *Daily Star* newspaper. He is also very active in the Awareness League, an anarchist organization committed to the libertarian transformation of Nigeria. The Awareness League is active in political education, various social campaigns, and environmental protection. It presently has 600 members and eleven branches throughout the country.

Mbah and I.E. Igariwey (the co-author of *African Anarchism*) are currently working on their next book. This will be an anarchist critique of military dictatorship in Africa, which they intend to complete by the end of 1999 (see page 1).

Mbah sites two Nigerians when asked to recommend other African authors he finds particularly sympathetic to anarchism: Ikenna Nzimiro and the late Mokwugo Okoye.

You can contact the Awareness League at: AL, POB 1920, Enugu State, Nigeria ~

IAS GRANT AWARDS

... Continued from Page 1

instability, economic difficulties, and lack of freedom inherent in the state system and neo-colonial capitalism.

Drawing on case studies of Nigeria, Egypt, Zaire, and other countries, they will address the role of the military as an institution on the African continent since the 1960's. They will examine military dictatorship in an historical context, the relationship between the military and state system, and its connection to the international political order. They will also portray the repression of free speech and human rights, corruption and economic mismanagement, and the destruction of communal African values.

The authors will conclude that overthrowing military dictatorships will not put an end to the oppressive conditions on the African continent. They will show that military dictatorships are not isolated aberrations of the state system and that nothing short of an anarchist response to the state and capitalism will fundamentally advance the African people to freedom.

The scheduled completion date for this project is December 1999.

If you are interested in applying for a grant, please send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to the IAS. Grant applications are also available at the IAS's website: <http://home.newyorknet.net/ias/Default.htm>.

... Grant Updates continued from Page 3

Will Firth completed his translation of three Eastern European anarchist writings. The first two articles are translations from Russian. They are entitled "A Survey of the Anarchist Movement in the Ukraine 1987-1994" and "Under Fire Between the Lines" (about the Volunteer Medical Brigade formed by anarchists and socialists during the 1993 seizure of the Russian parliament). The third is an excerpt from the Bulgarian language book *National Liberation and Libertarian Federalism* by Georgi Khadzhieff. He is currently securing publication for the translations. He was awarded \$600 in June 1998.

Joe Lowndes continues research for his piece, "Anarchism and the Rise of Rightwing Anti-statism." He is focusing most recently on the history of agrarian radicalism in the US as well as the decline of trust in the government since the Civil Rights movement and its link to the development of white class resentment (from Wallace supporters to Reagan Democrats to contemporary rightwing anti-government activists). His next focus will be the politics and strategies of current anti-statist movements on the right as both articulations of older forms of agrarian protest and contemporary responses to the neoliberal state. The expected completion date is May 1999. He was awarded \$1000 in June 1998.

Lucien van der Walt has nearly completed three out of five chapters for his project, *Anarchism and Revolutionary Syndicalism in South Africa, 1904-1921*, including work on the IWW of South Africa, the International Socialist League, and the Industrial Workers of Africa. Sections of the work are under consideration at various academic journals and he has also presented a seminar paper titled "'The Industrial Union is the Embryo of the Socialist Commonwealth': The International Socialist League and Revolutionary Syndicalism in South Africa, 1915-1919." He was awarded \$500 in June 1998.



Montseny

Patricia Greene continues research for her book, *Federica Montseny: The Woman and the Ideal/La Mujer y El Ideal*, and she has recently traveled to Spain and France to access archives and conduct interviews. She has also begun creating the Federica

Montseny Web Page accessible at <http://www.msu.edu/user/greenep/FedericaMontseny.html> and recently published an article entitled "Federica Montseny: Chronicler of an Anarcho-Feminist Genealogy" in *Letras Peninsulares* (vol. 11, no. 2, 1997: pp. 333-354). She was awarded \$900 in June 1998.

Mark Bonhert and Richard Curtis anticipate an early 1999 completion date for their project "Passionate and Dangerous: Conversations with Midwestern Anarchists" (formerly "Post-Industrial Resources: Anarchist Reconstructive Efforts & Visions in the Upper Midwest"). Left Bank has agreed to distribute their project. They were awarded \$250 in June 1997.

Matt Hern and Stuart Chaulk secured a publisher, Broadview Press, a major Canadian publisher, for their book *The Myth of the Internet: Private Isolation and Local Community*. They were awarded \$1200 in January 1998.

Zoe Erwin and Brian Tokar continue working on their anthology *Engineering Life: A People's Guide to Biotechnology* and anticipate a nearly complete manuscript by early 1999. They are still looking for a publisher. The Edmonds Institute (Edmonds, WA) has expressed interest in issuing a limited pre-publication edition for anti-biotech activists. They were awarded \$1000 in June 1997.

Murray Bookchin's work on the Spanish anarchists will appear in Vol. 3 of the *Third Revolution: Popular Movements in the Revolutionary Era* (Castells). He anticipates publication by the end of 1999. He was awarded \$1000 in January 1997 for the completion of the second volume of his *Spanish Anarchists*.

Chris Day continues work on his book *Anarchism and the Zapatista Revolution*. He was awarded \$2000 in January 1998.

Peter Lamborn Wilson's introduction to the new edition of Enrico Arrigoni's (aka Frank Brand) *Freedom - My Dream: The Autobiography of Enrico Arrigoni*, continues to take shape. He was awarded \$250 in June 1997.

Frank Adams continues historical research for his piece "The Educational Ideas and Management Practices of 19th and 20th Century Anarchists in Labor-Owned Cooperatives." He anticipates completion by the end of 1999. He was awarded \$500 in June 1997.

The IAS's 1999 Fundraising Campaign

The IAS needs your support: we must raise \$10,000 by January 2000 to continue awarding grants to radical writers, publishing *Perspectives*, and building the IAS endowment.

Please help make this possible by sending a donation to the IAS today. Your contribution will help the IAS meet its 1999 fundraising goal and thus make the following contributions to the development of anti-authoritarian social criticism:

- The IAS will award \$6000 in grants to writers struggling with some of the most pressing questions in radical social theory today. IAS grants help radical authors take time off work, hire childcare, purchase research materials, pay for travel expenses and other things necessary to produce serious, thoughtful works of social criticism.
- The IAS will publish two issues of *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*, our biannual newsletter. *Perspectives* is a unique source of interviews, publishing news, and commentary pertaining to anarchism. It helps keep people informed about anarchist scholarship and encourages dialogue among those interested in this work.
- The IAS will add \$10,000 to its endowment. We will place 20% (\$2000) of fundraising income into the endowment and, upon the success of our 1999 fundraising campaign, a very generous IAS supporter will contribute an additional \$8000 to the fund. Our endowment strengthens the IAS as an organization and will ultimately provide the financial means with which we can expand our support for radical writers.

As an IAS donor you will receive each issue of *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory*. Also, all IAS supporters who donate \$25 or more will be able to choose from the great books listed on the insert accompanying this issue and will also receive a 20% discount at Perennial Books, an exceptional radical bookseller located in Conway, Massachusetts. Donations are tax-deductible for US citizens.

The following individuals and organizations have already donated or pledged a donation to the IAS's 1999 fundraising campaign:

Dan Chodorkoff ~ Rebecca DeWitt ~ Maura Dillon ~ Miranda Edison ~ Paula Emery ~ Paul Glavin ~ Michelle Matisons and Gardner Fair ~ Cindy Milstein ~ Chuck Morse ~ Caroline Morse ~ John Petrovato ~ Jon Scott ~ and the Kate Sharpley Library.

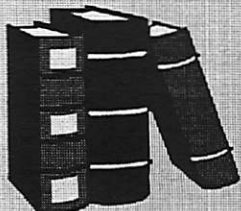
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1998 FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

The following groups and individuals made the IAS's 1998 fundraising campaign a great success. Their generosity helped the IAS raise more than \$9200 and thus continue to support radical writers, publish *Perspectives*, and build the IAS endowment.

Jerry Askeroth, Jon Bekken, Tom Copeland, Roger de Garis & Carolyn Francis, Rebecca DeWitt, Maura Dillon, John & Jolene DuBose, Miranda Edison, Bree Edwards, Elizabeth Elson, Paula Emery, Tony Epiceno, Richard Evanoff, Manuel Ferreira, Frank Gerould, Paul Glavin, Brian Goldberg, Luz Guerra, Thomas Johansson, Qayyum Johnson, Peter Kalberer, Jerry Kaplan, Richard Kostelanetz, David Koven, Alison Lewis, Mike Long, Michelle Matisons & Gardner Fair, Patrick McNamara, Gabe Metcalf, Cindy Milstein, Chuck Morse, Caroline Morse, Lynn Olson, John Petrovato, Eugene Rodriguez, Stanley Rosen, Bruno Ruhland, Jon Scott, Sidney & Clara Solomon, Patti Stanko, Peter Staudenmaier, Peter Stone, Elizabeth Sullivan, Gabriel Thompson, Dana Ward, Laura White, Dave Witbrodt, and Anonymous I & II.

Chumbawamba, Guelph Social Ecology Working Group, Jura Books, and the Kate Sharpley Library.

The IAS is particularly indebted to Anonymous I & II, Miranda Edison, Michelle Matisons & Gardner Fair, Caroline Morse, Chuck Morse, Jon Scott, Peter Staudenmaier, and Chumbawamba.

... Study Groups continued from page 3

1960s. As with the old, the primary function of study groups was seen as educational - providing opportunities for newcomers to familiarize themselves with classic socialist writers. Because the New Left was largely anti-vanguardist their study groups varied in purpose and tone from the older versions.

- New Leftists were much more concerned about learning environments and the size of organization than were the older generation. One aim of New Left study groups, therefore, was to create a smaller-scale atmosphere within which people would feel more comfortable than they could in large meetings.
- Because there were few vanguard groups for which to recruit, the study groups were not considered intermediate organizations in which people learned and were tested. Rather, these groups were intended to provide education and a linkage to action. Individual members were expected to determine their own degree of activism and involvement rather than striving for ultimate membership in the inner vanguard organization.

As with the Old Left, the New Left considered study groups to be useful but auxiliary devices to the main forms of organization and activism. The Old Left tended to be more thoroughly organized with respect to study groups and perhaps more detached from them, regarding them as necessary devices through which people could be tested. New Leftists brought spontaneous enthusiasm to their study groups so that their atmosphere was less serious and more personally engaging. Because of their lack of structure and spontaneity these groups often fell apart more easily than did Old Left study groups.

Women's Consciousness Raising Groups

The growth of the women's movement in the late 1960s saw the evolution of the study group as a distinctive form of mobilization with different intentions from either the Old or New Left. Although often ignoring a revolutionary perspective, some segments of the women's movement saw these groups as necessary for the formation of women's self-

consciousness.

The women's liberation movement has argued the need for personal liberation groups as devices for mobilizing the energies of women for change, whether revolutionary or not. Because women tend to be isolated from each other and because of the competitiveness imposed on them by American society, women came to view the personal liberation group as the first step in mobilization and self-organization.

Generally, small groups of women (between six and twelve) would meet and begin to know each other on a personal basis. At this initial stage, women were concerned with recounting personal experiences with sexism and to release - to openly acknowledge - their bitterness, frustration, and anger. They might examine past experiences and interpret them in terms of how they felt about them. At this stage, participants strove to admit their feelings about themselves, about other women, and about men. The expressions of individuals would be evaluated and discussed within the group, often by going around the room to seek comments and questions. Once individual "testimonies" were obtained, the group ideally attempted to locate common elements in the experiences.

There were often reasonable fears for the refusal to develop a higher consciousness, fears of seeing one's life as wasted and meaningless; or the fear of feeling the full weight of the uncomfortable and painful present; or despair for the prospects for change in the future. Personal liberation groups sought to articulate these fears and analyze them in terms of the objective conditions of women's situations in the past and present.

Study groups often reached a stage where they turned to a broader consideration of the sources of oppression. At this point the common experiences of other oppressed groups might be examined and the similarities to and differences from those of women would be analyzed. Broadening consciousness was regarded as important since the condition of women was recognized by most women's liberationists as only one form of systemic oppression. Again, resistance might develop to this

broadening tendency. Some women might remain committed solely to a women's struggle stance; others might again experience despair; still others would recognize the broader elements of oppression and see the opportunities to join with other groups in a common struggle, while protecting the integrity of the women's struggle.

Finally, personal liberation groups often turned outward and moved toward action. In this mobilizational phase, women sought to join active struggles in their organizations or in common organizations with others engaged in similar efforts. At this stage, women were expected to confront their oppression and deal with it openly. Activism might involve actions such as organizing new personal liberation groups for novices, learning to express oneself in public through writing and speaking, developing political campaigns on issues affecting women, and undertaking public relations activities to educate the general public.

Women's liberation study groups were distinctly different from those found in the Old and New Left. With personal liberation as a primary emphasis, they moved from individual therapeutic approaches to a broadening of consciousness before moving to public activism. Like the New Left groups, however, the emphasis was on the need to create small-scale environments within which individuals could feel comfortable and grapple with their own experience.

Note: this excerpt is reprinted from *Revolutionary Theory* by William Friedland et al (Totowa, N.J.: Allanheld, Osmun & Co., 1982), pp. 133-136.

Perspectives on Anarchist Theory

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