

Why we support Black Nationalism

The collective American memory is short, so we're not surprised when people ask us why we support Black nationalism, or even think Black nationalism is reverse racism. Twenty-five years after Malcolm X died and twenty Nixon/Reagan years after the Black Power movement challenged white power (the only kind we've got in the United States), Black Liberation is rarely even an item of public discussion.

This is the start of a new year, the end of a decade, and heading toward 1992—the 500th year of the white man's conquest of North America. This is a good time to exercise our collective memory. The bloody record of white America conquering, slaughtering and enslaving Native, Mexican and Black people may seem like ancient history, but of course, the white/non-white relationships created in the past live on. The present black/white political, economic and social relationship goes back to this: four million African slaves worked, for white America, for no pay, for 250 years. They built, for white America, the richest nation on earth . . . then never got a dime, or an acre of land, or the power to say where they wanted to go and what they wanted to do, or even an ounce of r-e-s-p-e-c-t. Nothing.

White America got it all. The proceeds from slavery fueled western expansion, conquest of the southwest, Texas, and California. Slavery financed the industrial revolution. Now, 150 years later, we know who owns corporate America—not black people. Not jobs, scholarships, poverty money, or a kinder, gentler America will redress this colossal rip-off. If there *were* jobs, scholarships and poverty money. But there aren't.

In 1988 the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *New York Times*, and *Newsweek* and *Time*, and U.S. Government statistics all agreed: black people are worse off than they were twenty years ago and the white/black gap is widening. Black unemployment is up, black college enrollment is down. Racist violence, by Nazi skinheads and others, is on the rise. Decades and presidential adminis-

trations bring economic ups and downs; but the basic structure of white supremacy in America never changes.

Some whites are fearful that a nationalist perspective is a separatist, or in their view, racist, position. We must point out that racial separation is a white invention and—for the last 500 years—a bloody passion. Black people have never separated the races—in South Africa or America. Black people didn't invent apartheid or Jim Crow or "separate but equal."

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Malcolm X reflected: "I'm not an American. I'm one of the 22 million Black people who are the victims of Americanism." Black nationalism was Malcolm's solution to America's system of white supremacy, but black nationalism did not originate or end with Malcolm X. From the first slave revolts to modern urban rebellions, some black people thought integration would solve the problems, and others fought for

black independence.

In 1619, a year before the Mayflower landed at Plymouth Rock, Africans were brought to America in chains. They are still breaking those chains; but how many centuries will it take to melt the white man's heavy metal heart? After 100, 200, 370 years and counting, should black people still wait for America to choose democracy? Or should they build a democratic and egalitarian society themselves, alone if necessary?

Black nationalism is based on the wholly rational idea that, given a choice, black people would rather do it for themselves. The John Brown Anti-Klan Committee supports black people's right to make this choice.

Black Nationalism is not a *wild* or *separatist* or *racialist* concept. Black nationalism is the perspective shared by millions of Blacks in South Africa, who want nothing more than an end to apartheid—Black Power in a black country. Black power is not the racist reverse of white power. In the real world white power means: apartheid, Jim Crow segregation, lynch-law and injustice. White power is the world view promoted by Pik Botha, Tom Metzger and George Bush. Black power, everywhere it exists and everywhere it's fought for, stands for majority rule, human rights, democracy and equality. Black power/nationalism is the world view promoted by Nelson Mandela, Winnie Mandela, Malcolm X and Steve Biko.

Black nationalists in the U.S., claim for black people the right to political power over their own land and resources in the South. A black nation on this continent could well be like today's Zimbabwe, (formerly Rhodesia) a black country, ruled by black people. The whites who live there are welcome to stay and help build the new society. An independent Black nation in the U.S. would mean that black people—who've had little control over their history for four centuries—will create their own future. Racial separation is not the point: only racists won't be welcome there. ■