

# **Black Power and the Slave Trade: How the Memory of Slavery Disrupted White Supremacy, 1959- 1989**

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## **Introduction**

The powers opposed to Negro progress will not be influenced in the slightest by mere verbal protest on our part. They realized only too well that protests of this kind contain nothing but the breath expended in making them. They also realize that their success in enslaving and dominating the darker portion of humanity was due solely to the element of FORCE employed (in the majority of cases this was accompanied by force of arms).

Pressure of course may assert itself in other forms, but in the last analysis whatever influence is brought to bear against the powers opposed to the Negro progress must contain the element of FORCE in order to accomplish its purpose, since it is apparent that this is the only element they recognize.<sup>1</sup>

-Marcus Garvey

Marcus Garvey defied unfavorable odds disproportionately stacked against Blacks worldwide in the early twentieth century. Born in the British colony of Jamaica, he recognized that only through the use of force were whites able to control the Black race during and after slavery. Therefore, he advised Africa and its descendants to reciprocate aggressive measures to reclaim their autonomy. Garvey's Black nationalist politics served as the preface to

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<sup>1</sup> Amy Jacques Garvey, *The Philosophy & Opinions of Marcus Garvey or, Africa for the Africans* (Dover: The Majority Press, 1986), 16.

the larger narrative of the 1960s Black Power Movement, making him a transformative figure in the fight to end the longstanding reign of white supremacy by drawing upon the collective and public memory of slavery. Collective memory is constructed through the recollection and interpretation of the past by individuals and various groups. These memories are often fragmented, but when put together, they narrate history in a way that relates to the prevailing views held within groups or by nations.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, collective memory even within the same country can differ depending on which social group or institution is in possession of those memories. For Garvey, the collective memory of slavery was assembled in part by his father whose family escaped slavery to establish free communities in Jamaica's mountainous hinterlands.<sup>3</sup> A descendant of the maroons, it is arguable that resistance was an intrinsic trait within Garvey's identity due to the collective memory of slave resistance within his family.<sup>4</sup>

Collective memory can and often does produce public memory. "Public memory...is a mode of memory that can only exist through the voices and actions of established living groups, composed by individuals who assert their presence in the public arena through relations of power."<sup>5</sup> It can involve materializing thoughts and recollections of the past often through physical remembrances such as monuments, statues and museums or intangible commemorations such as holidays or cultural celebrations. Most prominently, however, public memory is reliant upon people or organizations who strive to achieve a historical understanding within the public sphere in order to

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<sup>2</sup> Ana Lucia Araujo, *Slavery in the Age of Memory: Engaging the Past* (London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2021), 4.

<sup>3</sup> "National Heroes: Marcus Garvey," The National Library of Jamaica, <https://nlj.gov.jm/qcontentnational-heroes/>.

<sup>4</sup> Tony Martin, *Race First* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1971), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Araujo, *Slavery in the Age of Memory*, 5.

accomplish a political outcome.

As a United States immigrant, collective and public memory of slavery was at the root of Garvey's global rebellion against white supremacy. Garvey formed the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914 to serve as an international platform to amplify the tone of "New Negroes" which resounded with the three core tenants of Black nationalism. By urging the Black community to establish a separate nationhood to meet their own socioeconomic needs, he aroused race pride, resistance, and self-determination which would subsequently establish Black Power sentiment throughout the African Diaspora beginning in the late 1950s.<sup>6</sup> Through the UNIA, Garvey was the transnational megaphone for Blacks who sought to cross their names off the racial contract that bound them to lives of oppression due to the residual impact of slavery.<sup>7</sup> He inspired successive leaders who echoed the public memory of slavery throughout their own political activism during the Black Power Movement.

This research supports two main arguments: Black Power drew from the public memory of slavery to explain causes of racism and rationalize militant methods of Black protest against white supremacy; and Black Power leaders drew from each other to inform their own activism, thereby creating a lineage of activists who reconstructed the memory of slavery to achieve racial justice. Nation of Islam (NOI) minister of information Malcolm X was the son of Garveyites, and his own teachings blazed a path for Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) chairman Stokely Carmichael, Black Panther Party for Self-Defense co-founder Huey P. Newton, British Black Panthers leader Obi E. Egbuna and Black Power advocate and entertainer Tupac Shakur. The public memory of slavery was

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<sup>6</sup> Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement*, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

foundational to Black Power demands. This work spans from 1959 when X's teaching began to receive widespread attention, to the year of Newton's death and the release of Shakur's ode to the Black Panther Party in 1989.

Part I of this study, "Black Power Leaders and the Memory of Slavery," will reveal how X, Carmichael, Newton, Egbuna, Shakur and the social groups they represent leaned on the memory of slavery as the essence of their Black Power philosophy with the destruction of white supremacy as their utmost intention. It will present a chronology of Black nationalists who were prominent during the Black Power Movement predominantly in the United States while also demonstrating their diasporic influence. By explicitly and implicitly naming slavery as the root of Black oppression, X, Carmichael, Newton and Egbuna underscore white supremacy as a problematic global production that can only be eliminated through Black Power. Shakur is an exception to the temporal dimensions of the Black Power era. Nonetheless, each leader used their platform to demonstrate a clear connection between slavery and the causes of their political activism. This section will dissect the following speeches: X's "The Race Problem" delivered at Michigan State University in 1963; Carmichael's 1966 speech at the University of California, Berkeley; Newton's interview with pamphlet publication *The Movement* in 1968; Egbuna's essay written from prison in 1971, "Destroy This Temple"; and Shakur's 1989 song "Panther Power." Each text will be examined for how the memory of slavery is used to underscore the causes of racial injustice as well as to insist upon the empowerment and self-determination of African Americans to improve their own circumstances.

Part II, "Black Power Legacy and the Memory of Slavery," will demonstrate the heritage of Black Power advocacy that X, Carmichael, Newton, Egbuna and Shakur consulted or referenced to inform their activism, thereby creating a Black Power tradition grounded in the memory

of slavery. Black Power leaders frequently highlight the ideas, accomplishments and heroism of their predecessors to further educate the public and encourage Black pride. In this way, an ancestry of key thinkers and advocates within the Black Power Movement is established with the memory of slavery as a unifying entity of their collective activism. Inadvertently, the heritage of Black Power is memorialized by Black Power leaders themselves. This section will exhibit excerpts from the following speeches: X's 1958 address at a Marcus Garvey Day celebration in Harlem; Newton speaking about X in 1968 in *The Movement*; Egbuna recalling Carmichael speak at the 1967 Dialectics of Liberation conference in London; and a 1994 interview of Shakur briefly noting the work of the Black Panther Party. Each text will demonstrate how one leader was influenced by a previous leader's memory of slavery.

## **Part I: Black Power Leaders and the Memory of Slavery**

### **Malcom X and the Nation of Islam**

The Nation of Islam was an organization of African American Muslims who adopted the principles of Black nationalism. Introduced to religion while in prison, Malcolm X joined the Nation of Islam and became its minister of information. In January 1963, he was invited to speak at Michigan State University by the African Students Association and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Campus Chapter. Titled "The Race Problem," much of the speech states his opposition to the Civil Rights Movement and its leaders who worked toward the equal treatment of Blacks and whites. As the national spokesman of the organization, X encourages complete separation of Blacks and whites and regularly references the slavery past to build membership within the Nation of Islam. This particular speech includes perhaps his most famous extended metaphor of slavery. Describing Black integrationists in the United States as the

“old Negro,” X says these men and women represent house slaves who adopted the ways of their master.

The house Negro usually lived close to his master. He dressed like his master. He wore his master's second-hand clothes. He ate food that his master left on the table. And he lived in his master's house--probably in the basement or the attic--but he still lived in the master's house. So whenever that house Negro identified himself, he always identified himself in the same sense that his master identified himself. When his master said, "We have good food," the house Negro would say, "Yes, we have plenty of good food." "We" have plenty of good food. When the master said that "We have a fine home here," the house Negro said, "Yes, we have a fine home here." When the master would be sick, the house Negro identified himself so much with his master he'd say, "What's the matter boss, we sick?" His master's pain was his pain. And it hurt him more for his master to be sick than for him to be sick himself. When the house started burning down, that type of Negro would fight harder to put the master's house out than the master himself would. If someone came to the house Negro and said, "Let's go, let's separate," naturally that Uncle Tom would say, "Go where? What could I do without boss? Where would I live? How would I dress? Who would look out for me?" That's the house Negro?'<sup>8</sup>

Here, X uses the memory of slavery to vividly portray the pursuit of integration as counterproductive to the struggle of Blacks in America. He criticizes the Civil Rights

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<sup>8</sup> Malcolm X. "The Race Problem," Michigan State University, January 23, 1963.

<https://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/mxp/speeches/mxa17.html>.

Movement and its leaders – the “house slaves” – for facilitating efforts that underscored the belief that African Americans would be in a better condition if they were more aligned with white culture, shared white institutions, moved into white neighborhoods, attended white schools, served in the military or held jobs typically reserved for whites.<sup>9</sup> In this context, X implicitly describes his ideological rival Martin Luther King as a man still controlled by the concept of the white savior. X suggests that just as house slaves understood the master as their sole chance for survival, integrationists demonstrate the similarly misguided mindset that proximity to white people and participating in white institutions is the solution to Black problems. He denounces the belief that integration would finally put Blacks on an even playing field with whites. Quite contrarily, X contends that Blacks would thrive if apart from whites.

In the same speech, X claims the “new Negro” would have been the field slaves who wanted nothing to do with their master. “The masses- the field Negroes- were the masses. They were in the majority. When the master got sick, they prayed that he’d die. If the house caught on fire, they’d pray for a wind to come along and fan the breeze... If you went to the field Negro and said, “Let’s go, let’s separate,” he would even ask you where or when. He’d say, “Yes, let’s go.”<sup>10</sup> Here, X says that members of the Nation of Islam are modern manifestations of the field slaves. These are Black men and women who recognize that the location of freedom is anywhere that white people and white influences do not exist. Further, even if they were not Black Muslims, X says modern field slaves comprise the majority of the Black population because they are shut out of opportunities. He identifies them as the jobless or underemployed, those who live in poor housing,

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<sup>9</sup> X, “The Race Problem.”

<sup>10</sup> X, “The Race Problem.”

receive inadequate education or otherwise lack the benefits of American democracy.<sup>11</sup> These “new Negroes” recognize that freedom exists apart from rather than within close range to white people. He considers them new because the era in which he delivered his speech was one of resistance to racial discrimination and an overall rejection of white supremacy in ways that many Blacks had previously, and reluctantly, tolerated.

To further develop this rebellion toward white dominion, X urged Blacks to join the Nation of Islam which embraces ideals of race pride, self-determination and resistance as means to living not like minorities, but as the “dark majority who outnumber whites.”<sup>12</sup> In this way, X uses the memory of slavery to validate the existence of oppressed Blacks by connecting their suffering to slavery and the solution to the principles of Black nationalism. He tries to impress upon the Black community that they have been misled to believe their existence is insufficient without the presence of white people. In other speeches, he balances this approach by educating African Americans on their royal heritage as kings and queens in Africa while Europeans were uncivilized, living in caves. By using the memory of slavery to connect racial injustice of the 1960s to the period of slavery, X aims to unromanticize the illusion of integration. His words echo those of Garvey but also inspired successive activists. This is evident in the rise of Stokely Carmichael, once a follower of the Civil Rights Movement but most noted for his role in transitioning the attention of Black youth to the Black Power Movement.

### **Stokely Carmichael and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee**

Stokely Carmichael enrolled at Howard University in Washington, DC as an undergraduate student in 1960.

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<sup>11</sup> X, “The Race Problem.”

<sup>12</sup> X, “The Race Problem.”



That same year, he joined SNCC, a civil rights group dedicated to challenging segregation and other forms of racial injustice in the United States. By 1966, Carmichael rose in ranks within the organization and was named chairman. That same year, he would make another name for himself as a Black power agitator.

In June 1966, James Meredith, the first Black student to integrate the University of Mississippi in 1962, was shot for engaging in an independent “march against fear” throughout the state. Having completed only 30 of the 230-mile solo trek, 15,000 people dared to continue the march where Meredith left off as he healed in a local hospital. Of those people were Carmichael and other members of SNCC. It was then that Carmichael first issued demands for Black Power. “Everybody owns our neighborhood except us! We outnumber the whites in this county; we want Black power! That’s what we want, Black power!”<sup>13</sup> Carmichael’s cry for Black Power captivated young Blacks by declaring the need for Black people to ascend the social hierarchy through aggressive, no longer passive, insistence upon change. Although SNCC started out as a civil rights organization, its members gradually exhausted themselves of the peaceful and patient approach to equality enforced by civil rights leaders. Two months later, he spoke at a student conference at the University of California at Berkeley in which he “condemned” white America for its “criminal acts against Black America.” In an attempt to explain to the majority white audience how they could further the cause of racial justice in America by supporting the objectives of Black Power within their own communities, he drew from the past of slavery to pose a series of questions.

Carmichael first asks the audience, “How can Black

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<sup>13</sup> “Negro Marchers Chant: ‘We Want Black Power,’” *Tucson Daily Citizen*, June 17, 1966.

people inside this country move?”<sup>14</sup> In other words, what rights should they expect? What opportunities could they have? How much longer were they expected to wait for racial justice? And in what ways could they demand change? While the question was rhetorical, his response to his own inquiry solidified the fact that Blacks were done asking whites for what naturally belonged to them.

We were never fighting for the right to integrate, we were fighting against white supremacy. In order to understand white supremacy we must dismiss the fallacious notion that white people can give anybody his freedom. A man is born free. You may enslave a man after he is born free, and that is in fact what this country does. It enslaves Blacks after they're born. The only thing white people can do is stop denying Black people their freedom.<sup>15</sup>

To put it another way, even though white people cannot deny Black people of what is indeed a birthright, the institution of slavery did just that. Thus, Carmichael is saying that although slavery is over, whites continue to withhold basic humanity from Black people which they must cease from doing. Further, he clarifies his purpose for being in Mississippi a few months prior. He states that SNCC was not there fighting for the integration of public spaces as many Blacks had been known to do in the racially divided southern state. Rather, he insists that he and other members of SNCC traveled to Mississippi to combat the larger issue plaguing the Black population, which was the racist Jim Crow system that legalized Black inferiority. The understanding that Blacks must earn their freedom or any other rights inherent to white people is a false premise

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<sup>14</sup> Stokely Carmichael, *Stokely Speaks: From Black Power to Pan-Africanism* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Book, 1965), 46.

<sup>15</sup> Carmichael, *Stokely Speaks*, 47.

based on white supremacist ideology. Therefore, he clarifies for whites and Blacks alike that African Americans should not have to request what is rightfully theirs. Through this segment of Carmichael's speech, he uses the memory of slavery to reiterate that freedom is a natural condition inhibited only when forces oppose the right for freedom to thrive. By admonishing whites for making freedom an issue of legality, he thrusts the memory of slavery into the public domain to emphasize white supremacy as the cause of racial division and to illuminate its elimination as the cure.

Next, Carmichael begs the question of how white people who claim to be disassociated with racist institutions would maneuver to ally with Blacks seeking to tear down white supremacist systems.<sup>16</sup>

How can you, as the youth in this country, move to start carrying those things out? Move into the white community. We have developed a movement in the Black community. The white activist has miserably failed to develop the movement inside of his community. Will white people have the courage to go into the white communities and start organizing them? That's the question for the white activist. We won't get caught up in questions about power. This country knows what power is. It knows what Black Power is because it deprived Black people of it for over four hundred years. White people associate Black Power with violence because of their own inability to deal with Blackness. If we had said "Negro power" nobody would get scared. Everybody would support it. If we said power for colored people, everybody'd be for that, but it is the word "Black" that bothers people in this country, and that's their problem, not mine. That's the lie

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<sup>16</sup> Carmichael, *Stokely Speaks*, 46.

that says anything Black is bad.<sup>17</sup>

In this statement, the memory of slavery is implied by Carmichael as he defends his call for Black Power while simultaneously soliciting political action from white radicals who theoretically renounced their affiliation with white privilege in exchange for loyalty to the entire human race, not just their own. Without mincing words, Carmichael shames the presumably liberal white audience for their slow demonstration of allegiance to racial justice by asking them to consider venturing into their own communities to establish coalitions that support the Black Power Movement. However, he does not define power here. Instead, he contends that not only are white people familiar with the meaning of the word because they yielded theirs over Africa and its descendants “for over four hundred years,” but they continue to deny Black people power post slavery.<sup>18</sup> Black Power was not something white people should fear, he suggests, but it was yet another birthright that Blacks were reclaiming. Here, Carmichael uses the memory of slavery to remind white people of what they possessed in their own communities as a result of denying it from others. However, this was no longer going to be tolerated under the watchful eye of SNCC and its bold commands for Black Power.

Lastly, Carmichael asks the audience to evaluate the extent to which they are willing to help ensure Blacks acquire the financial means necessary to “live like human beings.”<sup>19</sup>

We have found all the myths of the country to be nothing but downright lies. We were told that if we worked hard we would succeed, and if that were

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<sup>17</sup> Carmichael, *Stokely Speaks*, 57.

<sup>18</sup> Carmichael, *Stokely Speaks*, 57.

<sup>19</sup> Carmichael, *Stokely Speaks*, 46.

true we would own this country lock, stock, and barrel. We have picked the cotton for nothing; we are the maids in the kitchens of liberal white people; we are the janitors, the porters, the elevator men; we sweep up your college floors. We are the hardest workers and the lowest paid...Black people are economically insecure. White liberals are economically secure. Can you begin to build an economic coalition? Are the liberals willing to share their salaries with the economically insecure Black people they so much love? Then if you're not, are you willing to start building new institutions that will provide economic security for Black people? That's the question we want to deal with!<sup>20</sup>

Although only slightly mentioned, the impact of the memory of slavery in this statement by Carmichael is heavy. By stating "We have picked the cotton for nothing..."<sup>21</sup> he is referencing the hundreds of years in which enslaved Blacks were financially unstable because their forced labor was unpaid. These legacies of slavery lived on through menial jobs in which many Blacks were prequalified due to meager education which led to ungainful employment opportunities, or educated Blacks dealt with discriminatory hiring practices that blocked Black professionals from gainful work. Therefore, while most Blacks worked for pay during the 1960s, their earnings were often below the living wage which reinforced slave conditions. Carmichael reshapes the memory by using slavery to interrogate the audience about its willingness to unravel economic hardship that left Blacks reliant upon white families and white companies for unequal pay that promoted poverty in African American communities. Appropriately, he closes his speech with one

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<sup>20</sup> Carmichael, 54.

<sup>21</sup> Carmichael, 54.

final question: “Will white people overcome their racism and allow for that to happen in this country? If not, we have no choice but to say very clearly, move on over, or we’re going to move on over you.”<sup>22</sup>

That would not be the first time Carmichael proposed militarism as a measure of accomplishing racial justice. As a SNCC member before being named its chair, he led Alabama’s Lowndes County in a voting campaign under the banner of the Black Panther Party. Its platform was “Black independent politics with guns.”<sup>23</sup> During a visit to California the following year, he met Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. From there lies the conception of the national Black Panther Party for Self-Defense.

### **Huey P. Newton and the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense**

In 1968, a publication titled *The Movement* released a pamphlet containing a question and answer-style interview with Huey P. Newton, the co-founder and intellectual brainpower behind the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. During the course of the interview, Newton shares the Black Panther Party’s stance on cultural nationalism, SNCC, Black and white liberals, white revolutionaries and other topics. Although the subjects appear disjointed at times, the common thread weaved throughout his discussion is how slavery remains a lived experience for African Americans, Black people throughout the world and people of color in general. He repeatedly refers to the United States as the “Black colony” and does not mince words when emphasizing the belief that African descendants in America are still slaves due to de jure and de facto discriminatory policies upheld by institutionalized racism that are rooted in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The Black Panther Party’s platform rests on the

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<sup>22</sup> Carmichael, *Stokely Speaks*, 60.

<sup>23</sup> Carmichael, 187.

memory of slavery. Its list of demands within the Party's Ten Point Program begins with a strong implication that African Americans were still under slave conditions in October 1966 when the doctrine was written: "We want freedom. We want the power to determine the destiny of the Black community. We believe that Black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny."<sup>24</sup> Here, the Party essentially declares that Blacks in the United States are still under the control of the white ruling class a century after emancipation. It suggests that Blacks continued to yearn for the right to make decisions about themselves, their families and the larger Black community without fear of white interference. In his interview with *The Movement*, Newton supports the first demand of the Ten Point Program, which called for the right for Blacks to determine their own destiny, through an extended metaphor about slavery.

The historical relationship between Blacks and whites here in America has been the relationship between the slave and the master; the master being the mind and the slave being the body. The slave would carry out the orders that the mind demanded him to carry out. By doing this, the master took the manhood from the slave because he stripped him of his mind. He stripped Black people of their mind.<sup>25</sup>

As a result, Newton says the slave master becomes the "omnipotent administrator" or a being with unlimited power often manifested in tyrannical fashion. Conversely, the male slave becomes the "supermasculine menial" or a strong yet degraded servant. The omnipotent administrator

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<sup>24</sup> Philip S. Foner, *The Black Panthers Speak* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 1970), 2.

<sup>25</sup> Foner, *The Black Panthers Speak*, 58.

acted in similar ways post-emancipation. As a result, supermasculine menials were forced to remain in their roles as exploited workers incapable of self-determination. Newton expresses that this tragic denial of one's own mental capacity can be seen among various ethnic groups. However, by 1966, a period of rebellion among the world's exploited populations had begun. Thus, he asserts that Black and all oppressed people were fighting for the purpose of recapturing their ability to think for themselves. "They are regaining their mind and they're saying that we have a mind of our own. They're saying that we want freedom to determine the destiny of our people, thereby uniting the mind with their bodies. In America, Black people are also chanting that we have a mind of our own. We must have freedom to determine our destiny."<sup>26</sup> In this way, Newton's reiteration of the first demand made in the Ten Point Program connects to the vivid memory of slavery, but more importantly, to the resistance of slavery. He explains "the vanguard group, the Black Panther Party along with all revolutionary Black groups have regained our mind and our manhood."<sup>27</sup> That, he says, is the first step toward walking in one's own destiny. The Ten Point Program continues its reflection on slavery in its third demand.

We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black community. We believe that 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 mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to

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<sup>26</sup> Foner, *The Black Panthers Speak*, 59.

<sup>27</sup> Foner, 61.



our many communities.<sup>28</sup>

Here, the Panthers begin to outline their anti-capitalist agenda by calling out the U.S. government for its failure to supply emancipated Blacks with land and resources to tend to their property. With over 100 years after freedom and the denial of land and resources, the Panthers sought the financial equivalent of those broken promises to support Black communities. In this way, the memory of slavery was viewed as both the source of and a solution to Black oppression. It is these principles within the Ten Point Program that Newton expounds upon in his interview with *The Movement*.

Newton discusses the third demand of the Ten Point Program, the end to the exploitation of Black people, by detailing the Panthers' subscription to revolutionary nationalism. He uses the memory of slavery to outline the Panthers' anti-capitalist agenda and bolsters support for socialism. Again, he shares his beliefs by way of example. Here, he describes the conflict in Algeria as "a good example of revolutionary nationalism."<sup>29</sup>

The French were kicked out but it was people's revolution because the people ended up in power. The leaders that took over were not interested in the profit motive where they could exploit the people and keep them in a state of slavery. They nationalized the industry and plowed the would-be profits into the community. That's what socialism is all about in a nutshell... The Black Panther Party is a revolutionary nationalist group and we see a major contradiction between capitalism in this country and our interests. We realize that this country became very rich upon slavery and that slavery is capitalism

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<sup>28</sup> Foner, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Foner, *The Black Panthers Speak*, 51.

in the extreme. We have two evils to fight, capitalism and racism.<sup>30</sup>

Through this statement, Newton uses the success of socialist soldier and revolutionary Ahmed Ben Bella in Algeria to describe the ambition of the Black Panther Party in the United States. By either ousting the American government or forcing the government to pay retributive finances to the descendants of slaves in the U.S., the Panthers sought to eliminate the burden of capitalism on Black people. Under capitalism, the Panthers did not consider Blacks to be free. Many Blacks worked hard for the benefit of wealthy white businessmen while they took home just enough “crumbs” to survive. Education was still denied, white violence went unaccounted for and an end to discrimination did not appear in sight.<sup>31</sup> From Newton’s perspective, slavery was more than a memory. The Panthers considered slavery a lived experience of their time. Therefore, by fighting capitalism, the Panthers were fighting against the continued enslavement of their people. “The revolutionary sees no compromise. We will not compromise because the issue is so basic. If we compromise one iota we will be selling our freedom out. We will be selling the revolution out. And we refuse to remain slaves.”<sup>32</sup> Through the lens of capitalism as the equivalent of slavery, the Panthers could potentially be viewed as radical abolitionists of the twentieth century who left their mark on activists fighting similar struggles throughout the African Diaspora. One man indisputably inspired by Newton and the American Black Panther Party was Obi E. Egbuna.

### **Obi E. Egbuna and the British Black Panthers**

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<sup>30</sup> Foner, 51.

<sup>31</sup> Foner, 64.

<sup>32</sup> Foner, 62.

The Black Power Movement in the United States had a profound impact on liberation struggles throughout the world. In Britain, its influence on Obi Egbuna, a Nigerian immigrant, was vast; In 1968, he established the British Black Panthers similar to the design of the Black Panther Party in America. However, government officials in the United Kingdom did their best to exterminate Black Power leadership and sentiment. The Race Relations Act of 1965 was the first UK legislation to address the racial discrimination which was increasingly problematic with the influx of immigration. Formalized on November 8, 1965, section one outlawed discrimination in public places, forbidding denial of access to hotels, restaurants, entertainment centers and transportation usage.<sup>33</sup> Section six was more complex. Called the Incitement of Racial Hatred provision, it imposed a monetary fine or prison sentence on anyone found guilty of using verbal or written words with the intent of being hateful based on race or country of origin.

On July 25, 1968, after using aggressive language toward Scotland Yard officers for harassing the West Indian community, Egbuna was penalized under the Race Relations Act. While serving time in prison, he drew from the memory of slavery to write an essay titled “Destroy This Temple” in which he defends his actions. “Mine is a rebellion of the enslaved man against men who makes slaves of other men. But Powellism, on the other hand, is the rebellion of the slave master against the slave. And when a slave master starts revolting against the slave of his own creation... then the contrast between the stupidity of this ‘logic’ and the brain of the man stating it is obvious.”<sup>34</sup> In this statement, Egbuna took the opportunity to criticize Parliamentary Enoch Powell. Three months earlier,

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<sup>33</sup> Race Relations Act of 1965.

<sup>34</sup> Obi E. Egbuna, *Destroy this Temple: The Voice of Black Power in Britain* (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1971), 127-28.

Powell addressed other members of the Conservative party during a general meeting to oppose the Race Relations Act of 1968. If passed, it would amend the 1965 Race Relations Act by adding a provision outlawing discriminatory housing and employment practices on the basis of race. In his “Rivers of Blood” speech, Powell expressed disapproval over the protection of immigrant rights, but in particular, Blacks from British colonies in the Caribbean and Africa. “In this country in 15 or 20 years’ time the Black man will have the whip hand over the white man.”<sup>35</sup> It is evident that Powell drew upon the memory of slavery to suggest that Blacks in England would come to dominate whites if laws continued to protect the interests of immigrants. While he was removed from office due to the “racialist in tone,” he remained free from the prescribed persecution of the incitement provision.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, Egbuna was charged for writing what police called a “murder document” that they claimed provided instructions on how to kill police.<sup>37</sup> In his essay from prison, he invokes the memory of slavery to contextualize the nature of the document for which he was arrested. He defends his message by situating himself as a slave rebelling against the master, which in his case would be the oppressive police force. In this way, he refutes his conviction for hate speech and insists that his mission was to compose a guide to self-preservation for the battered British West Indian community through the prescription of Black Power. He draws a clear distinction between his words and those of Powell. Comparing Powell to a slave master rebelling against a slave, Egbuna suggests that Powell attempts to war with Blacks who came to the UK seeking opportunities better than those afforded to them in

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<sup>35</sup> Enoch Powell, “Rivers of Blood,” April 20, 1968, United Kingdom.

<sup>36</sup> “Heath fires Tory for ‘racist speech’,” *The Province*, April 22, 1968.

<sup>37</sup> Robin Bunce and Paul Field, *Darcus Howe: A Political Biography* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 37.

post-slavery Caribbean colonies and perhaps even Egbuna's own home in Nigeria.

Further, Egbuna blasts the imbalanced use of the Race Relations Act for its own contradictions. The law was used to impose discriminatory sentencing against Egbuna for rhetoric that was characteristic of Black Power leaders throughout the African Diaspora while it let an overtly racist state representative off the hook for hate speech. Unlike other Blacks who Egbuna says are fooled by the myth that racism is more of an American problem, he, himself, was not surprised by his predicament.

To compare the racialism in America with the racialism in England is like comparing a bad slave master with a good slave master. I prefer the bad slave master any day. The bad slave master at least makes the slave aware that slavery is evil. From his attitude, he can make the slave realize without being coerced that slavery is a wicked thing which must be destroyed at all costs. But the good slave master is the sly one. He makes the slave think that slavery can be a good thing, that evil can be made palatable, that one can compromise with man's inhumanity to man... America is like a bad slave master. England is comparable to a 'good' slave master. In Mississippi, the white man tells you straight that he does not want you in his neighborhood and you know where you stand with him. In Wimbledon, the Englishman will apologize most profusely when he refuses you accommodations on racial grounds... This is the centuries old method they have employed to make the unsuspecting Black Tom here actually enjoy his slavery.<sup>38</sup>

Here, Egbuna conducts a comparative analysis of racism in

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<sup>38</sup> Egbuna, *Destroy this Temple*, 141-42.

the United States and England through the memory of slavery. While he concludes that racism in both countries is substantial, he states his “preference” for the overt ways in which America expresses its anti-Black sentiment, the outcome of which is the materialization of the “angry freedom-loving and uncompromising revolutionary.”<sup>39</sup> By dictating racial discrimination through its laws, America allows Blacks to not only experience second-hand citizenship but to read the numerous ways in which they will be mistreated under state authority. On the other hand, the good slave master, England, produces Uncle Toms.<sup>40</sup> Thus, he implies that Britain produces a weaker breed of Blacks who are comfortable with their condition due to the deceitful ways in which Parliament demonstrates its racism. Because racism was supposedly banned under the Race Relations Act, Egbuna suggests that some Blacks were under the illusion that they would be treated fairly in Britain. However, as the organizer of the British Black Panthers, his vision was aligned with X and Carmichael whose memory of slavery allowed them to recognize white supremacy both veiled and revealed.

### **TuPac Shakur**

Not the typical Black Power leader, TuPac Shakur had a complex public persona as both an entertainer and an activist. He began rapping in the late 1980s, around 10 years after hip hop solidified as a form of expression in urban Black communities and within two years of the complete disintegration of the Black Panther Party after the death of Huey P. Newton. His lyrics are both empowering and explicit, while the characters he portrays in movie roles range from professionals to criminals. A day in the life of Shakur was equally contradictory. On one hand, he criticized public education for mandating courses that

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<sup>39</sup> Egbuna, 141.

<sup>40</sup> Egbuna, 141.

lacked real-world relevance and applauded protestors during the 1992 Rodney King riots for raging against police violence.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, he served time in prison for sexual assault and was the eventual victim of fatal street violence. However, this study recognizes him as the son of Black Panther Party member Afeni Shakur and step-son to Black Liberation Army member Mutulu Shakur. The Black Power couple raised Shakur to exude the principles of the Black Power Movement, which he exemplified through the memory of slavery in one of his earlier songs, “Panther Power” from the posthumously released album, *Beginnings: The Lost Tapes, 1988-1991*.

As real as it seems  
 the American Dream  
 Ain't nothing but another calculated scheme  
 To get us locked up, shot up and back in chains  
 To deny us of the future, rob our names  
 Kept my history a mystery but now I see,  
 The American Dream wasn't meant for me  
 'Cause Lady Liberty's a hypocrite, she lied to me  
 Promised me freedom, education, equality  
 Never gave me nothing but slavery  
 And now look at how dangerous you made me  
 Calling me a mad man cause I'm strong and bold<sup>42</sup>

The memory of slavery is rampant throughout these lyrics and used to introduce the larger message of the song, which is a tribute to the Black Panther Party. This stanza confronts the false hopes America gave to Blacks upon receipt of freedom. They did not experience “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution,

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<sup>41</sup> TuPac Shakur, Tamalpais High School interview (Mill Valley, California: 1988).

<sup>42</sup> TuPac Shakur, “Panther Power,” *Beginnings: The Lost Tape, 1988-1991*.

which Shakur highlights within the first few lines of the song. Instead, Blacks faced one disappointment after another at the hands of white greed which was stingy with its democratic principles. Rather than share opportunities, Shakur says the only thing the country did for Blacks was enforce their enslavement and cause them frustration. In this way, he uses the memory of slavery to explain the anger and discontentment felt by many African Americans not only in the 1960s when the Panthers were in their prime, but in the late 1980s when the Black Power Movement was nearing its end as the Black community still suffered. Shakur's verse contains additional gripes with the United States which he continues to lament using the memory of slavery as the basis of his argument.

Promised me emancipation in this new nation  
 All you gave my people was our patience  
 Fathers of our country never cared for me  
 They kept my ancestors shackled up in slavery  
 And Uncle Sam never did a damn thing for me  
 Except lie about the facts in my history  
 So now I'm sitting here mad cause I'm unemployed  
 But the government's glad cause they enjoy  
   when my people are down so they can screw us  
 around  
 Time to change the government now.  
 Panther Power <sup>43</sup>

Here, the memory of slavery is acknowledged from the infancy of the United States. Shakur implies that the nation's founding fathers organized America without Blacks in mind, as it is well known that they were still enslaved at the time of American independence in 1776. Thus, the patience Shakur says America gave Blacks was not actually given but required as a result of the long wait

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<sup>43</sup> Shakur, "Panther Power."



for their highly anticipated freedom. After emancipation, many Blacks went from being full time, unpaid workers to being exploited laborers or entirely unemployed. Options were few and so was government assistance. According to Shakur, the solution to this slave-induced system was Black Power through the leadership of the Black Panther Party.

## **Part II: Black Power Legacy & the Memory of Slavery The Memory of Marcus Garvey**

In 1916, Garvey established the UNIA headquarters in Harlem, the hub of Black political activism, to expedite the end to white violence against the global Black community. His message was impactful. By the time the UNIA reached its peak in 1925, it had membership of nearly one million men and women with an estimated two to three times as many participants in its activities in the Caribbean, Latin America, Canada, Africa, and the United States.<sup>44</sup> Blacks were beginning to unite. One of those members was Earl Little, the father of Malcolm X, who sometimes took his son to UNIA meetings and was eventually killed by the Ku Klux Klan for engaging in UNIA activities.<sup>45</sup> Years later when X joined the Nation of Islam, he reflected on Garvey's successful leadership:

Marcus Garvey was the first Black man to come into this country and get a mass movement, an allegiance, support of the masses of Black people. Why? Because Garvey didn't care what the white man thought. Garvey didn't care how the white man felt. Garvey had the feelings of the Black man at heart. Garvey had the hopes and aspirations of the Black man at heart and the Black masses detected this, they felt this, they were conscious of this, so

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<sup>44</sup> Vincent, *Black Power*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964), 9.

they gave Garvey their support...because Garvey represented the Black man.<sup>46</sup>

Although the UNIA drastically declined after Garvey's deportation and subsequent death, X carried Garvey's torch by perpetuating principles of Black nationalism—the separation of Blacks and whites, pride in Black beauty and culture, resistance toward white superiority. X did not explicitly mention how Garvey connected slavery to his work in the UNIA but depicts an understanding and respect for Garvey, his politics and the foundations of his Black nationalist philosophy of which the memory of slavery was crucial. He acknowledges Garvey's pro-Black spirit and fearlessness of whites, channeling this energy into the Nation of Islam and later into his independent activism throughout the Black Power Movement.

### **The Memory of Malcolm X**

At Michigan State University on January 23, 1963, X spoke to students about the subject of race in America. During this time, he made some of his most famous remarks in which he describes the difference between the “house Negro” and the “field Negro.” He compared some Black civil rights leaders to slaves who were domestic servants that spent the majority of their time around their master. As a result, they began to identify more with the master, or whiteness, than their own people, or Blackness.<sup>47</sup> When questioned by *The Movement* about unity in the Black community, Newton referenced X's earlier remarks to articulate his response.

Historically, you got what Malcolm X calls the field nigger and the house nigger. The house nigger had

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<sup>46</sup> Malcolm X, “Marcus Garvey Day celebration,” August 1, 1958.

<sup>47</sup> Malcolm X, “The Race Problem,” Michigan State University, Jan. 23, 1963.

some privileges, a little more. He got the worn-out clothes of the master and he didn't have to work as hard as the field Black. He came to respect the master...Malcolm makes the point that if the master's house happened to catch on fire the house Negro will work harder than the master to put the fire out and save the master's house, while the field Negro, the field Blacks was praying that the house burned down. The house Black identified with the master so much that when the master would get sick, the house Negro would say, "Master, we's sick!"

Newton borrowed the words of Malcolm X to demonstrate a shared sentiment in separating themselves from the "Black bourgeoisie" who they considered to be "house Negroes" due to their partnership with whites.<sup>48</sup> However, while X preached of complete separation between the races at the time of his speech, the Panthers were willing to form alliances with whites whom they saw as "white revolutionaries," or those who had severed ties with the capitalist interests of the "white mother country."<sup>49</sup> "The Black Panther Party are the field Blacks, we're hoping the master dies if he gets sick<sup>50</sup>...If the Black bourgeoisie cannot align itself without complete program, then the Black bourgeoisie sets itself up as our enemy."<sup>51</sup> Making this his second metaphor demonstrating the memory of slavery in Black Power activism, Newton shared with *The Movement* that Black unity is desired, but it is not possible unless Blacks share the same vision and understanding of how to materialize that vision.

Newton's discussion here is certainly significant

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<sup>48</sup> Foner, *The Black Panthers Speak*, 51.

<sup>49</sup> Foner, 52.

<sup>50</sup> Foner, 51.

<sup>51</sup> Foner, 52.

because he continues to draw connections between 20<sup>th</sup> century oppression of African Americans and the period of enslavement. But what this case study and my larger research intends to illuminate is how Black Power activists drew inspiration from earlier leaders who also relied on the memory of slavery to support their efforts in the Black freedom struggle. Newton called attention to X's speech, made over three years prior to his interview with *The Movement*, after X was assassinated. Although this was not a particularly long stretch of time, it does validate the idea that X's words left a lasting impression, that his teachings lived vicariously through successive Black Power and Black nationalist leadership such as the Black Panther Party and serves as additional demonstration of how the memory of slavery is inextricably linked to and permanently ingrained in the work of racial justice proponents.

In April 1970 at Morehouse College, Carmichael spoke about Pan-Africanism which he describes as the "highest political expression of Black Power" being the formation of a "land base," preferably in Africa, where the Black fight for liberation could be headquartered.<sup>52</sup> He preempted this idea by pointing to the landmark success of two of his predecessors.

The Honorable Marcus Garvey organized around the concept of land in 1922- Back to Africa. Marcus Garvey had the largest organization in this country among Black people. No other organization past or present has been able to match Mr. Garvey...If you knew Brother Malcolm X you would know that his basic ideology was Garveyism. His father was a Garveyite. Always we must understand our history, because we will see how it moves- from Garvey to Malcolm's father to Malcolm, on down the line. The second largest organization that we've had, the

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<sup>52</sup> Carmichael, *Stokely Speaks*, 202-03.

largest one in our community is the Muslims...<sup>53</sup>

Here, Carmichael not only honors the legacy of both Garvey and X. He also highlights the influence Garvey had on X in his primary years and most pervasively throughout his work as a Muslim activist. By calling attention to both leaders, Carmichael implies their influence on his own activism, which in turn created other leaders.

### **The Memory of Stokely Carmichael and the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense**

In what Egbuna calls “one of the best speeches” he ever heard, on July 18, 1967, Carmichael spoke at the Dialectics of Liberation in London about the need for Blacks in Britain to stop bemoaning their struggles and begin to organize themselves.<sup>54</sup> The memory of slavery was weaved throughout his speech to explain the root of racism in America.

It was because white America needed cheap or free labor that she raped our African homeland of millions of Black people. Because we were Black and considered inferior, our enslavement was justified and rationalized by the so-called white Christians. They explained their crimes with lies about civilizing the heathens, the savages from Africa, whom they portrayed as being “better off” in the Americas than they’d been in their homeland. These circumstances load the base and framework for the racism that has become institutionalized in white American society.<sup>55</sup>

Carmichael was subsequently banned from Britain for his

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<sup>53</sup> Carmichael, *Stokely Speaks*, 198.

<sup>54</sup> Egbuna, *Destroy this Temple*, 16.

<sup>55</sup> Carmichael, *Stokely Speaks*, 90.

speech, but his words left a lasting impression on Egbuna. This was the beginning of the Black Power Movement in Britain of which Egbuna would take the reigns, stemming from Carmichael's influence. Just days after Carmichael's speech, Egbuna was invited to attend an annual meeting of the United Coloured People's Association (UCPA). Up until then, the UCPA was an integrated organization that worked collectively toward equality for Blacks. However, that meeting was pivotal. At its conclusion, the organization unanimously voted to rid the UCPA of white membership, adopt Black Power ideology and make Egbuna the chairman. Soon after, differences in direction and strategy divided the UCPA into two opposing factions, neither of which Egbuna preferred. In June 1968, he started the British Black Panthers. Thus, while Egbuna does not acknowledge Carmichael in his own speech, he is persuaded to organize Blacks in Britain after listening to Carmichael give a speech of his own in which the memory of slavery took center stage. It is further clear that Newton and the Black Panther Party also influenced Egbuna. Although the British Black Panthers were unaffiliated with the U.S. organization, its name, structure and goals were similarly geared toward the end of police harassment of the Black community.

Shakur also honors the Black Panther Party through his work and activism. Outside of his musical tribute to the Black Panther Party, Shakur continues to uplift his genetic connection to the Black Power group in various interviews. In a fiery invocation at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Indiana Black Expo in 1993, he insists on the need for Blacks to unite against police and other white authorities responsible for the killings, harassment and overall subjugation of Black people in America. The days of marching are over; the day for guns had arrived. In this way, he criticizes civil rights groups in a similar manner as X and Newton. The solution is not peace because that was not what Blacks had typically encountered from whites. The solution was Black Power,

which he preached through the lens of the Black Panther Party. "I was reading the newspaper, I saw the NAACP at a celebration for the Emancipation Proclamation. How is the NAACP still in business? They make us look bad. I'm not trying to take up for the thugs and the gangsters, but I'm coming from a different school, I'm coming from the Panthers, and that's what they need...the street element."<sup>56</sup> By once again calling upon the memory of the Panthers, Shakur revives Black Power demands that had died down in the early 1980s by breathing life into them at least a decade later. He does so by undermining civil rights organizations in a way that reflects X's attitude of justice by any means necessary, a recurring thread throughout his activism.

In 1992, four white Los Angeles police officers were acquitted after the first videotaped and televised beating of an unarmed Black man, Rodney King, during a traffic stop. A grieving city took to the streets burning down buildings, breaking into stores, and vandalizing property in outrage over the injustice, which Shakur attempts to explain revisiting the memory of the Black Panthers and slavery in a 1994 MTV interview.

We asked 10 years ago. We was asking with the Panthers, we was asking with the Civil Rights Movement. Now, those people that were asking are now all dead and in jail. So now, what do you think we're gonna do? Ask? For those wondering why all the unrest all of a sudden, it's been happening to us forever. We are the victims here. But we're tired of asking. For every day me, my parents, grandparents and ancestors have been on this soil we've been attacked by some people solely based on our race. I'm glad to see people worldwide standing with us

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<sup>56</sup> 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Indiana Black Expo, 1993.

in this battle for our lives.<sup>57</sup>

Shakur shares his exasperation with the cycle of abuse Blacks have endured since being forced into America and impatience with having to ask in the early 1990s for the same things Blacks marched for, protested against and demanded beginning in the 1950s. He issues what can be interpreted as a subtle slave reference by noting the days his “ancestors” have been on U.S. “soil” to quantify how long African Americans have been suffering from inequality and waiting for better treatment. Nearly a quarter century after Shakur’s death, not much has changed with policing in the Black community.

### Conclusion

In the past twenty years, activists have drawn upon the memory of slavery to push for the removal of monuments honoring slavery and its contributors, the renaming of institutions bearing the name of racist agents, and reparations.<sup>58</sup> In August 2018, college students toppled the “Silent Sam” Confederate veteran statue that was erected at the University of North Carolina in 1913 to “remind viewers that those students who fought for the Confederacy were heroes of the white race.”<sup>59</sup> As it was intended to be “an enduring testament to the success of white supremacy,” the fact that it was vandalized and pulled down by rope indicates a level of objection to white racism.<sup>60</sup> At the very least, the extraction of representations of slavery creates an illusion of a shift in race relations

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<sup>57</sup> Tupac Shakur, MTV interview with Abbie Kears (Beverly Hills, CA), March 4, 1994.

<sup>58</sup> Adam H. Domby, *The Lost Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia Press, 2020).

<sup>59</sup> Domby, *The False Cause*, 13.

<sup>60</sup> Domby, 13, 1.



today. “Indeed, they are also decrying entrenched structures of white supremacy that perpetuate race inequalities and racism that insist in remaining alive in former slave societies and societies where slavery existed.”<sup>61</sup>

Meanwhile, proponents of reparations for slavery are seeing slow progress in some countries while the struggle to secure this financial means of reconciliation remains an international battle. Jamaicans demanding money to atone for the atrocities of slavery were outraged to learn that British Prime Minister David Cameron was constructing a new prison on the Caribbean island in September 2015 but unwilling to discuss funding for descendants of its former free laborers.<sup>62</sup> However, a reparations bill was recently approved in the U.S. by Congress for the first time since its initial introduction in 1989, leading some headlines to declare this a “historic vote.”<sup>63</sup> Other engagements with slavery in the public memory remain uphill battles. For instance, some scholars have drawn comparisons between police and slave patrols. They argue that modern policing in the United States arose from slave patrollers whose job was to hunt, discipline and control Blacks during slavery to prevent their escape, facilitate their capture and present slave uprisings. In this way, the memory of slavery is utilized to make sense of the disproportionate number of Black men and women killed by police officers in comparison to those killed by whites.<sup>64</sup>

Individual and group activism of the mid-twentieth century was just as burdensome. The dismantling of discriminatory laws that barricaded access to freedom for

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<sup>61</sup> Araujo, *Slavery in the Age of Memory*, 69.

<sup>62</sup> Abdoulaye Gueye and Johan Michel, eds., *A Stain on Our Past: Slavery and Memory* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2018), 15-16.

<sup>63</sup> Maya King, “Reparations bill approved out of committee in historic vote,” *Politico*, April 15, 2021.

<sup>64</sup> Chelsea Hansen, “Slave Patrols: An Early Form of American Policing,” *National Law Enforcement Museum*, July 10, 2019.

Blacks in the U.S. and around the world was a heavy load that grew from the seeds of slavery and the germination of racism. Yet it was through the public memory of slavery that Black freedom fighters forced the world to face the injustices produced by the global dimensions of white supremacist hate.

In different historical periods...societies and groups choose to highlight select elements of their pasts. When making these choices, social groups put forward specific features that help them gain social visibility and recognition and therefore acquire political power. In other words...public memory is conveyed by groups carrying specific political purposes. Memory, then, becomes public in contexts in which, to some extent, organized groups asserting a certain identity experienced the rupture of their connections with their community, or imagined community of origin.<sup>65</sup>

Within the African Diaspora, that rupture of community connections was facilitated by the atrocity of trans-Atlantic slavery. Since the age of abolition and emancipation in the early nineteenth century, Black societies have channeled the slavery past into liberation struggles. Because slavery is commonly understood by Africa and its descendants as the origin of racial injustice, its recollection is frequently used both literally and figuratively to end the evils of racism by bringing the memory of slavery into the public arena.

Garvey experienced unprecedented political success by illuminating slavery as a monumental circumstance in the history of Africa and the forced dispersal of its population. The UNIA boasted of 800 chapters in 40 countries across four continents until its decline in the mid-

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<sup>65</sup> Araujo, *Slavery in the Age of Memory*, 5.

1920s.<sup>66</sup> However, Garvey's ultimate achievement was the tradition of Black nationalism he inspired. Following his leadership, X, Carmichael, Newton, Egbuna and Shakur all became memory makers. Through their words, they connected the past of slavery to the racial injustice of their time. In their own unique ways, each activist drew from the slavery past in hopes of creating a better future for Black people. Their participation in the work of memory in the public space should be situated in the aftermath of the Black Power Movement both in the United States and within its global reach. "In this way, activists are able to assert arguments for the official recognition and acknowledgement of 'the contributions of the populations of African descent to the building of societies in Europe and the Americas.'"<sup>67</sup> This research spotlights only some of the countless leaders who drew upon the memory of slavery in their fight to achieve racial justice. Many men and women of the Black Power era recognized slavery as the foundation for understanding and eradicating white supremacy. It is the transmission of their liberatory politics across generations of activists that has contributed to and sustained the Black radical tradition.

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<sup>66</sup> Vincent, *Black Power and the Garvey Movement*, 3.

<sup>67</sup> Nicole Frith and Kate Hodgson, *At the Limits of Memory: Legacies of Slavery in the Francophone World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 11.