

Revolutionary TransNationalism: The Revolutionary Action Movement, the League
of Revolutionary Black Workers, and the Black Power Movement in the United
States and Brazil, 1961-1972

By

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Abstract: This thesis investigates the role of transnational interactions and solidarity as central components to the Black Power movement in the United States and Brazil. Beginning with Brazilian artists and political radicals traveling and dialoguing with African American radicals in the United States and Cuba, chapter one traces the development of Black Power ideology in Brazil during the military dictatorship. Chapter two explores Robert F. Williams and the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) as architects of Black Power Revolutionary Transnationalism. They put the revolutionary potential of African Americans into the context of the decolonizing world and as a result influenced the development of an Afro-Brazilian RAM cell that would further challenge the military dictatorship. The final chapter highlights the centrality of transnational worker solidarity to the Black Power movement. As black workers gained power via unions in Brazil, their counterparts in the United States faced exclusion. But, during the dictatorship, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers called for solidarity and the organization of autoworkers in Brazil.

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Introduction

Pan-Africanism and the Origins of Black Radical Transnationalism

During the winter of 1970, blind Afro-Brazilian revolutionary José Rodriguez da Cruz led a prison break in which nine members of the Brazilian Revolutionary Communist Party (PCBR) and the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) escaped from Viera Ferreira penitentiary in Rio de Janeiro. Months earlier, Da Cruz participated in another prison uprising organized by RAM in Lemos de Brito penitentiary in Salvador, Bahia; six comrades escaped, but da Cruz was recaptured along the way. At Viera Ferreira, da Cruz convinced the incarcerated to revolt against the oppressive Brazilian military dictatorship while free revolutionaries bombed the exterior of the prison and created a hole big enough for prisoners to escape through. After the nine PCBR and RAM associates escaped, da Cruz was re-captured and sentenced to another 30 years of prison.¹ This radical act of leadership as well as self-sacrifice for the cause of overthrowing the military regime in Brazil demonstrated a commitment to the global black freedom struggle beyond what most would be willing to endure. RAM preached black self-determination, both for the black belt in the United States and for the northeast of Brazil. The fights for the liberation of all black and oppressed people in both Brazil and the United States have been connected since the beginning of the Atlantic slave trade. Da Cruz's actions were just one part of a revolutionary transnationalist connection between African American and Afro-Brazilian activists during the global Black Power movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

The growth of transnational solidarity between movements for black liberation occurred heavily during the Black Power era in the United States and in resistance to the military dictatorship in Brazil for three main reasons. First, the 1964 coup d'état in Brazil galvanized

¹ "Nove presos fogem da cadeia sob liderança de um cego," *Folha de São Paulo*, Aug. 25, 1970.

black and leftist resistance that had been placated during the democratic years after the death of Getúlio Vargas in 1954. The years following 1964 saw a rise in radical organizations that saw Brazilian liberation as part of a larger global struggle for liberty. Second, the Black Power movement in the United States, although building on significant African-American international advocacy, represented a truly transnational framework for black liberation that put the black freedom movement in the United States in conversation with the struggles for liberation throughout the decolonizing world. RAM had wide reaching impact among organizations for Black Power in the United States and in Brazil and stressed the importance of understanding the black freedom struggle as one for black self-determination in North America, and in considering national liberation as part of a broader call for global liberation through socialism. Finally, strains of the Black Power movement most invested in transnational solidarity organized around the struggle of black workers in the United States and abroad, situating the United States black freedom struggle in racial and economic terms that necessitated global transformation and the self-determination of all oppressed people in order to achieve true liberation.

Black transnationalism was not a unique invention of the Black Power movement, but rather was the outgrowth of over a century of international black organizing. Since the nineteenth century, African American leaders like Frederick Douglass and T. Thomas Fortune have argued that the black freedom struggle cannot exist solely within the United States. Douglass, as a representative of the United States government, embodied an early form of black transnational resistance. As diplomat to Haiti, Douglass used what Ronald Angelo Johnson deems a “diplomacy of Blackness. . . to realize mutual interests of Black people across the Atlantic world.”² To Douglass in the aftermath of the Civil War, a “Diplomacy of Blackness” capitalized

² Ronald Angelo Johnson, “Frederick Douglass and a Diplomacy of Blackness,” *Black Perspectives* (April 23, 2019), <https://www.aaihs.org/frederick-douglass-and-a-diplomacy-of-blackness/>.

on the revolutionary and potentially transformative reconstruction era to extend the uplift African Americans brought themselves to other black people throughout the Diaspora. Visions differed among black leadership about what this Pan-Africanism would look like. Booker T. Washington looked beyond US borders as an opportunity for black economic development. He believed that a black run cotton empire could challenge white capitalism and lead to the uplift of the black race worldwide.³

Journalist and agitator T. Thomas Fortune extended this idea of black diplomacy at the turn of the twentieth century.⁴ While on a diplomatic mission to the Philippines and Hawaii, Fortune “imagined transnational alliances along lines of color that might destabilize a strengthening Jim Crow system at home.”⁵ The expansion of US empire was problematic to Fortune, but he still underwent this trip because of the possibility for transnational solidarity between African-Americans and colonized subjects.

Afro-Caribbean thinkers and leaders also played a large role in the development of a black transnational consciousness, both in the United States and in Brazil. Marcus Garvey was one of the first modern black nationalists with an explicit plan for a Pan-African state. The first iteration of his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) was created in Jamaica in 1914 and espoused the idea of a black identity and race pride that existed beyond borders and Westphalian nationalism.⁶ The Jamaican UNIA did not last long as it drew the ire of white planting elites and alienated many black Jamaicans as well.

³ Andrew Zimmerman, *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 6.

⁴ For more on T. Thomas Fortune, see: Shawn Leigh Alexander, *T. Thomas Fortune: Afro-American Agitator* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2010).

⁵ Brian Shott, “Forty Acres and a Carabao: T. Thomas Fortune, Newspapers, and the Pacific’s Unstable Color Lines, 1902-03,” *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* Vol. 17, no. 1 (January 2018): 99.

⁶ Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (London: Oxford University Press, 2008), 54.

By 1916 Garvey would move to New York and see the diasporic community living in his neighborhood as inspiration to try again with the UNIA with the goals of black self-determination and pride. His skills as an orator, as well as by presenting ideas of race pride to a large black community, drew many into the UNIA. But in addition to the presence and ideas of Garvey himself, the unseen labor of UNIA women like Eunice Lewis, Amy Jacques Garvey, Maymie De Mena, and Henrietta Vinton also drove the growth of the organization and imbued it with “proto-feminist strands of black nationalism.”⁷ It was in the United States that the organization would swell to its largest enrollment.⁸ Garvey saw this support and capitalized on his increase in membership to begin to organize the “Black Star Line,” an entirely black owned and operated cruise ship company that promised to traverse the Panama Canal.⁹ Ultimately, the “Black Star Line” was unable to complete its voyage, but the UNIA continued despite the setback. The UNIA newspaper, the *Negro World* recognized the potential of Brazilian outreach. Canadian UNIA member George D. Creese saw through the myths of racial democracy and the harm this ideology inflicted on Afro-Brazilians, particularly in the northeast, and prayed that the UNIA’s “humble leader” would consider having Brazil organized “under the colors of the Red, Black, and Green.”¹⁰ No UNIA branch opened in Brazil, but according a 1921 *Negro World* publication one person living in Pernambuco contributed to the African Redemption Fund.¹¹ Despite the UNIA never officially reaching Brazil, Garvey’s influence would have a lasting legacy on Afro-Brazilian radicals.

⁷ Keisha N. Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 12-13.

⁸ Grant, 74.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 187-91.

¹⁰ George D. Creese, “The Black Man’s Progress in Brazil,” *Negro World*, March 12, 1921, 2.

¹¹ “African Redemption Fund,” *Negro World*, December 31, 1921, 5.

According to historian Eduardo dos Santos in his seminal work in Portuguese, the modern concept of Pan-Africanism began with Marcus Garvey.¹² Although historiography has surpassed Dos Santos and this 1968 publication in terms of identifying precursors to Pan-Africanism, it is important nonetheless to understand that for Brazilian black radicals during the military dictatorship, Marcus Garvey represented pan-African solidarity and pride. The initial media response during the beginning of the twentieth century to the advocacy of Garvey was dismissal as a “dangerous movement” and negative coverage of the “Black Moses.”¹³ Although never achieving widespread popularity, by his death in 1940 Garvey was well-regarded by the black press as a “transnational figure who was a reminder that the political actions of black people in other countries could serve as a reference for Brazilian action.”¹⁴ Garvey’s writings and oration inspired the struggle for black liberation in the US, Brazil, and globally.¹⁵

Another Afro-Caribbean activist and academic who had significant impact on black transnational thinking in the United States and Brazil is Trinidadian historian C.L.R. James. According to RAM founder Muhammad Ahmad, James “played an instrumental role in providing a synthesis between Black Nationalism and socialism.”¹⁶ His 1938 monograph *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* did groundbreaking work to place black actors at the center of global historical events. James contextualized the

¹² Eduardo Dos Santos, *Pan-Africanismo: De ontem e de hoje* (Lisbon: self-pub, 1968), 27.

¹³ Petrônio Domingues, “O ‘Moisés dos Pretos’: Marcus Garvey no Brasil,” *Novos Estudos CEBRAP* no. 109 (November 2017), 129.

¹⁴ Flavio Thales Ribeiro Francisco, *Fronteiras em definição: identidades negras e imagens dos Estados Unidos e da África no jornal “O Clarim da Alvorada” (1924–1932)* (São Paulo: Alameda, 2013), 101.

¹⁵ James, *The Black Jacobins*, 398-99. Garvey was popular in Africa as well. James writes that the King of Swaziland told Amy Jacques Garvey that the only two black men in the western world known to him were Marcus Garvey and the heavyweight boxer Jack Johnson. He also relays examples of Kenyan nationalists and the Ghanaian revolutionary and later president Kwame Nkrumah elevating Garvey as an influential thinker who contributed to their anti-colonial nationalist struggles.

¹⁶ Muhammad Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations 1960-1975* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2007), 242.

Haitian Revolution in conversation with the French Revolution and highlighted the hypocrisies of white revolutionary movements for universal human rights, except for black people and colonized subjects.¹⁷

James saw Brazil as a crucial actor in the steps towards global black revolution. In a 1958 lecture, James advocated for a Constituent Assembly of Caribbean states that would dialogue closely with Brazil.¹⁸ Democratic Brazil was growing quickly in 1958 and was a potential ally as an independent Latin American nation that could support the growth and development of a commonwealth of Caribbean states and British Guiana. In Brazil the writings of James inspired popular education programs and exercises in self-organization proposed by Paulo Freire. Brazilian economist Ana Margarida Esteves posits that the “Brazilian popular classes have a long history of struggle. . .that parallel much of that of Caribbean workers.”¹⁹ James’s conceptualization of global revolution applied to the specifics of the Brazilian military dictatorship and served as an inspiration for Catholic Marxists, the Landless Worker’s Movement, and even the organization that would become the Worker’s Party.²⁰

Claudia Jones was another Trinidadian radical who influenced black leftists throughout the world and called for recognizing the shared struggle of black people throughout the diaspora. Scholar Carol Boyce Davies writes that “Jones was remembered first and foremost for her anti-imperialist politics.”²¹ Jones identified strongly as a Marxist-Leninist and applied this ideology

¹⁷ C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 30-31.

¹⁸ C.L.R. James, “Lecture on Federation (West Indies and British Guiana),” (Lecture, Queen’s College, June 1958).

¹⁹ Ana Margarida Esteves, “C.L.R. James and the Rise of Solidarity Economy in Brazil,” *CLR James Journal* vol. 16, no. 1 (2010), 39.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 53-54.

²¹ Carol Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 64.

to the conditions of black people.²² In response to the Communist Party USA (CPUSA)'s reductionist decision to denigrating African American nationalism as opposed to the goals of the party, Jones called for black self-determination in the black belt more than 15 years prior to RAM officially taking up this position. Using Lenin and her own experiences, Jones grounds black people in the south as a nation colonized by the United States in the same way India existed as a British colony.²³ Harry Haywood goes as far as to say that Jones's activism and writing brought race back into the center of the CPUSA agenda.²⁴ In addition to her activism within the CPUSA highlighting the triple oppression of race, class, and gender faced by black women, Jones also forged personal connections with black transnationalists of different political ideologies. Jones was a friend and supporter of Marcus Garvey's ex-wife, Amy Ashwood. Ashwood was appointed a member of the West Indian Gazette editorial board.²⁵ Jones lived her entire life as an activist dedicated to the struggle of poor black women across the diaspora and saw Marxism-Leninism as the only possible framework for complete liberation.

W.E.B. Du Bois also took on the cause of black transnationalism and conceptualized Pan-Africanism as the logical extension of the black freedom struggle in the United States. Du Bois's academic works touched on this idea of transnational solidarity from the beginning, but by the time of his publication of *The Negro* in 1915 Du Bois argued that Pan-Africanism as a framework was vital to understanding world history.²⁶ To challenge the narrative of a

²² Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: NYU Press, 2011), 21. Gore explains Jones's early attraction to the CPUSA in response to their defense of the Scottsboro boys.

²³ Claudia Jones, "On the Right to Self Determination for the Negro People in the Black Belt," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African American Feminist Thought*, ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftal (New York: The New Press, 1995), 71.

²⁴ Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), 551.

²⁵ Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*, 229.

²⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Negro* (New York: Casimo Classics, 2007).

transnational but linear western civilization, Du Bois highlights the historical contributions of Africa to global society. In *The Negro*, he also forwards the idea that race is socially constructed, and as such those racialized as black form “as a mass, a social group distinct in history.”²⁷ This historicization of black history was not written as purely a correction of past scholarship, but rather was a political call for re-centering the diaspora as the framework for black freedom.

Du Bois refined this argument by his 1946 publication of *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part which Africa has Played in World History*.²⁸ By putting Africa at the center of the story of global civilization, Du Bois, like C.L.R. James, challenges the historiography that cosigned colonialism. According to Brandon Kendhammer, Du Bois positioned himself “as not only an African-American concerned with the worldwide problem of race, but as a Western trained intellectual attempting to construct a discourse of anti-colonial nationalism from within the same classically liberal tradition that had generated colonial ideology in the first place.”²⁹ By discursively situating himself both inside and outside of the world of western academia, Du Bois’s academic writings historicize Pan-Africanism as a logical and precedented method towards achieving black liberation worldwide.

Beyond academic engagement with Pan-Africanism, Du Bois’s political activism from the beginning situated the struggle for black liberty in the United States with the black race worldwide. In 1904, during the organizing stages of the Niagara Movement, Du Bois published his “Credo” in which he articulates his belief in the black race and its ability to “inherit the earth.”³⁰ By 1905, Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter established the Niagara Movement, a

²⁷ Ibid., 9.

²⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part which Africa has Played in World History* (New York: International Publishing Co, 1946).

²⁹ Brandon Kendhammer, “Du Bois the pan-Africanist and the development of African nationalism,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 30, no. 1 (January 2007), 52.

³⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, “Credo,” *Independent* 57 (October 6, 1904): 787.

transnational organization for black liberation. In their charter, among other things, was the demanding of universal black male voting rights and an end to discrimination in public accommodations.³¹ More significantly than any of the results of the Niagara Movement was its impact on the foundational policies of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). As editor-in-chief of the NAACP's *The Crisis* magazine, Du Bois began to engage with Pan-Africanism and black international issues almost weekly.³²

Du Bois was instrumental to the organization of the first Pan-African conference that met in 1919 and demanded, among other things, black self-determination worldwide including the colonies of Africa.³³ By the second Pan-African congress in London in 1920, Du Bois boasted on "26 different groups of people of Negro descent."³⁴ Additionally, more than 30 years prior to the Bandung conference, Du Bois included Indians and aboriginal Australians as part of the pan-African world.³⁵ The third Pan-African Congress was less organized, and activists were displeased at yet another year of the congress not meeting on the African continent.³⁶ Du Bois continued to write about Pan-Africanism, and returned to Pan-African conferences after Ghanaian independence. The All-African People's Conference in Accra that occurred in 1958 shows Du Bois's commitment to Pan-Africanism until the end of his life. He begins his speech to the conference by referring to black people throughout the diaspora as Africans.³⁷ By 1958, Du Bois, like the revolutionary nationalists, saw the only feasible praxis to achieve Pan-Africanism in socialism.³⁸

³¹ Dos Santos, 76-77.

³² For example, see: W.E.B. Du Bois, "To the World," *The Crisis* Vol. 23, no. 1 (1921): 5-10.

³³ Dos Santos, 82.

³⁴ W.E.B. Du Bois, "Manifesto the League of Nations," *The Crisis* vol. 23, no. 1 (November 1921): 18.

³⁵ Sarita Malik, *Representing Black Britain: Black and Asian Images on Television* (London: Sage, 2002), 15.

³⁶ Dos Santos, 99.

³⁷ W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Future of All Africa Lies in Socialism (1958)," in *A W.E.B. Du Bois Reader* ed. Andrew Paschal (New York: Macmillan, 1971), 252.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 254-56.

Du Bois had an impact on Brazilian radicals and intellectuals throughout the twentieth century. By the second half of the twentieth century his ideas regarding Pan-Africanism had been translated into Portuguese and influenced prominent Brazilian intellectuals. Edison Carneiro, Afro-Brazilian ethnographer and historian of black religion and culture in Brazil argued that there was a large African influence in Brazil. His ideas put Africanness at the center of Brazilian national identity.³⁹ Mirroring the arguments of Du Bois, Carneiro posits a sort of “double consciousness” of the Afro-Brazilian, at once both black and Brazilian.⁴⁰ Carneiro’s solution was integration into Brazilian society by fully embracing that part of one’s identity as superseding blackness, as blackness is inherently part of Brazilianness.⁴¹ Such an ideology was not universal among black leaders in early twentieth century Brazil. For example, black lawyer J. Gauraná Santana formed the “Black Legion” of the Radical Nationalist Party, a socialist organization with international focus that saw blackness and Brazilianness at odds with one another, at least in the popular discourse of the time.⁴² Both the thoughts of Carneiro and Santana were significant, but ideas of diasporic blackness and nationalism began to emerge into Afro-Brazilian discourse by the 1960s.

Black radicals like Abdias de Nascimento rejected Brazilian integrationist nationalist rhetoric when it came at the political and economic expense of black Brazilians. White Brazilians often cited equal protection in the constitution as proof of racial democracy, a frustrating occurrence for black activists trying to show the profound levels of inequality in

³⁹ For Carneiro’s ideas on Afro-Brazilian history and national identity: see Edison Carneiro, *Candomblés da Bahia* (Salvador: State Museum of Bahia, 1948), and *Antologia do Negro Brasileiro* (Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil: Globo, 1950).

⁴⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Co., 1903), 3.

⁴¹ Robert Brent Toplin, “Brazil: Racial Polarization in the Developing Giant,” *Black World* (November 1972), 22.

⁴² Kim Butler, *Freedoms Given, Freedoms Won: Afro-Brazilians in Post-Abolition São Paulo and Salvador* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 124.

Brazilian society.⁴³ Nascimento concluded a 1968 debate with Carneiro by asserting that “Black organizations are necessary because you will not get anywhere thinking that rights are conceded. Rights are taken; they are the fruit of a struggle!”⁴⁴ This struggle would be realized throughout the military dictatorship as radical groups began to proliferate pushing for revolutionary transformation of the Brazilian political and economic system with race a key factor in their analysis.

Rubem Valentim was a Bahian born Afro-Brazilian artist. He embraced a diasporic approach to his artwork, but instead of romanticizing the African past, he put blackness at the center of contemporary Brazil within a global context.⁴⁵ He did not receive much recognition in dictatorship Brazil, but his paintings were displayed at the First World Festival of Black Arts in Dakar.⁴⁶ Another Afro-Brazilian artist Arthur Bispo do Rosário, created radical artwork in a different manner to Valentim and other Tropicália artists. Bispo do Rosário voluntarily checked himself into a psychiatric institution in Rio de Janeiro in 1939 and stayed there creating art with objects he found on site for the next fifty years.⁴⁷ As an outsider even among Brazilian black radicals due to his schizophrenia, Bispo do Rosário built upon the precedent of artists like Valentim to put blackness at the center of his artwork.

The Black Arts Movement in the United States would be another space where Pan-African radicalism could build. Brazilian musicians would come to the United States to exchange ideas with African American artists. Beyond learning about Motown or soul music, these artists would also exchange ideas with political radicals like Stokely Carmichael, Muhammad Ahmad,

⁴³ Ibid., 16-17.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁵ Tanya Barson, “Introduction: Modernism and the Black Atlantic,” in *Afro-Modern: Journeys through the Black Atlantic*, ed. Tanya Barson (London: Tate Publishing, 2010), 7.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 10.

and Bobby Seale of RAM.⁴⁸ Due to the artistic background of these leaders they gained more credibility with the Brazilian musicians, which would also facilitate connections within Brazil between artists and political radicals connected to RAM via conferences in Cuba. As argued by Bracey, Sanchez, and Smethurst, the transnational connections between the Black Power and Black Arts movements distinguish them from earlier cultural or political movements.⁴⁹ Like Valentim's exhibit in Senegal, Black Arts would be an avenue through which revolutionary ideas spread globally.

The first chapter explores the rise in revolutionary response to the Brazilian military dictatorship that came to power in March of 1964. The regime suspended political rights, opposition political parties, and kidnapped and tortured activists striving to improve the conditions of black and poor Brazilians. In response to the government crackdown, Afro-Brazilians and other radical Brazilian comrades began to escalate the level of their response. Calling on the memory of the revolutionary black leader Zumbi of the quilombo Palmares, Afro-Brazilian intellectuals framed their activism as an extension of the Pan African primitive communism Palmares practiced during the seventeenth century. While Carneiro did his first study of Palmares from a Marxist perspective before the military dictatorship, activist scholars like Nascimento and others revived Zumbi in the context of transnational movements for Black Power and third world liberation. The history of transnationalism and the black freedom struggle is not restricted to African American activists but has been part of Afro-Brazilian political consciousness for a long time as well.

⁴⁸ Robyn C. Spencer, *The Revolution has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 27.

⁴⁹ John H. Bracey, Jr., Sonia Sanchez, and James Smethurst, *SOS-Calling All Black People: A Black Arts Movement Reader* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 5.

Afro-Brazilian artists like Jorge Ben used their music to resist military repression and tie the struggle of Afro-Brazilians into the global struggle for Black Power against white supremacy and United States imperialism. Tony Tornado publicly supported the ideas of Carmichael to the Brazilian military and was censored because of it. Tim Maia, building on his experiences with US racism between 1959 and 1964, drew from black music in the United States to tell his stories of the black experience in Brazil. His conception of Black Power, shaped like Tornado via the activism of Carmichael, included connected with other black people throughout the diaspora but rooting his music in the specific struggles of Afro-Brazilians.

Inspired by radical musicians, the black freedom struggle in the US, and by the writings of Brazilian radicals like Nascimento and Carlos Marighella, revolutionary direct action groups like the National Liberation Action (ALN), the October 8th Revolutionary Movement (MR-8), the Armed Revolutionary Vanguard of Palmares (VAN-Palmares), and the PCBR took up arms in hope of bringing about a socialist revolution that would overthrow the military dictatorship.⁵⁰ These groups, multi-racial but featuring Afro-Brazilians in prominent leadership roles, observed and dialogued with African American and other black transnational movements for liberty. Most exemplary of these connections was the cell of RAM that began to work with the PCBR during the late 1960s in Salvador, Bahia.

The second chapter posits an extension of Harold W. Cruse's "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American" to argue that the revolutionary nationalism employed by Black Power activists Robert F. Williams and RAM centered the role of transnational solidarity in the struggle for black liberation via a sort of revolutionary transnationalism.⁵¹ The Cuban

⁵⁰ Sandra Regina Barbosa da Silva, "*Ousar Lutar, Ousar Vencer: histórias da luta armada em Salvador, 1969-1971*" (Master's Thesis, Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2003), 49.

⁵¹ Harold W. Cruse, "Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American," *Studies on the Left* 2/3 (1962), 12-25.

Revolution inspired black radicals in the United States as well as provided pragmatic support for these organizations struggling against the United States government. Williams's continued involvement with RAM from Cuba and his distribution of *The Crusader* first from Cuba and then from China demonstrates the commitment of international actors in supporting black liberation in the United States.

Williams and RAM activists also impacted how Latin American revolutionaries understood the question of race, inspiring Afro-Cubans like Sandalio Junco and Brazilian radicals like Jacob Gorender and Carlos Marigella.⁵² The organization had transnational solidarity as a core tenant since its inception, and thus courted the already exiled Williams to be International Chairman.⁵³ In this role, Williams engaged with the Cuban government, published subversive newsletters, and hosted a weekly radio program criticizing white supremacy and capitalism in the United States and abroad.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, in the United States, RAM was organizing black workers, creating cells throughout the country, and training a Black Guard of young men to serve as community defense and a revolutionary vanguard. After the 1966 First Conference on Latin American Solidarity, a branch of RAM began to operate in Brazil.⁵⁵ Chapter two goes into greater detail about the specific formations of the organization than chapter one. Furthering the same principles of black self-determination and a black controlled socialist state centered in the predominately black northeastern region of Brazil, the appeal of the Salvador cell of RAM as a transnational representation of the organization was strong. This

⁵² Anne Garland Mahler, *From the Tricontinental to the Global South: Race, Radicalism, and Transnational Solidarity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 51.

⁵³ Akbar Muhammad Ahmad, "RAM: The Revolutionary Action Movement," in *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast*, ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 252-3.

⁵⁴ Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 288.

⁵⁵ Maxwell C. Stanford, "Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM): A Case Study of an Urban Revolutionary Movement in Western Capitalist Society," (Master's Thesis, Atlanta University, 1986), 59.

group, in collaboration with other multiracial Brazilian radical leftist groups, organized prison breaks in Salvador, Bahia and Rio de Janeiro and opposed the military dictatorship in the cause of revolutionary transnationalist solidarity and a black state in the northeast of Brazil.

The final chapter covers the transnational dimensions of black labor organizing with specific attention paid to autoindustry workers in the United States and Brazil. RAM members including General Baker had been organizing in Detroit since the early 1960s as well as working in automotive plants as members of the United Autoworkers labor union (UAW). Meanwhile the RAM central committee was theorizing the ways in which black autoworkers during a revolution would be able to bring American industry to a halt. Simultaneously, by 1968 UAW leadership was unable to prevent a Chrysler mandated plant speed up that affected black and white workers. In response, Baker and others called for a wildcat strike that caused a massive loss in production. Chrysler's reaction disproportionately punished black workers and organizers.⁵⁶ As a result the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM), which had existed as a radical reading group, began to publish newsletters relating the need of black worker solidarity and organization.⁵⁷

Building on the momentum of the wildcat strike, DRUM began to organize radical black workers in other ways. The second newsletter featured a profile of racist white UAW leaders and the "Uncle Tom" black union leadership that supported them.⁵⁸ *DRUM* newspaper called for boycotts and got 95% cooperation at first attempt to boycott racist bars. Additionally, DRUM organized a second wildcat strike that got 70% participation outside of another Chrysler plant in

⁵⁶ Luke Tripp, "DRUM-Vanguard of the Black Revolution: Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement States History, Purpose, Aims," *South End*, January 23, 1969, 8-9.

⁵⁷ Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*, 248.

⁵⁸ "Uncle Toms," *DRUM* vol 1., no. 2, 1-3.

Detroit. As a result of the strike, Chrysler lost 1,900 cars, but not a single worker was fired.⁵⁹

Moving this power into direct union activities, DRUM ran a representative for a vacant UAW steward position and scared white union leadership. Despite receiving the most votes in the first round, DRUM was defeated by the mobilization of retired white workers.⁶⁰

The success of DRUM inspired the development of other radical union movements including the Ford Revolutionary Union Movement (FRUM), the General Motors Revolutionary Union Movement (GRUM), and revolutionary unions of the Eldron Avenue gear and axle plant (ELRUM) and Harvester parcel workers (HRUM).⁶¹ These organizations that all had similar goals were brought together by a group of women activists who recognized the value in combining their political power and labor possibilities. In June of 1969 these revolutionary union movements (RUM) joined forces and legally incorporated the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW) as a central committee to oversee the organizing and action of the various RUMs.⁶² Similar to the LRBW, radical black unions began to proliferate throughout Africa and in Brazil preaching solidarity between oppressed black workers in a transnational context.⁶³

While the LRBW was created in response to white labor exclusions, black workers in Brazil had been controlling their own role in the labor movement for decades by the 1960s. The oil extractors and refiners' union (SINDIPRO) in Salvador, Bahia boasted over 70% black rank-and-file membership.⁶⁴ Racial inclusion was an organizing catalyst and SINDIPRO relied on

⁵⁹ James A. Geschwender and Judson L. Jeffries, "The League of Revolutionary Black Workers," in *Black Power: In the Belly of the Beast*, ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 138-40.

⁶⁰ Ahmad, *We Will Return in a Whirlwind*, 254-55.

⁶¹ Ernie Allen, "Dying from the Inside: The Decline of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers," in *They Should have Served that Cup of Coffee: Seven Radicals Remember the '60s*, ed. Dick Cluster (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 72.

⁶² Geschwender and Jeffries, 141-42.

⁶³ Dos Santos, 445-54.

⁶⁴ Alex De Souza Ivo, "Uma história em verde, amarelo, e negro: Classe operária, trabalho e sindicalismo na indústria do petróleo," (Master's Thesis, Universidade Federal da Bahia: 2008), 70-71.

black workers to make the organization function. Reflecting the commitment of black workers, Mário Lima was elected secretary of the union and would lead the organization for years before retiring. Building on the precedent of SINDIPRO, Nascimento called for more black participation in labor movements to move the organizations further into antiracist activism.

Besides SINDIPRO, Nascimento borrowed greatly from the organizational efforts of black women domestic workers, most notably Laudelina de Campos Melo.⁶⁵ Domestic labor was and continues to be overwhelmingly done by poor black women, many from the northeast. She successfully rallied these often off the books workers and gained legal recognition of the first domestic labor union in Brazil in 1936. She continued to organize across Brazil until the rise of the military dictatorship in 1964. Vital to her efforts was the solidarity expressed by Construction Workers Unions who shared resources, space, and organizing tips with newer domestic unions. When her unions became officially illegal with the first institutional acts Melo tried to reform the organizations in political parties. As a communist and member of the black movement, her struggle inspired the same workers that DRUM was trying to reach.

By 1971 the league was in serious trouble; Leadership disorganization and ideological divides led to downfall of organization. To manage the various RUMs, leaders formed an intelligentsia executive board that would make the ideological decisions for the organization from the top down.⁶⁶ Outside of Baker, Glanton Dowdell, and Chuck Wooten, the executive committee lost touch with workers and left conversations about their issues to a couple of staff members.⁶⁷ The largest single event to trigger the downfall of the LRBW was James Forman's

⁶⁵ Louisa Acciari, "Brazilian Domestic Workers and the International Struggle for Labor Rights," *A-id* (February 26, 2018), <http://www.a-id.org/2018/02/26/brazilian-domestic-workers-international-struggle-labour-rights/>.

⁶⁶ Allen, 79.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.

Black Economic Development Conference which highlighted a growing ideological division between factions of league leadership.⁶⁸ The struggle of black workers continued, though, with a predominately black staffed Chrysler plant in Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil unionizing with the UAW in 1972.⁶⁹

Black transnationalism has in many ways existed since the first slave ship pillaged the coast of Africa, but late nineteenth and early twentieth century conceptions of Pan-Africanism are a clear intellectual and organizational antecedent to revolutionary black transnationalism during the Black Power movement. But, periodization is important. The groups referenced in this study were not mere extensions of a Long Civil Rights, Pan-Africanist, or Black Nationalist tradition, but responded to white backlash to these movements with a firm call for Black Power.⁷⁰ The various radical groups in Brazil during the military dictatorship, the Revolutionary Action Movement, and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers are three iterations of Black Power and radicalism that called for transnational collaboration in the struggle against white supremacy, capitalism, and colonialism. Understanding these groups provides vital insight into the motivations of activists for Black Power in the United States and Brazil.

⁶⁸ Ahmad, *We Will Return in a Whirlwind*, 261-62.

⁶⁹ "Chrysler factories, offices, and testing grounds, 1925-2017," Jim Benjaminson. accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.allpar.com/corporate/factories.html>.

⁷⁰ For more on the importance of distinguishing periodization in the black freedom struggle, see: Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The Long Movement as a Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies," *Journal of African American History* 92 (2007), 255-288.

Chapter 1

Brazilian Radicalism for Black Power During the Military Dictatorship

Brazilian musician Jorge Ben begins the final song on his album *África Brasil* with a list of the eight African locations where the majority of those enslaved in Brazil originated.⁷¹ This album, inherently connecting Africa and Brazil, recognized the significance of Pan Africanism on the development of Afro-Brazilian political consciousness. The song begins with a graphic description of the abject conditions of Brazilian slavery, but by the end takes a triumphant turn as Zumbi, lord of wars, rebels and creates the quilombo community of Palmares. While attending to the long interconnectedness of Pan African struggles for liberation, Ben's album is a specific product of engagement with a transnational Black Power and Black Arts movement. His rhythms and beats synchronize Afro-Brazilian Samba with funky sounds popularized by African American musicians, and his message is one of black pride during the depths of white military rule in Brazil. *África Brasil*, both artistically and politically, would have been impossible if not for the contributions of various radical intellectual and activist groups operating in Brazil during the military dictatorship that lasted from 1964 until 1985.

Two strains of activism combined to form the movements for Black Power in Brazil, both with deep ties to the movement in the United States. First, black artists dialogued with other artists, musicians, and poets throughout the diaspora to find inspiration and exchange political consciousness. In Rio de Janeiro in particular, black music with Brazilian and other diasporic influences created a sense of race pride that Brazilian national identity has attempted to erase. Musicians like Ben, Gilberto Gil, Tony Tornado, and Tim Maia all were vital to the development of a black music scene in Rio de Janeiro that combined Brazilian musical tradition with soul and

⁷¹ Jorge Ben, "África Brasil (Zumbi)," track 11 on *África Brasil*, Philips, 1976, cd.

funk music being produced by black artists in the United States. Ben, Tornado, and Maia all made personal connections with Stokely Carmichael who shaped their artistic and political outlook.⁷² They would bring back from trips to New York more than just new sounds; Brazilian artists collaborating with Black Power activists would contribute to a Pan African radicalism during military Brazil. This created cultural space for political guerillas to operate.

Radical leftist groups that were often interracial dialogued extensively with radical organizations globally, including Black Power groups in the United States like RAM and the LRBW. These Brazilian organizations had the most impact on the development of radical ideology in Brazil. The Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) had roots in the 1920s, but the rise of Black Power organizations in the United States and the decolonizing movements throughout Africa and the Caribbean caused many to leave the Soviet Union affiliated PCB in favor of building new organizations.⁷³ These groups, including the National Liberation Action (Ação Libertadora Nacional- ALN), October Eighth Revolutionary Movement (Movimento Revolucionário Oito de Outubro- MR-8), Armed Revolutionary Vanguard of Palmares (Vanguarda Armada Revolucionária Palmares-VAR-Palmares), and the Brazilian Revolutionary Communist Party (Partido Comunista Brasileiro Revolucionário- PCBR) took up armed struggle against the military dictatorship. While using the conditions of their own country, these groups paid attention to the struggle for Black Power in the United States and used their connections to groups like RAM to further their guerilla struggles in Brazil. They struggled for a Marxist revolution in Brazil that would address the needs of Afro-Brazilians.

⁷² Anna Ferraz, “A tempestade de suingue de Tony Tornado,” *Centro de Estudos das Relações de Trabalho e Disigualdades* (July 20, 2015), <https://ceert.org.br/noticias/historia-cultura-arte/7651/a-tempestade-de-suingue-de-tony-tornado>.

⁷³ Jacob Gorender, *Combate Nas Trevas* (São Paulo: Ática, 1987).

The rise of transnational Black Power consciousness developed in similar ways to the movement in the United States; Pan Africanism and international struggles had a long history in Brazil prior to the specific Black Power era. The precursors to a Pan African Brazilian political conscious go deep in the county with popular memory going back to the first black nation in the western hemisphere, the quilombo of Palmares. Palmares entered the historical record with Sebastião da Rocha Pita in 1724. This report highlights the threat is served to colonial officials and the strength it took for the state to fight back against the maroon community. Brazilian historian Silvia Hunold Lara at the University of Campinas argues that the Portuguese understanding of Palmares led to the creation of capitães-do-mato, or fugitive slave catchers, that would be a part of a dialectical relationship between the state and Palmares. These slave catchers were typically racialized as mulattoes, described by Nascimento as light-skinned Blacks assimilated by the white ruling classes and pitted against their African brothers and sisters.”⁷⁴ Territorial gains were met with an increase in slave catchers and vice versa. Lara posits that the Portuguese empire interacted with Palmares as its own state at times, at least unofficially.⁷⁵ But most importantly, this set the precedent for the division of Afro-Brazilians along phenotypic lines, a method of racial formation Black Power activists in Brazil argued weakened black identity in Brazil and disconnected some from the wider diaspora.

One of the foremost scholars of the black experience during the colonial era of Brazil is historian Flávio dos Santos Gomes. Typically imaged as existing from 1604 until Zumbi’s death in 1696, Gomes mines colonial records to place the Palmares nation as existing from 1575 until

⁷⁴ Abdias de Nascimento, “Quilombismo: An Afro-Brazilian Political Alternative,” *Journal of Black Studies* vol. 11, no. 2 (December 1980), 156.

⁷⁵ Silvia Hunold Lara, “From singular to plural: Palmares, Capitães-Do-Mato, and the slave government,” in *Freedom by a Thread: The History of Quilombos in Brazil*, ed. João José Reis and Flávio dos Santos Gomes (New York: Diasporic Africa Press, 2016), 81.

1725.⁷⁶ Located in contemporary Alagoas, Palmares existed autonomously for 150 years as a black led multiracial society. Between six to eight million people inhabited Palmares at its peak in the seventeenth century including runaway African slaves, Palmares born free black people, indigenous Brazilians, expelled Jews, and even some white Portuguese outlaws.⁷⁷ The most prominent leader of Palmares was Zumbi who took over from his uncle in 1680 following the revolutionary founder's death. The Portuguese crown did not recognize the new leader and waged their most overt war against the community in the last decades of the seventeenth century. Military leader and legendary warrior Dandara, also the wife of Zumbi, led the resistance. Eventually she was defeated and took her own life rather than return to bondage.⁷⁸ Refusing to honor agreements with the Portuguese crown and angered by the loss of his wife, Zumbi defended the colony until his death in 1696 when he was decapitated by Portuguese troops.⁷⁹ The settlement would continue to resist until 1725, but even beyond that captured the imagination of Brazilian Pan Africanists and radicals.⁸⁰

The quilombo had strong nationalist tendencies that recognized how European Imperialism affected a variety of oppressed people. This made Palmares one of the earliest manifestations of Black Pan Africanism in Brazil that would later inspire the movement for Black Power during the dictatorship years. After Palmares was a nadir in Afro-Brazilian political advancement. Slavery persisted through the late nineteenth century, and due to the brutal nature

⁷⁶ Flávio dos Santos Gomes, *De Olho em Zumbi dos Palmares: Histórias, símbolos e memória social* (São Paulo: Claro Enigma, 2011), 7-8.

⁷⁷ Laura Premack, "Teaching Quilombismo: An Afro-Brazilian Political Philosophy," *Black Perspectives* (October 11, 2016), <https://www.aaihs.org/teaching-quilombismo-an-afro-brazilian-political-philosophy/>.

⁷⁸ Jarid Arraes, *Heroínas Negras Brasileiras* (São Paulo: Pólen Livros, 2017), 12.

⁷⁹ Gomes, *De Olho em Zumbi*, 28.

⁸⁰ For more on the contemporary quilombo movement, see: Elizabeth Farfán-Santos, *Black Bodies, Black Rights: The Politics of Quilombismo in Contemporary Brazil* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2016), and Merle L. Bowen, "The Struggle for Black Land Rights in Brazil: An Insider's View on Quilombos and the Quilombo Land Movement," *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal* vol 3., no. 2 (2010), 147-168.

of Brazilian plantations, not many enslaved people survived, let alone formed mass movements. But the enslaved resisted nonetheless. For example, a group of enslaved people rose up in Bahia in 1835 and took control of the Brazilian capital of Salvador. Challenging the distinctions between house and field slaves that Malcolm X would make in a 1963 speech to King Solomon Baptist Church, this uprising was carried out primarily by those enslaved in the domestic sphere.⁸¹ Organized by enslaved educated Muslims from different African nations, the movement inspired rebellions throughout the Americas despite being ultimately not successful.⁸²

When abolitionist ideas took hold, they were overwhelmingly in response to international pressure from Europe and debates about modernity. Slavery, to abolitionists, was not a moral horror, but rather an impediment to Brazil's modernization. On the other hand, to pro-slavery factions, abolition represented anti-nationalism by threatening the security of the economic system that allowed the young nation to grow. Domestically, abolition was difficult because despite horrific conditions, up to 75% of newly imported enslaved people died within years of arriving in Brazil, non-black Brazilians viewed Brazilian slavery as kinder than other forms of slavery.⁸³ This idea has continued due in large part to the myth of racial democracy in Brazil. First presented by other sociologists, but solidified by lusotropicalist sociologist and slavery apologist Gilberto Freyre, racial democracy posits that the diversity of Brazil has meant a rejection of white supremacy in favor of racial pluralism. Interracial sex in Brazilian history, to Freyre, was evidence of genial interracial interactions.⁸⁴ Nascimento would later argue that

⁸¹ Malcolm X, "Message to the Grass Roots," (speech to Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference, Detroit, November 10, 1963), <http://ccnmtl.columbia.edu/projects/mmt/mxp/speeches/mxt29.html>.

⁸² João José Reis, *Slave Rebellion in Brazil* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 188.

⁸³ Lamonte Aidoo, *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 12-13.

⁸⁴ Gilberto Freyre, *Casa Grande & Senzala* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Incorporated, 1964), 463.

Freyre and the rise of Brazilian national identity in the early twentieth century would have a lasting impact on blocking the potential of transnational black solidarity.

Edison Carneiro rejected racial discourse of early twentieth century Brazil and popularized contemporary interpretations of the quilombo of Palmares with a book publication on the subject. This would be vital for challenging the reactionary nationalist discourse that separated Afro-Brazilian activism from the diaspora. Carneiro would start the discursive challenge that would be revitalize transnationalism during the Brazilian struggle for Black Power. First printed in Mexico in 1946, Carneiro's reading of the quilombo is that it represented a primitive form of communism and could provide lessons in political organizing and social accountability.⁸⁵ Popular throughout the hemisphere, Carneiro advanced the cause of black leftist organizing as firmly rooted in black history. Carneiro was the first to discuss the cultural significance of Palmares on Afro-Brazilian communities of the twentieth century. He blended a black cultural explanation with a Marxian analysis of the labor conditions that led to the formation of Palmares and later the labor relations within the nation.

Teatro de Arena, a black theater troop associated with Abdias de Nascimento, brought Zumbi into the twentieth century from a black cultural perspective. The group produced *Arena conta Zumbi* in 1965.⁸⁶ While still engaging with Marxist interpretations about the quilombo, *Arena* put Zumbi's blackness at the center of his revolutionary politics. Opening in São Paulo on May Day, the performance was set in Palmares, was about the black experience in military Brazil, but even went so far as to make comparisons between the struggle for black rights in

⁸⁵ Edison Carneiro, *O quilombo dos Palmares* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1958), 24.

⁸⁶ Robert K. Anderson, "The Muses of Chaos and Destruction of *Arena conta Zumbi*," *Latin American Theatre Review* vol. 29, no. 2 (Spring 1996), 15.

Brazil with the fight for self-determination in Vietnam.⁸⁷ Vital to the success of this production was the participation of black domestic worker and labor organizer Arinda Serafim who gathered participants from the domestic worker sphere.⁸⁸ Serafim organized and drew attention to the gendered and racialized ways black domestic workers engaged in their labor. The connections between black arts and black women's domestic labor organizing characterize *Arena conta Zumbi* as an artistic manifestation of the Black Power movement. Straying from previous black organizations, Nascimento's theater production highlighted the working class cultural dimensions of black life and resistance during this period.

Although not explicitly mentioned, some interpreted the *Arena* production argue that the organization characterized Zumbi as the iron man of Palmares, a Stalin-esque figure who would guarantee social rights no matter the cost.⁸⁹ As a transnational call for black liberation within a Marxist framework, this performance was one of the most overtly radical interpretations of Zumbi produced during the most oppressive early years of the dictatorship. More than the Stalin subtexts, the formation of the theater production signaled the arrival of Black Power in Brazil. This production would be one of the first to characterize this historically unique era where black resistance formed outside of the framework of Brazilian nationalism and from a leftist perspective to confront the repression of the military dictatorship.

Zumbi and the Palmares quilombo also influenced the thinking of radical activists for Black Power in the United States. Before the movement began American scholar Samuel Putnam argued that Carneiro's seminal text is vital to understanding black history throughout the

⁸⁷ Gomes, *De Olho em Zumbi*, 77.

⁸⁸ Joaze Bernadito-Costa, "Destabilizing the National Hegemonic Narrative: The Decolonized Thought of Brazil's Domestic Workers' Unions," *Latin American Perspectives* vol. 38, no. 5 (September 2011), 38.

⁸⁹ Cláudia de Arruda Campos, *Zumbi, Tiradentes e outras histórias contadas pelo Teatro de Arena de São Paulo* (São Paulo: State University of São Paulo Press, 1988), 104.

diaspora and positions communism as a logical extension of this history of struggle.⁹⁰ The Radical periodical *Soulbook* was created in 1965 by RAM members in California to increase the organization's intellectual and cultural presence.⁹¹ In a later issue edited by Ahmad and Mamadou Lumumba, Willy Green credits Palmares as the "First Black Republic in the Americas."⁹² Palmares represented the possibility of black political achievement when not presented with interference from European colonial powers and Green valorizes the revolutionary attitude of the nation's black residents. He argues that each village of the broader quilombo fought back "to a man and to a woman."⁹³ Perhaps due to the problematic gender dynamics of the organization or due to relying on the testimony of Sebastião da Rocha Pita who wrote two centuries after the fall of Palmares, Green erroneously conflates Dandara's suicide with the death of Zumbi.⁹⁴ But, this account cemented Palmares legacy as a revolutionary Pan Africanist space both in Brazilian and African American imaginations.

While Nascimento ushered in the Black Power era of Afro-Brazilian resistance, Brazilian Marxist historian Décio Freitas related the transnational connections of this movement. He collected Carneiro's academic writings and did his own historical research to produce a play *Palmares: La guerilla negra* from exile in Uruguay in 1971.⁹⁵ Borrowing from the Teatro de Arena precedent, Freitas attempted to further highlight the need for black Brazilians to embrace

⁹⁰ Samuel Putnam, "Reviewed Work: *Quilombo dos Palmares* by Edison Carneiro," *Books Abroad* Vol 21, no. 4 (fall 1947), 403.

⁹¹ Robin D.G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, "Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution," in *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections Between African Americans and Asian Americans*, ed. Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 110.

⁹² Willy Green, "Self-Determination and African National Liberation in the U.S.A.," *Soulbook* Vol. 3, no. 2 (Spring 1975).

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Marc A. Hertzman, "Fatal Differences: Suicide, Race, and Forced Labor in the Americas," *American Historical Review* vol. 122, no. 2 (April 2017), 318.

⁹⁵ Gomes, *De Olho em Zumbi*, 62.

transnationalism in the struggle for liberation. Among the black middle class, Black Power appeared in stark opposition to their interpretations of Brazilian racial democracy. Among middle class black students who had access to university education during the military dictatorship, afro hairstyles, dashikis, and head wraps supposedly represented a “culture of poverty” that was made worse by Afro-Brazilian activists like Nascimento who operated outside of Brazil.⁹⁶ Freitas undertook his research to combat this perspective, but ultimately the impact was felt less than that of the Teatro de Arena. Nascimento’s movement sought to challenge these black middle class activist perspectives, but would ultimately be assisted by the popularity of Afro-Brazilian Black Power musicians.

Black musicians were vital agents of bringing Black Power ideology to the larger community. The “sister of the Black Power concept,” as described by activist Larry Neal, helped the movement grow via cultural and aesthetic expressions of black pride. The artistic styles differed but shared the key characteristics of black cultural and political self-determination and importantly were part of an “international struggle against colonialism, neocolonialism, and racism.”⁹⁷ Afro-Brazilian artists would either spend time in the United States exchanging black musical traditions with African American artists or listen voraciously to African-American works to blend with Afro-Brazilian musical traditions and trends. The Black Arts Movement was transnational at its core and Afro-Brazilian artists embracing the movement facilitated black cultural pride and a political shift towards Black Power.

As illustrated in the introduction of this chapter with the song *África Brasil (Zumbi)*, Jorge Ben was strongly influenced by both the Black Power movement and the Black Arts

⁹⁶ Christopher Dunn, *Contracultura: Alternative Arts and Social Transformation in Authoritarian Brazil* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 146-47.

⁹⁷ John H. Bracey, Jr., Sonia Sanchez, and James Smethurst, *SOS-Calling All Black People: A Black Arts Movement Reader* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 1.

movement transnationally. While *África Brasil (Zumbi)* represented an attention to the political struggle of black people in Brazil since colonization, Ben's music highlighted the unique contributions of Afro-Brazilians to the country in various ways. While other artists were denying their blackness, either explicitly or through the denigration of Afro-Brazilians in their lyrics, Ben praised the determination of Brazil's black community. Various songs of Ben's throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s were sung in testament to his radical mother. He wrote of the beauty of Afro-Brazilian women without reverting to the sexualizing tropes of his contemporaries like Roberto Carlos.⁹⁸ From 1968 through 1973, Brazilian scholar Alexandre Reis identifies seven songs in testament to a non-sexual Afro-Brazilian beauty.⁹⁹ The consistency with which Ben put a celebration of black aesthetics at the center of his music shows that his lyrics were not written by chance.

Beyond his romanticism, a few songs in particular highlight the ways Ben was connected to the political struggle for Black Power and his dialogues with the Black Arts movement transnationally. The title track of his 1971 album *Negro é lindo* (Black is Beautiful) was inspired by the various groups in the United States who made race pride a central component of the Black Power movement.¹⁰⁰ To situate the song in Brazil Ben goes to lengths to confront colorism within the Afro-Brazilian community. Additionally, *Negro é lindo* takes care to refer to black Brazilians specifically as a group deserving of praise. He uses a variety of phrases linked to Brazilian stereotypes about blackness like the "little old black man" to challenge both

⁹⁸ Alexandre Reis, "O 'poder negro da beleza': a influência dos movimentos estadunidenses Black is Beautiful e Black Power na obra de Jorge Benjor," in *Anais do XI Encontro Internacional da Associação Nacional de Pesquisadores e Professores de História das Américas*, 1-20 (Niterói, Rio de Janeiro: ANPHLAC, 2014), 4-5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7-10.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

transnational anti-blackness and the particularities that disproportionately affected black Brazilians.¹⁰¹

When confronted with the declaration of Black Power by Carmichael in 1965, the media of the dictatorship reacted with nigh universal disapproval.¹⁰² The radicalism of Black Power activists was juxtaposed with Martin Luther King, Jr.'s nonviolent approach. Of course, the realities of the violence King was willing to tolerate for civil rights was not covered. Ben responded diplomatically, or perhaps to preserve his own freedom, in 1971 when asked about his opinions on racism in the United States. He expressed solidarity with African Americans, relating that due to his existence as a black man he knew the realities of racism, but highlighted King as the African American activist he looks up to.¹⁰³ Paralleling the twoness of Afro-Brazilian identity posited by Carneiro, Ben's public statements served the interest of preserving himself within the Brazilian nation, but his songs captured his spirit of black resistance to white supremacy in Brazil. The lyrics subverted the military regime, were influenced by the Black Arts movement, yet were still uniquely Brazilian. Ben saw his success as vital to resisting the dictatorship so balanced his activism with his career.

Tim Maia likewise embraced soul music and a call for black self-determination in Brazil within the context of Black Power transnationally.¹⁰⁴ But unlike Ben, Maia would have explicit ties to Black Power via his interactions with Carmichael. His song *O Caminho do Bem* illustrates this point. Using funky, African American inspired beats, Maia croons about the rise of black

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 13-14.

¹⁰² Carmichael was erroneously credited with coining the term 'Black Power' in Lerone Bennet Jr., "Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power," *Ebony*, September 1966, 26. The Brazilian media reaction can be partially seen in "Negros do Brooklin lutam com a polícia pela terceira vez esta semana," *Jornal do Brasil*, July 14, 1965.

¹⁰³ Reis, 7.

¹⁰⁴ Paulina L. Alberto, "When Rio was Black: Soul Music, National Culture, and the Politics of Racial Comparison in 1970s Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 89, no. 1 (2009), 12.

political consciousness in Brazil and warns that this revolution is coming with lyrics like “read about it soon, know about it soon” and “believe, do not doubt it.”¹⁰⁵ Maia’s development as a radical artist came via his experiences as the second youngest of 19 children in the predominantly black Rio de Janeiro neighborhood of Tijuca.¹⁰⁶ In 1959 Maia moved to New York City after growing frustrated with the exclusivity of the Rio Bossa Nova scene. While there he attended meetings alongside Carmichael and engaged with black culture in various ways.¹⁰⁷ He studied Ray Charles and Motown artists and between dish washing and elderly care performed with black artists up and down the east coast. In 1964 Maia was arrested in Miami for possession of marijuana and was subsequently deported to Brazil.¹⁰⁸ Using his experiences with racism in the United States and in Brazil and adapting the lessons of Black Power activists in the United States to a Brazilian context, Maia was a voice that advocated for transnational solidarity while still highlighting the need to address the specificities of local racism in each location.

Another prominent Brazilian musician who embraced a diasporic blackness was Gilberto Gil. In response to his album *Refavela*, he articulated a cultural difference in Brazil between embracing being *black* compared to being *negro*. According to Gil, to be *negro* was a description of Brazilian identity, and to be *black* meant embracing an international diasporic identity.¹⁰⁹ Historian Paulina L. Alberto investigates this dichotomy between *negro* and *black* and finds that embracing the term *black* was unpopular among the right-wing supporters of the dictatorship as well as within the traditional Brazilian left.¹¹⁰ The right perspective makes sense; embracing

¹⁰⁵ Tim Maia, “O Caminho do Bem,” track 3 on *Racional Vol. 2*, Seroma, 1975, digital.

¹⁰⁶ *Tim Maia*, directed by Mauro Lima (Rio de Janeiro: Globo Filmes, 2014).

¹⁰⁷ Jesse Brent, “Review: A Tasty Slice of ‘70s Brazilian Soul and Funk,” *Public Radio International* (November 2, 2015), <https://www.pri.org/stories/2015-11-02/review-tasty-slice-70s-brazilian-soul-and-funk>.

¹⁰⁸ Carlos Eduardo Amaral de Paiva, *Black Pau: A soul music no Brasil nos anos 1970*, (PhD. diss., Universidade Estadual Paulista, 2015), 55.

¹⁰⁹ Alberto, 1.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

foreign radical consciousness leaves dictators trembling. But what of those on the left who charged the movement as being “culturally inauthentic and politically bankrupt?”¹¹¹ Throughout the 1970s there existed a faction of left-wing Brazilian nationalists who derided the association of *black* and the United States. Unsurprisingly, many of the left critiques came from white communists.¹¹² Despite all of this, by the 1970s *black* was embraced as a cultural signifier of Afro-Brazilians in Rio embracing transnational blackness as an identity.¹¹³ This was no doubt in response to the rising activism of black Brazilian artists associated with the Black Arts Movement.

The military dictatorship in Brazil recognized the potential of transnational organizing for Black Power, and as such did as much as possible to repress these activists and artists. The founder of the Brazilian band *Black Power* Paulo dos Santos was associated with the Brazilian Communist Party, and other musicians from *Black Rio* would financially lend assistance to leftist causes.¹¹⁴ Musician Tony Tornado was perhaps the most overtly radical in his lyrics and the military dictatorship did everything possible to ruin the reputation of this radical. In the 1960s he lived in New York and was friends with Carmichael.¹¹⁵ After returning from New York, he praised the activism of Carmichael and his conception of black political rights within a national framework that pandered to intergrationism.¹¹⁶ Tornado was in New York as Carmichael became associated with Max Stanford, RAM, and the Black Panther Party and in turn came back to Brazil with a more dangerous reputation than Maia.¹¹⁷ As a result, he was repeatedly harassed by

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., 25.

¹¹³ Ibid., 7-8.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 14.

¹¹⁵ Anna Ferraz, “Tony Tornado.”

¹¹⁶ “Tony Tornado: O sol na alma,” *Jornal do Brasil*, October 20, 1970.

¹¹⁷ “Hoover Links Carmichael to Negro Leftist Group,” *The New York Times*, May 17, 1967.

police and faced censorship of his song *Sou Negro* released in 1970.¹¹⁸ Ultimately it was the military supported Globo media company that would tarnish his reputation in the country. He married white actress Arlete Salles; the relationship would be portrayed in the media as racial democracy overcoming black radicalism, and despite his continued radical lyrics struggled to regain legitimacy as a Black Power radical for the rest of his career.

Other Brazilian radicals, both black and nonblack, would take the dialogues with the Black Power movement to the streets. During exile at the beginning of the dictatorship, Nascimento would push back against racial democracy ideology in Brazil and embracing a diasporic understanding of black identity.¹¹⁹ Nascimento situated his work within Brazilian national development and the role of Afro-Brazilians. Drawing on knowledge production produced by black Brazilians, diasporic black radicals, and even nonblack American academics like Thomas Skidmore, Nascimento took Gilberto Freyre's discourse of racial democracy to task. He presented his findings in Lagos, Nigeria and synthesized Brazilian historiography done by scholars in Brazil and the United States before calling for black self-determination in Brazil as part of a larger global movement.¹²⁰ The importance of Nascimento cannot be understated because he linked many of the cultural arguments of Afro-Brazilian musicians with the agitation of political economy brought about by Brazilian guerilla groups.

Nascimento's most widely circulated article was published in the *Journal of Black Studies*. "Quilombismo: An Afro-Brazilian Political Alternative" explored the development of black political consciousness and highlighted the need to connect the struggles of Afro-Brazilians with the struggle of all African descendent people throughout the diaspora. While

¹¹⁸ Amaral de Paiva, 104-106.

¹¹⁹ Abdias de Nascimento, *O Genecídio do Negro Brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra: 1978).

¹²⁰ Robert Brent Toplin, "Review: *O Genecídio do Negro Brasileiro*," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol 60, no. 2 (May 1980), 351.

recognizing the need for struggle within Brazil and the importance of claiming all the political rights associated with being Brazilian, Nascimento connected his politics with black diasporic intellectual production, writing “Black Brazilian memory is only a part and particle in this gigantic project of reconstruction of a larger past to which all Afro-Brazilians are connected.”¹²¹ Nascimento situated this historical project as fitting with the framework of Black Power, claiming that the end result of the Quilombismo movement means “Black Power will be democratic power.”¹²²

Nascimento frames the racial development of Brazil in leftist terms and many of the claims for statehood mirror the arguments made in Harold Cruse’s “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-America” in a Brazilian context.¹²³ Along with native people who were “briefly enslaved and then progressively exterminated,” black Brazilians were the “first and only worker” from 1500 until abolition in 1888. He continues to write that “the contemporary condition of Black people has not changed since then, except for the worse.”¹²⁴ He highlights the abject economic realities of black Brazilians in major cities and blames both the shortcomings of organizing among non-black leftists and capitalist development in Brazil.

Nascimento’s solution is detailed at the end of the article where he called for the formation of a Black state in Brazil modeled after Palmares. Notably land and the means of production will be publicly owned, education will be universal, ecological pollution will be stopped, and half of all positions throughout the state will be held by women.¹²⁵ Placing it firmly in a transnational framework, Nascimento writes that Quilombo residents must “maintain

¹²¹ Abdias de Nascimento, “Quilombismo,” 143.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 165.

¹²³ Cruse, 24.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 149-50.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 167-70.

intimate contact with all of our Black and African family, and with independent progressive African organizations, in the Diaspora as well as the continent, developing weapons of alliance and solidarity in resistance.” These principals, while explicitly Afro-Brazilian recognize the shared struggle for Black Power across the diaspora. While being the clearest iteration of a revolutionary society for Black Power in Brazil, Nascimento’s quilombismo had antecedents in left-wing guerilla groups that fought for the same principles during the beginning of the military dictatorship.

The best known Brazilian revolutionary activist and theorist outside of Brazil is Carlos Marighella. His *Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla* has inspired resistance movements throughout Latin America and the United States and figured prominently in the development of RAM’s Black Guard.¹²⁶ His development as both an activist and a theorist was quite protracted with origins in the PCB that opposed the government of Getúlio Vargas during the 1930s. He was born in Salvador, Bahia to an Italian immigrant father and an Afro-Brazilian mother and from the time of his first arrest in 1932 was an active agent for revolutionary change in Brazil. Marighella distanced himself from the PCB in the aftermath of their push toward united front politics during the dictatorship. Their alliance with former communist party activist Carlos Frederico Werneck de Lacerda, who supported the military coup d’état, was the final straw that led to Marighella forming his own organization for the liberation of Brazil.¹²⁷ Before leaving the PCB, in 1967 Marighella travelled to Cuba for the First Conference on Latin America Solidarity where he would dialogue with African American radicals like Stokely Carmichael.¹²⁸ Upon returning to

¹²⁶ Maxwell C. Stanford, “Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM): A Case Study of an Urban Revolutionary Movement in Western Capitalist Society,” (Master’s Thesis, Atlanta University, 1986), 2.

¹²⁷ Carlos Marighella, “Carta à Comissão Executiva do Partido Comunista Brasileiro,” *Marxists.org* (December 1, 1966), <https://www.marxists.org/portugues/marighella/1966/12/01.htm#topp>.

¹²⁸ Alzira Alves de Abreu, *Ação Libertadora Nacional (ALN)*, from the archive of CPDOC - FGV, Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil, Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Brazil, Marighella's integration of Marxism-Leninism with revolutionary nationalism that he observed from the African American delegation in Cuba led to a split with the PCB. In response, he organized the ALN which would remain a staple of resistance to the dictatorship throughout the 1960s and early 1970s.

The most famous action of the ALN was its role in the kidnapping of US ambassador Charles Burke Elbrick, but beyond this action organized various bank robberies and prison breaks that tested the will of the military dictatorship.¹²⁹ Beyond these direct actions the group was most well known for its connection to Marighella and theorizing of urban revolution.¹³⁰ Unlike many revolutionary groups of this era both in Brazil and in the United States, gender was a key category of analysis for these radicals. At each level of the organization from leadership to rank and file women were represented as about fifty percent of those making decisions. This was significantly higher than that of any other radical group in Brazil at the beginning of the dictatorship.¹³¹

In response to Marighella's writings, organizing, and connection to high profile kidnappings, the Brazilian military government wanted him dead. Military Police Deputy Sérgio Paranhos Fleury organized an ambush of Marighella's São Paulo apartment on November 4, 1969 and assassinated the revolutionary in cold blood.¹³² Three weeks later an eerily similar scene would occur in Chicago as police assassinated African American Black Power revolutionary Fred Hampton.¹³³ The ALN, though, would continue the battle against the military dictatorship for another five years before disbanding in 1971. After Marighella's death, the

¹²⁹ *O que é isso, companheiro?* Directed by Bruno Barreto, São Paulo: Miramax, 1997.

¹³⁰ Carlos Marighella, *Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla* (San Francisco: Praetorian Press, 2011), 6.

¹³¹ Luis Maklouf Carvalho, *Mulheres que foram à luta armada*, (São Paulo: Globo, 1998), 200.

¹³² "Estratégia para matar o terror," *Veja*, November 12, 1969.

¹³³ Faith C. Christmas, "'IT WAS MURDER,' RUSH: Hanrahan Must Go, Demands Curtis Burrell," *Chicago Defender*, December 6, 1969.

remaining public leaders Joaquim Câmara Ferreira and Eduardo Colleen Leite were assassinated in 1970.¹³⁴ The remaining members shifted into two short-lived organizations, the Popular Liberation Movement (Molipo) and the Leninist Tendency, neither of whom organized actions after 1971.¹³⁵

Connected to the ALN was the independent radical organization called the October 8th Revolutionary Movement (MR-8). This group achieved high levels of notoriety for being the instigators of the kidnapping of Elbrick in 1969.¹³⁶ Perhaps it was their interactions with the United States Ambassador, but MR-8 remained the most relevant guerilla group to the public in the post-dictatorship period.¹³⁷ In addition to their high profile kidnapping and continued presence in Brazilian popular culture, MR-8 was also the organization of Iara Iavelberg, one of Brazil's most famous Marxist feminist revolutionaries. First gaining recognition as the romantic and political partner of military captain-turned-guerilla Carlos Lamarca, she showed a commitment to worker control of the means of production and challenged Brazilian men on how women's labor was classified.¹³⁸ She was integral to the Elbrick kidnapping, but died in an alleged suicide in Salvador, Bahia in 1971, just two days after the covered-up assassination of Lamarca.¹³⁹ To this day leftists in Brazil question the circumstances surrounding her death.¹⁴⁰

After the deaths of Lamarca and Iavelberg most of the remaining members of the organization went to Chile in exile in 1972. Some remained in Brazil, but MR-8 moderated its

¹³⁴ Juliana Dal Piva, "109 dias de tortura," *ISTOÉ*, June 17, 2011, https://istoe.com.br/142634_109+DIAS+DE+TORTURA/.

¹³⁵ Nilmário Miranda and Carlos Tibúrcio, *Dos filhos deste solo* (São Paulo: BOITEMPO, 2008), 26.

¹³⁶ Fernando Gabeira, *O que é isso, companheiro?* (São Paulo: Companhia Das Letras: 2000).

¹³⁷ Rebecca Atencio, "Resistance or Reconciliation? Fernando Gabeira's *O que é isso, companheiro?* and the 1979 Amnesty Law," *Luso-Brazilian Review* vol. 52, no. 2 (April 2015), 103-104.

¹³⁸ Carolina Dellamore and Juliana Ventura de Souza Fernandes, "Representações do feminino no cinema e na memória da resistência armada à ditadura militar brasileira," *L'Ordinaire des Amériques* 222 (2017), doi:10.4000/orda.3464.

¹³⁹ Elio Gaspari, *As ilusões armadas: A ditadura escancarada* (São Paulo: Cia da Letras, 2002), 353.

¹⁴⁰ *Em Busca de Iara*, directed by Flavio Frederico (São Paulo: Kinoscópio, 2014).

position and did not participate in any bank robberies or kidnappings throughout the rest of the 1970s. This group was the least overtly associated with the Black Power movement and was the most similar to the established PCB and as a result did not maintain the political momentum some other revolutionary groups did. By 1980 the group had all but disappeared into social democratic labor organizing, but the organization is still technically active in Brazil today as the Free Fatherland Party (PPL).¹⁴¹ Although ideologically much different than the initial organization of the late 1960s, the PPL clings to their reputation as radicals while trying to operate within the limitations of the Brazilian government.

The final two revolutionary leftist groups investigated in this chapter have the strongest overt ties to the transnational Black Power movement. VAR-Palmares formed in 1969 in honor of the Palmares quilombo and advocated for a Marxist-Leninist revolution in Brazil to update Palmares' primitive communism for the twentieth century.¹⁴² The influence of Carneiro and Nascimento on the group are clear; they borrow much of the academic investigation into the history of Palmares done by these two black intellectuals. Palmares represented a primitive form of communism that the leaders felt could be adapted to the political conditions of all Brazilians. Although not formed by Afro-Brazilians, VAR-Palmares put Black Power at the center of their political praxis.

VAR-Palmares was aware of the struggles for liberation occurring throughout the world during the late 1960s and took great inspiration from African American activist and RAM

¹⁴¹ "Herdeiros do MR-8 pedem registro de novo partido ao TSE," *Globo*, August 24, 2011.

¹⁴² Flávio dos Santos Gomes, "Ainda sobre os quilombos: repensando a construção de símbolos de identidade étnica no Brasil," in *Política e cultura: Visões do passado e perspectivas contemporâneas*, eds. Elisa Pereira Reis, Maria Hermínia Tavares de Almeida and Peter Fry (São Paulo: Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Ciências Sociais, 1996), 205.

International Spokesman Malcolm X.¹⁴³ Fitting with their struggle for liberation in Brazil by any means necessary, VAR-Palmares collaborated with Marighella's ALN and the PCBR to shoot and kill British sailor David Cuthbert in Guanabara Bay, Rio de Janeiro in protest of a British-Brazilian trade agreement.¹⁴⁴ Also in 1972, members of this group advocated for the creation of a National Day of Black Consciousness on November 20th, the anniversary of Zumbi's death in 1695.¹⁴⁵ The holiday already existed, but was celebrated on the day of the official abolition of slavery in 1888 and honored white officials who ended slavery instead of the memory of the millions of enslaved. Although one of the first groups to advocate for this holiday, it would not be implemented until 2011.¹⁴⁶

VAR-Palmares was one of the most racially radical guerilla groups of the Brazilian military dictatorship and challenged other leftist groups to put race at the center of their conception of Brazilian class struggle. In April of 1972, leaders Maria Regina Lobo Leite Figueiredo, Antônio Marcos Pinto de Oliveira, and Lígia Maria Salgado Nóbrega were assassinated by the dictatorship in response to the sequestration of Cuthbert.¹⁴⁷ The organization would never recover and did not carry out any actions after April 1972. The mass execution of VAR-Palmares leaders would come to be remembered as Chacina de Quintino or Quinton Slaughter in the predominantly black neighborhood of Quintino in Rio de Janeiro.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Gabriel Izard, "El cimarronaje como símbolo étnico en los movimientos sociales afrobrasileños," *Boletín Americanista* 52 (2002), 136.

¹⁴⁴ "Sai a esquadra inglesa," *Folha de São Paulo*, February 9, 1972.

¹⁴⁵ Izard, 137.

¹⁴⁶ "20 de novembro é um marco na luta por liberdade e direitos," Sindicato dos Bancários, November 20, 2018, <https://bancarios.com.br/s/20-de-novembro-e-um-marco-na-luta-por-liberdade-e-direitos/>.

¹⁴⁷ "Terroristas morrem em tiroteio," *Folha de São Paulo*, April 6, 1972.

¹⁴⁸ Wanderlene Cardozo Ferreira Reis, "duras memórias: resiliência e resistência feminina à repressão militar no Brasil," *Cordis: Revoluções, cultura e política na América Latina* 11 (2013): 129.

The guerilla group most closely tied with the transnational Black Power movement is the PCBR. Mário Alvez was born in rural Bahia to Afro-Brazilian parents before moving to Salvador where he met his wife and later co-founder Dilma Borges.¹⁴⁹ While working with the PCB, Alvez met Jacob Gorender, a Salvador born child of Ukrainian Jewish immigrants. This group officially formed as an offshoot of the PCB in 1968 in São Paulo but operated independently of the party for some time before announcing their presence as a separate political party. As members of the “Dissident Brazilian Communist Party,” Alvez and Gorender attended the First Conference on Latin American Solidarity in Cuba. While there they dialogued with underground members of RAM which would shape the outlook of the organization.¹⁵⁰

The connection with RAM grew out of principles already forwarded by the founders of the PCBR. Gorender was said to have debated his nonblack comrades on the role of race in class struggle in Brazil. To Gorender, Afro-Brazilians since their arrival in Brazil understood the nature of class conflict better than anyone else. Building upon the writings of Nascimento that would serve as catalyst for the rise of Brazilian Black Power Gorender perceived Afro-Brazilians as the exclusive members of the Brazilian working class until immigration rose during the late nineteenth century, and even then remained the most committed to the social and political advancement of a broader Brazilian working class.¹⁵¹ Gorender would maintain the necessity of the connection between race and capitalism throughout his activist and academic career,

¹⁴⁹ Otto José Mattos Filgueiras, “Mário Alves, o guerreiro de grande batalha,” *Revista Espaço Acadêmico* 9 (March 2010), 102.

¹⁵⁰ CIA, “Special Report: The Latin American Solidarity Organization Conference,” No. 45, September 22, 1967, No. 0308/67B, Approved for release September 15, 2008, CIA-RPD79-00927A006000050004-9.

¹⁵¹ Izard, 134-35.

publishing his most famous book in 1978, *Colonial Slavery*.¹⁵² Gorender cited black academic interpretations of Palmares as one of the biggest motivating factors of his radicalism.¹⁵³

The group based its operations out of São Paulo but had close ties to RAM and other radical groups in Bahia. Brazilian radicals began to dialogue with RAM as soon as Robert F. Williams became Chairman-in-Exile from Cuba in 1964.¹⁵⁴ At the aforementioned Latin American solidarity conference Alves and Gorender would fully disassociate with the PCB to form their own revolutionary transnationalist organization in support of Black Power.¹⁵⁵ Never linked in the Brazilian press with the cell of RAM that carried out its first action in Salvador, Bahia in 1969, it is likely that the two organizations collaborated.¹⁵⁶ Like RAM, the PCBR's main method of direct action involved prison breaks. In addition to the actions of blind Afro-Brazilian leader da Cruz in Rio in August of 1970, the *Folha de São Paulo* credits the group as acting alone in an attempt to free comrades from a women's penitentiary in Recife.¹⁵⁷ Given the clandestine nature of the organization, it is hard to track each direct action of the group, but it was assumed by the military government that the PCBR played a role in Elbrick's kidnapping as well.

Questioning the role of the PCBR in the kidnapping of Elbrick, Alves was taken into police custody in Rio de Janeiro in early January 1970 before an old PCB reunion. Restrained for

¹⁵² Fabiano Maisonave, "Historiador e militante comunista Jacob Gorender morre em São Paulo," *Folha de São Paulo*. June 11, 2013. <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2013/06/1293357-historiador-e-militante-comunista-jacob-gorender-morre-em-sao-paulo.shtml>

¹⁵³ Gomes, *De Olho em Zumbi*, 78.

¹⁵⁴ *Black America* makes reference to Williams as Chairman-in-Exile as early as their 1964 special edition "Arm Yourselves for a War of Self-Defense and Survival." Williams himself did not publicly refer to his association with RAM until giving a speech in Vietnam. For more see: Robert F. Williams, "SPEECH: Delivered at the International Conference for Solidarity with the People of Vietnam Against U.S. Imperialist Aggression for the Defense of Peace. Hanoi, Democratic Republic of Vietnam November 25-29, 1965," *The Crusader* vol. 6, no. 3 (March 1965), 2.

¹⁵⁵ "Martins e Josafá acham que tumulto da Sé vem favorecer endurecimento," *Folha de São Paulo*, May 3, 1968.

¹⁵⁶ Stanford, 56-57.

¹⁵⁷ "NE: Descoberto plano de fuga de mulheres," *Folha de São Paulo*, November 15, 1970.

hours on the Pau de Arara and tortured with electric shocks and beatings, Alves did not give up any information. When asked for names of associates, Alves sarcastically responded with “you already know,” and when asked about a base in Minas Gerais responded with “well you should probably go look there then.”¹⁵⁸ His defiance may have extended the life of the PCBR but cut his own short. Once his torturers determined that Alves would not give up his comrades, they tied him down, cut open his stomach, and fed him to starving rats. His body was discovered the next morning by three comrades tasked with cleaning the torture chambers.¹⁵⁹ This would be the last time anyone would see a trace of Alves.

Gorender, who was also arrested and tortured during January of 1970, would continue the fight for Brazilian liberation with the widowed Borges.¹⁶⁰ Unfortunately, the death of Alves rocked the organization and it was difficult to organize any more actions. The risks of lost information combined with the knowledge of the horrors Alves endured at the hands of the dictatorship hurt morale. In late 1971 the PCBR ceased overt operations and began advocating for a free Brazil within the framework allowed by the dictatorship. Gorender and others joined up with organizers who would later become the Worker’s Party.¹⁶¹ Briefly in 1972 a few members tried to restart the organization but were quickly arrested.¹⁶² Borges would continue the search for her husband’s body until her own death in 1985.¹⁶³

By the end of 1972 the military dictatorship had successfully captured, kidnapped, imprisoned, or executed the majority of the guerilla leaders who had been fighting the dictatorship since its inception in 1964. Tracing the end of the organizations is difficult. Much

¹⁵⁸ Filgueiras, 119-121.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 122.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 123.

¹⁶¹ Gorender, *Combate Nas Trevas*, 221.

¹⁶² “Aeronautica julga indiciados,” *Folha de São Paulo*, November 19, 1972.

¹⁶³ Filgueiras, 124.

like in the United States many of the organizations were fluid and had memberships fluctuate. Organizational affiliations changed, ideologies morphed, and many simply grew tired of guerilla fights for the liberation of the country and retired from this type of activism. By late 1971 the Brazilian media reported that the only remaining guerilla groups with organizational power were the ALN and MR-8.¹⁶⁴ The PCBR was retreating into the underground, but affiliates remained active. The other organizations had been squelched by the regime.

One anonymous revolutionary reflecting on the dictatorship's relationship with Black Power recalled that "by 1970 it was hard to gather half a dozen black activists for a meeting."¹⁶⁵ The strongest case for Black Power in Brazil was articulated by Nascimento in his call for Quilombismo, but nonetheless these radical groups played a large role in the struggle for black liberation in dictatorial Brazil and across the diaspora. Afro-Brazilian artists also were a direct link to the Black Arts Movement and Black Power movement in the United States. Popular musicians like Tim Maia and Tony Tornado associated themselves with Carmichael in New York City at the same time he began to affiliate himself more with RAM.¹⁶⁶ These ties to the African American radical organization existed via music but also as a result of dialogues between revolutionaries in Cuba. Black activists throughout the diaspora but particularly in the United States put Marighella's theorization on urban warfare on par with Frantz Fanon and multiple organizations for Black Power would reference these Brazilian groups as comrades and influences in their own struggles for self-determination.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ "Alerta: Terrorismo ainda existe," *Folha de São Paulo*, September 29, 1971.

¹⁶⁵ Jean Marcel Carvalho França and Ricardo Alexandre Ferreira, *Três vezes Zumbi: A construção de um herói brasileiro* (São Paulo: Três Estrelas, 2012), 158.

¹⁶⁶ For more on Carmichael's association with RAM beginning in 1966, see: Donna Murch, "When the Panther Travels: Race and the Southern Diaspora in the History of the BPP, 1964-1972," in *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement*, ed. Nico Slate (New York: Palgrave Macmillon, 2012), 58.

¹⁶⁷ Black Liberation Army, "Spring Came Early This Year: A Message to the World from the Black Liberation Army," article, 1972, Proquest: *The Black Power Movement: Papers of the Revolutionary Action Movement, 1962-1996*, folder 010629-008-0555, 5-6.

Chapter 2

Revolutionary (Trans)Nationalism, Robert Williams, and the Revolutionary Action Movement in the United States and Brazil

Black Power revolutionary and political refugee Assata Shakur closes her autobiography with a discussion of Apartheid in South Africa. Although national particularities are vital to the struggle for liberation, Shakur recognized that “Imperialism is an international system of exploitation, and, we, as revolutionaries, need to be internationalists to defeat it.”¹⁶⁸ Black Power is often understood as an outgrowth of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, but, although the movements often overlapped, the struggle for Black Power was not satisfied with goals of domestic civil improvement. The Black Power movement, rather, was full of revolutionaries overwhelmingly interested in liberating black and oppressed people both in the United States and abroad.

Since at least Harold W. Cruse’s “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-America” was first published in 1962, movements for Black Power recognized that the struggle for black liberation did not end at the United States border.¹⁶⁹ Rather, transnational solidarity and all power to all oppressed people were at the center of various organizations; this chapter will pay specific attention to the conditions and opportunity for exchange with Afro-Latin Americans illustrated in the cases of Robert F. Williams and the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM). RAM and its leadership engaged with the struggle for black liberation throughout the world and sought allies in their shared fight against United States imperialism. They saw similarities between their struggle and Afro-Brazilian struggles against the military dictatorship that would

¹⁶⁸ Assata Shakur, *Assata: An Autobiography* (London: Zed Books, 1987) 267.

¹⁶⁹ Harold W. Cruse, “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American,” *Studies on the Left* vol 2, no. 3 (1962), 12-25.

ultimately lead to collaboration. Revolutionary nationalism, as it was understood and implemented by RAM, was not nationalistic at its core in the way white nationalism has existed, but rather was always deeply international.¹⁷⁰

Black revolutionary leaders during the Black Power era were no strangers to the connections of struggle between oppressed people throughout the world, but scholarship tends to look at Black Power in a domestic context. Although attention is paid to other movements for liberty, Black Power advocates played with the meaning of transnational solidarity, and indeed what it means for a diasporic movement to be considered transnational.¹⁷¹ Huey P. Newton, himself a member of RAM, advocated for what he called “intercommunalism.”¹⁷² To Newton the nature of the slave trade and history of oppression led him to believe nationalism for black people did not make sense, instead that this marker of identity should be abandoned in place of solidarity irrespective of borders.

Shakur, shaped by her encounters while incarcerated with Puerto Rican nationalist Lolita Lebrón, disagreed and stressed the importance of national self-determination for oppressed people, especially those struggling with continued colonization.¹⁷³ These debates are vital, but ultimately both of these leaders represent visions of the possibilities of transnational solidarity. Newton and the Panthers’ grew on this issue and did not let their opposition to borders prevent solidarity with revolutionary nationalist groups across the globe. I argue that this transnational

¹⁷⁰ Robin D.G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, “Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution,” in *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections Between African Americans and Asian Americans*, ed. Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 115-16.

¹⁷¹ For more on the global dimensions of black power and to see how transnational solidarity grew within the Black Power movement, see: Nico Slate, *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement* (New York: Macmillan, 2012).

¹⁷² For a discussion of Intercommunalism, see: Rhonda Williams, *Concrete Demands: The Search for Black Power in the 20th Century* (New York: Routledge, 2015): 202. For Newton’s connections with RAM, see: Kelley and Esch, 109.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 227.

reflexivity is a key component of the distinction between Black Power and other parts of the struggle for black liberation in the United States. Robert F. Williams and RAM serve as case studies in Black Power's commitment to transnational struggle through an ideology of revolutionary transnationalism.

The roots of revolutionary Black Power transnationalism go much deeper than the figures of the 1960s. As Richard B. Moore argues, there have always been acknowledged African roots in Harlem. Pan African connections exploded during the Black Power era, but these activists built on the scholarship and organizing of earlier black radicals. From at least W.E.B. Du Bois's publication of *The Negro*, African American historians have put Africa at the center of the story of black history. Beginning with the Harlem Renaissance the works of William Wells Brown, Benjamin Brawley, and Olaudah Equiano became more available and popular in black owned Harlem book stores and related the black freedom struggle in the United States to efforts of black people in other parts of the world.¹⁷⁴ While tracing the intellectual history of Afrocentricity in black political thought, Moore includes Marcus Garvey and Claude McKay's as a vital contributors to this consciousness. Their origins in the Caribbean contributed to African American understandings of the conditions of oppression facing black people globally.¹⁷⁵ As Black Power and global decolonization movements converged and dialogued Caribbean consciousness would again contribute to black transnational political ideology.

A more immediate precursor to the revolutionary transnationalist strategies of RAM were black feminist nationalists during the middle of the twentieth century. Even during the retreat of

¹⁷⁴ Richard B. Moore, "Africa Conscious Harlem," *Freedomarchives.org* (1963): 77-78. Vincent Carretta posits that Equiano was actually born in South Carolina and wrote his narrative using the collective perspective of Africans and African Americans but saw a need for an African voice to document the middle passage. Even if Equiano was born in South Carolina, his centering of Africa in the story of abolition further highlights the precedent of African American solidarity with the continent and other members of the diaspora.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 83-86.

Black Nationalism during the Red Scare, Black Nationalist feminists continued to agitate. Historian Keisha N. Blain argues that the involvement of women like Amy Jacques Garvey, Mittie Maude Lena Gordon, Amy Ashwood, and Maymie De Mena in the black freedom movement continued well into the 1960s, at which point a new group emerged that articulated “visions of black freedom that built upon yet also departed from earlier expressions of black nationalist and internationalist thought.”¹⁷⁶ The 1960s necessitated new visions of black radical transnationalism to fit the realities of the Cold War, but these nationalist figures would have direct influences on Black Power activists throughout the diaspora.

Returning to the revolutionary transnationalism of the 1960s and early 70s, the ideology included more than simply expanding the geographical framework of understanding the struggle for black freedom. Revolutionary transnationalism, drawing from the successes of the Cuban Revolution, called for armed self-determination. But again, there is long precedent for this organizational strategy.¹⁷⁷ Likewise Ahmad theorizes the concept as an indigenous ideology to black America. He juxtaposes revolutionary nationalist knowledge and ideology with the static interpretations of Marxism within the white left not grounded in material experience.¹⁷⁸ In *Black America*, RAM credits multiple Garvey Speeches on Black Liberation, force, and present day civilization and Du Bois quotes on Pan African Socialism and the problem of the color line as the intellectual and political precursor of revolutionary nationalism.¹⁷⁹ Understanding black transnational antecedents became a precursor to participating in the struggle.¹⁸⁰ The Cuban

¹⁷⁶ Blain, *Set the World on Fire*, 168.

¹⁷⁷ Akinyele Omowale Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

¹⁷⁸ Muhammad Ahmad, *Basic Tenants of Revolutionary Black Nationalism* (Philadelphia, PA: Institute of Black Political Studies, 1977), 1.

¹⁷⁹ “Roots of Revolutionary Nationalism: Excerpts from the writings and speeches of Marcus Garvey, J.A. Rogers, Elijah Mohammad, W.E.B. Du Bois, Robert Williams, Malcolm X, Harold Cruse, Rev. Albert B. Cleage, Jr., Max Stanford and James Boggs,” *Black America* (Fall 1964), 7.

¹⁸⁰ “The African American War of National Liberation,” *Black America* (Fall 1965), 4.

Revolution was a rupture into the mainstream acceptance of the possibility of revolutionary self-determination in the Western Hemisphere. Cruse recognized this significance and reframed the conversation about what black struggle in the United States should look like. As opposed to orthodox Marxist-Leninist movements, the combined oppression of race, class, and imperialism must form the basis of a revolutionary nationalist framework.

Cruse takes American academic Marxists to task with their inability to grapple with the problem of white supremacy and how it complicates a purely class-based analysis of capitalism and imperialism. He calls for transnational solidarity between Cuban revolutionaries and African American revolutionaries, setting the foundation for the ideology of two of the most transnational advocates for Black Power.¹⁸¹ Muhammad Ahmad was greatly influenced by Cruse and established a relationship between RAM and Cuba that would allow for later transnational collaborations like the Brazilian RAM cell. Robert F. Williams himself experienced solidarity with Cuba as he lived and agitated from Havana beginning in 1961.¹⁸² During his time in exile, Williams engaged with leftist revolutionaries around the world about the conditions facing African Americans.

Ahmad would literally write the monograph about revolutionary nationalism in 1977 reflecting on the ideology's foundational principles during the peak of RAM's activity during the 1960s. From the beginning, RAM associated the struggle for black self-determination in the United States with the formation of other revolutionary nationalist movements in other parts of the world. The only end point of revolutionary nationalism was an eventual world communist society ruled by the diverse "black underclass" defined as "the workers of Asia, Afrika, New

¹⁸¹ Cruse, 217-221.

¹⁸² Timothy B. Tyson, "Robert F Williams, 'Black Power,' and the Roots of the African American Freedom Struggle," *The Journal of American History* 85, no. 2 (Sep. 1998), 565.

Afrika, South and Central America, Native Americans, and Mexican/Chicanos.” These diverse yet similarly oppressed workers would have to develop consciousness of the “international, national, and class interests” of the white power structure and react in turn. The vanguard of this underclass therefore must be a “black internationalist” party, further putting transnationalism as a central component of Black Power praxis.¹⁸³

When discussing worldwide black revolution, Ahmad continued to stress the importance of revolutionary transnationalist issues framing all national liberation movements. Black Power could not exist “without the whole of U.S., western capitalist, and European bourgeois society being completely destroyed” and therefore all wars for liberation must oppose “U.S. imperialism internationally.”¹⁸⁴ He elevates revolutionary transnationalism to the status of “ideological arm of the Black underclass in guarding from falling victim to neo-colonialism.” Due to the intricacies of imperialism, racism, and classism to the function of the United States, socialism could only be achieved through the transnational dictatorship of the black underclass.¹⁸⁵

Black revolutionary transnationalists in the United States took particular note of the writings of Mao Tse-Tung and his leadership of the Chinese revolution and Frantz Fanon and the successes of the Algerian Revolution against their French colonial oppressors as examples to be followed for black underclass revolution.¹⁸⁶ Stanford identified with Chinese peasant revolutionaries and saw the purpose of RAM as applying “Marxist-Leninist Mao Tse-Tung thought” to the conditions of black people in the United States, particularly in the black belt.¹⁸⁷ Indeed Mao’s instructions for the Red Guard were copied almost word for word in the

¹⁸³ Ahmad, *Basic Tenants*, 5-8.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 14

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁸⁶ James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (London: University of Washington Press: 1972): 506.

¹⁸⁷ Kelley and Esch, 111.

instructions and training tools for the Black Guard cadres in black urban centers.¹⁸⁸ James Forman synthesized Cruse's arguments about revolutionary nationalism with Fanon's writings about African revolution. He argues that black radicals must be weary of Black Power Reactionaries who favor bourgeois economic and cultural nationalism. Instead Forman calls for the creation of Black Power Revolutionaries who recognize the importance of global solidarity and the opposition to all systems of oppression, not just the success of black people within those systems.¹⁸⁹

In 1968, Norma and Don Freeman edited an edition of *Vibrations* magazine that praised the combination of Fanon's conception of a "colonized mind" with the political action of Mao's China. In addition to assisting in their own ideological formation, the Freemans argue that Fanon and Mao also inspired the methods of resistance of Afro-Latin American revolutionary movements.¹⁹⁰ RAM would further synthesis Fanon by putting him in conversation with the works of Carlos Marighella; his instructions for urban guerilla warfare were key to the ideological formation of RAM's Black Guard. The Black Guard were trained to know their terrain better than the enemy, focus on mobility and speed of attacks, armed defense, and practice first aid during a retreat.¹⁹¹

By synthesizing the various strands of the Black Power movement, Rhonda Williams demonstrates in *Concrete Demands: The Search for Black Power in the 20th Century* that Cruse was impactful on the movement as a whole and that there was a breadth to the transnational solidarity of the Black Power movement. In a chapter devoted to Black Power outside of an exclusively United States context Williams argues that Mae Mallory, an exiled black leader and

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 113.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 512.

¹⁹⁰ "Imperialism, Nationalism, Racism: America's 'Manifest Destiny,'" *Vibrations* no. 4 (December 21, 1968), 9.

¹⁹¹ Stanford, 15-16.

advocate of armed self-defense, represents an early movement figure who understood the necessity of revolutionary transnationalism. Corroborating Cruse's position that Cuba served as a revolutionary inspiration and wakeup call for revolutionary transnationalists, Williams relates that Charles Anderson wrote to Mae Mallory extensively about the importance of Castro's Cuba and its proximity to Jim Crow Florida as well as about the revolutionary potential of Brazil, Argentina, Guatemala, Bolivia, and Venezuela.¹⁹² Mallory's investment in the political ideology of RAM would only grow after Cleveland organizers arranged protests for her immediate release from political incarceration in the city.¹⁹³ Williams also credits the free Angela Davis campaign as another catalyst of transnational solidarity. While some African American revolutionaries were thinking of struggle transnationally, the free Davis campaign brought popular attention to the plight of black Americans spurring the formation of organizations for Black Power around the world, including in Latin America.¹⁹⁴

Williams successfully puts transnationalism into the story of Black Power but does not gloss over the struggles involved with organizing solidarity efforts in different geographic and social contexts. Williams notes that despite a desire for transnational solidarity, oftentimes black revolutionaries in the United States did not grapple with the complexity of racial categorization or local politics. This clarification does present a unique challenge to the framework of Black Power as a transnational movement. Can transnational solidarity exist when actors are still using United States racial and economic dynamics to understand the conditions of oppressed people in other parts of the world? While a significant question that revolutionaries would debate throughout the sixties and seventies, as Williams says, "Black Power Internationalists cast their

¹⁹² Williams, *Concrete Demands*, 201.

¹⁹³ Kelley and Esch, 108.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 203.

lot with the oppressed at home and abroad,” showing that while not a perfect framework the goals of these revolutionaries were transnational at their core and committed to the liberation of all oppressed people across borders.¹⁹⁵

Robert F. Williams serves as a clear example of how the American Black Power movement moved beyond the borders of the United States to transition into a transnational movement.¹⁹⁶ His journey towards organizing around Black Power began as a boy in Monroe, North Carolina in 1936 when he observed an African American woman being beaten by a white police officer.¹⁹⁷ He learned firsthand about the black experience in the southern United States, but by the end of his activism he would learn about the experience of oppressed people in Latin America and Asia extensively.¹⁹⁸ Although later Chairman-in-Exile of the RAM, it is vital to understand Williams relationship to Latin American and Afro-Latin American revolutionary transnationalism outside of his explicit association with this organization.

Williams’ organizing principles, which began to form as branch president of the Monroe NAACP, were influenced by transnational black solidarity from the beginning. His commitment to armed community self-defense grew out of his experience as a black southerner and military veteran, but these views only solidified and intensified as he was forced to flee the United States and organize from Cuba. As early as 1959 while still NAACP branch president, “he connected the southern freedom struggle with the anticolonialism of emerging Third World nations.”¹⁹⁹ By 1962, his second year in Cuba, Williams explained

We know that this is really a world struggle. . . So our program is that we will continue with the sit-ins, and we will continue with pressure, pressure, pressure. But all the time

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 208.

¹⁹⁶ For a look at Williams’s early activism, see: Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 49-90.

¹⁹⁷ Tyson, “Robert F Williams,” 540.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 565.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 559.

we will identify ourselves with the African struggle, with the struggle of the Latin Americans, with the struggle of the Asians.²⁰⁰

This firmly grounds the actions of the black freedom struggle in the United States in a framework of transnational understanding and solidarity. This attention to the global aspects of the struggle for liberation further distinguish Robert F. Williams from the focus of the Civil Rights Movement in 1962 and, if transnationalism is a key component of Black Power, shows that Black Power as an ideology existed prior to 1965.

Williams early activism was transnational, but his approach would turn more into Black Power by 1961. He began publishing *The Crusader* in Monroe in 1959 as NAACP president to advance “the cause of race pride and freedom.”²⁰¹ Within an organization for civil rights Williams played with nationalist ideas but quickly after publication began *The Crusader* began to reflect his commitment to Black Power as a transnational organizing principal. This centrality became even more apparent after Williams fled the United States. Each issue reminds the reader that Williams is a “Publisher in Exile” and names the location of publication, first as Havana and later as Beijing. The case of the October 1964 special edition of *The Crusader* serves as an example of Williams’ commitment to transnationalism and Latin American liberation struggles. This edition was published in honor of China’s first successful nuclear bomb test, an event Williams perceived to be of vital importance to the outlook of transnational anticolonial liberation movements including Black Power because it represented backing from a nuclear power who spoke to being deeply committed to the cause of black liberation globally. Williams began the issue with a statement attributed to Mao Zedong, but rhetorically similar to other *Crusader* articles, calling for

²⁰⁰ John Schultz, “An Interview with Robert F. Williams,” *Studies on the Left* 2/3 (1962): 61.

²⁰¹ Tyson, 559.

workers, peasants, revolutionary intellectuals, enlightened elements of the bourgeoisie and other enlightened personages of all colours in the world, white, black, yellow, brown, etc. to unite to oppose the racial discrimination practices by U.S. imperialism and to support the American Negroes.²⁰²

Leading a *Crusader* article with a quote from Mao and centering an entire issue around Chinese support from black freedom in a transnational framework shows how committed Williams was to a Black Power highlighting shared liberation with all oppressed peoples. Tying together this interpretation is the last paragraph of the issue in which Williams mentions receiving many telegraph messages from Latin America celebrating China's technological achievement and what it could mean for black and Latin American freedom struggles.²⁰³ Most importantly, these cable messages from Latin America demonstrate that Williams' collaborations and communications were not limited to the states he resided in during his exile, but also occurred with on the ground resistance movements in other Latin American countries.

This communication with revolutionaries throughout the world was vital to the continued activism of Williams and publication of *The Crusader*. Although always seen a vital resistance figure in the fight against United States imperialism, Williams soon discovered that Cuba was not the revolutionary paradise and space of solidarity he imagined. Despite publicly calling for a Cuban style revolution in the United States, as early as 1962 Williams began to realize solidarity was a two way street and Cuba was not showing a deep commitment to global black liberation. According to an FBI informant, Williams was angry at the exclusion of Afro-Cubans from leadership in the communist party and expressed this dissatisfaction to Castro, straining the relationship.²⁰⁴

²⁰² Robert F. Williams, "Chairman Mao Tse-Tung's Statement," *The Crusader* 6, no. 2 (October 1964): 3.

²⁰³ Robert F. Williams, "Halleluia: The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth," *The Crusader* 6, no. 2 (October 1964): 8-9.

²⁰⁴ Tyson, 567. This tension between Afro-Cubans and Cubans not racialized as black was representative of many of the struggles facing transnational Black Power in Latin America, namely the lack of recognition of blackness in the

Che Guevara shared Williams' criticism of the Castro government; right before both men would leave the country they expressed their outrage together over an official Communist Party publication valorizing Martin Luther King, Jr. for his collaboration with the white working class while demonizing Malcolm X. Williams would reflect on the relationship recalling that "Che believed in the class struggle, but he realized that black people had a special problem that is more than class."²⁰⁵ As Williams left Cuba to move to China in 1965, he never lost sight of the importance of Latin American solidarity in the struggle for liberation.²⁰⁶ When the US government banned *The Crusader* from the US postal service in 1967, Williams wrote from Beijing of the necessity for open communication between revolutionaries in the US, Asia, Africa, and Latin America to advance the potential of a "minority revolution."²⁰⁷ For Robert F. Williams, Black Power could only exist and succeed by embracing transnational solidarity.

To understand Black Power revolutionary transnationalism it is vital to engage with RAM organizationally outside of Williams. Originally organizing as a student group at Central State in Wilberforce, Ohio in 1961, RAM embraced early on the need to struggle for black liberation as part of a larger global movement opposing racism, imperialism, and capitalism.²⁰⁸ RAM grew quickly with branches forming across the United States and even into Mexico and Brazil, but with major hubs in cities like Philadelphia, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Early enrollments mostly remaining contained to the United States, but since its inception, RAM saw the Cuban and Chinese revolutions as vanguards of an eventual black revolution in the United States. RAM posited that "black people of the world (darker races, black, yellow brown, red,

region in favor of national or mestizo identity. For more, see: Kwame Dixon and John Burdick, *Comparative Perspectives on Afro-Latin America* (Gainesville, FL: Univ. Press of Florida, 2012).

²⁰⁵ Georgie Anne Geyer and Keyes Beech, "Odyssey of a black militant: Cuba, China, and home," *Chicago Daily News*, October 20, 1970, 12.

²³ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Robert F. Williams, "Protest the Ban," *The Crusader* 9, vol. 2 (September-October 1967): 16.

²⁰⁸ Ahmad, "RAM: The Revolutionary Action Movement," 253.

oppressed peoples) are all enslaved by the same forces” and must cast their lot together in the hopes of rising up against their shared oppressor, namely white supremacy and United States imperialism.²⁰⁹ Once revolution in the United States occurred, the global struggle would continue until oppressed people the world over had self-determination and a just political economy.²¹⁰

Another core tenant of RAMs transnational Black Power advocacy was to build the movement around black students and the black working class. To Stanford, founding member and public chairman of the organization, this organizational strategy would facilitate change not just in the United States towards a revolutionary nationalist black state, but also serve as a foundation for global political and economic transformation. The “world communist” movement was predicated on a series of nationalist struggles building towards revolutionary transnationalism, the core of these respective nationalist movements being made up of the “black underclass” of workers fighting against the racist capitalist imperialism of the United States.²¹¹ Black worker organizing would flourish as a method for achieving transnational Black Power later in the 1960s with the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and black radical union movements in Detroit and in Brazil.

A published position statement called “Orientation to a Black Mass Movement, Part One” highlights RAMs vision of revolutionary praxis. Black students and the black working class “if properly channeled can revolutionize Black America and make Black America, the vanguard of the world's black revolution.”²¹² RAM, unlike the Cuban government, put black actors at the center of worldwide revolution and articulated explicitly how Black Power functioned on a transnational scale. This explicit mention of black revolution also connected with

²⁰⁹ “RAM Philosophy,” *The Los Angeles War Cry* (August 1965), 12.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ahmad, *Basic Tenants*, 7.

²¹² Stanford, “Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM),” 79.

the concerns of black people in Latin America who were erased from most nationalist movements in the region. Since its inception RAM organized around the liberation of all black and oppressed people, orienting Black Power firmly in the transnational struggles of the African Diaspora via its theorization of an united international black underclass.

As RAM grew in membership, recognition, and power, the organization did not forget the foundational principle of black transnational solidarity. Donald Freeman, a Case Western Reserve student, introduced Stanford, Wanda Marshall, and others who would become RAM's leadership to Cruse's revolutionary nationalism and helped lay the foundations for the organization's multi-city cell structure.²¹³ In May 1964, Freeman took the initial organizing RAM was doing in urban centers in the north to a national scale. He helped to organize the first collegiate Black Nationalism conference, which Stanford credited as the first time since 1960 that northern and southern black activists sat down together and served as the "ideological catalyst" that brought about the transition from the Civil Rights Movement into the Black Power movement.²¹⁴ The key component of this conference that led to the transition from national focus on civil rights to a transnational focus on Black Power was the commitment to the precedent of previous black revolutionaries who called for Pan-African solidarity. The conference adopted 13 points of implementation moving forward, among the most radical included a call to unite with revolutionaries in Latin America, achieve black solidarity in the US with the Pan-African world, and to eventually establish a Pan-African socialism.²¹⁵

Established black revolutionaries took notice of the rapidly growing Movement and indeed dialogued about the foundational principles of RAM. Among those who supported RAM

²¹³ Ahmad, "Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM)," 253.

²¹⁴ Stanford, 91.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 92-93.

in its transnational efforts was Mae Mallory. In letters to Robert F. and Mabel Williams, Mallory inquired about Stanford and Stanley Daniels. She took note of the Black Nationalism conference as well as RAM's organizing around Philadelphia construction employment discrimination and saw RAM as embodying a commitment to black working class struggle on a global scale.²¹⁶

Williams responded with statements in solidarity with the organizations leadership including Stanford and Rap Brown while they faced public opposition in the United States.²¹⁷ While RAM had broad appeal to black revolutionaries in the United States who favored a transnational approach to Black Power, the organization would truly become transnational by the late 1960s.

Malcolm X in his role as International Spokesman and Robert F. Williams in his role as International Chairman further inspired a transition away from limited civil rights organizing.²¹⁸ Through their global presence RAM transformed itself from a revolutionary nationalist organization in the United States to a revolutionary transnationalist movement. Malcolm's contributions to the internationalization of RAM occurred mostly on the continent of Africa. Shortly before his assassination, he met with African revolutionaries including Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Ahmed Sékou Touré of Guinea, and Gamal Abdul Nasser of Egypt and Syria.²¹⁹ In these conversations that were organized with great opposition from the US government, Malcolm explained RAM's outlook on their common enemy, US imperialism.²²⁰ RAM, following up with African revolutionaries after Malcolm's death, called for African nations to collaborate with the group in the spirit of "Pan African revolutionary

²¹⁶ Williams, *Concrete Demands*, 202.

²¹⁷ Robert F. Williams, "An Appeal: Support Frame-Up Victims", *the Crusader* Vol. 9, no. 3 (December 1967), 10.

²¹⁸ Stanford, 99.

²¹⁹ Angellar Manguvo, "Emancipating the "Kin beyond the Sea": Reciprocity between Continental and Diasporic Africans' Struggles for Freedom," *Geneology* vol. 3, no. 12 (2019): 9.

²²⁰ RAM, "Message to African heads of state from RAM-Revolutionary Action Movement-Black Liberation Front of the U.S.A., 1965," in *The Black Power Movement: Papers of the Revolutionary Action Movement, 1962-1996*, ProQuest, Folder 010629-006-0001, 21.

action.”²²¹ In the end, little materialized for RAM out of Malcolm’s trip to Africa, but his efforts to alert African revolutionaries to the workings of the organization speak to their transnational focus in building up the struggle for black revolution.

As delegate to Latin America, Williams had more success in spreading the organizing principles of RAM. While in Cuba, Williams met with guerrilla organizations from throughout Latin America to discuss how the movement could benefit black and oppressed people around the globe.²²² Among these leaders was the Afro-Brazilian communist Renato Tavarez, a veteran of the Aliança Nacional Libertadora in Brazil, a united front leftist labor organization led by Luís Carlos Prestes.²²³ In January 1966 the first meeting of the tricontinental conference occurred in Havana. This conference aimed to put African, Latin American, and Asian revolutionaries in dialogue with one another in hopes of assisting in a global struggle for liberation against the western capitalist power structure outside of a hardline reliance on the Soviet Union.²²⁴ Notably absent from this conference were black representatives of Brazil; only the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) was invited whose representative’s contribution to the conference was to say that racism is uniquely United Statesian and not a problem for black people in Latin America.²²⁵

More significantly than the independent visit of Tavarez to Cuba or the Tricontinental Conference was the First Conference of the Latin American Organization of Solidarity that occurred from July 31 to August 10, 1967.²²⁶ RAM had advocates and agents in Cuba by this

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Stanford, 58.

²²³ Report from the Departamento federal de segurança pública, Divisão de polícia política e social, Serviço de informações, 5 July 1944, box 15, folder 11, 277, Acervo Imprensa Alternativa, Arquivo Público do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Botafogo, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

²²⁴ Anne Garland Mahler, *From the Tricontinental to the Global South: Race, Radicalism, and Transnational Solidarity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 20.

²²⁵ Ibid., 51.

²²⁶ Joseph Hansen, “The OLAS Conference: Tactics and Strategy of a Continental Revolution,” *International Socialist Review*, November-December 1967, 1-10.

time. This contact was established in 1964 during a student conference. RAM members including Shola Akintolaya, Ernest Allen, General Baker, and Luke Tripp, the former two founders of DRUM and the LRBW, met in Cuba.²²⁷ Carmichael was the representative of Black Power at the conference and was instrumental in connecting RAM activists with guerilla activists from throughout Latin America including Brazil.

Carmichael was never publicly associated with RAM, but he did have experience with Max Stanford and other members of the organization. By May of 1966, Stanford and Carmichael had forged “close ties” in an effort to build a black revolutionary nationalist party in New York.²²⁸ As part of these efforts, Carmichael invited Stanford to speak at a SNCC fundraiser in Harlem as a representative of the newly formed Black Panther Party of Harlem in early September 1966.²²⁹ In his speech, Stanford included calling for solidarity with the colonized people of Latin America, which according to an FBI informant left an impact on Carmichael.²³⁰

In May of 1967 the FBI entered into the congressional record that Carmichael was connected to RAM and was advocating with them on behalf of black Marxist-Leninist dictatorship in the United States.²³¹ With the ties between RAM and Carmichael established, the connections between the cell in Brazil and the United States organization become clearer. Carmichael spoke at the end of the conference and called for hemispheric revolution. The language of Black Power was blended with the language of “Yankee Imperialism.” The clearest

²²⁷ Ernie Allen, “Dying from the Inside: The Decline of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers,” in *They Should have Served that Cup of Coffee: Seven Radicals Remember the '60s*, ed. Dick Cluster (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 94.

²²⁸ Donna Murch, “When the Panther Travels: Race and the Southern Diaspora in the History of the BPP, 1964-1972,” in *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement*, ed. Nico Slate (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 58.

²²⁹ “Black Panther Group Vows to Spare No One: Black Panthers Open Harlem Drive,” *New York Amsterdam News*, September 3, 1966.

²³⁰ FBI, “FBI File on Maxwell C. Stanford (Muhammad Ahmad), 1964-1974,” Folder 010629-004-0301, page 175.

²³¹ “Hoover Links Carmichael to Negro Leftist Group,” *The New York Times*, May 17, 1967.

foreshadowing of the rise of RAM in Brazil occurred near the end of his speech. Carmichael warns the white United States power structure that indeed the next Vietnam could occur in Brazil.²³²

Among those in attendance at the first Latin American Organization for Solidarity Conference with Carmichael from throughout the hemisphere was Brazilian revolutionary theorist and organizer Carlos Marighella. This conference and collaboration with the Black Power movement in the United States would be the impetus for Marighella leaving the PCB and forming the ALN that embraced the principles of revolutionary nationalism in Brazil.²³³ This group would operate independently of any United States organization but expressed solidarity with urban guerillas everywhere.

The poor showing of the PCB at the Tricontinental Conference inspired the invitation of more PCB dissidents who represented unaffiliated communists in the conference records. Jacob Gorender, a Ukranian-Brazilian Jewish Marxist, also attended the conference without party affiliation.²³⁴ His encounters with Black Power partially inspired the formation of the PCBR with Afro-Brazilian Mário Alvez. As a result of these exchanges, by 1968 a branch of RAM was established and operating in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.²³⁵ Gorender and the PCBR were headquartered in São Paulo, but Alvez remained connected to the activist scene in Salvador.

The *Folha de São Paulo* first called attention to the transnational dimensions of the PCBR and their potential collaboration with RAM in their August 10, 1968 issue. Using information gathered by the Brazilian Intelligence Department (DOPS), the *Folha* implicated the

²³² “Negroes Ready for War in U.S., Carmichael Says,” *The New York Times*, August 3, 1967.

²³³ Alzira Alves de Abreu, *Ação Libertadora Nacional (ALN)*, from the archive of CPDOC - FGV, Centro de Pesquisa e Documentação de História Contemporânea do Brasil, Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

²³⁴ CIA, “Special Report: The Latin American Solidarity Organization Conference,” No. 45, September 22, 1967, No. 0308/67B, Approved for release September 15, 2008, CIA-RPD79-00927A006000050004-9

²³⁵ Maxwell C. Stanford on page 59 of *RAM* writes about the branch forming in Rio de Janeiro. Brazilian primary sources indicate that the branch existed in Salvador, Bahia.

First Conference for Latin American Solidarity as the catalyst for the foundation of the PCBR and highlighted how the organization robbed a bank using “foreign strategies.” To the supporters of the military dictatorship, this conference was transnational in scope and led to radical collaborations an “immediately starting subversive movement throughout Latin America.”²³⁶ Much later Gorender said about the connections between the PCBR and black liberation movements like RAM, “In the Northeast, in Bahia and Ceará, we had a much larger base of support than any dissident faction of the PCB.”²³⁷ Like in the United States, RAM preferred to carry out actions in the name of other organizations and operated mostly behind the scenes.

The Brazilian movement, still using the acronym RAM, dialogued with the leadership in Cuba and the United States and undertook guerrilla tactics towards a goal of destabilization of the Brazilian military dictatorship and toward a black revolution in Brazil.²³⁸ The situation in Bahia during the military dictatorship, perhaps not fully recognized by Stanford, presented itself perfectly to the organizational principles of RAM. Bahia was the center of Afro-Brazilian culture since the colonial era and only grew in influence as the Brazilian state appropriated things like the martial art/dance capoeira or the dish feijoada. Black musicians like Jorge Ben testified to the significance of black culture in the region in tracks like “Na Bahia Tem.”²³⁹ Unsurprisingly Many of the assassinations of political dissidents happened in Bahia. The population of Bahia was overwhelmingly black, especially compared to the construction of the predominately white military dictatorship governing out of the south of the country.²⁴⁰ The Brazilian branch of RAM, forming in 1968 after the ideological shift from focusing on a black dictatorship in the US to

²³⁶ “Assaltos e subversão,” *Folha de São Paulo*, August 10, 1968.

²³⁷ Enock Calvacante, “Morre fundador do PT, Bruno Maranhão,” *Página do E*, January 26, 2014.

²³⁸ Stanford, 59.

²³⁹ Jorge Ben, “Na Bahia Tem,” track 1 on *Big Ben*, Phillips, 1965, digital.

²⁴⁰ Edward E. Telles, “Does it Matter Who Answers the Race Question? Racial Classification and Income Inequality in Brazil,” *Demography* 35, no. 4. (Nov. 1998): 465.

black nationhood in the south, allied itself with this revolutionary transnationalism and agitated in Bahia to bring about black autonomy in the northeast region of Brazil.²⁴¹

In 1969 this agitation took on its most overt form. On May 26, the Brazilian branch of RAM organized a prison escape from the maximum security prison Lemos de Brito in Salvador. Lemos de Brito was and still is the largest prison in the state of Bahia.²⁴² The majority black prison population began to rise beginning in the 1961 and by the years of the dictatorship was vastly overcrowded with abusive labor requirements.²⁴³ RAM responded. Posing as lawyers and smuggling guns into the prison allowed comrades Benedito Alves Campos, Antonio Duarte dos Santos, Avelino Blone Capitani, José Adelido Ramos, Antonio Prestes de Paula, and Marcos Antonio da Silva to escape. The “lawyers” passed drew their own weapons and passed them out to the incarcerated. Meanwhile outside of the prison, members of the organization planted bombs on the exterior wall that blasted a hole large enough for the political prisoners to escape.²⁴⁴ After fleeing the prison these revolutionaries robbed two banks before escaping a standoff with police and returned to the underground to continue the struggle for Afro-Brazilian liberation.²⁴⁵

The commitment of the Brazilian branch of RAM only grew in resolve in the wake of the initial prison escape. The group evaded capture for months and went underground in Rio de Janeiro until military police shot and killed da Silva and injured radical student Angela de Camargo at an apartment in Copacabana.²⁴⁶ As the central leadership in the United States began

²⁴¹ Stanford, 113. Stanford does not date the cell’s origin, but it likely developed when the dissident representatives of the PCB at the First Latin American Solidarity Conference returned to Brazil in 1968. The first documented direct action of the group happens in May of 1969, so it existed prior to then at the latest.

²⁴² Lucas Vianna Matos, “Entre o discurso e a prisão: elementos para uma análise do trabalho prisional no Brasil contemporâneo,” *Redes* vol. 4, no. 1 (May 2016), 125.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 132.

²⁴⁴ “Fuga de presos: secretario é considerado inocente,” *Folha de São Paulo*, April 7, 1970.

²⁴⁵ Stanford, 59.

²⁴⁶ “Exercito divulga ação contra terrorista na Guanabara,” *Folha de São Paulo*, Jan. 21, 1970.

to wane and transition into other transnational organizations for Black Power, members of the Brazilian branch allied themselves more with the PCBR.²⁴⁷ In response to the assassination of da Silva, RAM and the PCBR organized another prison break in August of 1970, this time taking the battle to the urban center of Rio de Janeiro. José Rodrigues da Cruz, a blind incarcerated revolutionary moved from Lemos de Brito to the Penitenciária Viera Ferreira in the aftermath of the first prison break, organized an uprising among the prisoners while comrades on the outside exploded a hole in the main wall of the prison allowing at least nine to escape.²⁴⁸ Da Cruz did not flee with his comrades; instead he was captured and sentenced to another thirty years in prison. So far, this is the last documented action attributed to members of the Brazilian branch of the Revolutionary Action Movement. Much like the members of the movement in the United States, RAM's Brazilian comrades infiltrated and organized other leftist organizations to continue the struggle for transnational Black Power and liberation.²⁴⁹

By the time of RAM's greatest prominence in Brazil, the organization in the United States had all but retreated. Trained fighters of the Black Guard had proliferated, but the leadership became very disorganized and decentralized. By 1968 the FBI and local law enforcement harassed and arrested activists, causing RAM to go further underground. Leadership split with some deciding to form the left-wing branch of the Detroit based Republic of New Africa and others forming an ideologically similar organization called African American Party of National Liberation. Both advocated for black self-determination in the US south but had abandoned the quest for taking over the entirety of the United States government. The last meeting of the RAM national central committee occurred in Cleveland, Ohio in October 1968.

²⁴⁷ Stanford, 144.

²⁴⁸ "Nove presos fogem da cadeia sob liderança de um cego," *Folha de São Paulo*, Aug. 25, 1970.

²⁴⁹ Stanford, 130-133.

Therein the organization decided to officially disband and continue the fight for liberation within other groups less known by United States authorities.²⁵⁰

Most of the attention of RAM activists would turn to Detroit where Baker and Tripp would organize black workers and build power to challenge the motor companies and racist union leadership. The central leadership of RAM would invest their time and resources in DRUM and called for all cells to focus on building these types of revolutionary union movements among black urban workers. Reports from Baker at the final meeting reinvigorated the conception of the black working class as vanguards of global revolution; the infrastructure of RAM in Detroit would allow radical union movements to grow.²⁵¹ As explored in Chapter 3, union movements led by black workers would serve as another dimension of the revolutionary transnational exchanges connecting Black Power in the United States and Brazil.

One of the other organizations to follow in the wake of RAM was the Black Liberation Army (BLA). Ahmad argues that they are a direct outgrowth of RAM's Black Guard.²⁵² Lending credence to his argument is the first publication of the BLA in spring of 1972. Therein the group praises explicitly "the methods used by comrades in Brazil" while describing a proposed model of urban guerilla warfare.²⁵³ Building on the theoretical writings of Marighella and the direct action of groups like RAM and the PCBR in Brazil, the BLA advocates that black people in the US rise up in urban centers as the vanguards of a black revolution. Perhaps by influencing

²⁵⁰ Muhammad Ahmad, *History of RAM-Revolutionary Action Movement*, manuscript, 1979, Freedom Archives: *Revolutionary Action Movement RAM*, http://freedomarchives.org/Documents/Finder/DOC513_scans/RAM/513.RAM.History.of.RAM.pdf, 37-40.

²⁵¹ Stanford, 143-44.

²⁵² Muhammad Ahmad, *The Ideology of Black Revolution: Notes on Revolutionary Nationalism*, manuscript, Proquest: *The Black Power Movement: Papers of the Revolutionary Action Movement, 1962-1996*, folder 010629-001-0598, 401.

²⁵³ Black Liberation Army, "Spring Came Early This Year: A Message to the World from the Black Liberation Army," 5-6.

organizations like the BLA, RAM succeeded in its mission of infiltration to inspire revolutionary transnational change.

The cases of Robert F. Williams and the Revolutionary Action Movement illustrate the importance of transnational solidarity to the Black Power movement. Building on Harold Cruse's theorization of revolutionary nationalism, these radicals presented their visions for global black liberation through a type of revolutionary transnationalism that recognized the need for African American leftist revolution and self-determination but grounded this understanding in the challenges facing other black and oppressed people globally.²⁵⁴ As Rhonda Williams shows, this was not an anomaly to the Black Power movement, but rather this individual and this group represent some of the clearest articulations of the importance of the transnational to the Black Power movement.²⁵⁵ Robert F. Williams dialogued with revolutionary leaders the world over and made sure that *The Crusader* alerted African American leaders to the broader global struggle of the 1960s. He facilitated meetings between radicals at international solidarity conferences from Cuba. RAM, taking inspiration from Cuba and the ongoing struggles in Algeria, saw themselves as part of the vanguard of global black revolution.²⁵⁶ In the late 1960s the organization would take on its most overtly transnational form with a cell operating out of Brazil.²⁵⁷ The cell operated for a few years and liberated many political prisoners before retreating and melting into the PCBR. Although the scale was smaller and global revolution did not occur, RAM's impact on Afro-Brazilian struggles against the military dictatorship demonstrated that there was power and praxis in a revolutionary transnational Black Power. RAM was the first group to organize

²⁵⁴ Ahmad, *Basic Tenants*, 1.

²⁵⁵ Williams, *Concrete Demands*, 201.

²⁵⁶ "Roots of Revolutionary Nationalism."

²⁵⁷ "Fuga de presos."

around the principles of revolutionary transnationalism and their commitment to a protracted global resistance embodied the spirit of the Black Power movement.

Chapter 3

Black Power, Black Workers, and Transnational Solidarity: DRUM, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, and Chrysler Colonialism

Robert F. Williams identifies the destruction of Detroit's auto production plants as a key component of a black revolutionary nationalist uprising. Occurring in stage one of revolution before direct conflict with the forces of United States imperialism, black factory workers represented the vanguard of the black revolution that would challenge the ability of the United States government to respond quickly.²⁵⁸ In preparation for the revolutionary nationalist uprising, RAM invested heavily in arming and training a Black Guard in Detroit.²⁵⁹ Although Williams was prescient in his prediction of the uprisings of 1967 that would affect Detroit, a black revolution did not occur. But this call for infiltration of the automotive industry may have set in motion the events that would lead to the formation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in June of 1969. The Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement and later League of Revolutionary Black Workers continued the tradition established by African American and Afro-Brazilian activists of the 1960s to agitate for a revolutionary transnational Black Power that would liberate oppressed people throughout the world.

The League of Revolutionary Black Workers had deep RAM connections prior to its foundation. Many of those who would go on to establish DRUM and the LRBW, including General G. Baker, Jr., Luke Tripp, John Williams, John Watson, and Gwendylin Kemp, first organized together as students at Wayne State University in 1963. The students formed the group UHURU, a revolutionary Black Power action cadre. In an interview with Ernie Allen, Baker

²⁵⁸ Robert F. Williams, "USA: The Potential of a Minority Revolution," *The Los Angeles War Cry* (August 1965), 7.

²⁵⁹ Muhammad Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations 1960-1975* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2007), 245.

recalled Robert F. Williams's radio program being the impetus for the foundation of UHURU.²⁶⁰ As students they circulated the *Black Vanguard* to black factory workers. The text was described as too dense for the workers, but the principles of revolutionary nationalism forwarded in the publication attracted the attention of RAM.²⁶¹ Demonstrating that Black Power was transnational at its core, even at the local level, the founders of UHURU went to Cuba in 1964 to meet Robert F. Williams, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Tanzanian revolutionary Muhammad Babu. Following the meeting, Williams integrated the student revolutionaries into RAM via the cover organization the Afro-American Student Movement (ASM). With RAM guidance, the ASM continued to publish *Black Vanguard*, but now under the auspices of building an African American student movement in Detroit.²⁶²

Upon returning to the United States and staging a demonstration against the draft, Baker began to follow in his United Auto Worker (UAW) union father's footsteps as a worker at a Dodge auto factory. Union work was supposedly the route to a respectable middle-class life, but black workers frequently were left out of this opportunity for social mobility.²⁶³ Union jobs were indeed good but hiring practices of the major automobile companies and UAW leadership made sure that black workers remained in "low-skilled" jobs with little to no opportunity for upward advancement. Until 1935 black workers were excluded from autoworker unions in Detroit all together. The rapid growth of black Detroit and the growth of the auto industry after World War II did mean black workers integrated into union jobs but were relegated to janitorial service or other non-glamorous work.²⁶⁴ While Polish migrants to Detroit rapidly ascended the latter of

²⁶⁰ Earnest Mkalimoto Allen, "Detroit I Do Mind Dying, a Review," *Radical America* vol. 3, no.1 (January/February 1977), 70.

²⁶¹ Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*, 242-3.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ David Goldberg and Trevor Griffey, *Black Power at Work: Community Control, Affirmative Action, and the Construction Industry* (London: Cornell University Press, 2010), 2.

²⁶⁴ Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*, 237-41.

union representation and leadership, black workers remained excluded. The division between black and polish workers would become even more apparent after the formation of DRUM.

By 1960, 15% of the Detroit metropolitan labor force was black, yet black workers remained grossly underrepresented in high-skill union jobs. At General Motors 67 out of 11,125 skilled tradesmen jobs were occupied by black workers. Chrysler was even worse with only 24 out of almost 7,500 positions filled by black labor. Ford had a slightly larger representation with 250 out of 7,000 skilled jobs going to black workers, but these numbers were inflated due to Ford's eagerness to bring on black strikebreakers.²⁶⁵ This meant that of the black autoworkers, the vast majority were on the assembly line or doing other manual labor. During this period of black migration to Detroit and entrance into the auto industry, Chrysler increased production of automobiles per year by 5 million while only hiring 200,000 additional workers. The tradeoffs for this increase in "efficiency" was black worker safety.²⁶⁶ UAW national alleged to prioritize racial equality but ignored the cases of discrimination in Detroit and did not push to change hiring practices until black workers demanded representation outside of the union.²⁶⁷

It was on the de facto racially segregated floor that Baker linked up with Glanton Dowdell, a formerly incarcerated worker who would also operate within the inner circle of the Detroit cell of RAM. In light of the urban uprisings and conflict with the national guard throughout Detroit in the summer of 1967, Baker and Dowdell created the newspaper the *Inner City Voice* and began to organize black Chrysler workers around racial discrimination on the job

²⁶⁵ James A. Geschwender and Judson L. Jeffries, "The League of Revolutionary Black Workers," in *Black Power: In the Belly of the Beast*, ed. Judson L. Jeffries (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 136.

²⁶⁶ Marvin Surkin and Dan Georgakas, *Detroit I Do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution* (New York: Haymarket, 2012), 85.

²⁶⁷ David M. Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008) 52.

and within the UAW.²⁶⁸ This first happened around a reading group, but would shift into more overt forms of agitation in time. It was in this reading group that the roots of revolutionary transnationalism would develop within the organization; according to Allen these workers were almost always reading Mao or other third-world revolutionary theorists and “it wasn’t uncommon for members to use the Chinese revolution as a framework for understanding the history of the black workers’ struggles.”²⁶⁹ The readings brought by the organizers of DRUM were deeply influenced by RAM and its Maoist tendencies further connecting black worker struggles in Detroit to similarly inclined organizations throughout the world including in Brazil.

The first organized action that would spur the creation of DRUM occurred on May 2, 1968. In response to a mandated speed-up in production, 4,000 employees embarked on a wildcat strike. Despite the action being interracial, black workers were targeted by Chrysler retribution and disproportionately punished. Baker was fired. To counteract this reaction from the boss and lack of solidarity expressed by UAW leadership, Baker and the black worker’s reading group organized around the name DRUM and publish a weekly newsletter, the first two attacking Chrysler, white union leadership, and black “Uncle Toms” who were loyal to the UAW.²⁷⁰ Cementing the connection to RAM was Dowdell and Baker’s actions on the floor of the plant. Initially trying to integrate these workers into the RAM front organization Black People’s Liberation Party, with organizational permission they transitioned from this goal into organizing DRUM and other Revolutionary Union Movements into the LRBW.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 246-7. For more on the Detroit uprisings of 1967 see Joel Stone, ed. *Detroit 1967: Origins, Impacts, Legacies* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017).

²⁶⁹ Robin D.G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, “Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution,” in *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections Between African Americans and Asian Americans*, ed. Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 120.

²⁷⁰ Geschwender and Jeffries, 139.

²⁷¹ Ahmad, *We Will Return*, 260-1.

By the sixth issue of the newsletter, DRUM requested that 80% of black Chrysler workers join the organization.²⁷² Although membership did not get that high, it was clear that the publication of *DRUM* was reaching black workers. The second major action called by the organization inspired 95% participation by black workers. Two bars across the street from the factory were known for their close relationship with management and poor treatment of black patrons. As a result, DRUM encouraged black workers to boycott two local bars and the majority of black labor was convinced without picket lines or signs on the way into the job site.²⁷³ After only a few weeks of publicity, DRUM was already making its impact felt. While the impact was felt on the local level immediately, Chrysler was already in the process of building a plant in Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil. They would go on to employ non-unionized black labor. Chrysler's anti-black labor practices both in Detroit and Curitiba were part of the globalization of industry during the post-World War II period. Revolutionary transnationalist activists like those of DRUM understood this process and extended their conception of Black Power to include solidarity with black workers around the world.²⁷⁴

These publications and the May 2 wildcat strike put DRUM on the radar of Chrysler and the UAW, but the power of the organization was not fully understood until September of 1968 when DRUM ran Ron March for a vacant steward position within the UAW.²⁷⁵ In a move unanticipated by UAW leadership, *DRUM* was able to mobilize an incredible number of black workers to support March's campaign for steward. The combination of having a voice for black

²⁷² "Black Unity," *Drum* vol. 1, no. 6, 1.

²⁷³ Geschwender and Jeffries, 141.

²⁷⁴ "DRUM Demands," *Drum* vol. 1, no. 9, 1.

²⁷⁵ Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*, 254.

workers and the fear of being called an Uncle Tom for voting the wrong way led to higher black turnout than any prior Detroit UAW election.²⁷⁶

March was not elected in the first round with a majority, but he was the leading vote getter with 563 votes compared to the second highest candidates 521.²⁷⁷ UAW rules necessitated a clear majority for a candidate to be elected. In response, white UAW officials mobilized retired white, mostly ethnically Polish workers for a runoff election. Retired union members were allowed to participate in elections, but rarely did prior to this election. A combination of loyalty to the UAW and racial animus led to a large scale turnout of retired white workers.²⁷⁸ The combined effort of white UAW officials to mobilize voters, as well as their collaboration with the police to ticket and tow DRUM members cars on the day of the election meant March did not become a UAW steward. Even with the electoral defeat, the UAW was officially on notice about the power of DRUM.²⁷⁹

Besides its influence in Detroit, DRUM paid attention to the struggles of black workers globally, including the black union movements in Africa and Brazil. Within three months of operation, DRUM turned its political power and attention to the plight of black workers in South Africa. Attacking Chrysler, wages, and white labor, DRUM demanded equal pay for equal work for black workers at Chrysler factories in Cape Town.²⁸⁰ They declared their solidarity with black workers in Latin America and Africa explicitly on the front page of the 24th issue of the weekly DRUM publication.²⁸¹ In a discussion of Chrysler's practice of firing sick workers, the

²⁷⁶ Surkin and Georgakas, 40.

²⁷⁷ *Finally Got the News*, directed by Stewart Bird, Rene Lichtman and Peter Gessner (Brooklyn: Icarus Films, 2003).

²⁷⁸ Geschwender and Jeffires, 143.

²⁷⁹ "Ron March D.R.U.S. Trustee," *DRUM* vol. 1, no. 15, 1-2.

²⁸⁰ "DRUM Demands," 1.

²⁸¹ Surkin and Georgakas, *Detroit I Do Mind Dying*, 39.

publication calls this corporate practice the “plunderers of Black people in South Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere.”²⁸² This coincides with the growth of Chrysler in Brazil that occurred in the immediate aftermath of the military coup d’état.

Chrysler bought Brazilian car manufacturer SIMCA in 1958, and in 1967 reintroduced three Brazilian cars to the Brazilian market as Chrysler Esplanada, Regente, and GTX.²⁸³ By 1969 a new plant opened in Curitiba Brazil for the production of pickup trucks in a non-union factory.²⁸⁴ Using this contextualization, it is likely that the DRUM was including the majority black factory workers in Brazil in their discussion of Latin American exploitation by Chrysler. The combination of shared exploitation by Chrysler and a strong belief that the military dictatorship in Brazil was the result of United States interference led DRUM to advocate in print on behalf of Brazilian autoworkers.²⁸⁵ There does not seem to be correspondence between DRUM and the black workers in Curitiba directly, but the solidarity of DRUM did push union leadership to respond to the new factory. Curitiba Chrysler workers would unionize in 1972 under the UAW. Again, DRUM’s conception of Black Power was ahead of the UAW in terms of advocating for black worker rights worldwide.²⁸⁶

Back in Detroit, Revolutionary Union Movements were popping up throughout the city. By November 10th, 1968 the black gear and axle manufacturers at the Eldon Avenue plant had organized into their own organization called the Eldon Avenue Revolutionary Union Movement (ELRUM). Black workers soon organized Revolutionary Union Movements at Ford (FRUM),

²⁸² “Get Sick, Get Fired!” *DRUM* vol. 1, no. 24 (November 1968).

²⁸³ William D. Brisbane, “Chrysler, Dodge, and Jeep of Brazil,” *Plymouth Bulletin*, 1989, 1-3.

²⁸⁴ “Chrysler factories, offices, and testing grounds, 1925-2017,” Jim Benjaminson. *Allpar: Dodge, Jeep, Ram, Chrysler*, accessed April 28, 2019, <https://www.allpar.com/corporate/factories.html>.

²⁸⁵ “The Voice Interviews Frank Joyce,” *Inner City Voice* Vol 2., no. 7 (July 15, 1970).

²⁸⁶ National Confederation of Metalworkers, “Venda da Chrysler: Filial no Brasil durou só três anos,” News Release, (May 15, 2007), <http://www.cnmcut.org.br/conteudo/venda-da-chrysler-filial-no-brasil-durou-so-tres-anos>.

Jefferson Avenue (JARUM), Mack Avenue (MARUM), and General Motors (GRUM). In response to the formation of ELRUM and their subsequent meeting with the UAW, 66 black workers were punished.²⁸⁷ This would spur the women activists who ran the day-to-day operations of the various RUMs to collaborate.

Hoping to pool their resources, black women workers Marion Kramer, Gracie Wooten, Arlene Baker, Mary Baker, Cas Smith, Jeanette Baker, and Helen Jones called “for a more systematic approach to organizing.”²⁸⁸ They were active in various RUMs, but frequently found their own labor devalued by the labor activist men. These women activists found General Baker, John Watson, John Williams, and Luke Tripp similarly inclined to organize cooperatively citywide and jointly called over 100 workers together on January 21, 1969.²⁸⁹ Like so many organizations, both in the United States and Brazil, the precursor to the formation of the LRBW was the labor and planning of working black women.

Even given relative racial egalitarianism within Brazilian labor unions, black women workers during the military dictatorship found themselves demanding a seat at the table in organizing much like Kramer, Wooten, Smith, Jones, and the Bakers did in Detroit. During this time period almost 93 percent of domestic workers in Bahia were women of African descent, yet only 14.4 percent of these workers belonged to a labor union.²⁹⁰ Despite this, sociologist Joaze Bernadino-Costa argues that:

Throughout their histories, domestic workers’ organizations have resisted economic exploitation and social marginalization, fought to affirm the humanity of every domestic

²⁸⁷ Ahmad, *We Will Return in a Whirlwind*, 257.

²⁸⁸ Marion Kramer, in interview with Muhammad Ahmad, Detroit, MI, July 5, 2002.

²⁸⁹ Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*, 258-59.

²⁹⁰ Mary Garcia Castro, “The Alchemy Between Social Categories in the Production of Racial Subjects: Class, Gender, Race and Generation in the Case of Domestic Workers’ Union leaders in Salvador-Bahia, Brazil,” *The European Journal of Development Research* vol 5, no. 2 (December 1993), 6.

worker, and proposed to restructure society on the basis of equality, social justice, respect for all human beings, and dignity.²⁹¹

This organization began with Afro-Brazilian women activism and has continued to set the tone for how the black movement and the labor movement in Brazil can cooperate in the interest of all poor and black workers.

Laudelina de Campos Melo was the first to connect the struggles of black women domestic workers to the organizing potential of organized labor. She founded the Santos Professional Association of Domestic Employees in 1936. Building on her experience in the Brazilian Black Front and the PCB, Melo embarked on domestic labor organizing as “transnationalisation from below.”²⁹² She won legal labor union status as recognized by the Brazilian state which would serve as a precedent for other domestic worker’s organizations in Bolivia and the Caribbean.²⁹³

During the dictatorship, black feminist organizations convinced and then collaborated with labor movements to consider domestic labor and increase the representation of black women into the labor movement. Various black women leaders in the domestic worker organization campaign were also active in the Black United Movement (MNU) in Salvador and saw domestic labor organizing as central to the development of black unity.²⁹⁴ In interviews with sociologist Mary Garcia Castro, multiple black domestic workers reported that the collaboration between the black movement in Brazil and the labor movement due to the shared experience of slavery “which has yet to be abolished.”²⁹⁵ This shows that black domestic workers in Brazil

²⁹¹ Joaze Bernadito-Costa, “Destabilizing the National Hegemonic Narrative: The Decolonized Thought of Brazil’s Domestic Workers’ Unions,” *Latin American Perspectives* vol. 38, no. 5 (September 2011), 37.

²⁹² Louisa Acciari, “Brazilian Domestic Workers and the International Struggle for Labor Rights,” *A-id* (February 26, 2018), <http://www.a-id.org/2018/02/26/brazilian-domestic-workers-international-struggle-labour-rights/>.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ Castro, 10.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

have an understanding of the historical relationship between white supremacy and capitalism and see their uplift as reliant upon confronting the two systems together. Additionally, these workers did not see a natural alliance with the feminist movement, arguing that the interests of bourgeois women leading the Brazilian cause did not relate to the conditions of black women laborers.²⁹⁶

During the 1960s in Campinas in the state of São Paulo, Melo continued her organizing of black domestic workers. She founded the Association of Domestic Workers of Campinas and found the most support from collaborations between black and labor organizations. Nascimento mobilized his experimental theater to assist in recruitment, and the Construction Workers' Union (STC) shared their organizational space with the new union.²⁹⁷ In addition to sharing the facilities, the STC also offered aid in drafting statutes and legal documents and facilitated classes about union history and theory.²⁹⁸ The black movement and the labor movement came together in 1960s Brazil to recognize their largely overlapping membership and shared organizational interests. This strength allowed labor in Brazil to look transnationally as well.

While black organizers in Brazil were collaborating across professions, the size and influence of the Detroit auto industry meant black workers in Detroit had to begin to build their movements across companies before expanding into other industries of black labor. The LRBW was legally incorporated in June of 1969 and began focusing their efforts on reaching black workers via the *Inner City Voice (ICV)*, an in-house periodical.²⁹⁹ The combined forces of RUMs sent a clear message to the auto industry that black labor could no longer be ignored. Chrysler

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 14.

²⁹⁷ Bernadito-Costa, 38.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 39.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 261.

“visibly increased the number of black foremen” by 1970.³⁰⁰ In addition to putting the bosses on notice, the formation of the LRBW also caused significant internal changes to the UAW. Black workers were elected union president at six different locals throughout the city and the number of black committee members and shop stewards increased significantly.³⁰¹

Beyond creating workplace changes in Detroit, the LRBW was also committed to the national cause of building the Black Power movement. The organization was divided but ultimately manifested its support of movement building via the Black National Economic Development Conference (BEDC) organized by James Forman in Detroit in 1969.³⁰² The most significant result of the BEDC was a call, authored by Forman, for black reparations to be paid by white religious organizations for investment in the black community. The “Black Manifesto” was signed by LRBW members including Tripp, Wooten, and John Williams whose influence can be seen most overtly in demand 7 that calls for the foundation of a National Black Labor Strike and Defense Fund.³⁰³ Despite the location of the conference in Detroit and the participation of some central committee members the BEDC challenged the LRBW both financial and ideologically; some of the central committee disagreed with the manifesto as reforms that do not address structural issues facing black workers and the LRBW footed most of the bill.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ Ernie Allen, “Dying from the Inside: The Decline of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers,” in *They Should Have Served that Cup of Coffee: Seven Radicals Remember the ‘60s*, ed. Dick Cluster (Boston: South End Press, 1979), 77.

³⁰¹ Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*, 261.

³⁰² James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (London: University of Washington Press: 1972), 544-45.

³⁰³ Black Economic Development Conference, “Black Manifesto,” *The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice*, April 26, 1969, <https://episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/exhibits/show/specialgc/item/202>.

³⁰⁴ Ahmad, *We Will Return in a Whirlwind*, 256.

While no equivalent to the LRBW was created in Brazil, unionization efforts and labor leaders saw the success of Melo in prioritized the needs of black workers and growing organizational power. Indeed multiple members of the first executive committee of the Union of Workers in the Distillation and Refining Industry of the State of Bahia (SINDIPETRO) were Afro-Brazilians, including Secretary Mário Lima.³⁰⁵ SINDIPETRO collaborated in organizational efforts with the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) and with the Getúlio Vargas Brazilian Labor Party (PTB) and quickly grew in membership.³⁰⁶ Immediately prior to the arrival of the military dictatorship more than 70% of rank-and-file refiners were black. Records of worker race were not kept regarding the number of rank-and-file extractors, but it is likely that this percentage was even higher based on the difficult working conditions and low wages compared to other union jobs.³⁰⁷

The Brazilian Class Unit (UCB), a nation-wide labor union consisting of workers from various industries and associated with the PCB, attempted to build on the strength of SINDIPETRO and the domestic worker unions by recognizing the power of black labor.³⁰⁸ The UCB as a member of the World Federation of Trade Unions reached out to the National Union of Angolan Workers (U.N.T.A.) in the aftermath of their foundation in February 1960.³⁰⁹ During this time of worker dialogue, Nascimento highlighted the need for interracial worker unity in

³⁰⁵ “O Sindicalista,” Memorial Institute of Mário Lima, accessed April 26, 2019,

http://www.mariosoareslima.com.br/mariolimanews/ver_conteudo.asp?cod_conteudo=74&tipo=memorial.

³⁰⁶ Franklin Oliveira, Jr., “A Usina dos Sonhos: Nascimento, ascensão e refluxo da organização sindical dos trabalhadores da indústria da destilação e refinação do petróleo no Estado da Bahia, 1954 – 1964,” Master’s Thesis: Universidade Federal da Bahia: 1995), 130-131.

³⁰⁷ Alex De Souza Ivo, “Uma história em verde, amarelo, e negro: Classe operária, trabalho e sindicalismo na indústria do petróleo,” (Master’s Thesis, Universidade Federal da Bahia: 2008), 70-71.

³⁰⁸ Patrícia Vieira Trópia, Andréia Galvão, and Paula Marcelino, “A reconfiguração do sindicalismo brasileiro nos anos 2000: as bases sociais e o perfil político-ideológico da Conlutas,” *Opinião Pública* vol. 19, no. 1 (June 2013), 83.

³⁰⁹ Eduardo Dos Santos, *Pan-Africanismo: De ontem e de hoje* (Lisbon: self-pub, 1968), 451.

Brazil to advance the cause of black freedom. Building on the example of SINDIPRO in Bahia and rejecting some southern labor unions for their lack of attention to racial justice as worker justice, Nascimento “urged greater organized black participation in trade unions.”³¹⁰

Nascimento’s conception of Quilombismo understood worker control to be a vial pre-cursor to black self-determination and as such encouraged the transformation of Brazilian labor organizing. The labor connections that formed among predominately black workers in the United States, Brazil, and throughout Africa further support black radical union movements as operating within a framework of revolutionary transnational Black Power.³¹¹

The distinction between the advocacy of the LRBW and the action of white leaders of the UAW, as well as the juxtaposition of Brazilian labor’s high black participation and cooperation with African union movements are vital for placing Revolutionary Union Movements and the LRBW as part of the Black Power movement and not as not part of the long history of the labor movement. The distinct shift that occurs after the formation of the LRBW demonstrates that the established activism of the labor movement or Civil Rights Movement were not enough to create black worker political power. Although influenced strongly by labor history and Civil Rights direct action, the LRBW is firmly situated within the framework of the Black Power movement. First of all, by the fifth newsletter DRUM had explicitly oriented itself as a worker led organization for Black Power.³¹² To remove the organization from its own self-identification and periodization within the black freedom struggle is problematic. As argued by Cha-Jua and Lang, situating Black Power as an extension of early movements “obscures [Black Power’s] strategic

³¹⁰ Howard Winant, “Rethinking Race in Brazil,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* vol. 24, no. 1 (February 1992), 188.

³¹¹ Dos Santos, *Pan-Africanismo*, 445.

³¹² “Black Power,” *Drum* vol. 1, no. 5, 3.

vision, goals, objectives, leaders and followers, practices, symbols and discourses.”³¹³ By ignoring the years and context in which the LRBW developed, studies fail “to adequately address the specific historical context in which they were operative.”³¹⁴ This flattening of information creates challenges in addressing the peculiarities of Black Power labor transnationalism which mobilized workers at local levels with an eye on the struggles of workers and colonized people around the world.

Also contributing to the importance of periodization were the interactions of black labor organizing and the Black Power movement. Expulsion of black radical labor during Red Scare of the middle twentieth century meant that there was a generation divide in awareness of the power of union organizing as black workers.³¹⁵ As the focus of the black freedom struggle shifted toward civil rights there was a lull in black union participation and activism. In *Black Power at Work: Community Control, Affirmative Action, and the Construction Industry*, David Goldberg and Trevor Griffey argue that the return to a focus on the black worker and black labor were central to activists’ conceptualization of Black Power.³¹⁶ This did not mean these groups were anti-organizing, but rather represented a radically pro-black labor position that rejuvenated the activism of African American workers.³¹⁷ Putting labor at the center of Black Power further clarifies the distinction between the movement and the Civil Rights Movement or other strains of black nationalism. Additionally, understanding Black Power as a labor movement as well as a political and cultural movement highlights the transnational dimensions of the movement.

³¹³ Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, “The Long Movement as a Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies,” *Journal of African American History* 92 (2007), 70-71.

³¹⁴ Goldberg and Griffey, 7.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

Despite the growth of black labor organizing worldwide and the development of black unions, by the end of the 1969 the LRBW was beginning to decline. Ahmad cites the turning point for the LRBW as happening when they cosigned James Forman's Black Economic Development Conference (BEDC) in late April of 1969. Ahmad and Baker were split with regards to welcoming Forman into the league; Ahmad saw him as a controversial figure who would either take over the league or destroy it. Around the same time, Baker made clear his displeasure with the leadership's direction. Around the same time the executive committee invested in a reading group for members outside of the black labor community. A group of predominately white liberals began to participate in League activities which alienated both black workers and some organizational leadership. These two shifts in League focus in 1969 signified a shift away from the black worker as the centerpiece of the movement and as vanguard for revolutionary change.³¹⁸

Also contributing to the dissolution of the league was the loss of the *ICV*. Longtime publisher of the *ICV* John Watson transitioned into editor-in-chief of the Wayne State newspaper, *The South End*. His aim was to provide a better funded alternative to the rapidly declining *ICV*, but this transition represented another move away from black autoworkers and towards an academic slant of the organization.³¹⁹ But ultimately, outside of the brief creation of a leftist China-Albania bookstore, neither students nor workers were recruited en masse after the transformation of media responsibilities.³²⁰ Indeed the final reference to the LRBW or the struggle of black automotive workers came in early March 1969.³²¹ Central Committee of the LRBW published a blurb calling for a boycott of Chrysler. Although the tone of *The South End*

³¹⁸ Ahmad, *We Will Return in the Whirlwind*, 261-62.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 263.

³²⁰ Kelley and Esch, 121.

³²¹ Mike Hamlin, "Chrysler Boycott Called by LRBW," *The South End* Vol.27, no. 90 (March 4, 1969), 1.

had been significantly different than that of the *ICV*, this story marked the end of overt media support for the LRBW.

Ahmad and Allen both identify the largest single cause of the downfall of the League as being the ideological split between the A and B groups of leadership. The A group, standing for Akbar or nationalism, focused on the need for black worker self-determination. The B group, standing for Bolshevik, saw cooperation with the white left as vital to the development of the organization. The B group began to distance itself from the black working class base of the LRBW and wanted to move the organization into more of the established left in the United States. They became comrades with the very same American Marxists that Cruse warned could not “deal with the implications of revolutionary nationalism, both abroad and at home” back in 1962.³²² Baker, Allen, and Wooten were among the members of the A group that remained committed to revolutionary transnationalism in the LRBW. This group also actively campaigned against the sexual harassment faced by black women at the hands of B group leadership and criticized the B group’s lack of commitment to black women while dating, drinking and doing drugs with, and on some occasions assaulting white leftist women.³²³

Women activists who sustained the organization during its peak also joined the A group in their criticism of much of the executive committee leadership. Edna Ewell Watson, Marian Kramer, Cassandra Smith, and Gricie Wooten contributed most of the funds for the organizing committee, gave rides to movement contacts, and allowing male leadership to sleep in their homes.³²⁴ Kramer’s take on the gender dynamics of the LRBW was simple, “Why is it that we always get the work and get shit upon in the process? Those men got to come back into the

³²² Harold W. Cruse, “Revolutionary Nationalism and the Afro-American,” *Studies on the Left* 2/3 (1962), 13.

³²³ Ahmad, *We Will Return in a Whirlwind*, 271-73.

³²⁴ Lewis-Coleman, 105.

community. . . We've got to be organizing in both places."³²⁵ Coupled with leadership controversy between the executive board and central committee, internal divides fractured organization to unsustainable degrees.³²⁶

DRUM and later the LRBW along with Afro-Brazilian domestic worker and oil worker unions serve as examples to understand the centrality of black labor to the development of the Black Power movement. Black workers joined together both domestically and internationally in response to the racist policies of auto manufacturers. RAM operatives saw the need to organize black factory workers if the goal of a revolutionary transnationalist social transformation were ever to occur. The unfair labor practices of the Detroit auto industry and the racism of UAW leadership galvanized this racial and class consciousness among black autoworkers. By the middle of 1968 these tensions between industry, unions, and black labor reached a boiling point and DRUM was formed.

This organization for Black Power implemented reading groups and engaged black workers to further understand the power they had as a united group while keeping an eye on oppressive work practices beyond the United States border. DRUM called out Chrysler for their racist and imperialist workplace practices in Curitiba.³²⁷ This would force the UAW to unionize the Brazilian workers in 1972, an effort made easier by the strong precedent of black labor leadership in Brazil. While Afro-Brazilians like Laudelina de Campos Melo organized black workers to join unions in massive numbers during the 1960s, African Americans continued to organize outside the official body of the UAW. By 1969 Detroit had multiple dialoguing but disjointed RUMs operating. The black women who kept these organizations afloat for little

³²⁵ Robert Mast, *Detroit Lives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 103-5.

³²⁶ Allen, "Dying from the Inside," 100-103.

³²⁷ "Drum Demands."

recognition pushed the RUMs to band together. As a result, Chrysler started to hire black foremen and the UAW elected black leadership at the local level.³²⁸ Despite these successes, the LRBW did not experience a protracted existence. Internal strife in the forms of financial decision making, sexism, and ideological divisions led to the demise of the organization in 1971. Nonetheless the LRBW was a significant revolutionary transnationalist Black Power organization that led to a change in workplace and union practices and providing a launching pad for the class consciousness and labor activism of many black workers.

³²⁸ Allen, "Dying from the Inside," 77.

Conclusion

Black Power Revolutionary Transnationalism: Lessons from the Past, Lessons for the Present

The rights of all marginalized people worldwide have been threatened in the aftermath of the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States and the coup-d'état that forced Dilma Rouseff from power and paved the way for the rise of fascist Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro.³²⁹ Bolsonaro uses sickening rhetoric in reference to Afro-Brazilians; while implying that black descendants of quilombo communities are fat and lazy he used a unit of weight measurement, arrobas, reserved in the Portuguese language for cattle. He lives in fear of Brazil becoming a “gay tourism paradise,” would rather a son die in a car accident than come out as gay, laments the fall of the military dictatorship and the torture that came with it.³³⁰

Beyond rhetoric, the government of Brazil is waging a war on Afro-Brazilians and the indigenous communities living in the country. Brazilian lesbian black feminist activist and political leader Marielle Franco was assassinated in the streets of Rio de Janeiro on March 14, 2018 for daring to call for radical changes to Brazilian society towards a recognition of Afro-Brasileira humanity and political consciousness. She demanded answers and change from a government that failed to provide services for black women and families in the poorest neighborhoods of Brazil. As a result, she was killed in a drive by shooting by former Rio de Janeiro Military Police officers Elcio Queiroz and Ronnie Lessa. Queiroz had multiple pictures with Bolsonaro on his Facebook page. Lessa, whose daughter used to date on of Bolsonaro's

³²⁹ Pedro Paulo Zahluth Bastos, “Ascensão e crise do governo Dilma Rouseff e o golpe de 2016: Poder estrutural, contradição e ideologia,” *Revista de Economia Contemporânea* Vol. 21, no. 2 (Winter 2017): 53.

³³⁰ “Who is the Trump of the Tropics?: Brazil's Divisive New President, Jair Bolsonaro—In his own Words,” Sam Meredith, CNBC.com, October 29, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/10/29/brazil-election-jair-bolsonaros-most-controversial-quotes.html>.

sons, moved into the same R\$4 million beach-side condominium as the president just weeks after the assassination of Franco.³³¹

Since the assassination of Franco, helicopters have been opening fire into deeply segregated poor black neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro.³³² Additionally, the Rio de Janeiro Military Police killed 11 year old Jenifer Gomes outside of her school during the second week of February, 2019. That Friday, the same police force executed 13 men who were lined up to be arrested for “gang activity,” fulfilling Bolsonaro’s promise that Brazil would adopt a shoot to kill mentality that allowed for the police to shoot first if they felt a threat justified it.³³³ On February 14, 2019 Pedro Gonzaga, a 19 year old musician, was killed leaving a supermarket. Like Eric Garner in New York City, Gonzaga was killed by a security officer’s choke hold.³³⁴ A little over a month later on March 16, Rio de Janeiro police shot 12 year old Kauan Noslinde Pimenta Peixoto multiple times in the back, killing the boy in front of his ten year old brother before handcuffing them both.³³⁵ On April 9, musician Evaldo dos Santos Rosa was shot 80 times in his car with his kids in the backseat after being “mistaken for a gangster.”³³⁶ All of these victims were black and represent just a small portion of the almost 1,500 people killed by the military

³³¹ “Bolsonaro, Militias, and Marielle Franco: What We Know,” *Brasil Wire*, March 14, 2019, <http://www.brasilwire.com/bolsonaro-militias-and-marielle-franco-what-we-know/>.

³³² Benedita da Silva, tweet, February 22, 2019, 12:43 p.m., <https://twitter.com/dasilvabenedita/status/1099016954021580803>.

³³³ “It was Execution: 13 dead in Brazil as state pushes new gang policy,” *The Guardian*, February 14, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/14/brazil-13-dead-gang-policy-shoot-to-kill-rio>.

³³⁴ “Protests erupt in Brazil after death of black teenager who was restrained,” *The Guardian*, February 17, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/17/brazil-protests-restraint-death-black-teenager-rio-de-janeiro>.

³³⁵ “Mãe diz que menino de 12 anos foi baleado e algemado por policias,” *Redação RIC Mais*, March 19, 2019, <https://ricmais.com.br/noticias/brasil/mae-diz-que-menino-de-12-anos-foi-baleado-e-algemado-por-policiais/>.

³³⁶ “Brazil shooting: 10 soldiers held after family’s car riddled with bullets,” *BBC*, April 9, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-47865381>.

police yearly in the state of Rio de Janeiro. This number will surely rise under Bolsonaro's presidency.³³⁷

The indigenous population of Brazil is under similar threat. One of the first policies Bolsonaro implemented upon his ascendance to the presidency was the elimination of the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs. He rolled the responsibilities of the ministry into the Ministry of Agriculture, and promises to open up indigenous reserves to United Statesian corporations for mineral extraction.³³⁸ Indigenous Brazilians already disproportionately face the brunt of mineral extraction in the Amazon; in February the water supply of the Paxato community was poisoned after a dam broke and polluted the drinking water with mineral waste. Structural violence is bound to rise as Bolsonaro rhetorically dismisses Brazil's Indigenous people, but in addition to this, Native Brazilians identify a rise in overt violence as emboldened agribusiness representatives encroach onto native land.³³⁹ As Bolsonaro opens up more of the Amazon rainforest to deforestation, vulnerable communities of color worldwide will be the first to feel the pernicious effects of environmental racism brought about by an even more rapidly warming climate.³⁴⁰

With the crises facing Afro-Brazilians under a Bolsonaro presidency, militant calls for transnational solidarity are more important than ever. Afro-Brazilians, women in particular, are

³³⁷ "Brazil: Police Killings at Record High in Rio," *Human Rights Watch*, December 19, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/12/19/brazil-police-killings-record-high-rio>.

³³⁸ Mia Alberti, "Brazil: Native groups protest against 'anti-indigenous' Bolsonaro," *Al Jazeera*, April 24, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/brazil-native-groups-protest-anti-indigenous-bolsonaro-190424182035658.html>.

³³⁹ Mia Alberti, "Brazil's Paxoto depended on a river that's now polluted with mud," *Al Jazeera*, February 12, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/02/brazil-pataxo-depended-river-turned-mud-190212165216265.html>.

³⁴⁰ Ingrid Waldron, *There's Something in the Water: Environmental Racism in Indigenous and Black Communities* (Winnipeg, NS, Canada: Fernwood Publishing, 2018), 6.

mobilizing in opposition to the regime but want support from the international community.³⁴¹

The protest movements of Afro-Brazilians are not new to the country. Formerly enslaved Africans created an independent black nation in Alagoas that survived for 125 years despite the best efforts of the Portuguese crown to recapture the territory and people living within it. Predicting future calls for interracial solidarity in support of black liberation, the citizenry of Palmares was a combination of self-liberated Africans, black people born in the quilombo, expelled Jews, and even white European criminals. Like the contemporary situation in Brazil, women played vital roles in pushing for egalitarianism during the seventeenth century. The warrior Dandara defended the community from Portuguese invasion, and her suicide would be memorialized in the mythology of Palmares until the present.

Afro-Brazilian intellectual Edison Carneiro published the first major contemporary analysis of Palmares from Mexico in 1946. He tied the revolutionary nation of Palmares into twentieth century Afro-Brazilian culture. *O quilombo dos Palmares* is firmly a Marxian text that relates these black cultural productions to the labor conditions that created Ganga-Zumbi's initial rebellion and the subsequent economic structuring of the quilombo. Palmares, according to Carneiro, was a Brazilian manifestation of primitive communism and could be modeled and updated for the betterment of twentieth century Brazilian society.

Picking up the scholarship about Palmares was Brazilian Black Power activist Abdias de Nascimento. Still often cited by black activists protesting the Bolsonaro regime, Nascimento produced *Arena conta Zumbi* in the year after the coup d'état that expelled João Goulart from the presidency. Building on Carneiro's scholarship, Nascimento presented the parallels between

³⁴¹ Ana Cernov and Adriana Guimarães, "Despite the backlash, women are driving the resistance to repression in Brazil," *Democracia Aberta* (April 9, 2019), <https://www.opendemocracy.net/es/democraciaabierta-es/a-pesar-de-la-involuci%C3%B3n-las-mujeres-est%C3%A1n-liderando-la-resistencia-en-brasil/>.

Brazilian slavery and the conditions of Afro-Brazilians during the military dictatorship. Despite the specificity to the Afro-Brazilian community, Nascimento still advocated for a Black Power rooted in transnational solidarity. Throughout the military regime Nascimento would refine his ideas about a black revolutionary nationalist state that was antiracist, antisexist, antilatfundist, and dialogued with other black revolutionaries across the world. These ideas would coalesce into his political philosophy described in the late years of the dictatorship as quilombismo.³⁴² The legacy of Palmares was brought to the diaspora from Afro-Brazilians like Carneiro and Nascimento and led to African American calls for solidarity with Afro-Brazilian freedom movements during the Black Power era.³⁴³

Another area in which transnational Black Power manifested was in the Brazilian music scene during the dictatorship. Musician Tim Maia, recognized as the father of Brazilian funk, used his experiences with racism in the United States to shape his calls for Afro-Brazilian race pride. While living in New York City, he attended meetings led by Jamaican born Black Power activist Stokely Carmichael who would influence Maia's political philosophy upon his return to Brazil.³⁴⁴ During his years in the United States he also worked with many African American artists across the eastern seaboard and likewise took musical inspiration from Ray Charles and Motown back with him to Brazil. Jorge Ben and Gilberto Gil achieved greater mainstream popularity than Maia and as such had to be careful about public statements, but the musical influences of the diaspora are present throughout the 1970s. Lyrically they challenged racist

³⁴² Abdias de Nascimento, "Quilombismo: An Afro-Brazilian Political Alternative," *Journal of Black Studies* vol. 11, no. 2 (December 1980), 156.

³⁴³ "DRUM Demands," *Drum* vol. 1, no. 9, 1.

³⁴⁴ Paulina L. Alberto, "When Rio was Black: Soul Music, National Culture, and the Politics of Racial Comparison in 1970s Brazil," *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 89, no. 1 (2009), 12.

stereotypes about black Brazilians and in songs like *Sou Negro* and *Refavela* they called for the recognition of black beauty and race pride.

Bands like *Black Power* and artists like Tony Tornado dialogued extensively with African American radicals and had connections to Brazilian radical communist movements. Additionally, they publicly lauded the activism of Black Power activists like Carmichael. Like Maia, Tornado also spent time in the United States and grew close to Carmichael.³⁴⁵ He proudly identified with James Brown but came back to Brazil more radical than the American musician he idolized. The military dictatorship organized a campaign to disgrace Tornado, but ultimately it was the media's reaction to his marriage to white actress Arlete Salles that discredited his activism to the public.

Many radical groups advanced the cause of Black Power and revolutionary transformation inside of Brazil from outside of the music scene which was limited by record sales and censorship. The most famous Brazilian radical group was the National Liberation Action founded by Brazilian Communist Party dissident Carlos Marighella. Marighella, born in Salvador, Bahia to an Afro-Brazilian mother, wrote the *Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla* which would serve as an ideological guide and instructional manual for radical action to overthrow reactionary governments via the country's urban centers.³⁴⁶ The *Minimanual* would go on to influence Black Power activists worldwide including Muhammad Ahmad of the Revolutionary Action Movement.³⁴⁷ The ALN grew out of the First Conference on Latin American Solidarity in Cuba and would advocate for black self-determination worldwide. The ALN's most famous

³⁴⁵ Anna Ferraz, "A tempestade de suingue de Tony Tornado," *Centro de Estudos das Relações de Trabalho e Disigualdades* (July 20, 2015), <https://ceert.org.br/noticias/historia-cultura-arte/7651/a-tempestade-de-suingue-de-tony-tornado>.

³⁴⁶ Carlos Marighella, *Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla* (San Francisco: Praetorian Press, 2011), 6.

³⁴⁷ Maxwell C. Stanford, "Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM): A Case Study of an Urban Revolutionary Movement in Western Capitalist Society," (Master's Thesis, Atlanta University, 1986), 14-16.

direct action in Brazil was a collaborative kidnapping of United States Ambassador Charles Elbrick with the October 8th Revolutionary Movement. MR-8 gained notoriety through the kidnapping and for being the organization of Brazil's most famous woman guerilla, Iara Iavelberg who challenged masculinist assumptions about what was considered labor in a Brazilian leftist framework.³⁴⁸

The guerilla groups most associated with a transnational Black Power movement in Brazil were the Armed Revolutionary Vanguard of Palmares and the Brazilian Revolutionary Communist Party.³⁴⁹ VAR-Palmares was not founded by Afro-Brazilians but were followers of Nascimento's teachings about the need for a revolutionary state that put antiracism at its core. They synthesized Nascimento with Malcolm X and worked closely with other groups to kidnap or kill agents of white imperialism like the British sailor David Cuthbert.³⁵⁰ Also affiliated with Cuthbert's assassination was the PCBR. Founded by Afro-Brazilian Mário Alves and Ukranian Jewish Brazilian Jacob Gorender, the PCBR collaborated with the Revolutionary Action Movement out of the United States. The PCBR organized multiple successful prison breaks, including the collaborative effort with RAM to liberate comrades from Viera Ferreira in Rio de Janeiro, but after the capture of Alves and Gorender withdrew from overt operations.³⁵¹

During the height of Brazilian guerilla resistance to the military dictatorship, organizations for Black Power in the United States paid attention to the struggle of Afro-Brazilians and advocated for revolutionary nationalist transformation across the African Diaspora. Robert F. Williams was inspired to be an activist as a child witnessing the assault and

³⁴⁸ Elio Gaspari, *As ilusões armadas: A ditadura escancarada* (São Paulo: Cia da Letras, 2002), 353.

³⁴⁹ Gabriel Izard, "El cimarronaje como símbolo étnico en los movimientos sociales afrobrasileños," *Boletín Americanista* 52 (2002), 136.

³⁵⁰ "Sai a esquadra inglesa," *Folho de São Paulo*, February 9, 1972.

³⁵¹ Otto José Mattos Filgueiras, "Mário Alves, o guerreiro de grande batalha," *Revista Espaço Acadêmico* 9 (March 2010), 124.

beating of a black woman at the hands of a white police officer in Monroe, North Carolina. By the time of his greatest influence during the mid-1960s, the scope of his activism transcended the United States border as he organized radical resistance and growing black political consciousness from Cuba and later China. From Cuba, Williams was recruited into RAM as Chairman-in-Exile and with this group he began to overtly agitate for an end to both United States imperialism and Latin American oppression.³⁵²

RAM, which formed in Wilburforce, Ohio as a student organization in 1961 quickly grew into a national force. Clandestine in nature, RAM had leadership cells located across the United States. They tied their revolutionary destiny to that of all the black people of the world. Asians, Latin Americans, and Indigenous people from around the world fit into their political conception of black.³⁵³ RAM members went to Cuba and dialogued with revolutionary movements from around the decolonizing world and ultimately formed an alliance with the PCBR that led to a cell of RAM operating out of Salvador. This group would spring onto the Brazilian guerilla scene in 1969 with a prison break to liberate six comrades from the Lemos de Brito penitentiary in Salvador. As the dictatorship police closed in on the group, they moved operations to Rio de Janeiro where they would organize another prison break with the PCBR. Led by the blind activist and prisoner José Rodrigues da Cruz, nine guerillas fled from Penitenciaria Viera Ferreira.³⁵⁴

With RAM in decline in the United States, many of the Detroit cadre would undertake the task of organizing black autoworkers outside of the UAW. General Baker and others called for a wildcat strike of a Chrysler plant that caused a massive loss in production for the company.

³⁵² Robert F. Williams, "Halleluia: The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth," *The Crusader* 6, no. 2 (October 1964): 8-9.

³⁵³ Robin D.G. Kelley and Betsy Esch, "Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution," in *Afro Asia: Revolutionary Political and Cultural Connections Between African Americans and Asian Americans*, ed. Fred Ho and Bill V. Mullen (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 115.

³⁵⁴ "Nove presos fogem da cadeia sob liderança de um cego," *Folha de São Paulo*, Aug. 25, 1970.

Black organizers were disproportionately punished despite the interracial nature of the strike. Building upon previous reading groups and discussions and deeply dissatisfied with the UAW's handling of the strike, Baker and others formed the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement. This Revolutionary Union Movement, self-identified as an organization for Black Power, would quickly grow in political power and recognition.³⁵⁵ After DRUM organized an electoral campaign that was narrowly defeated other RUMs began to proliferate in the city.

Women did most of the organizational labor for the RUMs and suggested the movements collaborate.³⁵⁶ In 1969 the League of Revolutionary Black Workers was legally incorporated. The league put Detroit on notice, and soon automakers began to hire black foreman and the UAW began to elect black workers to local leadership. While having success in Detroit, the LRBW also paid attention to the struggle of black autoworkers in South Africa and Brazil. Even though racial representation has historically been better in Brazil than in the United States, particularly in the petroleum industry, black Chrysler workers in Curitiba were not unionized.³⁵⁷

Afro-Brazilian labor activists like Laudelina de Campos Melo had been organizing black workers in a variety of industries throughout the twentieth century but had great success in the 1960s collaborating with construction workers unions to organize a strong domestic worker union that was over 90 percent black.³⁵⁸ Attaining similar numbers of black representation was the SINDIPRO oil workers' union in Salvador.³⁵⁹ No doubt due to the strong precedent of black labor in Brazil and in some part due to the pressures of the LRBW, the UAW organized these

³⁵⁵ "Black Power," *Drum* vol. 1, no. 5, 3.

³⁵⁶ Marion Kramer, in interview with Muhammad Ahmad, Detroit, MI, July 5, 2002.

³⁵⁷ "Chrysler factories, offices, and testing grounds, 1925-2017," Jim Benjaminson. accessed April 22, 2019, <https://www.allpar.com/corporate/factories.html>.

³⁵⁸ Joaze Bernadito-Costa, "Destabilizing the National Hegemonic Narrative: The Decolonized Thought of Brazil's Domestic Workers' Unions," *Latin American Perspectives* vol. 38, no. 5 (September 2011), 38.

³⁵⁹ Alex De Souza Ivo, "Uma história em verde, amarelo, e negro: Classe operária, trabalho e sindicalismo na indústria do petróleo," (Master's Thesis, Universidade Federal da Bahia: 2008), 70-71.

workers in Curitiba in 1972.³⁶⁰ Internal divisions led to the collapse of the league by the beginning of 1972, but the legacy of the LRBW continued to inspire black activism within and outside of official labor unions throughout the 1970s.

These various organizations that supported Black Power in the United States and Brazil all had tremendous impacts on the political and social climate of the globalized 1960s and 1970s. They peaked by the end of the 1960s and the pressure of unsympathetic governments in the two countries led to the official demise of all of these groups by 1972. Marighella was assassinated in 1969, Alves in 1970, Lamarca and Iavelberg in 1971, and the entirety of VAR-Palmares's leadership in 1972. This did not halt the fight for black liberation in Brazil, but like their comrades in the United States, radical organizations were severely curtailed during the 1970s.³⁶¹ Often from exile Black Power musicians continued to produce records that challenged the dictatorship and the likes of Ben, Maia, and Tornado influence both the musical, cultural, and political scenes of resistance to this day.³⁶²

The violence and repression of black people throughout the diaspora have never gone away but these problems have experienced a mainstream resurgence during the era of Trump and Bolsonaro. Black activists in the United States and Brazil are fighting for their lives daily, much like the Black Power revolutionaries of the 1960s and 1970s. Despite repression and death, the legacy of Afro-Brazilian guerillas like Marighella or Alves can likewise be seen in the protest movements of the present. With a keen eye on the history of repression, hopefully black leaders in the US and Brazil can bring about a renewed sense of transnational solidarity that spurs all people to become advocates for Black Power in the face of twenty first century fascism.

³⁶⁰ "Chrysler factories, offices, and testing grounds, 1925-2017."

³⁶¹ "Alerta: Terrorismo ainda existe," *Folha de São Paulo*, September 29, 1971.

³⁶² Alberto, 1.

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