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The Promises and Pitfalls of Reparations

Yusuf Nuruddin

The demand for reparations is the *international Human Rights* agenda for the twenty-first century, one that attempts to redress “the problem of the twentieth century,” as stated by DuBois, “the problem of the color line, -- the relations of the darker to the lighter races men in Asia and Africa, in America and the islands of the sea.”¹ Elsewhere in this volume are papers which address the international dimensions of reparations – in particular the debt owed to Africa by Western powers for the holocaust of slavery and colonialism. (I don’t use the word “holocaust” lightly – over ten million Africans were killed in the Congo alone during the Belgian occupation under King Leopold’s rule).² Not only is redress for this crime against humanity an international issue, there is also *international solidarity* of African peoples, continental and Diasporan, in this reparations movement. The worldwide issues are complex, involving the case by case specifics of former colonial relationships, the adjudication of international law, and the restructuring of international debt and loan agreements. For the sake of clarity, I will restrict my focus to issue of reparations owed to African Americans for their enslavement in the United States.

The demand for reparations, once dismissed by reactionaries as the futile cry of a “fringe group of angry black militants,” is now indisputably the *mainstream Civil Rights* agenda for the opening decade of the twenty-first century. Organizations such as N’COBRA -- the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America -- have struggled to lay the groundwork for this reparations movement for over a decade, and Congressman John Conyers (D.-Mich) has introduced legislation (H.R. 40) annually since 1989, which calls for a commission to study the legacy of slavery and the feasibility of reparations. Those efforts notwithstanding, the mainstreaming of the reparations agenda is due, in no small measure, to the endeavors of Randall Robinson, the former director of TransAfrica. His book *The Debt: What America Owes to Blacks*,³ published in the millennial year 2000, was a clarion call for reparations, which

reached the ears of all African Americans regardless of class or political ideology. Robinson was also responsible for enlisting the aid of Harvard Law School professor Charles Ogletree to assemble a legal team and pursue avenues of reparations litigation.

Of course, human agency can only be effective in the ripe historical moment. Marcus Garvey, known for his visionary Pan Africanism rather than any materialist conception of history, once stated with Marxist clarity that “When all else fails to organize our people, conditions will.”⁴ The material conditions in Blackamerica were ripe for a reparations movement. In the public discourse generated by this movement, some reactionary whites have argued that the movement by African Americans to obtain reparations for slavery would divide the American people. The American people are *already* divided – by stark economic inequalities. These structural inequalities are the material conditions which have mobilized the African American populace -- across class lines -- in support of a reparations agenda. A study of households conducted in the mid-1980’s showed that while income gaps between blacks and whites were closing, the median white American family owned eleven times as much wealth (real estate, investments, savings, etc.) as the median black American family.⁵ During 1990s and into the twenty-first century this racial wealth divide has been widening. Wealth is often accumulated through inheritance, thus the origins of this widening divide may be traced back many generations. The Civil Rights movement dismantled American apartheid (*de jure* segregation -- but certainly not *de facto* segregation as a tour through any of America’s chocolate inner cities and vanilla suburbs will reveal) qualitatively transforming the landscape of civil liberties, access and opportunities for African Americans. Yet the dismantling of the social and political aspects of American apartheid has not led to African American community empowerment or development, just as the dismantling of the social and political aspects of Zimbabwean and South African apartheid has not led to national reconstruction in those societies – because in all three societies, the economic resources (including the land and the mineral wealth -- all ill-gotten gains) remained concentrated in the hands of whites.

Unyielding structural inequalities have betrayed the Civil Rights movement in the U. S, just as they have betrayed the revolution in Southern Africa. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s dream lies dormant because there was never a full integration of African Americans into the economy -- because there is still black poverty in the midst of white affluence. Many political analysts of the current “post-civil rights” era have observed that if King were alive today, his focus would be on achieving economic parity and economic justice.

Now that the demand for reparations has been embraced by the black establishment, and thereby made reputable and legitimate in the eyes of the black bourgeoisie as well as in the eyes of the non-advanced sector of the masses who rely upon the imprimatur of "bona fide" black leaders, a groundswell has been achieved. With the exception of literally a *handful* of Thomasian black conservatives who view reparations as but another entitlement program which fosters a sense of dependency and victimization that is detrimental to black progress, there is near unanimity in the African American community on this issue. The black managerial and professional class, the black working class and the black lumpen all want reparations; blacks regardless of their ideology -- integrationist-assimilationist, nationalist-separatist, Marxists-Leninist, feminist, or Afrocentrist -- all want reparations. There is a surety of victory in the air, a sense of invincibility that emerges from the heady combination of moral authority (we *must* be compensated for this crime against humanity!) and unflinching solidarity. Yet it is certain that class contradictions will emerge as the movement becomes more focused on the logistics of implementing reparations. How that the resulting struggle is conducted will have great bearing on state of Blackamerica for decades to come. In fact, we would be remiss if we did not recognize that the fashioning of the class character of reparations policy, will be the one of the monumentally decisive moments in the entire course of African American history.

That conflicting class interests ---those of the working class, upper middle class, and underclass - would emerge in the struggle for reparations should not be surprising. Struggles for national liberation always have internal class conflicts. The principle of unity and struggle defines the working class strategy in national liberation struggles. In other words, the black working class must unite with the black bourgeoisie in the struggle to gain reparations from white America, but black workers must struggle against the bourgeoisie for control of the specific reparations agenda. In the face of white supremacy, the unity of African people is an absolute necessity. But emotional calls for black unity, often becloud the conflictual class interests that exists within Blackamerica. Because the transfer of wealth involved in a just reparations settlement would not be trivial, it is important that the black working class, move in a Lukacsian sense from being "a class in itself" to "a class *for itself*," in short, that it become conscious of it's particular interests and organize around a reparations agenda which represents these interests. Reparations settlements could involve individual cash payments, investments in community development projects, the transfer of land, tax exemptions, tuition-exemptions or any combination of these factors. The way reparations settlements are structured could be more advantageous to one class than another. It is often argued that class divisions among African Americans is largely fictional, that there is no real black bourgeoisie - that at best Afroamerica has a class of petty bourgeoisie or even

lumpenbourgeoisie, i.e., tenuous struggling sub-bourgeoisie, who are “one paycheck away from being homeless,” i.e., if laid off or fired they would not be able to make their mortgage payments. I argue there are substantial class differences among African Americans and that the internal struggle for the shape of reparations will sharpen these real differences. We cannot masquerade ideological differences either, some demands for reparations have a more revolutionary character to them than others. Some formulations of reparations are consumer-oriented palliatives while others challenge the very legitimacy of the existing nation-state (perhaps pre-maturely). In launching a reparations movement it is necessary that we be very conscious of the class issues and the ideological issues that shape the various types of reparations demands.

Some historical background would be instructive in this regards. The demand for reparations has been long-standing in radical black activist circles -- reaching back *at least* to the Black Power movement of 1960s – which was where and when I first came into political consciousness. For those of us who are seasoned black activists, the concept of reparations has been in our political vocabulary since our nascent days of activism in high schools or as undergraduates. I was college freshman in 1969, the year when James Forman, acting as a spokesperson for a Black Economic Development Conference, interrupted the worship service at Manhattan’s Riverside Church and read from the pulpit a Black Manifesto demanding that “white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, which are part and parcel of the system of capitalism . . . begin to pay reparations to black people in this country.”⁶ Forman demanded a total of a half billion dollars to be allocated in detailed amounts for establishment of the following black-owned and operated projects: a southern land bank for evicted black farmers; major publishing and printing industries in Detroit, Atlanta, Los Angeles and New York; state-of-the-art television networks in Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland and Washington, D.C.; a social research center; a training center for developing both community organizing skills and media technology skills; subsidy for the existing National Welfare Rights Organization; a National Black Labor Strike and Defense Fund; an International Black Appeal which would develop cooperative business in the United States and in Africa, fund liberation movements in Africa and fund a Black Anti-Defamation League to protect the African image; and a black university in the South. Given population of over 30 million black people he calculated that the \$500 million demand amounted to merely “15 dollars for every black brother and sister in the United States.” Needless to say the white religious establishments balked at these demands.

The Black Manifesto was not the first demand by African Americans for reparations. The Nation of Islam demanded reparations as early as the 1950s. This demand was disseminated widely beginning around 1960 with the

publication of *Muhammad Speaks*. This official news organ of the Nation of Islam under Elijah Muhammad's leadership, soon became one of the most popularly read weekly newspapers in the black community. It carried a ten point platform on the back page of each edition entitled "What the Muslims Want." Besides the call for democratic rights -- freedom, justice, equality of social opportunity and employment opportunity, equal education, and an end to police brutality and racial violence -- the ten point program also included demands for reparations: the establishment of a separate state or territory for the descendants of slaves; the release of all black death-row prisoners; and until equal justice is established, tax-exemption for all black people.⁷ The Black Panther Party's ten point platform, developed in 1966, had many similarities. It called for democratic rights -- freedom, justice, full employment, relevant education, decent housing, trial by a jury of peers, and an end to police brutality and murder. In addition the platform called for reparations (special compensatory measures to repair the damage exacted by slavery, segregation, and continued oppression): freedom for all black prisoners; the exemption of all black men from military service; and the right to a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to determine "the will of the black people as to their national identity." Point # 3 of the Black Panther Party's platform was the most explicit:

We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black Community. We believe this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and the mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered ten million Jews. The American racist Has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million black people; therefore we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.⁸

This is not an attempt to give a summary history of the demand for reparations by African Americans because in one form or another the demand has always been a part of our history, as the following examples illustrate. In 1951, William Patterson and Paul Robeson lead delegations of African Americans to United Nations offices in Paris and New York to submit petitions -- with compiled documented evidence of lynchings and racial violence -- charging the United States government with genocide and seeking redress (but not monetary compensation).⁹ In 1955, the venerable black American activist and Pan Africanist, Queen Mother (Audley) Moore authored a pamphlet on reparations; in 1962, she met with President Kennedy to discuss the issue.¹⁰ In 1963 she formed an organization -- the Reparations Committee for the Descendants of American Slaves -- which sought 500 million dollars as partial compensation for historic injustice -- and which filed at least one lawsuit for reparations in a California court. The National Movement for a 49th State preceded Queen Mother Moore's reparation activity by two decades.¹¹ In 1934, this organization,

headquartered in Chicago, posed the America with the challenge of creating a new state of the federal union exclusively populated and governed by blacks. The creation of a 49th state would be “an opportunity for the nation to reduce it’s debt to the Negro for past exploitation.” In 1913, over twenty years before the 49th State movement, a black state was proposed in a book entitled “Prophetic Liberation of the Colored Race of the United States of America: Command to his People” by Arthur Anderson.¹² Turning to the nineteenth century for examples, in the 1860s -- during and after the Civil War -- there was a mass demand for land on the part of freedman.¹³ Earlier, in the 1810s and 1820s compensation for slavery meant securing funds from white America for repatriation to the Motherland. Free black men such as shipbuilder Paul Cuffe, and Bishop Daniel Coker worked in concert with the American Colonization Society (in spite of the Society’s racist motives) to resettle ex-slaves in Sierra Leone and Liberia.¹⁴

As this quick survey of past demands for reparations demonstrates, individual payments or disbursements to the victims or descendants of victims – such as the \$20,000 checks issued as compensation to Japanese Americans who were interred in detention camps during World War II – was not always the form of reparations, though idea of an individual check seems to dominate the popular imagination and the heated popular discourse between blacks and whites.

Historically, one of the most frequently articulated demands for reparations has been for land -- repatriation to sovereign land on the African continent or ownership of land in the Black Belt South via either sovereignty, federal statehood or simply title and deed. During the Civil War, African Americans did receive such reparations. In January of 1865, shortly after Union General William Tecumseh Sherman victoriously marched through Georgia, he issued Special Field Order #15. Quoting the historians Hine, Hine and Harrold:

This military directive set aside a thirty-mile wide tract of land along the Atlantic coast from Charleston, South Carolina, 245 miles south to Jacksonville, Florida. White owners had abandoned the land, and Sherman reserved it for black families. The head of each family would receive “possessory title” to forty acres of land. Sherman also gave the freed men the use of army mules, thus giving rise to the slogan, “Forty acres and a mule.”

Within six months 40,000 freed people were working 400,000 acres in South Carolina and Georgia low country and on the Sea Islands. . . .

Meanwhile , hundreds of former slaves had been cultivating land for three years. In late 1861, Union military forces carved out an enclave around Beaufort and Port Royal, South Carolina, that remained under federal authority for the rest of the war. White planters fled to the interior leaving their slaves behind. Under the supervision of U.S. treasury officials and northern reformers and missionaries began to work the land in what came to be known as the “Port Royal Experiment.” When Treasury agents auctioned off portions of the land for non-payment of taxes, freedmen purchased some of it.¹⁵

In July of 1865, a few months after the end of War, General Oliver Howard, the director of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands (commonly called the Freedman's Bureau) issued Circular 13 setting aside 40 acre plots for freedmen. "But" say Hine, Hine and Harrold, "the allocation had hardly begun when the order was revoked [by President Andrew Johnson] and it was announced that land already distributed under General Sherman's Special Field Order #15 was to be returned to its previous white owners." ¹⁶

The most radical of the contemporary formulations of reparations are for the return of these "40 acres" in the context of a sovereign nation state composed of land in Black Belt South -- land now occupied by the contiguous states of Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. The African Blood Brotherhood, a left nationalist formation coterminous with the Garvey movement, first advanced this Black Belt Thesis and in 1928 the thesis was adopted by the CPUSA – although repudiated several years later. ¹⁷ The Nation of Islam repeated the call for separate state "on this continent or elsewhere" with the further stipulations that the land be "fertile and mineral rich" and that the former slavemaster supply the needs for this new state for 20 to 25 years until it becomes productive and self-sufficient. ¹⁸ In the contemporary struggle for reparations, the Black Belt independence is advanced by the New African Liberation Front (NALF) which is composed of the December 12th Movement, the Republic of New Africa (RNA), the New African People's Organization (NAPO) which is an RNA splinter group, and the Malcolm X Grassroots Coalition which is a youth affiliate of NAPO. Both RNA and NAPO have close organizational ties with the National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America (N'COBRA) – the founding members of N'COBRA were members of RNA and NAPO. N'COBRA, however, functions as a united front, embracing any person or organization who endorses the movement, regardless of their formulation.

However, in the absence of a widespread and well-coordinated violent insurrection, a secessionist demand by nationalists-separatists would not be entertained by the U.S. federal government. (Even with the threat of armed struggle, it is unlikely that the U.S. would negotiate such a demand. The more likely scenario is that it would mobilize its war machine to crush such an insurgency. This scenario might include the mass incarceration and genocidal extermination of black people in detention camps as depicted in John A. Williams's famed novel, *The Man Who Cried I Am* and poet/songwriter Gil Scott-Heron's recording "*The King Alfred Plan*," -- and which formed the essence of the political education "tours" at the Black People's Topographical Research Centers of the seventies. ¹⁹) Hence the **legitimate** demand for reparations in the form of a sovereign nation state remains more of a consciousness-raising tool than a practical formulation. Freedom – especially in the form of national self-

determination, is never given – it has to be taken. And the price for freedom -- as Malcolm cautioned for those who think that it can be taken easily -- is death.

Land as a form of reparations, need not, however be structured as a sovereign independent state – nor does it need to be allocated only within the confines of the Black Belt south. There are probably a number of creative ways in which large tracts of urban or rural land can be deeded to black communities and function as semi-autonomous enclaves. I will not attempt to suggest what those arrangements would look like in this paper, but there certainly are precedents in the recent settlements of land claims made by Native Americans. (As an aside, many African Americans legitimately can establish their Native American ancestry and entitlement to Native American rights and benefits. There are even entire “tribes” that are noticeably “half-breed” or thoroughly mixed with African ancestry. Some of the most hostile white reactions to Native American land claims have been directed toward these “mixed breed” tribes. The reaction was that these people had perpetrated a huge fraud -- they were merely “a bunch of *n-word* pretending to be Indians.”)

I am not suggesting that we create a semi-autonomous Afroamerica which is a federation of far-flung Bantustans dotted with casinos, selling tax-free cigarettes and economically dependent upon tourism, but I am saying that land – whether as individual real estate holdings or as publicly-owned commons – should be a real item of discussion in any reparations settlement. One only has to take a cursory glimpse at the quality of life in any low-income housing project in any inner city, to realize that overcrowding – the violation of basic human territorial instincts – contributes to social pathology. (A classic study of overcrowding among rats yielded significant aberrant behavioral trends including an increase in the killing of male rats by other male rats and an increase in the abandonment of offspring by female rats).²⁰ Regardless of the social inferences we can or cannot draw from sociobiology or from laboratory manipulations of animal behavior, we certainly can attest to the fact that the mainstream society’s fear of **social explosions** (uprisings, insurrections, “riots”) has lead to socially engineered policies of containment. (Containment of what? Containment of violence and aggression. According to the famous *frustration-aggression hypothesis* formulated by a team of Yale social psychologists, frustration, i.e., the blocking of aspirations, leads to aggression.²¹ Aggression in turn must find an outlet. The normal targets for the aggression would be the source of frustration; if that target is not available a secondary target would be innocent bystanders; the third target, if the first two are unavailable, is one’s own self, i.e., literal self-destruction, or internalized aggression. In real world terms, if the oppressive white power structure which blocks black aspirations is not an available target for inner city black aggression, then black-o-black crime rates will rise, as will self-destructive alcoholism and drug addiction. Every death by

drug overdose is listed in the coroner's office as a suicide.) The socially-engineered policy of containment -- the dumping of drugs and weapons in the black ghettos -- has resulted in **social implosions** – violent inward collapsing and destruction of community life, via domestic violence, via narco-terrorism (i.e., turf wars for the control of drug trade) and the host of other pathological behaviors that abound on the tiny patches of land that apartheid has allocated to us. In summing up the importance of land reparations I will deviate, for just a moment, from a basic Marxist conception -- the transition from a feudal stage of production to a capitalist stage of production -- long enough to quote from the with the 19th century American political economist and social reformer, Henry George:

The widespread social evils which everywhere oppress men amid an advancing civilization, spring from a great primary wrong – the appropriation, as the exclusive property of some men, of the land on which and from which we must all live. From this fundamental injustice flow all the injustices which distort and endanger modern development, which condemn the producer of wealth to poverty and pamper the non-producer in luxury, which rear the tenement house with the palace, plant the brothel behind the church, and compel us to build prisons as we open new schools.²²

In this capitalist stage of production, however, there is strong argument, for the kinds of reparations formulations which James Forman advocated – placing the ownership and control of industry in the hands of the black community. And in this late stage of capitalism, this age of globalization, Forman where the control of mass communication is crucial for counter-hegemonic discourse, the formation of class consciousness and mobilization and organization of the working class and the oppressed -- Forman was prescient in demanding black ownership and control of media outlets -- publishing houses and tv stations (radio stations should be added to his demand as well).

We should remain cognizant of the facts that slave labor in cotton and tobacco fields in the ante-bellum South produced a wealthy class of agrarian capitalists –*and that slave-trading by New England merchants produced profits which financed the development of the textile industry.*²³ The use of water-mill powered machinery for the large-scale manufacture of textiles marked the beginning of the Industrial Revolution in the United States. The new class of industrial capitalists re-invested money from the textile industries into other burgeoning industries; hence the profits generated by the trading in African slaves propelled the United States into the age of industrial capitalism.

It is fitting then, that reparations – which is essentially a socialist project – in the sense that it would involve a massive re-distribution of wealth, encompass

not only the transfer of land or real estate, but the financing of industry in the African American community. Re-distribution of wealth is not a matter of charity; it is a matter of economic justice -- as the development or rather overdevelopment of the U.S. capitalist economy was directly contingent upon the institution of slavery -- the super-exploitation or of the human resources of Africa, i.e., the underdeveloping of the black community. I would argue that the economic development of the black community should involve the financing of not only high tech industries or such as computer factories, or the mass communication industries which Forman advocated, but also low-tech manufacturing plants. There is no reason why the people of Harlem or Bedford-Stuyvesant cannot own and operate their own bicycle factory or manufacture strollers, baby carriages, or metal furniture -- kitchen tables and chairs -- which are competitive on the market. The creation of industrial factories would only be one dimension of a reparations economic development model, an infrastructure of creatively-structured financial institutions such as savings and loan associations, credit associations and consumer co-operatives have to be developed as well.

The ownership and control of industry by a community corporation is, of course, an experiment in socialism or at least veering towards socialism. I am not an economist, but I suppose that worker-owned-and-operated industries would represent some kind of transitional economy and perhaps the proper term for such industries would be co-operatives. Furthermore, I assume that there might be difficulties with such co-operatives but hopefully not insurmountable problems such as C. J. Munford, a Marxist-trained historian, seems to indicate. At a recent Reparations Conference, Munford, argued a that two different economic systems, a small black co-operative or socialist system of production and a larger white capitalism or private ownership of production, would not be able to co-exist in the same society.²⁴ The capitalist system would eventually overwhelm the smaller socialist system.

Nevertheless, any valid plan for reparations must include an intensive investment in community development. In the past I have used freely the analogy of the Marshall Plan to indicate the necessary levels of capital infusion into the economic infrastructures of the black ghettos, but I have been put on notice that the European Recovery Program was merely one of America's instruments for dominating the global economy. For lack of a better analogy, I will continue to use this one, but guardedly. There is an appropriate analogy of more recent vintage. In the post 9/11 climate there has been much talk about re-erecting the Twin Towers and re-building New York City. As many astute black people have pointed out, long before the destruction of the World Trade Center, there was a Ground Zero which existed in the ghettos of black America. Reparations should repair and rebuild the Ground Zero Ghetto.

A Marshall Plan or Ground Zero Plan would not simply involve the economic development; the reconstruction and development of inner city housing, schools, health care delivery systems, day care centers, and other public institutions which directly impact upon the quality of life in the inner city would all be a part of the reparations agenda.

Malcolm X eloquently stated that the main difference between the black community and other ethnic enclaves in America , e. g., Little Italy or Chinatown, is that the black community **is controlled** politically and economically **by outsiders**, by people who do not live in the community. The black ghetto is a colony -- complete with colonial administrators such as the judges, social workers and teachers; an occupying army - the police; and colonial exploiters - the non-black (white, Arab, Korean, etc.) merchants who do a thriving business in the black community (although the late controversial Khalid Muhammad probably exaggerated when he stated that everyday outsider merchants "take tractor-trailer truckloads of cash out of Harlem"). In his 1964 speech, *The Ballot or the Bullet* Malcolm articulated its ideology as "the political, economic, and social philosophy of black nationalism." He defined his economic philosophy of black nationalism::

The economic philosophy of black nationalism is pure and simple. It only means that we should control the economy of our community. Why should white people be running all the stores in our community? Why should white people be running the banks of our community? Why should the economy of our community be in the hands of the white man? Why? If a black man can't move his store into a white community, you tell me why a white man should move his store into a black community. The philosophy of black nationalism involves a re-education program in the black community in regards to economics. Our people have to be made to see that any time you take your dollar out of your community and spend it in a community where you don't live, the community where you live will get poorer and poorer, and the community where you spend your money will get richer and richer. Then you wonder why where you live is always a ghetto or a slum area. And where you and I are concerned, not only do we lose it when we spend it out of the community, but the white man has got all our stores in the community tied up; so that though we spend it in the community, at sundown the man who runs the store takes it over across town somewhere. He's got us in a vise.

So the economic philosophy of black nationalism means in every church, in every civic organization, in every fraternal order, it's time now for our people to be come conscious of the importance of controlling the economy of our community. If we own the stores, if we operate the businesses, if we try and establish some industry in our own community, then we're developing to the position where we are creating employment for our own kind. Once you gain control of the economy of your own community, then you don't have to picket and boycott and beg some cracker downtown for a job in his business.²⁵

If C.J. Munford is correct in his assessment that black co-operatives or collectively-owned -and -operated industries could not thrive in a capitalist economy,

then funds for community business development would have to be allocated to private black businessmen. A reparations program structured in this manner would only serve the class interests of the black bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. Malcolm did not have a vision of bourgeois nationalism where a neo-colonial elite or national bourgeoisie gained control over the economy of the black community. Robert Allen in his classic text *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* described the co-optation of the 1960s black power movement by corporate America:

....Led by corporations such as the Ford Foundation, the Urban Coalition and the National Alliance of Businessmen, the corporatists are attempting with considerable success to co-opt the black power movement. Their strategy is to equate black power with black capitalism.

In this task the white corporate elite has found an ally in the black bourgeoisie, the new, militant black middle class. . . The members of this class consist of black professionals, technicians, professors, government workers, etc. . . They were made militant by the civil rights movement; yet many of them oppose integration because they have seen its failures. Like the black masses, they denounced the old black elite of Tomming preachers, teachers and businessmen-politicians. This new elite seeks to overthrow and take the place of the old elite. To do this it has formed an informal alliance with the corporate forces which run white (and black) America.²⁶

Allen summarizes the attitude of the new black elite towards the white corporatists "Give us a piece of the action and we will run the black communities and keep them quiet for you."²⁷ Another part of this new black elite were the so-called "poverty pimps" – the class who grew rich through administrating anti-poverty programs in the 1960's during President Lyndon Baines Johnson's attempt build a "Great Society" via a "War on Poverty." Frequently the administrators grew rich as a result of mismanagement, nepotism, fraud and misappropriations of funds. History repeats itself. Allen's book is not merely an analysis of the sixties, it is cautionary tale of what can happen again. What Allen alerts us to is one of the potential pitfalls of the reparations movement. Reparations could result in the continued empowerment and economic advancement of the new black elite at the expense of the masses of working class and poor peoples. This pitfall can be termed the embourgeoisement or bourgeoisification of reparations.

Another equally disastrous potential pitfall of reparations is lumpenization of reparations. The use of terms such as "lumpen" or "underclass" is distasteful and analytically incorrect for many Marxists who see the masses of the poor or chronically unemployed as a reserve army of labor. Furthermore as the social philosopher Bill Lawson notes important questions about the term "underclass" remain unanswered. For example: Are the poor and the underclass synonymous or distinct groups? And if they are distinct, then what is the characteristic which distinguish them from one another? Is it geographical concentration; length of time one remains in poverty; attitudes; or behavior? Do the two groups overlap?

Or is one group a subset of the other? If so, which is larger group and which the subset?²⁸ The feminization of poverty and the criminalization of black male youths introduce even more troubling questions. The term “lumpenproletariat” has the connotation of a class which subsists through criminal behavior.²⁹ Are impoverished female headed households “lumpen?” Are even the teenagers who are racially profiled, stopped and frisked without probable cause and arrested for possession of tiny amounts of marijuana, lumpen? What about the victims of the police policy of “zero tolerance,” who are arrested for minor offenses such as drinking beer in public. When these young men are sent through the central booking are they criminals or lumpen? The answer to all of these questions, of course is, no. They are not “lumpen” in this classical Marxist sense of lumpenproletariat. Yet to deny that the existence of a underclass culture --- in which people valorize “gangsterism” or “thug life,” view time spent in jail as a badge of honor, indulge in the most blatant forms of verbal misogyny, celebrate their own “dawgish” behavior, spend money like they are “*n-word*-rich” on “mother’s day” but are destitute for the rest of the month, pawn food stamps for cigarette and beer money, want fifteen minutes of fame as a guest on the Ricki Lake Show confessing sordid secrets to the world, don’t have a husband or a wife but have “my baby father” and “my baby mother,” eat five chicken wings with ketchup and hot sauce and side order of pork fried rice with duck sauce for dinner every night and hurl anti-Asian epithets at the people who sell and prepare that dinner, buy designer clothes and leather jackets for toddlers, spend all day smoking Indo or blunts and drinking fortys, gamble away their rent money shooting “see-low” on the corner, and show off their cell phones on the bus by having loud conversations with their homies ---- would be unscientific in the face of obvious social behavior. I may be roundly excoriating by the “political correctness police” for these observations, but any sociologist or urban anthropologist worth his or her salt would have to take notice of the social norms and values of this underclass or lumpen culture. Still, I utilize the term “lumpen” at my own risk -- while still realizing that there is a precedent for it in the language of the Black Panther Party.³⁰

Having introduced this notion of “lumpen culture” for the purpose of analyzing reparations, I will not expend much time engaging in the debate about reasons for the existence of poverty or the underclass. I will simply state that I am neither a “behavioralist/culturalist” nor a “structuralist.” Posing the question as cultural values/cultural behavior versus structural inequality is to me pate

ntly false - and a false question necessarily yields a false answer. Rather than view the causal factor as a “either/or” choice, I view causation as a “both/and” situation – a confluence of dual causal factors. Poverty is perpetuated by both structural inequality and cultural values/cultural behavior. The process is dialectical. Certainly structural inequality, the economic infrastructure is at the

base of the problem, but the superstructure of ideology, belief and values interacts with the base in a very Gramscian way. There is an economic crisis shaping the quality of life of the underclass, but there is also cultural crisis exerting a strong negative influence as well. This does not mean that I am an advocate of assimilation or Anglo-conformity. No, the underclass should not adopt white middle class values. There are alternative cultural systems -- counter-cultural rather than sub-cultural – offering the option of *resistance* to cultural hegemony and oppression rather than the option of acquiescence as assimilation or Anglo conformity offers, or the “option” of *participation* in one’s own oppression as the lumpen or underclass subculture offers.

Maulana Karenga, a professor of Black studies and political science, and the creator of the black cultural celebration, Kwanzaa and the alternative cultural nationalist system of Kawaida (which he describes “an on-going synthesis of the best of nationalist, Pan Africanist and socialist thought and practice”³¹), states that

[T]he key crisis in black life is the cultural crisis, i.e., the crisis in views and values. The vision crisis is defined by a deficient and ineffective grasp of self, society and the world, and the value crisis by incorrect and self-limiting categories of commitment, and priorities which in turn limit our human possibilities³²

He goes on to state that at the heart of this cultural crisis is the fact that black people have a *popular culture* rather than a *national culture*. The negative views and values which constitute this popular culture are: (1) a high level of re-activeness rather than pro-activeness, (2) high level of lumpenism, (3) high level of simple survival orientation, (4) high level of present-time orientation, (5) an over-emphasis on fun and games and (6) a high-level of myth-orientation and grandiose dreams.³³ This “popular culture” of course sounds very much like “culture of poverty.” Karenga elucidates on each of the above views/values, in his amplification on “lumpenism” he states in part that “hustler values permeate Black popular culture, i.e., emphasis on quick money at any cost. . . conning, gettin’ over.”

The psychologist, Na’im Akbar, adds to Karenga’s litany of negative cultural values when states that black people possess a set of pathological attitudes that are legacy of slavery. Included among the eight attitudes which Akbar lists are negative attitudes toward work, property and a propensity of playing the clown role. One of the attitudes towards property is *conspicuous consumption*.³⁴

Note that both Karenga and Akbar attribute these values to the black community in general not to any specific underclass. Herein lies the gist of the problem. The ghetto is product of American apartheid. It is racially

homogeneous but heterogeneous in its class configuration. In this transclass community, the poor and/or underclass live side by side with the working class -- and with a small minority of the black bourgeoisie (frequently buppies but also some older professionals such as doctors or lawyers who live near their clientele). The values of lumpen culture and the values of the working class culture often vie for hegemony in the ghetto. In this sense, lumpen values or underclass values permeate the culture of the ghetto, i.e., many -- though not all - - lumpen values and behaviors are transmitted to members of the working class, especially the working poor, and especially amongst the youth who socialize in school or in voluntary peer group associations. What starts out as lumpen culture then becomes mainstream black ghetto culture or "black popular culture" which is described by Karenga.

Given the pervasiveness of this popular culture, culture of poverty, underclass culture or lumpen culture - with it's emphasis on present time orientation (immediate rather than delayed gratification), "getting' paid," fun and games and conspicuous consumption -- a blanket cash payment of reparations would be not be in the best interests of community development or community upliftment. I may be roundly criticized for this assertion as a 'bourgeois social scientist' who is insensitive to the needs of the poor. Furthermore, given the feminization of poverty, the number of female-headed households that are impoverished, my remarks could be misconstrued as an attack on the plight of black women. So let me clarify that I am not anti-cash payment. In fact, I would emphatically state that if reparations are structured in part as cash payments, that the poor/ and underclass is the segment of the black community which is most in need and most deserving of a receiving such a reparations check in the mail. I am arguing, however, that such checks should be designated for specific purchases, that payments be made in small increments over a period of years rather than in one lump sum, and that all prior to the receipt of such payments the designated recipients enroll in a mandatory six month seminar in money-management.and consumer education.³⁵

Imagine for a moment if none of the above stipulations were applied. In the worst case scenario, a lump sum payment of reparations, in lumpen culture, would considered "mother of all mother days" ("mother's day" is ghetto slang for the first of the month, the date when welfare checks -- or aid to mothers with dependent children -- arrive in the mail). Sales of liquor and illicit drugs would reach an all time high as would sales of designer clothes. Tommy Hilfiger or Ralph Lauren might even have a special reparations sales event or a design a special "Free at Last" Reparations shirt. Everyone would be talking about buying a Lexus or a Mercedes, and there would be coast to coast parties and barbecues, with airline ticket finally going up as a new black jet-set flies from New York to Atlanta to Los Angeles in search of the best Reparations bash. If

reparations checks arrived on a Friday, half of the recipients would be broke by Monday morning – with nothing to show for it except fancy new clothes, gold-plated jewelry, a collection of the latest CDs and videos, a 53 inch high-definition wide-screen projection tv, and memories of a great weekend. Of course I exaggerate, in order to make a point, but as community of consumers rather than producers – and conspicuous consumers at that – the African American poor would not enjoy long-term benefits from sudden wealth. C.J. Munford pointed out in his Reparations Conference paper, that cash transfers are at best short term redistributions of wealth because in a capitalist system the money is ultimately re-circulated to the ruling class. All one has to do is read about the number of million dollar lottery winners who soon found themselves in economic difficulty in order to realize that massive social problems caused by centuries of oppression and institutional racism, cannot be solved or repaired by putting a check in the mail.³⁶

Yet there are some ways in which cash payments can be productive. Checks can be issued which are specifically designated for educational purposes allowing the recipient to utilize the money towards tuition –at a trade school, liberal arts college, graduate or professional school. – or as a “voucher” for private education at the elementary or secondary level.³⁷ Checks could also be issued which were designated for mortgage payments or home improvements, or the purchase of major household appliances. Or perhaps monies could be earmarked for small entrepreneurial ventures, such as vending inventory. (Though this would be handled better by encouraging entrepreneurs to apply for small business grants from a reparations-funded Community Development Corporation).

In the final analysis, however, cash payments should not represent more than say ten to twenty-five percent of the total reparations payments. The other seventy-five to ninety percent should be utilized to dismantle the worst aspects of apartheid: joblessness and the substandard conditions of public housing, education, healthcare delivery systems, daycare facilities, parks and recreational facilities, etc. (I would include the upgrading of prison conditions since they warehouse such a high percentage of African American men and women). Reparations in my vision should ultimately be a community empowerment program, with billions of dollars being allocated in increments over the next several decades, for the reconstruction and redevelopment of the cities, towns and hamlets of the Black Belt south and the northern inner cities where the overwhelming population of African Americans reside. A one-time lump sum payment of reparations even for this type of reconstruction and redevelopment would be inadvisable on two counts. First of it would probably “bankrupt” America to pay the amount that is due African Americans –an amount which is

in the multi-billions or trillions not the paltry \$500 million sum cited by well-meaning activists in the 60s, (of course the sum grows because of inflation and interest, but even in 1960s dollars, their figure was probably grossly under-estimated). More importantly, however, reparations is a **national endowment** to black people which does not solely belong to the living generations of African Americans, but to several future generations as well. We were enslaved for over 300 years and payments of reparations for that oppression cannot and should not be made in one lump sum. Reparations should be paid in annual installments or in larger installments every five to ten years for the next 75 to 100 years. America would love to get off the hook for its centuries of racism by making a lump sum cash payment to mis-educated consumers or even a lump sum investment in building (but not maintaining) new community projects.. We forget that the payment of reparations **absolves** the nation of any past injustices; if that money were mis-spent or if investments in community projects were poorly allocated and black Americans remained in the same conditions of impoverishment, then . . . well it would just be too bad. “We paid you, you had your chance, sorry fella.” We could never charge racism or discrimination again. This is why I stated in the beginning of this paper that the way we structure reparations will be one of the most momentous decisions in the history of the African American people.

A lot of energy has been expended on (1) how we should get reparations, e.g., via litigation or legislation and (2) who should pay private corporations or governments.³⁸ (Some diligent researchers have even traced the network of companies, banks and insurance companies which profited from the slave trade³⁹). All of this is good and necessary work . Now we must get to the job of deciding what a reparations program must look like. Maulana Karenga in his wisdom stated that we must initiate a national black and white dialogue on the issue of reparations; and that that national conversation must not merely focus on the calculation of monetary compensation, but instead on focus on the moral and ethical issues of the holocaust of slavery which was a monstrous crime against humanity. For Karenga, reparations must have five components: (1) admission of the moral wrong, (2) apology, (3) recognition in the form of national monuments/ memorials, (3) compensation and (5) measures to prevent future racism.⁴⁰ No one could argue with this; but I would add that as we initiate this national inter-racial dialogue in public forums such as this journal; that as a act of self-determination (*kujichagalia*) African Americans must also initiate national dialogues amongst ourselves. This internal dialogue must result in the shaping of our own policy about what the package of compensation should look like. Those of us who were not well grounded in the community empowerment/community control struggles of the 1960s , would do well to prepare themselves for such an internal dialogue by reviewing the literature of community control⁴¹ To this end of initiating this internal dialogue and creating

a body of grassroots brothers and sisters who can formulate the policy for, and oversee the implementation of, a national reparations compensation program, Amiri Baraka has called for a National Representative Assembly, a democratically elected congress or parliament representative of the masses of African American working class people.⁴² The people who would be elected would not be the typical slate of sleazy and corrupt politicians who have misrepresented our interests over and over again in the past. This slate would come from the tried and true community activist and organizers and neighborhood leaders who have demonstrated commitment and dedication to the struggle of African people. . the people who are our statesmen. Frantz Fanon stated “That every generation, out of relative obscurity, must discover its mission and either fulfill it or betray it.” Our mission is to secure the resources to build a self-sufficient and independent community. Reparations and Self-governance must go hand in hand.. This is how we will insure and protect our collective interests, for ourselves and for our future generations, so that as Maulana Karenga so often says “We can once again step back on the stage of human history as a free, proud and productive people.”

Marcus Garvey told us: “Up You Mighty Race, you can accomplish what you will”⁴³

With the proper administration , the proper management, the proper governance of the reparations resources, we can.

Reparations: It's not about getting' paid. It's about Nation Time.

¹ William Edward Burghardt DuBois , *The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903.

² Adam Hochschild, King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).

³ Randall Robinson, *The Debt: What America Owes to Black People* (New York: Dutton/Penguin, 2000). The book is largely anecdotal and good portion of it addresses the issue of “psychic damage” caused to African Americans by Eurocentric distortions, falsifications and omissions of Black history. For Robinson, reparations must include not only monetary compensation but multiculturalism, i.e., an acknowledgement by white America of the African and African American contributions to American and world civilization.

⁴ Shawna Maglangbayan, *The Black Handbook: Selected Quotations from Garvey, Lumumba and Malcolm*. (Chicago: Third World Press, 1973). Pamphlet.

⁵ The 11:1 white-black ratio of median wealth was reported as a front page story in The New York Times in the mid-80's. This index may be as high as 12.5: 1, according to another study. In a review of Melvin L.Oliver and Thomas M. Shapiro's Black Wealth/ White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality

(New York: Routledge, 1995), Robert A. Margo writing in the Independent Review (Vol. 1, No.3) states: "Drawing on SIPP (Survey of Income and Program Participation) data for the late 1980s, chapter 4 presents some basic evidence of wealth inequality in contemporary America, including the unsettling finding (p. 86) that the black-white ratio of median wealth is only 0.08 percent [i.e., white-black ratio of median wealth 12.5:1] percent while the black-white ratio of median household income is 0.62."

⁶ For a discussion of Foreman's Black Manifesto see C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church Since Frazier* in the dual book E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* / C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Church Since Frazier* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 130-134. The full text of "The Black Manifesto" is in Appendix B, pp. 179-190.

⁷ Ibid., Appendix F. "What the Muslim's Want," pp. 202. Also in James L. Golden and Richard D. Rieke, *The Rhetoric of Black Americans* (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co, 197), pp. 408-409.

⁸ Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, ed., *Liberation, Imagination and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 2000), Appendices: October 1966 Black panther Party Platform and Program, pp. 285-286.

⁹ Patterson, William L,ed., *We Charge Genocide: The Historic Petition to the United Nations* (New York: International Publishers, NY, 1971).

¹⁰ William A. Darity, Jr., "Reparations" in *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, edited by Jack Salzman, David Lionel Smith and Cornel West (New York: Simon-Schuster Macmillan, 1996) Vol. 4, pp. 2315-2318. The late Queen Mother Moore was a venerated figure in the nationalist/Pan Africanist community, she died at the age of 99 in the late 1990s. Always resplendent in African fashions, she earned her honorific title through her regal bearing, her travels to Africa where she was so anointed, and her long history of struggle which included phases as a Garveyite --- and a Communist! Though I have personal recollections of her dating back to 1968, I am indebted to the encyclopedia entry by Darity for specifics about her reparations activity. See also Veronica D. Di Conti, "Reparations," in *Encyclopedia of Minorities in American Politics* {Vol. 1} edited by Jeffrey Schultz, et al., (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 2000), pp.146-147.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Chokwe Lumumba, "Notes On Reparations for New Afrikans in America," in *Reparations Yes* (Third Edition) by Chokwe Lumumba, Imari Obadele and Nkechi Taifa. (Baton Rouge: House of Songhay, 1993) p. 15. Lumumba cites as his source: Leronne Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Co., 1969) p. 189.

¹⁴ Darlene Clark Hine, et.al., *The African American Oddyssey* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2000) , pp 171-172. Information about Paul Cuffe and the American Colonization Society appears in several black history texts.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 259 -260

¹⁶ Ibid., p 260

¹⁷ For information on the African Blood Brotherhood and its relation to both Garvey movement and the Communist Party, see: Theodore G. Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (San Francisco: Ramparts Press, 1972); Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1976); Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem During the Depression* (New York: Grove Press, 1984); Rupert Lewis and Maurice Warner-Lewis, ed., *Garvey:Africa, Europe, The Americas* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1994);

Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996); Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: verso, 1998); and Rod Bush, *We Are Not What We Seem: Black Nationalism and Class Struggle in the American Century* (New York: New York University Press, 1999).

¹⁸ See Note # 7 above.

¹⁹ John A Williams, *The Man Who Cried I Am* (Boston: Little Brown, and Company, 1967); Gill Scott-Heron, record album, *Free Will* (Flying Dutchman label, 1972). Black People's Topographical Centers were a national network of political education centers located in the ghettos of major cities in the 1970s. Virtually unknown outside of the inner city, "The Top" had a major impact on the consciousness of all blacks who took the three hour "tour." Replete with impressive color-coded maps of the "ghetto-resevations" that "confine the captive black American population, and photographs of 30 foot poison gas canisters located in detention centers, the tour of "The Top" was a chilling, political paranoia-inducing experience.

²⁰ Edward T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (Anchor/Doubleday, 1969), Chapter III "Crowding and Social Behavior in Animals," pp.23-40. For additional effects of crowding on behavior see Jonathan Freedman, *Crowding and Behavior* and Irwin Altman, *The Environment and Social Behavior : Privacy, Personal Space, Territory, Crowding,*

²¹ Dollard,J., Doob, L.W., Miller, N.E., Mowrer, O.H., & Sears, R.R. *Frustration and Aggression* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939).

²² Henry George, *Progress and Poverty* (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1992 [1879]), pp. 340-341.

²³ Abdul Alkalimat, *Introduction to Afro-American Studies: A People's College Primer*, {Sixth Edition} (Chicago: Twenty-First Century Books, 1986), p. 61

²⁴ First Reparations Education and Mobilization Campaign Conference, November 2-4, City College of New York campus, Harlem, NY. Munford's paper was entitled "Forms of Reparations: Problems of Political Economy." In addition to C. J. Munford's conference paper and his other written works, it may be useful to scan old and current issues of the *Review of Political Economy* for economic assessment and critique of various reparations models . According to William A.Darity, Jr.'s article "Reparations" [See Note # 10]: "One organization that received its start from funds generated in response to {James Forman's} manifesto was the Black Economic Research Center [which] began publishing the *Review of Black Political Economy* a journal now published under the auspices of the National Economic Association, the professional organization of black economists. In the early issues of the *Review*, Robert S. Browne, director of the research Center advocated substantial reparations to correct disparities in wealth between blacks and whites."

²⁵ Gerorge Breitman, ed., *Malcolm X Speaks* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), pp.38-39. From the speech entitled "The Ballot or the Bullet" delivered by Malcolm X in Cleveland, Ohio on April 3, 1964.

²⁶Robert L. Allen, *Black Awakening in Capitalist America* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990 [1969]), p. 19

²⁷ Ibid., p. 19

²⁸ Bill E. Lawson, The Underclass Question (Philadelphia :Temple University Press, 1992), p.2

²⁹ Tom Bottomore's *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1983) states that Marx , in the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Part V, describes the lumpenproletariat as " 'the refuse of

all classes,’ ‘a disintegrated mass,’ comprising ‘ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, pickpockets, brothel keepers, rag-pickers, beggars’ etc.” [p. 292]

³⁰ The Black Panther Party adopted, from Frantz Fanon’s observations in *The Wretched of the Earth*, the controversial position that the lumpenproletariat were the most oppressed segment of the masses, and that since they had the least to lose and the most to gain, they would be the most revolutionary group in the society, “the vanguard of the revolution.” The black revolutionary culture of the late sixties and early seventies reflected this belief. On the album *This is Madness* (Douglas 7 label, 1971) recorded by the legendary Last Poets, Omar ben Hassen’s poem “*Related to What*” contains the lines: “An Armageddon jumped off on the corners of 125th Street and 7th Avenue as the junkies, winos, pimps and prostitutes finally reclaimed their rightful name as a vanguard party.” This echoes Fanon, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1968), who speaks of rural peasants who have migrated to the city and cannot find employment as the lumpenproletariat who will spearhead the urban revolution. “[T]hat horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people. . . So the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed, and the petty criminals. . . throw themselves into the struggle for liberation like stout working men. These classless idlers will by militant and decisive action discover the path that leads to nationhood.” [pp.129-130] The Nation of Islam in its heyday was known for reforming lumpen and turning them into nation-builders. Malcolm X , was of course, the quintessential “lumpen–turned-nationalist revolutionary.”

³¹ Maulana Karenga, *Kawaida Theory: An Introductory Outline* (Inglewood, CA: Kawaida Publications, 1980), p.15.

³² Ibid., p.17

³³ Ibid., p. 18-20

³⁴ Na’im Akbar, *Breaking the Chains of Psychological Slavery*. (Tallahasie: Mind Productions and Associates, 1996).

³⁵ The struggle to convince black people that a personal reparations check is not the best formulation of reparations will be a difficult uphill battle. There are formidable forces rallying around the concept of a check as this message from Dr. Conrad Worrill, Chairman of the National Black United Front indicates:

“ ‘The Campaign To Cash The Check,’ spearheaded by Rev. Al Sharpton of the National Action Network based in New York City, and a host of other activists and organizers from around the country, have emerged as a force willing to take to the streets, in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, to make known to the world the critical issues affecting Black people in this country. ‘It’s obvious today,’ Dr. King challenged us in 1963, ‘that America has defaulted on its promissory note in so far as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation. America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked insufficient funds.’ Dr. King continued: ‘We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. And so we’ve come to cash this check, a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.’ ”

It should be clear to all African people that both the Republican and Democratic Parties, the last several years, have participated in compromising any efforts to ‘Cash The Check.’ In fact, both parties have compromised many of the hard fought gains that came out of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements of the 1960s. Therefore, The Campaign To Cash The Check will focus on one of the most critical issues Black people should demand, and fight for. That is the continued demand for Reparations.

The Check that Dr. King was talking about Cashing in 1963. that has not been cashed, is the Check of Reparations . . .”

³⁶ Nor should reparations checks be sent to the working class or the black middle middle class to be used as luxury money for vacation trips (not even to Africa). Reparations should not be viewed as extra cash for Christmas presents or for adding a new garage to the house. This would trivialize reparations.

³⁷ Some reparations proposals, such as one presented in Randall Robinson's *The Debt*, argue for tuition exemption for higher education for all African Americans for at least two generations. It is not clear whether the federal or state governments would be responsible for reimbursing the schools or if the schools – given that the original endowments of many elite institutions came from profits earned from the slave – should be responsible for footing the bill themselves. If this burden of footing the bill were placed on all colleges across the board regardless of their complicity in profiting from slavery, the historically black colleges would be adversely affected. If the historically black institutions had to foot the bill for all of their students they would go bankrupt; if they were exempt from footing the bill, students would choose to attend the predominantly white free tuition colleges and universities. Besides tuition-exemption, the most widely discussed example of reparations structured as services rendered with cost-exemption, is income tax exemption. Veronica d. Di Conto [See end of Note # 10] states that recent attempts to demand reparations "have included claims filed by some African Americans with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). In 1996, the IRS received and denied thousands of tax claims for slavery reparations. . . . Variations of the black tax story have been floating around the country since at least 1993, when an article in *Essence Magazine*, a periodical aimed at black women, urged readers to seek reparations from the Internal Revenue Service on their tax forms and gave instruction on how to do so. More than 20,000 people followed *Essence* author L. G. Sherrod's advice. . . ." [pp. 146-147].

³⁸ A lot of energy has also been spent on who gets paid? Are African-Caribbean immigrants eligible for reparations? Or is the United States government only legally responsible for paying reparations to the black people whose ancestors were enslaved within the borders of the United States and /or the thirteen original British colonies which became the United States. On the face of it, it would seem that if reparations is compensation for enslavement alone, then Caribbean immigrants would have to take their legal claims to the governments of Britain, France, Spain or the Netherlands. If it is compensation for slavery *and continued oppression* then Caribbean immigrants – at least second or third generation descendants of Caribbean immigrants – should have a stake in the claim. From another angle since the reparations movement is one of international solidarity, a Pan-African claim can be made against all of the Western powers involved in slavery or colonialism.—and African people wherever they are –or whatever their origin – can collect. The slave trade itself was after all international. During enslavement and after emancipation there was movement of Diaspora blacks back and forth from the Caribbean to the mainland, many of the slaves being "broken" in the Caribbean before being brought to North America. The structuring of reparations as Community Reconstruction and Development programs rather than as cash payments eliminates one set of problems but introduces another. The inner city communities eligible for reconstruction funds would have to be populated predominately by African Americans (descendants of those enslaved in the United States). If large numbers of African-Caribbean immigrants live in those neighborhoods, they of course would benefit. But can reparations funds be legally invested in areas where the black population consists primarily of immigrants? On the face of it, it would seem like communities which are overwhelmingly composed of African-Caribbean immigrants would not be legally entitled to reparations, unless an international indictment against all Western powers were made on behalf of all African peoples.

³⁹ Deadria C. Farmer-Peallmann is one of the leaders in this research. She unearthed the connection between Aetna Insurance Company and slave trade profits. She delivered the results of her ongoing research, linking Aetna and other contemporary corporations to slave-trade profiteering, in a paper entitled "In Her Majesty's Service" at conference on "Slavery and Reparations" sponsored by the Society for the Study of Africana Philosophy. [Philosophy Born of Struggle 7th Annual Conference, October 20-21, 2000, New School University, Dr. Everet Green, Coordinator].

⁴⁰ Plenary Session address delivered on November 3rd at the First Reparations Education and Mobilization Campaign Conference, November 2-4, City College of New York campus, Harlem, NY.

⁴¹ A short but excellent introduction would be William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) Chapter Four, “The Ideologies of Black Power,” pp. 112-191; The late Amos Wilson left a monumental 900 page posthumously published legacy, *Blueprint for Black Power: A Moral, Political and Economic Imperative for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Afrikan World InfoSystems, 1998) which also deserves our study..

⁴² Final speech of Plenary Session delivered on November 3rd at the First Reparations Education and Mobilization Campaign Conference, November 2-4, City College of New York campus, Harlem, NY.

⁴³ Amy Jacques-Garvey, ed., *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Atheneum, 1973).