DRAFT MANIFESTO FOR BLACK LIBERATION

From the Black Left Unity Network

Draft 2.2

May 2015
Preface

Greetings Comrades, Sisters, and Brothers,

Herein we offer a revolutionary perspective on a much needed national program of action from a section of the Black Liberation Movement. In these critical times, when the masses are rebelling against the aggregate conditions of oppression we face -- from police murder and terror to homelessness, joblessness, the school to prison pipeline, direct attacks against workers rights and unions, the particulars of women’s oppression, the miseducation of our youth and our people generally, and the still ongoing fragmentation of our liberation forces -- we must come together, unite, and rebuild the National Black Liberation Movement. This is a call to action for all Black revolutionary organizations in particular, including Black caucuses inside multi-national revolutionary formations, and to revolutionary individuals generally who are prepared to join with others to build organization and movements among the masses.

We are calling for the convening of a National Assembly of the Black Liberation Movement in 2016. A National Black Assembly will hopefully enable Black left revolutionary organizations, veteran revolutionaries and younger revolutionary forces alike to meet, debate, and adopt a national program and to lay plans for building national revolutionary visibility, infrastructure, and organization among our people. Only a United National Black Liberation Movement can offer the level of guidance and direction needed to the masses who are looking for answers and the most effective way forward. All of us as conscious forces are needed and responsible to accomplish the monumental task being clearly called for in this period by the objective conditions confronting us.

This document is in its second drafting and is being circulated (and we ask for your help in sharing and spreading this document) widely with the intent to invoke discussion, debate, and a vision of the revolutionary motion that we must reignite under a unified national program of action. We call on you to convene study groups, panel discussions, community meetings, and so on to discuss this Draft Manifesto for Black Liberation and to offer your collective input, suggestions, ideas, and vision for revolutionary motion. Please join with us in the effort to organize and convene the National Black Assembly as one crucial step forward.

We invite you to read this draft and make whatever criticisms you feel are necessary. We must search for greater clarity and be inclusive of every essential point for the revolutionary consciousness needed for our struggle. We need you to take ownership of this manifesto and change it however you feel must be done - add to it. Share it with your comrades. We need a national discussion and debate to achieve the greatest consensus possible.

The Draft Manifesto will be revised every four months until the National Black Assembly is convened based upon the relevant input we receive from the discussions and debates across the country.

Yours in Solidarity,

The National Organizing Committee (NOC)
for the National Assembly of the Black Liberation Movement
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The Black Left Unity Network
Find our journal: http://jblun.org http://blackactivistzine.org
Introduction

The deep crisis facing Black people requires bold radical action. We can accept this challenge as individuals and as groups, but the strategic goal must be the rebuilding of a national movement for Black liberation. There are many groups, small and scattered even when organized on a national level. We are in the hundreds of thousands on an individual level of people who see the need for militant fight back. It is time for a great coming together to rebuild our Black liberation movement on a national level. This manifesto is being presented to you as a draft that we can all debate and make whatever revisions are necessary. We need to be on the same page and channel our efforts into one mighty force that can strike decisive blows against our oppressors.

Our Fight Has Always Been for Freedom

The history of Black people involves every aspect of life but there has always been a central theme, how can we get free from exploitation. This is a critical starting point for all education and self-consciousness in the Black community. It demonstrates the basic humanity of Black people, the will to live and find ways to improve the quality of our lives as a collective, a community, a nation. In order to be a revolutionary we have to know our history.

We Have a Black Radical Tradition to Build On

Our tradition of militant fight back has been anchored in six (6) ideological tendencies that are most often woven together in the thought and practice of any given individual, organization, or movement. These are: Black liberation theology, Pan-Africanism, Nationalism, Revolutionary Nationalism, Feminism/womanism, and Socialism. The most recent concentration of ideological discourse and debate has been in the 1960’s represented in the thought, life and work of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. In order to be a revolutionary we must study this radical Black tradition.

We Are Rebuilding the Modern Black Liberation Movement

There are many ways to identify when we have had a national Black liberation movement. The main point is having a high level of unity of the militant forces actively organizing and mobilizing at local levels. Moreover, this goes beyond single issue movements and grasps the overall character of fighting on all fronts. When we have had a high level of our national Black liberation movement we have had policy formation by bodies of national representation, coordination of national fronts of struggle, and major conferences in which ideological debate led to consensus and an intensification of resistance. This refers to the 1967 and 1968 Black Power Conferences, the 1970 Congress of African People, the 1970 revolutionary peoples convention of the Black Panther Party, the 1972 Gary National Black Assembly, the 1974 conference of the African Liberation Support Committee, and the 1998 Chicago launching of the Black Radical Congress. In order to be a revolutionary you must study these advanced stages of our national Black liberation movement.
We Are the Black Left Unity Network (BLUN)

Based on the lessons of these major conferences and the intensification of the capitalist crisis it has become clear that the Black liberation movement has to be rebuilt on the basis of the fighting capacity of the masses of working and poor people who are the vast majority of people in the Black community. This manifesto is being developed by the BLUN in order to recruit people and organizations who understand that racism, patriarchy, and national oppression can only be ended by waging a Black working-class led struggle in which the capitalist, patriarchal system is targeted as the main enemy of Black people, indeed all of humanity.

The BLUN has been in motion for the past eight years networking with individuals and organizations, building unity and joining every struggle that emerges. Our greatest advance in the last two years has been our journal, The Black Activist. This journal represents the kind of unity dialogue that we hope to spread. It begins the general theoretical work that can educate, motivate, and agitate for greater development of the national Black liberation movement that we need.

We seek to build the BLUN as the organizational framework for all Black revolutionary militants to come together. We invite all revolutionary minded organizations and individuals to join us to discuss our revolutionary ideas, to coordinate our struggles, and to mobilize the vast majority of our people in the fight back that is necessary to oppose and defeat our enemies. To deepen the unity and context of revolutionary struggle, we must get the necessary criticisms from our comrades based on the principle of unity-struggle-unity.

Black History is the Fight for Freedom

The lessons of history are general summations of a process, and can be about individuals and social groups, from the local level to the entire world. This process includes social forces that represent different classes and nations, as well as many other aspects of humanity (gender, sexuality, religion, generations, etc.). The main dynamic of the African American experience, the theme that embraces all Black people, is the fight not only to survive or thrive but to resist and end capitalist and patriarchal exploitation in whatever form it has been developed, from the slave trade and colonialism in Africa and throughout the African Diaspora, through sharecropping, industrial wage slavery, and now being damned to excruciating forms of poverty. The system has been against us but we have always fought back, and the fight back is the great theme of our history.

Africa

Africa was invaded by Europeans and Arabs. They gave Africa a double blow – they stole the people and forced them into the labor systems of slavery in the West, and they colonized African land and virtually enslaved the people who remained in Africa. In both instances they imposed Arab, European and western culture on African people, especially language, religion, family life and organization, sexuality, legal systems, what little education that was provided,
and cultural aesthetics. Indeed, the innate social systems of the indigenous peoples throughout the continent were undermined and patriarchal political and social relations were promoted where they did not already exist across the continent in order to exact control over the people and the great natural resources evident in Africa. The infamous colonization frenzy was organized and legalized by Europeans in the Berlin Conference of 1894-95.

After World War II African resistance movements expelled the invaders and created independent African countries beginning with Ghana in 1957. These countries were mainly guided by a rising African capitalist class who compromised the liberation struggles by aligning their policies with the capitalist system as embodied in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Many African revolutionaries who fought national oppression and represented the working class and struggles against imperialist neo-colonialism were murdered (e.g. Patrice Lumumba, Chris Hani, Amilcar Cabral, Eduardo Mondlane, Pierre Mulele, General China, Kimathi, Stephen Biko, etc.). Today all of Africa is facing the need for a 21st century national liberation revolution led by the working class and its impoverished masses.

The European Slave Trade

The process of raping Africa of its population was to serve the labor needs of Europe, especially in the fields and mines of the Americas. As Eric Williams and others have analyzed, this was a triangular trade of human trafficking that directly gave rise to capitalist industrialization and served to link Europe (manufactured goods) to Africa (Labor) to the Americas (extraction of raw materials). This barbaric process spread Africans to every island in the Caribbean and to every region of North, Central, and South America creating the modern African Diaspora.

Our freedom struggle raged against these crimes against humanity. Strong examples are Queen Nzinga Mbande of Angola, Joseph Cinque of the Amistad Revolt; the revolts in the U.S. South led by Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, and Gabriel Prosser; the leadership and resistance of freedom fighters such as Sojourna Truth as well as the remarkable leadership, resistance, and organized freeing of slaves from the plantations by Harriet Tubman.

The Slave System

Slavery was a labor system that bred, sold and worked Africans to death, lasting about 400 years! Millions of Black people were spread throughout the south to reproduce slaves, and to produce tobacco, rice, and many other products, especially cotton. Black field hands were worked to death in a system from “Can’t see to can’t see.” The double duty of Black women’s labor, which expressed reproductive and productive labor, intensified her exploitation.

It was the economic process by which the wealth of the ruling class was created that continues through inheritance and corporate profits as well as the higher incomes of the white working and middle classes till the present day.

Slavery, Cotton, and Capitalism

The production of cotton pulled Black people into the deep South, creating what became known as the “Black Belt”. Though slavery’s true role in the rise of capitalism has been deliberately obscured historically, the production and reproduction of slaves (commodification of African peoples) and their production of cotton for the world markets in the 1700 and
1800s was the economic basis upon which the modern industrial world developed, starting with the production of textiles in England and North America. Cotton produced in the U.S. South was the number 1 commodity in the world at the beginning of the 19th century. The industrial north as well as the slave south reaped the profits and benefits of slavery. Factories in the U.S. North which produced cloth for clothing and other commodities; ships departing from northern (and southern) ports to transport slaves and produced goods around the world; northern banks to grant credit for both slave and industrial expansion, all developed as a result of slavery. Even the wages of white workers in northern factories were made possible directly because of slave labor and the profits derived from the production of cotton and its place in the world markets at that time. *These are the historical facts that make reparations such an important question for the Black Liberation Movement both historically and today.*

**Emancipation**

As result of the two labor system – slavery in the South and wage labor in the North – there was struggle over the control of the federal government and which economic system would prevail. This struggle led to the Civil War. Slave labor threatened the wages of white workers and with the moral imperative to oppose this vicious system advocated by the Abolitionist Movement, many whites in the north were motivated to support the war.

Black people were not given freedom by anybody. They rose up and fought in many ways to be their own liberators. DuBois, in his master work, *Black Reconstruction* discusses the general strike of slaves withholding their labor and undercutting the slave regime. Black people fought in the Union Army at numbers (percent of total population) far higher than whites. That “general strike” referred to by DuBois and the entry of Black men into the Union Army was the decisive factor tipping the scales of the war in favor of the North, making the victory of the North over the South possible.

**The African American Nation**

After the overthrow of slavery, Black people, particularly in the Black Belt South where the majority of former slaves still resided, began to create African American culture that was a continuation of but different from their original African cultures. They created new social institutions, forms of speech/language and collective community life that were demonstrated in the church, in music and other social and political venues. They were concentrated in counties that were majority African American, dominated by the plantation economy, repressive county and state governments and a system of apartheid, known as “Jim crow” segregation.

The culture and new social institutions developed by the former slaves were both advances over the oppressive conditions of slavery and the embodiment of backward traditions existent in American society at that time, such as the patriarchal organization of the Black family and Black community life. These “New Africans” or African Americans created a division of labor among former male and female slaves, reinforced and encouraged by US institutions such as the Freedman’s Bureau, that placed limitations on the rights of women, subordinating them under male domination, both in the larger society and within the Black community. This held true even though it was both black men and women, who's labor and reproductive labor under slavery equally formed the basis of the rise of industrial Capitalism in Europe and the United States. All political rights and leadership roles in representing the African American people went to Black men while Black women were to maintain care for the family, home, and
community.

The modern Civil Rights Movement developed in opposition to the barbaric oppression imposed on Black people in the Black Belt, including rape and forced breeding under slavery; continued sexual assaults on Black women by white males as a form of reinforcing white supremacy; 150 years of lynchings; the punitive economic system of peonage (share cropping); the struggle against “Jim Crow” segregation and the right to vote.

**Dispersal to Proletarianization**

During the 20th century there was a push out of the south and pull into the North (West, Midwest and East) that dispersed Black people into the major cities of industrial development. Black people were forced out of the rural agricultural South into the urban industrial North.

Migration out of the South was forced through racist terror as well as an act of resistance in that people were rejecting old forms of oppression in search of a better life.

**Urban Ghettoization**

Racist segregationist practices dominated the cities and a real estate conspiracy forced Black people into the worst housing areas that concentrated all of the worse social problems usually under tight police social control. This major transformation was based on Black people being employed in the industrial system and on that basis building from their southern roots into new, major bases of potential political power.


**Crisis of Permanent Poverty**

Capitalism’s recurring economic crises have continually wreaked havoc on the lives of the oppressed black masses with high unemployment and the lack of jobs, the systemic patterns of poor education, the lack of adequate and affordable healthcare, and the lack of decent, affordable housing.

A technological revolution is reorganizing the basis of production in society, including dramatically reducing the demand for the labor of the old industrial system. The capitalist state is realigning and ending the social safety nets brought about by the struggles of the 1930s that forced the creation of the FDR New Deal and the struggles of the 1960s that led to the creation of the Great Society programs of Kennedy and Johnson.

A growing section of the Black community is being forced into permanent poverty, under the chemical assault of drugs both illegal and by prescription. And we are facing a new form of slavery in the prison system as well as the wealth transfer that has taken place through
predatory lending in housing, assaults on access to healthcare, public education, and employment.

**The Centrality of the South**

The Black liberation movement takes place in every state, every city, and has tasks in many countries around the world. However, special consideration must be given to the ancestral homeland of Black people in the US, the former slave states of the South. This is the largest concentration of Black people, the greatest levels of exploitation by US and global capital, and is leading the country in right wing initiatives.

A majority of African Americans living in the South has remained constant since slavery. In 2010, 55 percent of the black population lived in the South, and 105 Southern counties had a black population of 50 percent or higher. And the reverse migration of African Americans to the South is growing today.

**The Southern Basis of Black Working Class Exploitation:**

*Foreign Direct Investment and Global Capital in the South*

Throughout the 11 states of the Southern Black Belt, there are 11,523,063 people living in poverty. A single parent of two children working a full-time minimum wage job will make $10,712 before taxes—more than $4,500 below the federal poverty line. Black family income is less than half of white family income not only in the South but nation-wide. And the demonstrated wealth of the African American woman is the lowest of all in this society at $5.00! This is based upon our historic super exploitation as a people in the Southeastern region of this country, impacting upon black life everywhere across the US.

Because many Southern states have right-to-work anti-union laws, the region has recruited global capital (so-called foreign direct investment, FDI) to take advantage of cheap labor, low unionization, and a weak or non-existent regulatory environment for capital.

The most backward politicians with anti-democratic policies are based in the South. Their demand for state’s rights is a form of autonomy to keep the South as a region of right wing control and cheap labor.

**Our Fight is Against Capitalism….A Racist System of National Oppression, Patriarchy, and Imperialism**

The Black left is fighting on all fronts against all forms of oppression. A central point of unity is that all of our struggles can advance only to the extent that we mount a full assault on capitalism as a racist system of national oppression, patriarchy, and imperialism. Capitalism is the basis for the 1% control of this society. What many comrades call racism, but that we characterize as a form of National Oppression, is the deeply embedded ideological, political, social, and economic justification for Black dispossession. Patriarchy is the systemic economic and political exploitation and oppression of women, which cannot be separated from capitalism’s rise and sustainability. Imperialism is the source of national oppression, colonialism, and neocolonialism. Together, these systemic forms of exploitation and oppression are the source of our misery.

**What is Capitalism?**

Capitalism is an economic system that exploits the labor of the working people and feeds the
greed of the corporations and the rich who own the factories and machines. People work and create value turning raw materials into usable products and are paid much less than the value they create, only the minimum. Most of the rest is surplus taken by the corporations as their profit. There is a struggle between the workers and the owners over the allocation of this surplus – they live fat while we starve.

What is National Oppression?

National Oppression is a racist system of social, economic, political and cultural oppression and economic exploitation of historically formed oppressed peoples, their communities and histories. National Oppression developed as a means to keep the oppressed subjugated to imperialist oppressor nation states (such as Europe and USA) and the people (usually of European ancestry) that are identified with the founding of that nation state. It is a form of colonialism. As a structure of developing capitalism, beginning with the triangle slave trade, colonialism fostered racism and the biological LIE about race as a human category to promote white supremacy and white skin entitlement. The African American people suffer from national oppression.

What is Patriarchy?

Patriarchy is the system of male supremacy in all aspects of economic, political, social, and cultural life, subjugating the female gender to the male gender. Capitalism is at once a system of the exploitation of working people, while also developing and maintaining a racially and gender based taking of profits from the labor of the working people. As a patriarchal system, capitalism simultaneously exploits, subjugates, and oppresses women. This means that capitalism derives even greater profits from women by paying lower wages because they are women and deriving even further profits from their unpaid labor for the maintenance and care of the home and family life, supplying the Capitalist system with generations of relatively healthy human beings for purposes of the exploitation of all forms of productive and reproductive labor. For African American women, Capitalism has always meant a form of triple oppression – as African Americans, as workers, and as women. These systems are deeply embedded with one another.

What is Imperialism?

Imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism in its never ending need to derive more and more profits from the subjugation of poor nations and peoples throughout the world, including the theft (expropriation) of their lands and raw materials. The imperialist domination and spread of capital (big corporations and major industries) throughout the world has produced nothing less than genocide, unimaginable poverty and disease, chaos, wars of conquest and competition for control of markets, resulting in impoverishment and violence against women and children, and unparalleled misery across the globe. Imperialism has historically taken the form of colonialism and neocolonialism.

How Does Capitalism Exploit Us?

Today we live at a time when capitalism is transforming and increasingly replacing human labor with smart machines. If people are not working for a wage the market system is dysfunctional for the circulation of goods and service – no money means people can’t buy what they need.

Capitalism makes money on death and mass incarceration as the prison industrial complex
extraordinaire (highest prison population in the world). Capitalism's callousness about death includes the combination of bad food and bad health care, all varieties of drugs and alcohol, the TV culture that kills the mind, and the military industrial complex that produces major weapons for imperialist wars and all forms of military aggression including the police violence in the cities throughout the U.S.

**How Does Capitalism Exploit the World?**

Capitalism is an imperialist system of national oppression of peoples throughout the world. Using military invasions and global organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) among others, the global capitalists have invaded almost every country in the world to capture cheap labor and important raw materials. This continues the imperialist practice of moving wealth from the third world into the major European countries and the US.

The United Nations and NATO are used to justify imperialist military aggression.

**Can We Defeat the Capitalist System?**

Nothing lives forever – slavery ended, feudalism ended, and capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy will end as well. More and more the majority of humanity has no stake in the capitalist system and is rapidly growing to hate it and struggle against it. Outside of the US the discourse of resistance is explicit in its rejection of capitalism, but inside we face the soft terror of media and government obsessed with putting a gag rule on any alternative discourse. A good indication of the rejection of capitalism was the “Occupy Movement” that exposed the evil exploits of the ruling 1%. The end of capitalism, imperialism and patriarchy will only come with our militant unity of action and active resistance. The renewal of the struggles for national liberation and socialism throughout the world and within the US are key to the ending of national oppression, patriarchy, and the capitalist/imperialist system.

**National Liberation and Strategic Working-Class Unity Starts With the Leadership of the Black Working-Class**

**Why the Working Class?**

The majority of people in the US are working people, all of whom are being exploited by the capitalist system and they hate it. A majority of African Americans (both male and female) are working class and as a class, must take the lead in challenging capitalism, national oppression, patriarchy, and all forms of exploitation and oppression inside the US. The greatest allies of the Black Liberation Movement are the militants in the working class movements, especially from the oppressed nationalities and peoples from Africa, Latin America, Asia and all oppressed nationalities inside US Borders. Because of the white supremacy imbedded in the very essence of capitalism, there is a racist national chauvinism that turns some white workers into enemies of Black people under the false notion amplified by the mainstream media that we are the cause of their misery. As people fight in their own interest against the bosses and the state, the conditions may be created to expose the role of white supremacy, hopefully offering opportunities to win numbers of white workers, both at home and abroad, to an anti-racist unity with the working classes of the oppressed nations internationally and the oppressed nationalities inside US borders. Thus, Black workers must also take the lead in the fight against capital by calling for true anti-racist, anti-sexist unity of all working class sectors in this society and internationally. This is the meaning of the slogan solidarity in the workers movement.
Modern Black Worker Organizations

The first Black worker organization, The Colored National Labor Union, was formed in 1866 and included Frederick Douglass as one of its early leaders. High points in the organization of Black workers in the modern history of our struggle as a people include the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (1969), Black Workers Congress (1971), Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (1972), Black Workers for Justice (1981), and the Black Workers Unity Movement (1985). There are also many rank and file Black caucus groups, workers centers, and now the Southern Workers Assembly.

Black Working Class Women

The struggle against capitalism in the USA and world-wide, must also be a struggle against sexism, unequal pay, unpaid labor in the form of care for the family, and indeed against patriarchy itself. Black working class women are super exploited by capital as workers, as women, and as African Americans. Thus, while helping to lead in all organizations and areas of our struggles, sisters must also form a national organization of women with branches in their communities, workplaces, churches, unions, and the broader Black Liberation Movement to end the super exploitation (greater profits) of women workers.

National Black Revolutionary Women’s organizations must lead the fight against the exploitation of all working class and oppressed nationality women within the political, economic, social, and cultural realms of capitalism. We must fight to end all forms of sexism, male supremacy, sexual assault, rape, and violence against women, both domestically and within society as a whole. Domestic violence within the Black community must be stopped! Black working class women should also study and understand, along with all women, the exploitation of unpaid labor in the home and of reproduction under capitalism.

Class Unity with Latinos

National oppression and extreme capitalist exploitation of Latinos makes them close allies of Black people. This is especially true with the people who share a heritage from Mexico, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and other countries in the Caribbean, Central and South America such as Cuba, Brazil, and Venezuela.

The capitalist strategy is to divide workers and play them against each other. The most desperate will take lower wages creating a conflict if people lose their jobs. Our class unity must take a strong position against this capitalist ploy and unite Black and Brown workers in a common cause.

Class Struggle, Trade Unions, and Black Liberation

Initially the fight of workers is first and foremost a fight to have a job and then to make their working conditions better. This is the role and purpose of organizing trade unions, including the fight for higher wages, the elimination of all forms of racism on the job, an end to sexism and the lower women’s wage, for childcare, and for benefits such as affordable healthcare and retirement pensions with which they can lead a decent quality of life. As working people we must fight against unemployment and for structural changes in basic working conditions such as the shorter work week. Our task is to organize and
unionize whole work places and entire industries in the fight to end our exploitation as a people. This aspect of our struggle is necessary. But we believe we must go further and link these important struggles with the vision and preparation to defeat the capitalist system once and for all. We are in an all-out war of the capitalists against us, the workers. They will always cheat us, because capitalism dictates exploitation and that is how the game is played.

**We Fight On All Fronts**

The unity of the Black Liberation Movement and the workers movement under revolutionary leadership does not take place in the abstract. The class struggle against national oppression always takes place in a concrete context. It is our theory that keeps us focused on the underlying issues that unite us against the capitalist ruling class. The system of oppression and exploitation has always attempted to set us against each other, propped up people in between us and them, and employs the state and its police forces as their pawns of social control. While in the day to day struggle we confront many “in between” types (such as some black politicians and some of the so-called leaders of black organizations) it is important to keep our eye on the real enemy. And on each battle front it is useful to maintain a focus on a strategic slogan to guide us.

**Patriarchy and Black Women’s Leadership**

Patriarchy actually pre-dates or existed in various parts of the world before the rise of capitalism. However, under rising capitalism and it’s imperialist expansion for control of labor markets, raw materials, and land to feed its growing industrial needs, male supremacy became systematized and institutionalized along with racism in every part of the world as a means of control by the West. This meant European white male dominance over women, other peoples and cultures. But before the rise of capitalism and imperialism, there were many types of societies in existence across Africa. There were matriarchal societies in some African cultures and societies of relative “male/female equality” among Africans. Many women played roles of substance and leadership (economically, politically, and culturally or spiritually) in many African societies. These societies were largely, though not completely, eliminated with the rise of capitalism, colonialism (national oppression), imperialism, and patriarchy.

The Black Liberation Movement must overcome and correct the internalized male chauvinism in our history and advance the leadership of women at all levels of the Black Freedom struggle, in our communities, churches, unions, and promote equality in our homes.

The struggle against patriarchy, male supremacy, and sexism is key to rebuilding the black freedom struggle and the unity of our people as a whole. Although this struggle must be led by women, it must be taken up and supported by the whole black community, male and female alike!

The movement we need requires gender equality! Mobilize the women and follow the leadership of women on all battle fronts!

**Environmental Racism**

The capitalist system is destroying the natural environment of the world by unleashing profit seekers to ravage eco-systems, pollute the air and water, unleash nuclear waste, create global warming, and rapidly decrease bio-diversity that has built up over millions of years. The
African American people face the grave impact of environmental racism, as the US South has become the dumping ground for all types of dangerous waste by products from industrial and agricultural (animal) industries.

The earth’s resources must be a commons for the use of all humanity to share! End fossil fuel use! Our future must be green!

**The Elderly**

Our society is growing older but lacks sufficient support and respect for senior members of our communities. This includes removing them from trans-generational households and forcing them to face the crisis of declining incomes, weakening welfare support, poor health care, and isolation from loved ones and friends. We must become a sharing and loving society from the cradle to the grave.

Full pension for all retired workers! Build social capital of the elderly to be lifelong contributors to society! All older people must be respected and cared for!

**Our Health**

The capitalist system has spoiled our food, used advertising to seduce people to lust for sugar, salt, and fried foods, and turned health care into a factory system that keeps most of us running to the pharmacy dependent on the latest drug commodity hoping the insurance company will pay. Of course there are people with no insurance and have to choose between food, rent, and health care costs. Look around and see the obesity, bad teeth and poor vision and hearing. The capitalists have turned our neighborhoods into food deserts. This has to stop.

The African American people face the greatest impact of the lack of universal healthcare. We suffer with lower rates of insurance coverage and less access to quality care, resulting in the highest rates of stroke, heart attack, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease (with limited access to life saving kidney replacement), AIDS, and other life threatening diseases.

Fight for universal health care! Stop fast foods in our community! Forward to community gardens! Ban liquor sales in our community!

**Education**

The education gains of the 1960’s have been wiped out. Our children are not learning to read and write and work with numbers in the public schools while the system takes money out of the public schools to finance the privatization of education. In many urban areas school boards are closing schools in the Black and Latino communities at an alarming rate. High stakes testing results places our youth on a path of failure with limited possibilities for good employment. College attendance and graduate rates are not increasing and with attacks on affirmative action and minority scholarship funding ethnic cleansing of the campus is taking place.

Free universal quality public education for all!

**Housing**

The last few economic crises that have ruined people’s lives in this country have targeted Black people most of all and many have been based on housing exploitation. Whether it is outrageous mortgage schemes, or loan programs that cheat the unsuspecting consumer, or
the reservation camps of public housing, Black people are facing housing insecurity. And when housing is found it is usually the poorest in quality and highest in cost. We are faced with an increasing number of people who are homeless, including adults and children.

House everyone and eliminate homelessness! End loan practices that cheat the people!

**Police Repression and Prisons**

Every 28 hours the police forces in the US gun down a Black person. The vast majority of Black youth are routinely rounded up and placed into the data bases of the police authorities. The prisons are overcrowded with Black men and Black women are increasingly being processed through the prisons camps as well, becoming the fastest growing sector of the national prison industry.

Our communities are under constant surveillance, leading to police assaults and murder. And whether in or out of our segregated neighborhoods, we are harassed and arrested for walking, running, driving while Black or just wearing hoodies. “Black people have no rights this system is bound to respect!” We are still not free in this country!

Stop the surveillance and monitoring of all communications in the Black community!

Stop police murder and terror! Community control of police!

**Political Prisoners, Prisoners of War, and Exiles: Free the Imprisoned Cointelpro/Civil Rights Era Human Rights Defenders and Political Activists**

From the time the first African was snatched off the African continent and slammed onto the shores of the Americas, Africans in the Western Hemisphere have fought for our liberation. Across the generations our movement has fought back and as a result the political prisoners, prisoners of war, and exiles of the Black Liberation Movement who engaged in all forms of militant struggle are not recognized today as the incarcerated and exiled liberation fighters of our freedom struggle and they have paid the price.

Beginning with the Garvey Movement, the FBI created and launched an illegal, militarized law enforcement response to Black and other oppressed nationalities resistance. Eventually, this duplicitous and bloodthirsty strategy of the state to curtail the uprisings of the 50s, 60s, and 70s, became known as the Counter Intelligence Program, COINTELPRO. From wiretapping, to sabotage, to outright murder and assassinations, our movement was hit. The U.S. Senate’s 1976 Church Committee investigation declared it “unfit for a democratic society.” While scores of people were killed and hundreds arrested, still dozens more were criminalized, subjected to show trials, and have languished in prisons across the United States or been exiled for the past 35 to 40 plus years.

Indeed, revolutionary heroines such as Assata Shakur and Nehanda Abiodun have been exiled in Cuba for decades. Brave freedom fighters including Mumia Abu Jamal, Imam Jamil Al-Amin, and Sundiata Acoli among others have been subjected to long prison sentences, torture, medical neglect, and solitary confinement for as much as 30 to 40 years in the dungeons of super-and ad- max prisons. There they have been subjected to inhumane programs such as the so-called “Special Administration Measures” (SAMs) and “Communications Management Units” (CMU). These additional layers of isolation deprive the imprisoned of contact with family, independent medical assistance, and lawyers.

In addition to our duty to reclaim them, as most are aged, frail, in poor health and have no
meaningful traditional legal remedies or have been denied court ordered release, we must demand their release, raise their banners and educate the masses about the sacrifices they have made.

**Reparations**

The exploitation of Black labor and the brutal oppression of Black people is part of the international conditions created by the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and system of colonialism. This international system created a major part of the capital accumulation for the development of European and U.S. capitalism. Issues of underdevelopment, lack of opportunity, inequality in social status, and shorter life expectancy for the majority of Black people throughout the world, are some of the injuries built into the capitalist system with continuing impacts. The demand for reparations connects Africa and the African Diaspora to a common international demand of redress against the governments of colonialism and imperialism and the international economic institutions like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization for crimes against humanity as outlined in the UN Declaration on Human Rights.

Reparations must be one of the major demands for self-determination!

**Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, and Queer* Brothers and Sisters Rights**

There has been too little education, compassion, and silencing historically in the African American community and the broader left on the role that the systems of capitalism and patriarchy play in the oppression of people based upon their sexual orientation or identity.

This systemic oppression often takes the form of homophobia or fear and shame of gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender, or queer people – making them targets of ridicule, isolation, violence, and even murder. Historically, the Black community would not acknowledge or follow the leadership of Black LGBTQ people, if their sexual orientation was known publically. The truth is that our history and ancestry, dating back to Africa, is rich with two-spirited and same-gender loving people.

Organizations led by gays and lesbians like the Combahee River Collective, for instance, have made great contributions to the struggle for Black Liberation. Black LGBTQ people have always been active in our movements, churches, and communities. They are our parents, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, cousins, and friends/comrades --- family.

Today we must not only welcome the active participation of our Black LGBTQ comrades into the Black Liberation Movement, calling on this community to organize and build revolutionary organizations against capitalism, imperialism, national oppression and patriarchy and for LGBTQ Rights -- but also help to create the conditions whereby the leadership of Black LGBTQ people can be developed and supported. All people, especially in the Black Freedom Movement, should be judged by their practice, character, and qualities as human beings --- not their race, gender, or sexual orientation.

There are many issues to fight on. While marriage equality is important for many Black LGBTQ people, we also know that issues such as police and state violence against gays and lesbians, the extrajudicial murder of black trans women, mass incarceration, access to healthcare, homelessness, and workers rights are all life and death issues that working class Black LGBTQ people face daily.
*Young people today self-identify as queer as a way of identifying their sexual-orientation and gender expression as well as their radical political identity, in hopes of distinguishing them from the centrist and liberal white gays.

**Culture and Black Liberation**

The capitalist system turns everything into a commodity to be bought and sold, and this includes the cultural production or contributions of our community. We all used to sing and now we buy CDs and pay to go hear other people sing. Furthermore they pay them to sing what they want not what we have been doing to serve ourselves and our community. Hip Hop – Rap was invented to serve our community and to express the political critique and aspirations of the youth. However, it has been twisted into the abnormal and often misogynist gangster rap. Perhaps the greatest danger comes from TV and its renaissance of the old stereotypical images of Black people as clowns or gladiators.

On the other hand there is an unbroken history of cultural production that has inspired people to resistance and to fight back. The poets and musicians lead the way. Our cultural revolution must re-link to our African origins and embrace the best in the history of our cultural developments as African Americans. Jazz is Black classical music.

Cultural production for Black liberation! Recruit cultural workers to every front of struggle!

**We Are Part of a Global Struggle**

We all live on planet earth and increasingly our struggles involve issues that impact people all over the globe. We embrace the need to be internationalists and focus on freedom and quality of life for everyone in the world. Our approach is to link especially to the struggles in the African Diaspora.

**The Struggles in Africa**

1960 was proclaimed by the United Nations as Africa Year because so many countries were gaining their independence from European colonization. However, this led to neo-colonialism governed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Furthermore, a class of bureaucratic tyrants took control of the state apparatus in most countries, looted the wealth and suppressed the people.

African people world-wide must rebuild the African struggle for independence, unity and freedom!

**The Struggle of Black People in the Caribbean**

All of the Caribbean island countries are part of the African Diaspora. In their origin the difference for African people was only about where the slave trading boat stopped and which European colonial language one was going to be forced to speak. The fight continues in the Caribbean on many levels, from the trade union based Movement for Social Justice in Trinidad-Tobago, to the fight for sustaining socialism in Cuba.
Long live Caribbean unity! Oppose the domination of US and global capital!

**The Struggle of Black People in Latin America**

In Central and South America, including Mexico which is in North America, the history of Spanish colonialism brought African labor and historic Black populations. This is notably in Brazil and Colombia, but there is some manifestation in most places. The impact of US imperialism has forced many of these peoples to migrate to the US creating the Latin American Diasporas. We have the joint unity of the origins of the African Diaspora and the contemporary shared experiences of racism and class exploitation.

Long live African American and Latino unity! Build our movements of movements throughout the Americas!

**The Struggle of Black People in Europe**

There are Black communities all over Europe. They have been informed by the militant struggles we have waged in the US and we must embrace their history of struggle as well. They face comparable forms of racism and class exploitation of those born there as well as the recent migrants from the African continent.

Long live the unity of African Americans and Black Europe!

**Our Fight for Reform is Linked to a Revolutionary Strategy**

**The Day to Day Struggle**

The idea of a revolution is abstract but the fight for one is not. Peoples fight back in the context of their lives, at their place of work, at the unemployment office, at the grocery store, the school, the church, etc. Big political ideas take shape and form on the ground in practical circumstances. When the fight intensifies, everybody can get educated, can get political, and can begin to think about the link between the reform struggle and the revolutionary leap that is necessary. It is mainly in this context that a Black Left can be grounded in the roots of our people, in the very fight they wage themselves. We join them, embrace their leadership, link their fight with the fight of others, and help them to sum up and learn lessons from victories and defeats, and train militants to increase their ability to sustain the struggle.

Fight back every day! Link the fight for reform to revolutionary goals!

**“No More Trayvons”: the Response to Racist Attacks**

Every racist attack must be opposed and mass resistance built to end it. Just as we raised the slogan “No More Trayvons” as part of the massive nationwide mass mobilization, so must we continue that on higher and higher and more coordinated levels. This is one of the key tasks of rebuilding a national Black liberation movement.

**The Electoral Struggle**

The capitalist state is a rigged game controlled by the ruling class. They don’t play fair and we can’t win by getting in it and trying to reform things. All too often we have been lured into local politics as mayors and city council officials only to try and fix a broken system that can’t be fixed with minimal reforms. However electoral politics is a terrain of struggle. It can be an arena of debate, education, and discussion to raise the consciousness of people and present them with an alternative to the hypocrisy and illusions of mainstream politicians.
Our movement, including all forms of electoral struggles and independent party initiatives, must remain autonomous and independent from the state’s political parties such as the Democrats and Republicans and NGO control. On the other hand Black power consolidated at the local level can be utilized to build the independent power of the masses – unionization, local minimum wage laws, use of eminent domain to house the homeless, local environmental protections, money for public schools not charter schools, etc.

**Our Struggle Will Last for Generations**

Each of us lives a life and we hope to attain the goals we set during that time. It is important to think of struggle as a hand off through the generations in which each generation has a mission, a contribution to make, and then it is up to the next generation to take it from there. We all fight for freedom, but the fight towards freedom goes forward one step, one stage, one historic leap at a time.

**The 1960’s Generation**

The last great upsurge was the 1960’s. (See “How the 1960’s Riots Hurt African-Americans,” National Bureau of Economic Research.) The activists of the 1960’s are the current elders of the movement. They are walking, living, libraries of information. They are also the bearers not only of the experiences of victory and great mass mobilization but of past factional battles and splits within the movement that hurt our efforts. All of this experience is valuable, both what to emulate and what to avoid.

**The 21st Century**

The 21st century is very different from the 1960’s. We are in the midst of a technological revolution that is being used to change all aspects of life and we have to adapt to that and learn how to use digital tools to make our struggle more effective. We don’t have the revolutions of rising expectations that we had in the 1960’s, fueled by the revolutions in China, Cuba and Viet Nam, as well as the national liberation battles all over Africa. Today we are fighting many forms of Afro-pessimism as well as the disease of drugs and a breakdown of many traditional Black social and cultural institutions. Today we are being challenged to rebuild on a new basis to take our fight to the next level.

**Building Revolutionary Institutions and Rituals to Sustain Our Movement**

Our task is to build organization to struggle in every context — revolutionary organizations as well as mass movements of workers, women, students, church members, residents, health care patients, seniors, etc. And we must oppose patriarchy, sexism, homophobia, and all other backward manifestations of this bankrupt system as we rebuild the Black Freedom Struggle. People get reborn when engaged in struggle and we must engage as our people need a rebirth. Every organization must be built on the foundation of our own people and not based on hand outs from friendly foundations and NGOs. We must fight for the “new African American male, female, and child” based upon a healthy, collective, equality minded, and anti-individualism, socialist consciousness for the African American people.

**Dual Power: A Strategic Revolutionary Objective for Self-Determination and Workers Power**

Altering the balance of power between the Black and multinational working-class and the U.S. ruling-class and its imperialist state in favor of positioning the oppressed and exploited
masses for social revolution, must be a constant aim of revolutionary strategy.

A strategic program focuses mainly on the relationship between politics and economics. It must not only put forward demands for democracy, it must fight for transformative power to organize alternative social, economic and political models that begin to engage the masses in organizing and administering in a different way the places where they work, the communities where they live, the social institutions they rely on and positions in local government. This can be defined as a level of dual and contending power.

**Our Pledge is to Fight for Freedom by Any Means Necessary**

The BLUN is committed to building a national network of the most militant, most class conscious fighters for Black liberation. Our goal in drafting this manifesto is to create a national dialogue about what basic unity we can reach so that we have a context for coordinating our fight back as a National Black Liberation Movement. This Draft Manifesto will be discussed on conference calls, in face to face regional meetings and/or other gatherings, and at a National Assembly for Black Liberation. It is a draft so we welcome all comments, criticisms, and guidance for revised text in search of unity – struggle - unity!

**Contributions to the Draft Manifesto**

Sections in the Draft Manifesto such as environmental racism, the elderly, housing, education, culture, and reparations need more depth and clarity. A call to our newly conscious youth and emerging young leaders is needed in the Draft Manifesto. We invite organizations and activists in these particular arenas of struggle to help deepen these sections and any other areas of the Draft and forward them to us. We again encourage all brothers and sisters to meet in their organizations and communities, form study groups, hold panel discussions, etc., to study, discuss, and debate the Draft Manifesto and share the analysis, thinking, contributions with us and others across the country.

Contributions, debates, other important arenas of struggle can be summed up and sent to the BLUN Website for publication or forward to: bintaorg@gmail.com. No submission should be longer than 350 words.

Black Left Organizations and Left Based Mass Movements are invited to join the National Organizing Committee for the National Black Assembly and activists are called upon to join one of our working groups or committees:

- Draft Manifesto Editorial Committee
- Fundraising Committee
- Location Committee
- Outreach Committee
- Revolutionary Women’s Working Group
- Others as determined…

**Contact Us**

Contact the Black Left Unity Network at theblun@gmail.com
Find our journal the Black Activist online at iblun.org and blackactivistzine.org, or write to editorial@iblun.org
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