THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORKING-CLASS ORGANIC INTELLECTUALS
IN THE CANADIAN BLACK LEFT TRADITION: HISTORICAL ROOTS
AND CONTEMPORARY EXPRESSIONS,
FUTURE DIRECTIONS

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the
University of Toronto

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORKING-CLASS ORGANIC INTELLECTUALS IN THE CANADIAN BLACK LEFT TRADITION: HISTORICAL ROOTS AND CONTEMPORARY EXPRESSIONS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS
“Doctor” of Education (2011)
Christopher Harris
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University of Toronto

Abstract

This thesis explores the revolutionary adult education learning dimensions in a Canadian Black anti-racist organization, which continues to be under-represented in the Canadian Adult Education literature on social movement learning. This case study draws on detailed reflection based on my own personal experience as a leader and member of the Black Action Defense Committee (BADC). The analysis demonstrates the limitations to the application of the Gramscian approach to radical adult education in the non-profit sector, I will refer to as the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC) drawing on recent research by INCITE Women of Colour! (2007). This study fills important gaps in the new fields of studies on the NPIC and its role in the cooptation of dissent, by offering the first Canadian study of a radical Black anti-racist organization currently experiencing this. This study fills an important gap in the social movement and adult education literature related to the legacy of Canadian Black Communism specifically on the Canadian left.
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the support of my committee who provided me with great insight, and quite simply, an in-depth understanding of the fields of radical adult education and social movement learning. Professor Peter H. Sawchuk has supported me throughout the past six years, helping me shape and finalize my thesis to meet the necessary requirements. In addition, I am indebted to Professor Stephanie Ross for her extensive feedback to strengthen my revisions and ensure the thesis made an important contribution to the literature. I would like to thank Professor David W. Livingstone, whom I consider to be an elder, for providing valid insight into some of the weaknesses in the arguments of my thesis, so I could improve them. And lastly, I would like to thank Professor Bob Boughton and Professor John D. Holst in the international field of radical adult education, whose commentary and scholarship inspired me to develop a thesis on the Canadian Black Communist tradition in the first place.

I cannot forget the Black Left activists and elder organic intellectuals who provided me with the intellectual and moral foundation that made this thesis possible. Canadian Black Power organic intellectuals, Norman Richmond, Owen Sankara, Dudley Laws, and Dr. Akua Benjamin mentored me, each in their own way throughout the past decade. I am indebted to Keisha, Dashawn, Quanche, and the dozens of BADC/Freedom Cipher youth who are no longer street-involved and successfully entered the working-class. To the Set It Off Ladies who successfully graduated high school and made it to college and university, I must say that I learned a great deal from you all which broadened my insights on the contradictions of organic intellectual formation in the 21st century.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................. iii

List of Acronyms .................................................................................................................... v

Preface ................................................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 1: Introduction ...................................................................................................... 5

Chapter 2: Reclaiming the Revolutionary Gramsci: The Centrality of the Revolutionary Vanguard and Communist Adult Education to the Production of Working-Class Organic Intellectuals ........................................................................ 21

Chapter 3: Overview of Marxism, Black Liberation, and Black Working-Class Organic Intellectuals ........................................................................................................ 65

Chapter 4: Canadian Black Power, Organic Intellectuals and the War of Position in Toronto (Canada), 1967-1975 ..................................................................................... 105

Chapter 5: BADC’s Freedom Cipher Program and the Challenges of Black Working-Class Organic Intellectual Production in 21st Century Canada ........................................... 131

Chapter 6: Moving Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC): The Case for Liberation Schooling in African-Canadian Civil Society ........................................................................... 194

References ............................................................................................................................ 216
### List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAPA</td>
<td>Afro-American Progressive Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABB</td>
<td>African Blood Brotherhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIM</td>
<td>American Indian Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALD</td>
<td>Actual Level of Development</td>
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<td>ALD</td>
<td>African Liberation Day</td>
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<td>ALMC</td>
<td>African Liberation Month Coalition</td>
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<td>ALSCL</td>
<td>African Liberation Support Committee</td>
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<td>ANLC</td>
<td>American Negro Labor Congress</td>
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<td>APSP</td>
<td>African Peoples Socialist Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASM</td>
<td>Afro-American Student Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>BADC</td>
<td>Black Action Defense Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>BLFC</td>
<td>Black Liberation Front of Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>BPP</td>
<td>Black Panther Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSCP</td>
<td>Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSG</td>
<td>Black Study Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>BWA</td>
<td>Black Workers Alliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>BWC</td>
<td>Black Women’s Congress</td>
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<tr>
<td>BYO</td>
<td>Black Youth Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAW</td>
<td>Canadian Auto Workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBTU</td>
<td>Coalition of Black Trade Unionists</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIO</td>
<td>Congress of Industrial Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COINTELPRO</td>
<td>Counter Intelligence Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CORE</td>
<td>Congress of Racial Equality</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPC</td>
<td>Communist Party of Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPSU</td>
<td>Communist Party of the Soviet Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>CP USA</td>
<td>Communist Party of the United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Common Sense Revolution</td>
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<tr>
<td>CUPE</td>
<td>Canadian Union of Public Employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRUM</td>
<td>Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRELIMO</td>
<td>Front for the Liberation of Mozambique</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRSO</td>
<td>Freedom Road Socialist Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSLN</td>
<td>Sandinista National Liberation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FYI</td>
<td>For Youth Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBW</td>
<td>Institute of the Black World</td>
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<tr>
<td>KUTVA</td>
<td>University of Toilers of the East</td>
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<tr>
<td>LRBW</td>
<td>League of Revolutionary Black Workers</td>
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<tr>
<td>LRNA</td>
<td>League of Revolutionaries for a New America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNSJ</td>
<td>Metro Network for Social Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPLA</td>
<td>Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAACP</td>
<td>National Association for the Advancement of Colored People</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>New Democratic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPDUM</td>
<td>National People’s Democratic Uhuru Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPIC</td>
<td>Non-Profit Industrial Complex</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSM</td>
<td>New Social Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>OAAU</td>
<td>Organization of Afro-American Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSM</td>
<td>Old Social Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OW</td>
<td>Ontario Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAIGC</td>
<td>African Party for the Independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCI</td>
<td>Italian Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEF</td>
<td>Peoples Educational Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEL</td>
<td>Paid Educational Leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSI</td>
<td>Italian Socialist Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAM</td>
<td>Revolutionary Action Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCMP</td>
<td>Royal Canadian Mounted Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>RUM</td>
<td>Revolutionary Union Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDS</td>
<td>Students for a Democratic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIU</td>
<td>Special Investigations Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNCC</td>
<td>Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPA</td>
<td>Socialist Party of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPIRIT</td>
<td>Sisters in Action for Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCHC</td>
<td>Toronto Community Housing Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDSB</td>
<td>Toronto District School Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAIA</td>
<td>Universal African Improvement Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAW</td>
<td>United Auto Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIA</td>
<td>United Negro Improvement Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITA</td>
<td>Union for the Total Independence of Angola</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UT</td>
<td>University of Toronto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YCF</td>
<td>Youth Challenge Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YCL</td>
<td>Young Communist League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YOU</td>
<td>Young Onkwehonwe United</td>
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Preface

The point of this short Preface is to provide a basic overview of where its contributions fit within multiple bodies of research literature. The general rationale for this thesis revolves around both its political significance and several serious gaps in the existing academic literature. In terms of social significance, the anti-racist, black communist movement in Canada has served as a vital axis around which progressive organizing and mobilization for social change has revolved. This Canadian Black Communist Left has targeted many of the most oppressive structures and practices that contemporary society has thrown forward and I suggest here that a richer and deeper critical understanding of it carries with it the potential for enormous positive change in the future. With its roots deep in the struggle against Canadian imperialism generally, but with the last half of the 20th century serving as a key moment in its ongoing evolution, the Canadian Black Communist Left’s relative invisibility in the academic literature, in my view, demands a response. Moreover, if part of the intellectual outcome of this work is to recover a history that has yet to be formalized, then in practical terms it is a goal of the thesis that this recovery be shaped by the needs to further support and contribute to the charting of a viable path forward.

In terms of the academic literature, this thesis sheds light on and contributes analysis that, to this point, has been almost completely absent from any sustained research attention. This is the case in several ways. As I will show, first, there is a general under-development of research on the relationship between social movements and adult learning/development that has been recently documented (Wainwright, 1993; Conway, 2001; Mansbridge and Morris, 2001; Holst, 2004; Hall and Turay, 2006). Here it seems
clear that the lack of attention to this intersection of academic fields serve neither field very well. Studies of social movements lacking attention on how people themselves undergo change (i.e. learn) both individually and collectively effectively stultifies analysis, while adult education research that fails to engage with social movement phenomena partially betrays the progressive, social change impulse that has been central to it virtually since its inception as a legitimate field of study (e.g. Hall and Turay, 2006), if not before that in implicit terms.

Second, there is a major gap in both social movement and adult education literature related to Canadian Black communism specifically. Beyond those few covered here there are virtually no treatments of this movement, in relation to either social movement or adult education research. This may in part be due to the difficulty of researching movements of this kind, Canadian Black communist movements are difficult to study because they were relatively small in size, whereby the majority of activism was conducted in a grassroots and informal manner with very little documentation, except for brief articles in *Contrast*, Toronto’s largest independent Black Left newspaper from the 1960s-1990s. Likewise, there exists no sustained investigation of how activists emerge specifically in Canadian Black communist movements.

Third, even within the general field of adult education there remains a need for more careful attention to organized as well as informal and inter-generational learning specifically. The review of literature as well as collection of reflective case study inspired observations based on my own activist work contained in this thesis demand that these be central to analysis of learning in the Canadian Black Communist tradition. There are a variety of ways of seeking to understand the learning that is embedded in social
movements. However, as I argue in the thesis, one of the most effective ways to understand these learning processes as a whole is by framing them as organic intellectual development, that is, the political education of communist activist-intellectuals in Canadian Black communist movements. Here too, there is literally no existing research related to the Black Communist/anti-racist traditions in Canada (or elsewhere). As I show, what information that does exist is largely scattered across topic-specific historical studies, autobiographical materials as well as related period sources including popular articles, pamphlets, and so on. Thus, one of the most basic contributions of this thesis work is to gather, organize and make sense in terms of social movements, adult education and organic intellectual development the information that is available. Also, I synthesize these findings on organic intellectual formation in Canadian Black communist movements and use them to identify general processes of organic intellectual formation relative to other movements on the Canadian Left.

Finally, this thesis fills important gaps in the new field of studies on the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC) and its role in the cooptation of dissent, by offering the first Canadian study of a radical Black anti-racist organization currently experiencing this. Analysis here is again based on detailed reflection and gathering of information based on my own personal experience. The Black Action Defense Committee (BADC), of which I have been both a member and leader, is currently completing a three-year anti-racism project funded by the City of Toronto’s Youth Challenge Fund (YCF). This study examines the contradictions of anti-racist educational projects in the non-profit sector and their implication for anti-racist movements and the left more generally, as an increasing number of former protest and radical social justice organizations are becoming
incorporated into the Canadian state and mainstream civil society through their entry into the NPIC. This case study of the BADC experience in the non-profit sector will develop a theory to advance the educational work of radical adult educators engaging in radical adult education for social change in state funded left social justice organizations.
Chapter 1
Introduction

The Origins of the Thesis

The initial motivation for this thesis began with the identification of the need to better understand and document an anti-racism education project I implemented at the Black Action Defense Committee (BADC) to train working-class African-Canadian youth to become revolutionary activists who do anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and Black Feminist organizing in African-Canadian civil society. Since BADC is a leading Black Left organization in the city of Toronto that emerged out of decades of militant anti-racist struggles against police brutality in the 1970s and ‘80s, I thought it was a suitable location for the education of Black working-class organic intellectuals (communist activists). As a BADC youth leader and radical adult educator, I directed the Freedom Cipher program from 2007-2009 to educate the next generation of organic intellectuals within the organization.¹ In order to accomplish this, I collaborated with BADC elder, Norman “Otis” Richmond to engage youth in inter-generational learning since this played a critical role in my own ideological development. At that point Richmond was an elder Black Power organic intellectual 40 years deep in the struggle for African-Canadian liberation (1967-2007) who led the development of the Canadian Black Power movement in the 1960s and ‘70s and continues to work as an independent journalist and popular community radio personality. In fact, many, if not all, of the analytic themes that I discuss in the thesis have links to these efforts and experiences.

¹ The Freedom Cipher Program is a three year $450,000 anti-racism education initiated funded by City of Toronto’s Youth Challenge Fund from 2007-2009.
This doctoral thesis also builds on earlier research on the learning and development of organic intellectuals in the Canadian Black Power movement (Harris, 2005). The goals of this thesis, however, are broader than those linked to either the experiences with the Freedom Cipher Program or those outlined in my earlier work. They are to understand the possibilities, limitations, and tensions of producing organic intellectuals in the context of a social-democratic anti-racist organization. To do so, I will refer to Gramsci’s (1971) *Prison Notebooks* in which he wrote extensively on the education of organic intellectuals in communist movements, in conjunction with this, however, it is necessary to return to a series of debates around the nature of social movements in relation to Black Liberation, Black Marxism and specifically communist party development. And, it is also necessary to develop a type of secondary analysis of existing information bearing on these concerns that is available for the most part only through a disparate collection of popular and in particular the biographical and autobiographical literature on the learning and development of Black organic intellectuals. In turn, this paints a portrait of organic intellectual development amongst this group historically and links it to the present.

**A General Introduction to Key Concepts, Literature and Concerns**

Gramsci developed a theory of organic intellectuals to refer in part to activists and intellectuals who were either responsible for winning the hegemony of the working-class or maintaining the hegemony of the Bourgeoisie in Western industrialized capitalist nations. Gramsci saw organic intellectuals as the “qualified political intellectuals, leaders and organisers” who organized mass consent for the ruling class to exercise leadership
and direction over the state, political economy, and civic, cultural, and educational institutions of civil society (Gramsci, 1971:16).

In the literature on Blacks and communism, there are a few instances where Black communists have been theorized as organic intellectuals: Afro-Caribbean Marxist activists, Walter Rodney (Swai, 1981, 1982) and C.L.R. James (Rosengarten, 2002); Black consciousness leader, Steven Biko (Bofelo, 2005) and revolutionary Black working-class activists in Post-Apartheid South Africa (Nzimande, 2005, 2006). For the most part, however, the notion of “Black organic intellectuals” has applied to neo-Gramscian interpretations of Gramsci’s theory by post-modern scholars (Simms, 2000; Grindstaff, 2002; Shattuc, 1997, 2002; Hibbard, 2003). Such scholars, I will argue, de-radicalize Gramsci’s revolutionary working-class organic intellectuals, to portray reformist working-class African-American civil rights and anti-poverty activists as organic intellectuals.

As I will show, instances of this approach are easy to find. Lipsitz’s (1988) biography of Ivory Perry portrays the grassroots activist as a Black organic intellectual in the Civil Rights movement. Inspired by Lipsitz, Sales, Jr.’s (1994) study argues Malcolm X’s revolutionary-nationalist Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) sought to recruit Black organic intellectuals into the membership but this failed to materialize because of his premature assassination within its first year of operation. In the case of Black women Public Housing activists, Rodriguez (2006) argues they are organic intellectuals because they live in impoverished government housing and at the same time do tenant organizing and advocacy for safe and decent housing. In the Black British context, Alleyne (2002) analyzes the life histories of Black working-class cultural
workers who were a part of the New Beacon Bookshop: an activist circle in Britain that engaged in community organizing, bookselling, publishing, and teaching. Alleyne contends New Beacon activists who sacrificed formal education and training to do political work in the 1970s and ‘80s became organic intellectuals in Black working-class Britain because they lacked formal education and training and chose precarious employment over professional career development. Perhaps with the exception of Sales, Jr. (1994), even in a basic review of them we can see that these studies are limited because they fail to adequately distinguish between social-democratic anti-racist and revolutionary-nationalist activists. Informing most of my argument in the thesis as a whole, following Gramsci, I claim it is vital to define Black working-class organic intellectuals in a more specific way, as revolutionary-nationalist/communist activists who engage in praxis by organizing political campaigns, proletarian race and class alliances, socialist cultural production and mass education to erode the old hegemony of the Bourgeoisie in African-Canadian civil society, and eventually construct a new proletarian hegemony in its place.

At the same time, without any explicit mention of either adult learning or Gramscian theory specifically, there is a small but growing body of literature on the history of U.S. Blacks in the Communist Party of America (CP USA) from the 1920s to the 1940s. I suggest that this material can be used to complement Gramsci’s vision of working-class communist organic intellectuals, by documenting the activism of Black workers, peasants, and intellectuals within the Party (Patterson, 1971; Davis, 1974; Haywood, 1979; Painter, 1979; Naison, 1983; Fort-Whiteman, 1987; Grigsby, 1987; Horne, 1984, 1988; Watkins-Owens, 1996; Solomon, 1998; Davies, 2008). Davies (2008)
recent biography of Black woman communist Claudia Jones, for example, argues she was a pioneering Black Feminist communist in the CP USA from the 1930s to the ‘50s. However, though such studies are an important resource for my focus in this thesis, we will see that I depart from approaches like Davies’ when she claims Gramsci’s organic intellectual framework is too limiting to understand Jones legacy as a leading Black Feminist in the party.

The second wave of organic intellectuals who organized and led U.S. Black Power in the 1960s and ‘70s has also been written on extensively, particularly the Black Panther Party (Foner, 1970; Newton, 1972; Cleaver, 2001; Abu Jamal, 2004; Hilliard, 2006), the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (Baker, 1994) and the Revolutionary Action Movement (Ahmad, 2007). The history of revolutionary Black women in the U.S. Black Power movement is still relatively unknown, with the exception of some notable autobiographies of CP USA leader Angela Davis (1974) and Panther leaders Assata Shakur (1987), Elaine Brown (1994), Safiya Bukhari (2010).

In the Canadian literature there are only two studies on African-Canadian organic intellectuals. Wild (2002) analyzes the literature of Canadian Black Marxist-Feminist Lesbian writer Dionne Brand from the standpoint that she is an organic intellectual. My Master’s Thesis was the first detailed study to apply Gramsci’s organic intellectual framework to understand the informal educational dimensions of the learning and development of Black working-class communists who led the Canadian Black Power movement in Toronto from 1969-1975 (Harris, 2005).

As I mentioned above, research discussions of organic intellectuals do not tend to articulate their development as a learning process per se. My general claim on the
relevance of paying attention to this learning dimension of organic intellectual
development is that taking seriously the patterns of development of such people tells us
something important about how radical activism and leadership can and does emerge in
society. And, in the absence of this type of appreciation, most analyses of the roots of
effective mobilization and revolutionary praxis have the tendency to devolve in two ways
that are not mutually exclusive. On the one hand, it may devolve or become overly
dependent upon accounts of different structural conditions of movement or party success
(or failure) which does not adequately express how living human beings contribute,
undergo change and ultimately bring about such success or failure. On the other hand,
accounts of the spontaneous appearance of extraordinary individual leader/ activist/
organic intellectuals border on the fallacies of ‘great man’ approaches to historical
change that, likewise, do little to sustain the development of praxis, strategy or action.
Therefore, in order to more deeply understand organic intellectual development and to
avoid such pitfalls, interwoven with descriptive reporting of this learning is a variety of
basic points of conceptualization of adult learning itself. While there is clearly more that
could be done in this regard in analyzing this learning, here I introduce the basic points of
reference that I draw on in the research. On this question, my additional point is that
organic intellectuals are not simply products of learning, but also that further
specification of this learning requires us to orient towards learning in a broad way.

In the first place, following adult education research generally (e.g. Thomas,
1991), I agree that it is useful to distinguish and explore both learning content and
learning processes. Learning content is obviously important because it is composed of
and expresses perspectives that includes, excludes and organizes information in particular
ways that afford or tend to inhibit learning outcomes. I take as equally obvious the fact that learning content is inherently political even if it is still necessary to argue about the exact nature of the politics it expresses. In a variety of places in the thesis I show that it is important to engage in such arguments, and I present specific depictions about the political nature of learning content. In a variety of places I argue, for example, that we can distinguish between more radical learning content that supports and builds viable programs of social change (e.g. Marxist-Leninist or Feminist or Gramscian inspired content) versus content that is inherently less radical (e.g. anti-racist; anti-sexist; multicultural; liberal; capitalist; post-modern inspired content). In general, the assumption is that the nature of this learning content matters to the learning and specifically organic intellectual development that emerges.

At the same time, content must be understood to be taken up with specific learning processes. Over the last three decades in particular the field of adult education has increasingly recognized that people develop knowledge through a variety of different learning processes. Generally speaking, these processes are seen as organized and informal learning activities (e.g. see Freire, 1973; Brookfield, 1981; Foley, 1999; Kilgore, 1999; Sawchuk, 2003, 2006a; Livingstone and Sawchuk, 2004). Organized learning can refer to any form of intentional, planned, curriculum-based programs of education including those carried out by colleges and universities as well as those carried out by other organizations (see Livingstone and Sawchuk 2004 for a general explanation of terms). As I show in this thesis research, there is a great deal of organized learning that takes place that is linked with types of social movements (sometimes called ‘non-formal learning’ in adult education research because it is not linked to state-based schooling)(cf.
LeJeune and Palston, 1976; Paulston, 1980; Bingman, 1988; Finger, 1989; Holford, 1995; Holst, 2002, 2004).² I argue that this organized learning is important to organic intellectual development. Some of the biographical materials on Black communist activists that I explore, for example, show people such as Hosea Hudson (Painter, 1979), and Harry Haywood (Haywood, 1979) whose development was deeply influenced by formal communist schools in the CP USA. Informal learning refers to the kind of development that people do in the course of their everyday lives. In terms of the organic intellectual development it appears as activists engage in social movement, program or party building work, mobilization work and so on (cf. Eyerman and Jamison, 1991; Foley, 1999; Kilgore, 1999). As I describe it in the thesis, these learning processes can be self-directed or collective. In addition we also will see that these informal learning processes often involve an inter-generational dimension. This refers to the processes through which movement elders teach, either in organized or informal ways, younger or newer activists and is a matter that, to date has not been adequately recognized within social movement adult learning research.

Among other things, emphasis on the relationship between learning content and process allows me to interrogate and contextualize (both empirically and conceptually) the basic question of why the Freedom Cipher succeeded in organizing a grassroots youth movement, but failed in the production of Black working-class organic intellectuals. I will discuss the contradictions of engaging Black youth in communist education in a state-funded non-profit organization in the non-profit industrial complex (NPIC), a useful

² See Mayo (1996) for an additional discussion about how Gramscian analysis may be involved in understanding this learning.
term to describe an ever-expanding sphere of civil society comprised of social service -- and increasingly social justice non-profit organizations funded by the state and charitable foundations.\(^3\) It will become apparent why radical adult educators experience difficulties in building socialist consciousness within what I argue to be reformist social movement organizations caught within the NPIC: a structure that is, I claim clearly an extension of bourgeois civil society. Constructed on the basis of these broad theoretical and historical explanations, I argue that, ultimately, the process of organic intellectual formation can only occur through the dialectic of revolutionary organizational forms, praxis, and communist education in self-directed, collective, and inter-generational relations of learning on the Black Left.

**Research Questions and Goals**

Despite this broad range of studies on the relationship between Blacks and communism and Blacks and organic intellectuals, there are none which elaborate on the notion of Black working-class communists as organic intellectuals as well as the learning processes and content that support their development. As such, this study will fill an important gap in the literature on Black organic intellectuals for the following reasons.

\(^3\) The NPIC is a term used to describe the non-profit sector which has been an effective tool of the U.S. and Canadian state in co-opting Left dissent and de-stabilizing social justice movements by incorporating them into the welfare state through non-profit funding. For social movement organizations operating in the NPIC, the focus changes from mobilizing for social justice and transformative change, to an emphasis on providing services to a constituency and thus resource mobilization, resulting in de-politicization -- and the dismantling of left coalitions as individual non-profit organizations compete for scarce funding resources (INCITE, 2007).
First, it will be the first detailed study on the complexities of organic intellectual formation on the Black Left in Toronto. In fact, in this regard according to my approach to Black working-class organic intellectuals, this study is likely the only analysis of its kind currently available. Second, it will contribute to the debate on the relationship between radical social movements, civil society, and social change more broadly. By making a case for a particular interpretation and application of Gramsci’s theory in radical adult education, it will prove the usefulness of his organic intellectual framework to the advancement of the struggle for African-Canadian liberation in the 21st century. Third, it will take up the ways that organic intellectual development and movement building is influenced by the state through the NPIC, which has important implications of its own for social change prospects.

My central research question guiding this study is: what are the possibilities and limitations of educating Black working-class organic intellectuals in a social-democratic anti-racist organization in African-Canadian civil society in the absence of a revolutionary party/organization? To answer this question, I will explore the following secondary questions to better understand the challenges I experienced educating and training BADC youth to become communist organic intellectuals: a set of experiences that inherently ground the general empirical and theoretical concerns in concrete reality. What types of revolutionary organizational forms were absent in the education and training at BADC, particularly when compared to previous periods of Black working-class organic intellectual formation? What were the challenges of implementing communist education curriculum in the Freedom Cipher in the form of informal self-directed study and political education classes to develop working-class African-Canadian
youth into communist activists? What tensions existed in the inter-generational learning between elder Black communists and working-class African-Canadian youth with no historical memory of or interest in learning about previous African liberation struggles? What were the ideological contradictions of educating and training Black organic intellectuals in a state-funded anti-racist organization in the NPIC? What is the experience of utilizing Hip Hop music as a Black working-class cultural tool to contribute to the process of organic intellectual formation in the 21st century?

**Methodology**

Methodologically, there are limits to the analysis I offer here in the traditional social science sense. Traditional qualitative and quantitative social science studies may have value, but this thesis also has value as an integrated historical analysis of Canadian Black Communist movements with a learning and organic intellectual development lens. This thesis is focused on a marginalized group of Black working-class youth experiencing a number of life challenges that prevented them from participating in extensive interviews or survey work. BADC youth workers were unable to participate in extensive open-ended interviews about their political-education and anti-racist organizing experience in the Freedom Cipher program due the constraints daily survival placed on their lives, ranging from the increasing criminalization of the Black working-class, and Black student disengagement, to the struggle of balancing multiple jobs and single parenthood. Consequently, the research method was adapted to reach the youth who were the focus of the case study.
The primary focus of the thesis is the radical adult educational experiences of three Black working-class youth who were undergoing political education and leadership training in the Freedom Cipher program I was directing at BADC. However, their voices were limited in the BADC case study (Chapter 5) for the reasons outlined above. It is true that my immediate accounts only involve three BADC youth workers, but by extension I also interviewed and analyzed the working life histories of BADC elders I engaged with directly in the Freedom Cipher program. In addition, vis-à-vis a secondary analysis, I analyzed the critical political biographies and histories of a series of Black communists again through the lens of movement learning and organic intellectual development. From the perspective of a traditional social science study, this thesis does not have a specified number of subjects, but it does include a primary and secondary analysis of a cast of 25 individuals. The strength of this thesis is that it is a historical analysis of learning and organic intellectual development in the context of an uneven social movement.

**Organization of the Thesis**

This study draws primarily on a number of diverse literatures to expose the informal, formal, and inter-generational dimensions of Black working-class organic intellectual formation in the Black revolutionary-nationalist and communist movements in North America during the 20th century. In so doing, it becomes clear that, following this introductory chapter, there is a need to spend some time developing a better understanding of the relationship between alternative perspectives on black liberation politics.
Chapter 2, as a backdrop, consists of a critical review and elaboration of Gramsci’s theory of working-class organic intellectuals conducting a socialist educational and cultural war of position in civil society to construct a new proletarian hegemony, and its relevance to Black liberation politics, as a viable political strategy in the 21st century. I make the case for Holst’s (2002) Gramscian thesis in the radical adult education literature on the centrality of the revolutionary party to the formation of working-class organic intellectuals in the struggle to win proletarian hegemony in bourgeois civil society. To accomplish this, I discuss the limitations of Neo-Gramscian post-Marxist civil societarian theory that argues autonomous new social movements practicing participatory democracy and post-modern identity politics in bourgeois civil society are sufficient to transform society (Boggs, 1984; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Finger, 1989; Golding, 1992; Welton, 1993). Contrary to the post-Marxist project of expanding liberal democracies through radical democratic practices, I argue that the Gramscian project of communist organic intellectuals engaged in the hegemonic struggle for socialist transformation is more relevant than ever at the beginning of the 21st century when global capitalism is in crisis.

In Chapter 3, the informal educational relations and organized political-education responsible for the education of Black communists in the North American communist parties and the U.S. Black Power movement are examined to clarify the nature of organic intellectual formation in the revolutionary African-American and African-Canadian experience in the 20th century. I outline Gramsci’s theory of working-class organic intellectuals and explore recent debates initiated by those who question the relevance of Marx (Robinson, 1983) and Gramsci (Hall, 1986; Genovese, 2005; Wilderson, 2005) to
the politics of Black radicalism, with the contention that Gramsci is a useful theorist to understand the educational formation of revolutionary-nationalist/communist activists within the Black working-class in North America. This historical backdrop and contextual framework is applied in Chapter 4 to one of two original case studies on the educational dimensions of organic intellectual formation in the Canadian Black Left in the 1960s-‘70s, building on earlier research (Harris, 2005) on the Black working-class organic intellectuals who led Canadian Black Power. Using the key sources of informal discussions and community radio interviews with former Canadian Black Power leader, Norman “Otis” Richmond, as well as articles from the independent Black press in Toronto in the 1960s and ‘70s, I analyze the informal educational experience of Black Power organic intellectuals and draw lessons from that period to frame a critical assessment of the successes and failures I experienced in educating and training working-class African-Canadian youth at BADC in recent years. I argue here that the Black Power experience confirms the importance of convergence of revolutionary vanguard party/organizations, praxis, movement-based self-directed and collective study, and inter-generational learning in the education of organic intellectuals.

In Chapter 5, I provide the second case study of the thesis based on my three years experience directing the Freedom Cipher program at BADC attempting to educate and train Black working-class organic intellectuals. I utilize Vygotsky’s conception of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that refers to student-centered collective learning where instruction leads development, to critically evaluate my efforts to cultivate revolutionary leadership within the NPIC by managing a social-democratic anti-racism program at BADC. In particular, I assess the revolutionary Hip Hop pedagogy, Set It Off
Girls Groups, political-education classes, intellectual discussions and inter-generational learning BADC youth engaged in with elder organic intellectual, Norman “Otis” Richmond on Freedom Cipher Radio, a monthly youth segment on Saturday Morning Live, CKLN, 88.1 FM. I argue that the richest experience of communist education at BADC did not occur in the Freedom Cipher, but rather in the Hood2Hood movement: a revolutionary Blood and Crip peace and unity campaign from without the NPIC.

The final chapter consists of an analysis of the limitations of the NPIC as an organizational context for communist organic intellectual formation, and proposes an alternative model for a communist school that could be implemented at BADC under the leadership of Basics Community Newsletter, our closest revolutionary allied organization. I conclude with a Gramscian framework inspired by recent trends in Socialist Cuba’s independent Hip Hop music industry to implement a communist school for the African-Canadian community to overcome the limitations of the Freedom Cipher.

It is important to recall that one of the goals of this research was not simply to understand the issues but to engage in a process of social change. In this sense, the findings of this research are partially constructed around and will be used to develop a communist school in the upcoming years to overcome the limitations of the Freedom Cipher that failed to produce organic intellectuals, despite its success in organizing a state-funded social-democratic anti-racist youth movement in the Westend of Toronto. The final chapter provides some insights in these terms. I will utilize this doctoral research to re-organize the Freedom Cipher into a liberation school at BADC, independent of the bourgeois state. The communist school will advance the organic intellectual project at BADC by rectifying the mistakes of the past three years to create an
institution that will achieve greater success in the difficult task of organic intellectual
formation within the Black working-class in Toronto.
Chapter 2
Reclaiming the Revolutionary Gramsci: The Centrality of the Revolutionary Vanguard in the Education of Working-Class Organic Intellectuals

Introduction

This chapter examines current debates in the adult education literature over the legacy of Gramsci and his contribution to radical adult education. This examination will ultimately contribute to a generalized understanding in this area of research, but, as I noted at the beginning of this thesis, the aim is also to connect these matters to the concrete realities of revolutionary potential, thinking and action in contemporary Canadian society with special attention to developing an ideological framework suitable for the formation of a liberation school to politicize BADC youth into Black working-class organic intellectuals. By reclaiming the revolutionary ideas of Antonio Gramsci that I argue were misappropriated by both Western Eurocommunism in the 1960s-70s; and the liberal left in the North American academy in the 1980s-90s. I hope to reveal his original contributions to Marxism-Leninist theory and effective, particular approaches to radical adult education. In relation to adult education analysis, I suggest that learning content – the theory, concepts and approach that may direct successful mobilization, strategizing and action – is foundational and both affects and is affected by the types of learning processes within which it is taken up and through which the content itself is further developed in the course of revolutionary praxis. The significance of Leninist vanguard politics to Gramscian communist education will be discussed by examining the contentious debates between communist, Post-Marxist, and Western Left theorists on the relationship between revolutionary parties, social movements, and radical adult education.
in civil society for social change. Through this, I will make the case for the centrality of revolutionary organizations in the education of working-class organic intellectuals.

This doctoral study also contributes to the debate in the radical adult education literature on the extent to which communist education within and associated with Marxist-Leninist parties is an effective and authentic form of radical adult education. On the question of the ideological struggle within social movement literature over the relevance of communist education and revolutionary party politics to radical adult education, Boughton (2004) states:

I reject the implicit anti-party message of most of the new social movement theory/practice with which popular education writing has engaged; and I am critical of the failure of radical adult education to engage in any systematic way with the theoretical and practical questions of party building and party organization which are central to the international socialist tradition. It seems to me that this failure continues a much longer tradition within university-based accounts of radical adult education, of avoiding such questions because of the difficulties which revolutionary socialist organizations pose for liberal intellectual views about dissent, freedom of debate, the autonomy of individuals and university-based intellectual activity itself (Boughton, 2004:2).

Like Boughton, I too am frustrated with the tendency to dismiss communist education from the field of radical adult education. Gramsci had great insight on the challenges and possibilities of working-class organic intellectual formation to advance revolutionary party politics in the West. Building on Leninism, Gramsci expanded our understanding of the educational dimension of vanguard party politics, particularly the role of revolutionary parties in the formation of working-class organic intellectuals who could in turn lead an anti-capitalist war of position in bourgeois civil society to construct a new proletarian hegemony. But first, let us consider the argument that Gramsci’s revolutionary theory has over time been largely co-opted by strands of Italian Eurocommunism in the 1960s-70s, as well
as the Liberal post-Marxist Left in the North American Academy in the 1980s-90s. As we will see specifically, these instances of co-optation are rooted in selective readings of his work that consistently marginalize – or more often completely ignore – the centrality of the (Communist) party in his theories of revolutionary action, and in turn, his theories on the nature and role of organic intellectuals in social change.

Reclaiming the Revolutionary Gramsci: Moving Beyond the Reformism of Eurocommunism

Was Gramsci’s theoretical innovation of Marxism formulated effectively as a way to advance communist party strategy in the West or is it amenable to and did it express a reformist agenda in Left politics? I claim that contrary to the popular consensus in the North American Left that Gramsci was a post-Marxist intellectual, a review of his work demonstrates a clear expression of commitment to the development of Marxist-Leninist theory. Indeed, in the aftermath of the defeat of the revolutionary Turin Factory Council movement and the failure of this spontaneous insurrection in post-war Italy, Gramsci left the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) to become a founder of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in the early 1920s. Although the political orientation of the PCI was ambiguous at times, it is nevertheless within the context of this shift and Gramsci’s embrace of core communist (as opposed to socialist) principles that he developed his most important ideas on working-class organic intellectuals and the war of position for proletarian hegemony in bourgeois civil society within his Prison Notebooks (1971). These theoretical contributions cannot be meaningfully separated from Gramsci’s lifelong political activism as a PCI leader. In relation to this, we can say that Gramsci was not a
philosopher of radical democracy, as the selective re-readings of many neo-Gramscian scholars suggest (Boggs, 1976, 1984, 1995; Antonian, 1987; Golding, 1992; Borg, Buttigieg, and Mayo, 2002; Morrow and Torres, 2001). He was first and foremost an Italian communist. His arguments are inextricably linked with the notion that revolutionary parties were the most advanced organizational form in the struggle for socialism.

To sustain this claim, we can begin by noting that while Gramsci believed that the Turin Factory Council movement, which culminated in a spontaneous insurrection, had a critical role to play in the Italian Revolution, he was also highly conscious of the limitations of autonomous workers’ organizations in the struggle for political power and the inability of the reformist PSI to lead this uprising into a social revolution. Gramsci was specifically cautious of the influence of anarcho-syndicalists in the factory councils because they advocated the self-emancipation of the working-class without the intervention of a vanguard party. The dominance of this political orientation prevented the proletariat from rising above its *economic-corporate* consciousness, narrowly focused on increasing the economic prospects of the worker, to achieve *ethical-political hegemony* in civil society by forming political alliances with the peasantry and incorporating their broader interests into the revolutionary working-class movement (Gramsci, 1971:160-161). In “Notes on the Southern Question”, Gramsci contended that the industrial proletariat was a minority in Italy, and thus required a revolutionary communist party to transcend the limited aims of the factory council movement and mobilize the majority of the population, largely of peasant origin against capitalism:

The Turin communists posed concretely the question of the ‘hegemony of the proletariat’: i.e. of the social basis of the proletarian dictatorship and of the workers’ State. The proletariat can become the leading and the dominant class to
the extent that it succeeds in creating a system of class alliances which allows it to mobilize the majority of the working population against capitalism and the bourgeois state. In Italy, in the real class relations which exist there, this means to the extent that it succeeds in gaining the consent of the broad peasant masses...[by] understanding the class demands which they represent; incorporating these demands into its revolutionary transitional program; placing these demands among the objectives for which it struggles (Gramsci, 1978:443).

Although factory councils were the clearest expression of workers’ democracy, he clearly outlined his view that spontaneous trade union radicalism as an end in itself still expressed and sustained bourgeois hegemony because it did not seek to create a new socialist society (Ibid, 1971:160). Directly, following the example of Lenin and the Bolsheviks Gramsci saw the revolutionary party as “an organic part of the proletariat” because it contained the most advanced elements of that class (Gramsci, 1994:269), and was the only institution capable of leading a socialist intellectual and moral reform that could culminate in a new socialist worldview and national-popular collective will amongst the Italian working-class and peasantry (Gramsci, 1971:132-133).

The first sustained instance of Gramsci’s co-optation came long before his emergence as a key theorist in either North America or other countries of Europe. Ironically, it can be found as a means to justify a reformist agenda for Italian communism itself, in the work of PCI leader Palmiro Togliatti, who helped organize the party in the 1920s and remained in the leadership until his death in 1964. In his article “The Present Relevance of Gramsci’s Theory and Practice”, Togliatti (1957) argued that the Party’s theses, “The Italian Road to Socialism”, adopted at the 8th Congress of the PCI in 1956 was entirely based on Gramsci’s political theory. In this document, the PCI recommends the abandonment of anti-capitalism in favor of parliamentary struggles for gradual economic reforms under capitalism (Togliatti, 1957). The concept arose out of PCI debates on the legitimacy of Marxism-Leninism after Nikita Khruschev’s condemnation
of the crimes of Stalin at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). The idea of the “Italian Road to Socialism” is based on a social-democratic theory of socialism that places at its centre liberal democratic struggle for structural reforms in the state and political economy. In late 1964, the concept became crystallized when right-wing PCI deputy Giorgio Amendola criticized the possibility of renewing Soviet communism in the 1960s and called for the foundation of a new united workers party that was neither communist, socialist nor social democratic but would continue the struggle for the democratization of the PCI from its Leninist roots into a mass party that could embrace all three Left parties in Italy (Pribicevic, 1981:8-9). In his critique of the PCI’s neo-Gramscian ideology which eventually became known as Eurocommunism, Thompson (1998) dismissed it as a departure from Gramsci due to its re-conceptualization of war of position as building class alliances to improve the bourgeois state and civil society. Likewise, Bianco (1977) does not see any historical continuity between Gramsci and Togliatti, the latter’s revisionism being evident when he transformed what was once a vehicle of revolutionary class struggle (e.g. the PCI) into a social-democratic party:

I am strongly convinced that there is no continuity between Gramsci and Togliatti; between the politics of the PCI, led by Gramsci and the PCI, led by Togliatti, because, while the politics of the former is revolutionary at least in theory, the politics of the latter has proven to be revisionist in practice…it has been Togliatti, who has progressively transformed the will and the action of a

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4 The ideology of Eurocommunism arose out of new radical democratic conceptions of mass party pluralism over vanguardism and the importance of struggling for broad social alliances and political coalitions with socialist, social-democratic and liberal forces, rejecting the Leninist strategy of struggling for state power. A key theme is the principle of achieving socialism through liberal democracy, whereas socialism is viewed as the highest stage of democracy (Pribicevic, 1981:5).
revolutionary party, the PCI, led by Gramsci, into a more and more evident reformism. Togliatti neglects many of the key-positions in Gramsci’s thought, such as the necessity of a violent rupture with the bourgeois state apparatus; the class character (and not inter-class character) of the alliances of the proletariat and the authentic nexus between democracy and socialism (Bianco, 1977:157).

From the initial co-optation of Togliatti to later investigations of it, in the 1970s polemic on the Italian Left over the extent to which the PCI’s Eurocommunist ideology was a valid extension of Gramscism, Salvadori would conclude: “it seems to me that in any case the party’s present strategy of ‘historical compromise’ and ‘ideological pluralism,’ the struggle for the ‘democratic’ transformation of the State, have nothing to do with Gramsci but are in contradiction with his thought” (qtd. in Bianco, 1977:161). Bianco and Salvadori arrived at this conclusion based on the fact that Gramsci built the PCI to become a vehicle of anti-capitalist struggle, while Togliatti and the Eurocommunists transformed the party into a tool of class collaboration limited to the winning of social-democratic reforms in parliamentary politics. In other words, Eurocommunists took up some of the methods of political struggle Gramsci believed were needed in Western liberal democracies, while abandoning the revolutionary goals of that political struggle.

In refutation of the type of appropriation of Gramsci by the PCI, Bates (1976) outlines the continuity of Gramsci’s work with Comintern directives from the Soviet Union. Crucially, Bates challenges what he argued to be the PCI’s misinterpretation of Gramsci, by reference to Gramsci’s lost writings obtained from the Gramsci Institute of Rome (1976:116). According to Bates, Gramsci developed his theory of hegemony and Communism in the 1920s specifically as a response to the failure of socialism to develop in the western industrialized nations (Ibid). The result was an expansion of Lenin’s theory of state hegemony (coercive power) to encompass a broader ideological struggle over the state and civil society. Gramsci wrote:
The direct determinism that moved the Russian masses in the streets to revolutionary assaults was complicated in Central and Western Europe by all the political superstructures created by the greater development of capitalism; it rendered mass action slower and more cautious, and therefore demands from the revolutionary Party a system of strategy and tactics much more complex and long range than those used by the Bolsheviks between March and November 1917 (qtd. in Hamrin, 1975:77).

In the Prison Notebooks, Gramsci (1971) expanded his thesis on the strategy and tactics of communist parties in the west further by stating that Bourgeois cultural hegemony in the working-class organizations of civil society was a huge barrier to the development of the revolutionary movement in the West:

In Russia the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks... (Gramsci, 1971:238).

Due to the highly developed nature of industrialized capitalist nations the organizations of civil society were ideological “fortresses” and “earthworks” that held consensual control over the masses and defeated revolutionary movements even in times of great economic crises. As a result, for Gramsci, the war of position must be waged through mass socialist cultural and educational activity in the “superstructures” of civil society, he likened to “the trench-systems of modern warfare” (Gramsci, 1971:235). While the war of movement is concerned with conquering state power, the war of position is a long-term preparatory phase of struggle in the “trenches” of civil society to defeat these “massive structures” of bourgeois liberal democracies:

war of movement increasingly becomes war of position, and it can be said that a State will win a war in so far as it prepares for it minutely and technically in peacetime. The massive structures of the modern democracies, both as State organizations, and as complexes of associations in civil society, constitute for the art of politics as it were the ‘trenches’ and the permanent fortifications of the front in the war of position: they render merely ‘partial’ the element of movement which before used to be ‘the whole’ of war, etc. (Ibid:243).
According to Gramsci, a long protracted war of position consisting of popular education and mass socialist cultural production against bourgeois hegemony was necessary to win the “war of movement”, a frontal assault on the state. Bourgeois hegemony is the capitalist elite’s consensual control of the oppressed classes; exercised through the social, cultural, religious, labor, communications (mass media) and educational institutions of civil society which appear to be autonomous but nevertheless serve the political interests of the ruling class by propagating and legitimating bourgeois ideology in all areas of life. The war of position is a long-term strategy that required “enormous sacrifice from infinite masses of people” and “exceptional qualities of patience and inventiveness” if the revolutionary party was to become successful in defeating capitalist culture, values, and other manifestations of bourgeois ideology in civil society (Ibid:238-239). Once the working-class organic intellectuals attained proletarian hegemony in civil society through mass socialist education, cultural production, and organization, the dictatorship of the proletariat could be realized.

The dictatorship of the proletariat was originally conceived by Marx and later Lenin, as a workers’ state whereby the working-class in alliance with the oppressed classes govern, control production, and exercise hegemony over the bourgeoisie, in the same way that the latter is hegemonic under capitalism (Miliband, 1991:151). The experience of 20th century socialist revolutions indicates fundamental social transformation will not occur in capitalist nations without a political party rooted in mass struggles that has the organizational capacity to control the state (Harnecker, 2007; Holst, 1999, 2002, 2007). Harnecker (2007) contends mass movements working through left political parties are highly positive and highly revolutionary because they create radical
educational opportunities that help people learn about the relationship of the political-economic, national, and international context of local mass struggles (qtd. in Holst, 2007:5). Meanwhile, mass movements that do not transcend the local level have weak revolutionary potential, because it is only when movements expand to the national level that they can challenge the state and determine whose class interests it is serving (Ibid).

The macro economic experience of Venezuela and Cuba in the past decade proves socialist states in the hands of popular classes are capable of constructing alternative models of international economic cooperation based on the principles of socialism and national sovereignty (Holst, 2007; Raby, 2006). For example, Venezuela formed the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our Americas (ALBA), a “fair trade” alliance with Cuba and other progressive left governments in the Caribbean and Latin America (Bolivia, Nicaragua, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica) to counter the neoliberal Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), U.S. imperialism is expanding in the region (Ibid). Today, socialist states like Cuba and Venezuela are the leading force constructing non-capitalist power structures based on equity and social justice to counter neo-liberal globalization and imperialism (Raby, 2006:57).

The relevance of these debates over Gramsci on the Italian left to this thesis is to show that, from early on, there has been an important distinction between “neo-Gramscian” interpretations of his work that claim he negated Marx’s theory of revolutionary class struggle, and those that argue that he merely developed it further pertaining to the strategy of western communist parties who must first win proletarian hegemony before they consolidate the socialist state (Holst, 1999, 2002, 2009). In this latter view of Gramsci, the revolutionary party remains central to advancing both the war
of position and the war of movement: two qualitatively distinct forms of struggle that are nonetheless strategically related in achieving the same aim. The war of position is a strategy devised by Gramsci to eventually win the war of movement in industrialized capitalist nations by gradually eroding the consensual control of the Bourgeoisie in civil society. Now let us consider the role of post-Marxism in further reformulating Gramsci’s theory of radical adult education into neo-Gramscian left-liberal discourse.

**Neo-Gramscianism and the Rise of Post-Marxist Hegemony in the Academy**

In addition to the PCI’s cooptation of Gramsci’s revolutionary ideas to serve a reformist politics, the emergence of post-Marxism in the 1980s eroded the revolutionary content of his theory even further. Post-Marxism was in part inspired by the previously discussed PCI debates of the 1960s-70s as Western Marxists promoted Eurocommunism as a New Left “Gramscian” alternative to Lenin’s Old Left vanguard politics. The inability of the Eastern Bloc countries to construct socialism, not to mention the Soviet repression of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 were also deeply involved in these debates (see Wainwright, 1993). In “Socialist Strategy: Where Next?”, key neo-Gramscian scholars Laclau and Mouffe (1981) began to question the validity of Marxism in understanding the “new” political subjects on the Left such as women, youth, racial, national, and sexual minorities whose identity and specificity of oppression they argued could not be adequately explained by Marx’s analysis of class conflict. They offered a re-conceptualization of Gramsci’s theory of hegemony to resolve this “crisis” of Marxism. For Laclau and Mouffe, Gramsci’s war of position or struggle for hegemony over the integral state (state + civil society) implied a post-socialist strategy based on a
“multidimensional conception of political radicalization” that transcended the uni-
dimensionality of Leninism who was said to be solely concerned with the struggle for
state power (Ibid:20). Laclau and Mouffe rejected Gramsci’s socialist strategy, and saw
the opportunity to transform the struggle for hegemony into a left liberal project:

The multidimensional conception of political radicalization involved in the
notion of the integral state, which informs Gramsci’s strategy of a war of
position, enables us to grasp the specificity and importance of these new
contradictions which are bound up with forms of domination different to that of
economic exploitation. Without doing violence to the Gramscian conception of
hegemony, this can be expanded to include the demands of the new social
movements. But once the notion of hegemony is reformulated in these terms, a
whole series of problems arise which undoubtedly do force us to go beyond
certain of Gramsci’s formulations (Ibid:21).

In their selective re-reading of Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, Laclau and Mouffe
disassociate Gramsci’s revolutionary war of movement from the war of position, and re-
conceputalize the latter as a new type of reformist identity politics based on the gradual
accumulation of parliamentary reforms that politicize all social struggles over identity in
civil society (Ibid). Laclau and Mouffe contend that, from 1968 onward, new
contradictions have emerged under advanced capitalism in the West, most clearly
expressed in the new social movements (NSMs) as new political subjects who are not
located at the point of production and who define their politics in a radically new manner
that departs from the traditional Marxist paradigm. The NSMs derive their power from
their social location in a society that is not only capitalist, but also sexist, patriarchal, and
racist (Ibid:21).

According to Goldstein (2005), Laclau and Mouffe contend radical democratic
politics must focus on discursive struggles in the academy over hegemonic discourses—
not political conflict for state power. In their attempt to move beyond Gramsci, post-
Marxists claim the hegemonic function of the working-class and the role of the party as
the unifying agent in this struggle must be abandoned. For them, Marx’s theory of class struggle and Lenin’s vanguardism cannot be privileged at the ontological level; it can neither recognize nor explain the types of social differentiation in advanced capitalism and the NSMs emerging to respond to these social divisions. Instead, post-Marxists argue for a project that can be recognized by other political subjects as fundamental to achieving their distinct political goals based on their movement’s identity.

According to Laclau and Mouffe, the NSMs should not abandon bourgeois democracy but rather develop it further by increasing mass participation in both civil and political society to create a more “radical” and “pluralist” democracy (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985:176). The object of radical social movements is now democratic transition rather than socialist revolution (Leonhard, 1978; Marzani, 1980; Sassoon, 1982, 1986; Antonian, 1987; Golding, 1992; Boggs, 1980, 1984, 1995; McLaren et al., 2002). Radical pluralists operating within a neo-Gramscian framework limit Gramsci’s politics to a non-revolutionary strategy led by autonomous social movements whose main objective is the democratization of civil society—not proletarian hegemony (Giovanni, 1979; Boggs, 1984; Mayo, 1999; Bofelo, 2005).

As an alternative to Laclau and Mouffe, Post-Marxist Critical theorist Sanbonmatsu (2004) offers a synthesis of Gramsci’s Marxism and Foucault’s post-modernism, to construct a neo-Gramscian alternative strategy to rebuild the still-fractured left. Although Sanbonmatsu supports Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, he dismisses its universalizing totality and argues for a Post-Modern Prince to move beyond Gramsci’s (1971) Modern Prince, the Leninist vanguard political strategy as outlined in his Prison Notebooks. Sanbonmatsu re-envisions Gramsci’s organic intellectual project, but still
recognizes the need for conscious leadership even in anarchist and popular democratic movements, because denying this prevents one from addressing the question of what constitutes legitimate forms of leadership (2004:143). While it was the task of organic intellectuals in the modern prince, Gramsci’s mass vanguard party, to lead the war of position for hegemony by disseminating a new socialist “common sense” in civil society (Ibid, 144), the activist-intellectuals in Sanbonmatsu’s postmodern prince would be responsible for organizing a single global horizontal movement comprised of a multiplicity of autonomous left organizations in global civil society. To accomplish this, they must gather up:

the dispersed energies of existing liberation movements throughout the world and provide them with the form of a single world historical movement. Through its articulation of a moral ontology of freedom…the prince would seek to win the loyalties of other movements and groups in society, exerting a hegemonic influence over culture and state. In its coming-to-form as a unified subject, the postmodern prince would illuminate the many-sided nature of power and domination—capitalism, patriarchy, racism, and other distorting institutions—and also prefigure the just society to come (Ibid:158).

Sanbonmatsu credits Laclau and Mouffe (1985) for conceptualizing a similar articulation of diverse social movement elements that do not reduce their interests to class exploitation; however, he critiques them for not specifying the content of this articulation (Ibid:183). According to Sanbonmatsu, Mouffe and Laclau offer a negative articulation based on the alienated contention that each movement would relate to every other movement as an “other” (Ibid). As an alternative to Laclau and Mouffe, Sabonmatsu’s postmodern prince was inspired by Chomsky et al. (1986) because they had a positive
articulation of elements based on a common identity as human beings with a shared historical reality.  

Despite his critique of Laclau and Mouffe, Sanbonmatsu agrees with them that Lenin’s authoritarian vanguard had been widely dismissed and discredited by most left political theorists in the latter half of the Twentieth century (Ibid:172). Echoing Laclau and Mouffe, Sanbonmatsu argues that although Gramsci was a self-identified “Marxist-Leninist”, he was qualitatively different from Lenin because of his distinction between “bureaucratic centralism”, an authoritarian top-down organizational party structure and “democratic centralism”, an “organic and democratic organizational form” (Ibid:173). Similarly, the post-modern prince must also be more emancipatory and inclusive than bureaucratic vanguard organizational forms: “The prince cannot be reduced to its mere official ‘governmental’ bodies” or a single political party because once this occurs his “utopian imaginary” becomes “vulnerable to attack from without and corruption and bureaucratization from within” (Ibid:189, emphasis in original). According to Sanbonmatsu, the organizational form necessary to realize the postmodern prince in practice would require a new post-socialist International based on a neo-humanist philosophy that reflected the plurality of local and global movements living in harmony with nature and each other:

The unity of the postmodern prince is a spiritual and historical unity, in the sense that its constitutive parts come to view themselves as ‘organically’ and not

5 Sanbonmatsu’s conception of the postmodern prince was inspired by the book Liberating Theory, a manifesto written in 1986 by a group of veteran left intellectuals in Z Magazine (Michael Albert, Leslie Cagan, Noam Chomsky, Robin Hamel, Mel King, Lydia Sargent, Holly Sklar) that called for a “new humanism” whereby distinct social movements learned “to function in the context of one another” and “recognize that they themselves are essentially different facets of one still larger movement all of whose parts must relate positively to one another if the whole and any of the parts will succeed” in “creating a new liberatory society” (Sanbonmatsu:160).
merely functionally related to one another…the prince must be able to exploit strategic opportunities by acting, at times, like a single organism. That is, it must be able to pursue long-term goals with some consistency of purpose, and these goals must be pursued not just locally and globally, but with a certain degree of simultaneity and tactical coordination. In practical terms, this means that something like a new International is required. Like the Internationals of old, this one too would conceive of itself in utopian terms, as a bid to remake human life. Unlike the old, however, it would be rooted in a critical life-philosophy rather than merely in opposition to capitalism per se. It would also be thoroughly democratic, eschewing the centralization of political authority (Ibid:189).

While adopting multiple organizational forms in a de-centralized global civil society, the postmodern prince would still “represent the single, transcendental consciousness of today’s diverse social movements” (Ibid:182).

However, contrary to Sanbonmatsu’s claims, it is not Gramsci’s conception of hegemony and vanguard party politics that is a departure from Lenin, but rather Sanbonmatsu’s own conception of the postmodern prince that interprets Gramsci’s ideas as a departure from Marxism into post-Marxism. While Gramsci agrees that the revolutionary socialist project is international in scope, the point of departure is “national”, and it was the task of the revolutionary party to organize the diverse movements of the oppressed classes within a given Western capitalist nation-state into a single national popular anti-capitalist movement:

To be sure, the line of development is towards internationalism, but the point of departure is ‘national’…Consequently, it is necessary to study accurately the combination of national forces which develop in accordance with the international perspective and directives [i.e. those of the Comintern]. The leading class is in fact only such if it accurately interprets this combination—of which it is itself a component and precisely as such is able to give the movement a certain direction, within certain perspectives (Gramsci, 1971:240).

Even in the arena of international politics, Gramsci supported the Third International as an international vanguard organization to assimilate the richest experience from the Russian Revolution and inform the development of communist movements in other
countries. Sanbonmatsu’s notion of avoiding Leninist organizational forms to advance the global left clearly signals a “post” Gramscian political strategy.

Post-Marxism also misappropriates Gramsci’s theory of working-class organic intellectual formation by arguing that civil society is autonomous of political society, and social movements spontaneously produce them. In contrast, Holst (2002) argues that Gramsci’s communist organic intellectuals were qualitatively distinct from post-Marxist activists who think they are “organic” but are in fact left-liberal traditional intellectuals operating in various institutions of bourgeois civil society who maintain ruling class hegemony by not challenging it:

Essentially, the distortions of Gramsci come largely from radical pluralists who hold positions in institutions of civil society—such as schools, universities, community-based organizations—who want to believe that their educational work creates organic intellectuals and that reform-oriented organizing within social movements is counter-hegemonic political work, faithful to Gramsci…[but] Gramsci was not a radical pluralist. He was a communist who believed in the absolute necessity of a revolutionary party of the working-class…radical pluralism…speaks to a defensive, reformist politics…that sees civil society as a sphere largely independent of the state…radical pluralists do not need to put words in Gramsci’s mouth; they can use Gramsci’s own terms: hegemony of the proletariat or proletarian hegemony (Holst, 2002:67-68).

Contrary to the neo-Gramscian post-Marxists, Gramsci (1971) saw capitalist civil society as an extension of bourgeois hegemony, and his study of intellectuals in the Prison Notebooks was concerned with their function (within the state) in creating mass consent for socialism by undermining this consensual control over the working class. Gramsci did not support the expansion of civil society to protect it from bourgeois state intervention and preserve it as a realm of freedom as post-Marxism suggests, but rather advocated a war of position led by revolutionary organic intellectuals to construct proletarian hegemony:

The first problem to resolve, for the Turin communists, was how to modify the political stance and general ideology of the proletariat itself, as a national
element which exists within the ensemble of State life and is unconsciously subjected to the influence of bourgeois education, the bourgeois press, and bourgeois traditions (Gramsci, 1971:443).

In recent decades, Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) post-Marxist conception of radical pluralism has gained increasing attention in the Humanities and contributed to the displacement of Marxism in the Academy. Like the ideologues of Eurocommunism (Togliatti, 1957; Berlinger, 1977), Laclau and Mouffe successfully de-radicalized Gramsci’s political theory and reformulated it into a coherent left-liberal discourse that has attained widespread popularity in recent years (Sanbonmatsu, 2006).

In an effort to reclaim the revolutionary Gramsci, Hill (2007) argues we must return to Marxism, the “leitmotiv” of Gramsci’s theory of hegemony:

Insofar as Gramsci’s struggle was committed to overcoming the hegemony of the bourgeoisie—their intellectual and moral dominance based on a capitalist form of political economy—substituting this hegemony for proletarian hegemony necessarily entailed a completely different conception of politics; one that was redefined through the reversal of the subordination of social relationships to an economic rationality. It was one in which existing conceptual boundaries were revised to maximize and broaden the scope of thought so that reality was no longer distorted by the application of narrow and false abstractions… hegemony must be defined in terms of the leitmotiv of Gramsci’s long-term commitment to the overthrow of capitalism via the application of socialist forms of thought and practice (2007:45).

Hill conducted this study on Gramsci’s pre-prison writings to prove that his conception of hegemony was a development of Marxist theory, inspired by years of political activism in the Italian Socialist Party (PSI). The following three elements of historical materialism were evident in Gramsci’s conception of hegemony: 1) historicism of reality; 2) dialectical totalization; and 3) humanist (re)articulation (Hill, 2007:50). In opposition to post-Marxism, Hill argues for a redefinition of hegemony as a problem of cognitive and moral submissiveness that explains why the oppressed classes in capitalist society consent to their own alienation (2007:71). Hill reveals that Gramsci’s theory of
hegemony was rooted in Marx’s humanism and confidence in humankind’s potential. Contrary to the defeatism and class collaboration inherent in post-Marxism, Hill contends Gramsci’s notion of hegemony was truly revolutionary in that he was certain *hegemony could be won* by the proletariat through widespread socialist political, educational, and cultural activity in bourgeois civil society to improve the level of socialist culture within the working-class.

Gramsci affirmed the only way for the working-class to defeat Bourgeois hegemony was through the educational activities of a revolutionary party. In Gramsci’s pre-prison writings, Holst (2009) identifies three educational roles for the revolutionary party. First, the party must engage workers in collective *nonformal learning* through the creation of *nonformal educational institutions* whose purpose is to nurture the ideological development of party members (e.g.: Gramsci’s participation in the Socialist Youth Federation Centre as a PSI member). Second, it must immerse party cadre (members) in popular organizations so they *learn in struggle*, through their own consciousness-raising efforts to educate workers and other oppressed groups (such as national minorities) about the broader national and global political-economic contexts of local class struggles and the course of action necessary to resolve these contradictions. Third, the party must create *educational materials*, such as the party press and other forms of propaganda to be utilized by party members in their daily agitation in popular struggles. The numerous articles Gramsci contributed to the socialist and communist party press as a party propagandist are an example of such material. And fourth, Gramsci understood the multiple forms of vanguard popular education led by the party described above, created the spontaneous informal education that occurred amongst the popular classes in the civic
life of working-class communities independent of the party’s organized educational activity (Holst, 2009:631-632).

In addition to the educational roles of the party, Holst reveals the nature of Gramsci’s party education contains the following three elements. One, party education is of a *class* nature, which educates the popular classes to think independently of the ruling class, in terms of their own class interests in capitalist society. Two, party education is not abstract but *concrete*, based on the actual needs and goals of the class struggles the popular classes are currently engaged in. Three, party education is *collective*, so people learn reciprocally through dialogue and are inspired to take collective action (Ibid:632-633).

At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, post-Marxism’s interpretation of Gramsci has become the new hegemonic ideology in radical adult education. The retreat from socialism has been attributed to the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s—and the neo-liberalization of universities in recent decades, both of which inspired many socialist intellectuals to embrace post-Marxist and post-Modernist discourses. (McClaren, 2005; Holst, 2007). Draining Gramsci’s theory of its revolutionary content is not surprising in the academy, especially when we consider Phelp’s assessment of this problem:

> Gramsci has become safe, tame, denatured—a wisp of his revolutionary self. Academics seeking to justify their retreat into highly abstruse theories have created fanciful illusions about their ‘hegemonic activity’. They have created a mythical Gramsci who holds views he never did, including an opposition to revolutionary socialist organization of the sort that he, following upon Lenin, held indispensable (Phelp, 1995:53-54).

In the past two decades, the influence of post-Marxism in adult education and social movement theory has led to a focus on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and
autonomous NSMs in civil society as the primary agents of change on the Left. Radical adult education is no longer examining the role of capitalism and the state in expanding globalization, and the need for a revolutionary praxis and vanguard politics that goes beyond civil sectarianism to overcome this (Holst, 2004:2-3). The main thesis in post-Marxist adult education is that NSMs are both the catalyst of a person’s individual transformation and the main location where this occurs (Finger, 1989:20). Finger (1989) analyzes NSM educational practices to develop a new theory of post-modern adult education. Finger argues that NSMs are creating new forms of adult education which abandon radical politics and seek individual transformation rather than societal change like the traditional left political parties:

Transformation, in order to be effective, has to rely on and stem from the person, whereas structures and institutions can at most be supportive. This means that the transformations are of an educational nature but not of a political nature; the relevant social and political transformations come ‘from within’ and happen at the level of the person. Therefore, the main slogan of the new movement is: ‘the personal is political!’ This kind of transformation does not need a structured and hierarchically organized mass movement, since the most efficient places to bring about transformation are grassroots groups promoting local cultures (Finger, 1989:17).

According to this theory, political parties are “Old Social Movements” that defined the status, role, and function of the individual in relation to the development of modern society. Meanwhile, in postmodern adult education, the individual defines his/her identity in relation to post-modern society (Ibid:15-16). In this liberal interpretation of adult education for a post-modern world, the “old” models of communist education concerned with party building and developing mass organizations of popular power to defeat capitalism are no longer necessary or desirable. In her study of the Metro Network for Social Justice (MNSJ), a Toronto-based coalition of organizations against neo-liberal globalization, Conway (2001) illustrates the pedagogical role of NSMs in generating new
forms of emancipatory learning by identifying three modes of democratic knowledge production in the movement: 1) tacit knowledges that are produced by activists and transmitted through their daily cultural practices; 2) praxis-based knowledge that develop when activists critically reflect on their practice; and 3) knowledge production, when social movement actors consciously produce knowledge in a participatory and democratic manner (p. 48-49). Welton (1993) similarly asserts that NSMs represent a new era in politics, creating new democratic institutions and learning processes that ultimately expand democracy to the masses (p.152-153).

Holst (2007) contends that the turn to civil societarian perspectives has led to a shift in radical adult education from the traditional socialist goals of organizing national movements to transform capitalist nation-states towards public and privately funded social movement organizations operating in a local/global civil society dialectic. In recent years, a number of radical adult educators have responded to the neo-liberal privatization of former state-run services in housing, education, and community development by organizing NGOs. In these not-for-profit organizations, professional adult educators receive funding by the state and private foundations to provide social services to the working-class and other marginalized groups to help them cope with the negative effects of globalization on local communities (Holst, 2007:4-5).

The influence of the neo-Gramscian perspective on organic intellectual formation is also prevalent in recent literature on the radical intellectual and cultural capacities of workers in the Canadian labor movement (Sawchuk, 1996, 2003; Livingstone, 2002; Livingston & Sawchuk, 2000, 2004). In particular, Livingstone’s case study of White working-class organic intellectuals in the Canadian labor movement argues informal
labor education is a radical political-educational praxis in the ongoing struggle of organized labor for socialist democracy in Canada.

Livingstone (2002) expands our understanding of the complexities of working-class organic intellectual formation in the Canadian labor movement by examining the political education of a White Canadian auto-worker in his late twenties in the Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW). In particular, Livingstone analyzes how the different spheres of informal learning contributed to this worker’s ideological development as a socialist organic intellectual by: 1) studying formal union courses in the CAW’s Paid Educational Leave (PEL) political education program; 2) participating in informal learning networks to draw on the knowledge of more experienced co-workers; 3) engaging in independent music production in working-class communities; and 4) initiating sustained dialogue with workers to raise their cultural level and political consciousness (p. 225-230). Livingstone argues that organic intellectuals emerge spontaneously in working-class communities through the informal cultural and educational activities workers engage in, in everyday life (Ibid:227).

Livingstone rightly emphasizes the role of formal political education courses in social movements, informal learning from more advanced peers, autonomous music production independent of the corporate music industry, and open dialogue with workers, in the ideological development of working-class organic intellectuals. Livingstone argues that social change in advanced capitalist societies will involve widespread cultural transformation within the working-class:

First, cultural transformation from the ideological hegemony of the currently dominant social groups in advanced capitalist societies is an extremely complex and time-consuming process. It will require concerted challenges to many ruling myths and ‘common sense’ cultural beliefs before seriously challenging established forms of political power. Second, sustaining such challenges will
require the development of more democratic forums for popular dialogue on all the issues of potential political importance in everyday life (Ibid:232).

Livingstone is also correct in observing that a long-term war of position involving widespread open dialogue and popular education facilitated by organic intellectuals in every sphere of bourgeois civil society is the only way to achieve a democratic socialist transformation of Canadian capitalism (p. 234). However, I depart with Livingstone on his contention that working-class organic intellectuals operating spontaneously within social movements and working-class communities can defeat bourgeois hegemony, independent of the leadership of revolutionary organizations. Vanguard organizations are required to coordinate the local socialist cultural and political-educational activities of individual organic intellectuals and social movements into a national popular collective will. The leadership of a revolutionary working-class party is required to construct a complex of socialist hegemonic forces that eventually transform the bourgeois state and civil society into a new historic bloc. In Canada, the working-class is multi-national and complex, with oppressor nation British and French workers, oppressed First Nations, African-Canadians, and diverse national minorities. In the Canadian context, the communist left must create organic intellectuals in the different class fractions who will organize multi-national unity within the working-class by educating, organizing, and persuading workers, minority nationalities, and First Nations to form a new national popular collective will.

Elsewhere in the social movement literature, Gramsci is presented as a democratic and flexible alternative for the NSMs, as opposed to the rigidity of Lenin and the OSM. In their reading of Gramsci, Carroll and Ratner (1994) attempt to find “middle-ground” between Marxism-Leninism and Radical-Pluralism, by arguing that the NSMs have the
greatest potential for social change by applying the neo-Gramscian strategy of “counter-hegemony” that seeks to unify popular-democratic and class-based movements in the common struggle against neo-liberal globalization. Carroll and Ratner propose a neo-Gramscian alternative to what they regard as the bankruptcy of Leninist vanguard parties and the anti-hegemonic tendencies of radical pluralism that are only concerned with localized micro politics (p.10). Thus, in much of the social movement literature, Gramsci is qualitatively distinct from Lenin and is not seen to the same aspirations as communism, namely the goals of socialist revolution and human liberation, which have been abandoned by the proponents of post-Marxism (Cohen, 1985; Melucci, 1992, Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 1988) and neo-Gramscianism (Boggs, 1984; Carroll & Ratner, 1994).

Gramscian theorists in radical adult education contest post-Marxist readings of Gramsci as a radical democrat who abandoned revolutionary party politics in the struggle for transformative change. Holst (2002) is critical of post-Marxist adult education theorists who mis-appropriate Gramsci for their reformist project of engaging in “participatory” models of popular education, as though radical adult education alone will bring about social change. Also, Holst contends Gramsci wrote of proletarian hegemony and not the more general “counter-hegemony”, because he believed this was the most effective strategy to win mass consent and establish a workers’ state in the industrialized capitalist nations. Holst compares Gramsci’s theory of “proletarian hegemony” to Freire’s “conscientization” in that the latter was conceptualized as a dialectical negation of bourgeois culture in civil society that “conscientizes” the oppressed classes through the advancement of socialist culture and revolutionary organizational forms:
It is important to note the use of *proletarian hegemony*, because it focuses us precisely on Gramsci’s dialectical understanding of the class nature of hegemony. The term *counter-hegemony* does not account for the creative aspect of conscientization: the creation of new knowledge—a working class outlook that goes beyond countering the bourgeois outlook to creating a fundamentally new way of conceiving the world (Holst, 2002:90).

Contrary to post-Marxism, Gramsci advocated building proletarian hegemony through an ideological war of position under the leadership of a revolutionary party -- not the expansion of participation in bourgeois civil society through autonomous social movements. In Holst’s (2009) reading of Gramsci, the aims of party education are to develop vanguard leadership to lead popular organizations and struggles. The party must develop the leadership capacity of party cadre so they can in turn lead and unify all of the oppressed groups into an alliance with the working-class so it can become hegemonic (Holst, 2009:634). In addition to capacity-building, the party’s internal educational work must educate its membership to understand the *line of march*, the ability to determine the path forward for the revolutionary movement based on its own particular national, historical, political-economic context, and socio-cultural processes of development (Ibid).

And finally, through its external educational work in the popular organizations, the party must guide these movements along the line of march (Ibid:635). The revolutionary party is the communist adult learning centre that not only conducts mass political education campaigns *within* social movements; it is the *only* institution that has the political will and organizational capacity to educate and train the working-class and other oppressed groups to become the new hegemonic class. Holst reminds us that Gramsci’s life work was building a mass vanguard party, and his model of communist education recognized the centrality of the revolutionary party in the political-ideological, organizational, and educational struggle of the working-class for proletarian hegemony (Holst, 2002:115).
To further support this point, it is instructive to examine the concrete results of the attempts to apply Gramsci’s ideas in post-Marxist ways. For instance, the Brazilian Left sought to apply his strategy in popular education while refusing to engage in party building. Ireland’s (1987) assessment of Gramsci’s influence in Brazilian popular education from the 1960s-1980s attributes the failure of this radical adult education movement to liberate the popular classes from Brazilian capitalism and colonialism, to its misappropriation of Gramsci’s socialist strategy. Ireland argues Gramsci’s main contribution to popular education was his contention that radical adult education requires the leadership of a vanguard party to develop working-class cadres (organic intellectuals) who could in turn lead and direct their own class to create a new hegemonic force in the bourgeois state and civil society (1987:27). Ireland correctly observes that if radical adult education wants to advance the Left it must overcome the limitations of spontaneous post-Marxist adult education and apply Gramsci’s theory in its entirety:

few educators would deny the inherently political nature of education but many have profound misgivings about education being directed by intellectuals committed to a political party. Gramsci lays great emphasis on the role of the party and on that of the intellectual, as a constituent member of that organization, in the revolutionary process. There is a tendency when utilizing a Gramscian perspective in Popular Education to omit reference to the question of party and to restrict the concept of organic intellectual to that of educator (1987:79).

As long as popular educators tail behind the popular movements rather than provide them with communist education and revolutionary leadership, popular education loses its value as a tool in the liberation struggles of the working-class and oppressed nations historically colonized by imperialism. The dialectic of revolutionary party-building and expanding communist education within revolutionary parties is critical for advancing socialism in Canada.
In recent years, a growing number of radical adult educators have been concerned with reclaiming the specifically Leninist heritage of communist education in revolutionary parties throughout the 20th century, to further our understanding of exactly what constitutes radical adult education (Allman & Wallis, 1995; Holst, 1999, 2002, 2004; Boughton, 1997, 2005; Au, 2007). Holst (1999) traces the Leninist roots in Gramsci’s theory of communist education and provides a critical contribution to the debate over the legitimacy of Marxism-Leninism in popular education, since he (along with Freire) holds such a central place in this field (Mayo, 1999; Schugurensky, 2001).

There are a variety of parallels between the treatment of Gramscian theory in general and in adult education research specifically. Until recently, the tendency in Neo-Gramscian adult education literature was to deny Gramsci’s Leninist heritage (Leonhardt, 1978; Marzani, 1980; Sassoon, 1982, 1986; Antonian, 1987; Golding, 1992; Boggs, 1980, 1984, 1995; McLaren et al., 2002; Coben, 1998; Livingston, 2002). Holst (1999) quotes Gramsci at length in order to challenge such denials (Holst, 2002:281-282). A number of other scholars also locate Gramsci within the Marxist-Leninist tradition of revolutionary class struggle for proletarian dictatorship, although they disagree with the prospects of Leninism as a means of advancing revolution today (Pozzolini, 1970; Salvadori, 1979; Femia, 1987; Germino, 1990; Bellamy & Schecter, 1993; Allman, 2002; Drake, 2003). Beyond Holst, and in efforts to reclaim Gramsci from left liberal post-Marxism in recent years, an emergent group of communists in radical adult education have also re-established Gramsci’s political theory as inherently connected with Marxism-Leninism (Bianco, 1977; Allman & Wallis, 1995).
Holst (2004) goes one step further, by analyzing two Marxist-Leninist organizations in the U.S. to illustrate the prospects for Gramscian communist education in the 21st century. Holst compares the communist adult educational practices of two U.S. Marxist-Leninist vanguard organizations: 1) the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO) currently engaged in party-building; and 2) the League of Revolutionaries for a New America (LRNA), concerned with organizing mass communist education campaigns within the anti-globalization movement. Both organizations were formed in the early 1990s, but are historically rooted in the Maoist new communist movement of the 1970s (Elbaum, 2002). Holst demonstrates the need for unity between left parties, typically defined as OSMs, and the NSMs to advance the anti-globalization movement towards socialism. He compares the mass educational work of these organizations to Gramsci’s educational theory, arguing that both are sites of Gramscian communist education in the U.S. that recognize the significance of vanguard organizations to the coordination, education, and advancement of the revolutionary process in bourgeois civil society.

The FRSO utilizes popular education techniques to advance its communist educational work in multinational working-class and oppressed nationality movements with low literacy levels engaged in mass struggle. Popular education is useful to FRSO because their educational work is based on the maoist “mass line” principle of “from the masses, to the masses”, which means all communist education and organizing must work directly from the lived experiences of the oppressed (Ibid:29-30). FRSO’s popular education work begins with the experiences of the masses and problematizes and systematizes their understanding of their reality, to help them gain a deeper understanding of racism and capitalist oppression, so they can struggle to transform it
(Ibid). Contrary to liberal uses of Freire that seek to democratize learning relations within the classroom, FRSO is in line with Freire’s (1973) work on the Brazilian Left, utilizing popular education to expand the democratic participation of the popular classes in their own struggles for liberation.6

The LRNA is a former Marxist-Leninist organization that no longer sees its political educational work in the classic Leninist sense of “convincing the working-class that communism would be in their interest”. Instead, they focus on a growing “objective communist class” of homeless and structurally unemployed workers, whose survival depends on replacing capitalism with communist relations of production in order to survive (Holst, 2004:34). According to League leader Nelson Peery, LRNA political education is concerned with elevating the subjective consciousness of the mass movements that represent this new class (i.e. anti-poverty, welfare rights etc.) through public speakers who can explain “what people already know” about this revolution caused by the introduction of labor-replacing technology such as the microchip and robotics, to inspire people “for their historic revolutionary task” (2004:11).

The rise of post-Marxist theorists Laclau and Mouffe discredited Marxism in the academy in general and reformulated Gramsci’s theory of hegemony and revolutionary transformation in particular to advance post-Marxist discourse as a viable alternative for the academic left. Left Critical theorist Sanbonmatsu synthesized Gramsci and Foucault,

6 A leading Brazilian popular educator in the field of adult literacy, Freire completed his doctoral thesis in 1959 at Recife University and began developing his method of mass literacy education when appointed by the populist Governor, Joao Goulart in 1961. When Goulart was overthrown by a right-wing coup in the mid-60s, Freire (1973) went into exile in Bolivia and then Chile where he wrote his most influential work, Pedagogy of the Oppressed. The book was originally published in English because it was blacklisted in Portuguese by the Brazilian censors (Kane, 2001:34).
while Caroll and Ratner attempted to reconcile Marxism-Leninism with post-Marxism to construct a neo-Gramsican theory to rebuild the Left in the 21st century. In response to the proliferation of radical pluralist discourses, Gramscian scholars Holst, Hill, and Ireland reclaimed Gramsci’s contribution to radical adult education. Now we can use this as a backdrop to clarify his theory on the primacy of the revolutionary party to the formation of working-class organic intellectuals on the Communist Left.

**Vanguard Communist Education and Working-Class Organic Intellectual Formation**

Despite the influence of Leninism in Gramsci’s thought, Western Left theorists often question the usefulness of Leninist organizations in the education of revolutionary leadership. Wainwright (1993) provides great insight into alternative models of radical leadership development pioneered by the Western New Left to replace the Leninist vanguard party. Wainwright was active in the 1968 student movement, eco-feminist, and radical shop stewards movement in Western Europe in the 1960s, and developed a democratic theory of knowledge based on her experience, to contribute to the ideological foundations of a new left movement today. In *Arguments for a New Left; Answering the Free Market Right*, Wainwright (1993) emphasized the importance of democratic civic organizations in the workplace, community, and internationally, “as means through which practical knowledge is socialized, theoretical understanding is scrutinized and partially knowing, collective agents of change are forged” (p.5). According to Wainwright, New Left movements struggled against “all knowing authorities of the state and the corporation”, including authoritarian parties on the left, whether economistic or Leninist (Ibid:6). The Western New Left was based on the principle of autonomy, and
internal debate created participatory forms of learning such as workshops, anti-authoritarian horizontal networks, and rotating leadership positions as an alternative to the bureaucratic leadership of traditional Leninist parties (Ibid). In opposition to Leninist notions of vanguard education from above and the centralization of knowledge, Wainwright argues for the democratization of knowledge from below in autonomous social movements as a necessary precondition of democratic change (p.8). To cite an example, the second wave women’s movement utilized various forms of autonomous grassroots knowledge production that created new forms of power when women shared and reflected on their experience in order to take action against patriarchy. This contributed to the democratization of knowledge by posing the following challenges to traditional notions of expert/scientific knowledge: 1) developing a recognition of knowledge in previously unrecognized or under-valued skills; 2) revealing that emotion could be combined with reason in the production of knowledge; 3) engaging in consciousness-raising which resulted in a recognition of the “fallibility of knowledge” (i.e. it could be transformed through modifying old behavior); 4) understanding that underlying social processes of knowledge production (“what is really going on”) provided a richer account than empirical generalizations (p.78).

Wainwright refutes the Leninist notion of the revolutionary party as an “all-knowing” elitist organization that could “distill and centralize the knowledge of the membership”, and the Western New Left challenged this by producing a “cumulative popular challenge to all-knowing forms of socialism” (p.61). The New Left challenged Leninism through their own pragmatism which privileged practical experiential knowledge over the scientific knowledge of vanguard parties: “the new movements
created their own ways of organizing based on their own experiences and sources of knowledge and skill ignored by existing managerial methods” (p.77).

Wainwright’s case for spontaneous democratic knowledge production from below, is counter to Lenin’s vanguard communist education from above. It was Lenin’s contention that the spontaneous radicalism of oppressed classes was only half the battle of winning proletarian hegemony: communist education in revolutionary parties must develop this spontaneous radicalism of the social movement leadership and rank-and-file by combining it with the leadership and expertise of vanguard communist organizations to advance revolutionary strategy. While Wainwright builds a strong case for the democratization of knowledge in autonomous NSMs independent of revolutionary parties, not only does the notion of democratization of knowledge say little about whether learning and knowledge production is primarily adaptive or transformative, but also she fails to account for how the expansion of democratic and participatory forms of learning in diverse social movements alone can defeat ruling class hegemony in bourgeois civil society, as a precondition of winning control of the capitalist state. In order to advance the socialist project in Western industrialized nations, this will require both above ground mass democratic participation in radical movements and undemocratic practices executed by the underground centralized leadership of revolutionary parties to resist imperialist state repression and coordinate local and regional movements into a national anti-capitalist movement for proletarian hegemony.

Contrary to post-Marxism’s separation of Lenin and Gramsci, and Western Left critiques of the viability of vanguard politics more generally on the Left, Gramsci’s theory of radical adult education begins with the Leninist conception of the revolutionary
vanguard party: an advanced detachment of the working-class comprised of socialist intellectuals who work in a closed, elitist, hierarchically structured organization capable of advancing the socialist project in a given capitalist nation-state. In defense of Marxism-Leninist parties, they are revolutionary organizations that recognize the autonomy of identity and class-based movements on the left, but seek to unify all oppressed peoples movements against capitalist imperialism to undermine the divide-and-conquer technique of ruling class hegemony, in order to construct proletarian hegemony. Lenin’s key contribution to communist education was his understanding that revolutionary socialist consciousness did not *spontaneously* emerge from social movements; it had to be brought to the working-class from *without*, through a revolutionary vanguard party comprised of an elite socialist intelligentsia:

> The economic struggle merely ‘impels’ the workers to realize the government’s attitude towards the working-class… *we shall never be able* to develop the political consciousness of the workers by keeping them within the framework of the economic struggle, for that framework is too narrow…Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers *only from without*, that is, only from outside…the relations between workers and employers (Lenin:1902:78).

Lenin critiqued labor education in the Russian trade union movement because it disregarded politics and limited itself to educating workers about the economic struggle to overcome their grievances with employers, but not the political class contradictions of capitalism and the necessity of abolishing capitalist production relations. Lenin argued that the spontaneous rebellious activity of the working-class proved that there were workers who had the potential to become professional revolutionaries whose “profession” was to provide labor and other social movements with revolutionary political, ideological and organizational leadership. However, it was the duty of the vanguard party to educate and train rebel workers in the theory and practice of revolutionary socialism (Holst,
Lenin stated that the duty of the revolutionary socialist was not to tail behind the masses but use communist education to develop organic leaders from the masses into “professional revolutionaries”:

Such workers, average people of the masses, are capable of displaying enormous energy and self-sacrifice…and are capable (in fact, are alone capable) of determining the outcome of our entire movement—but the struggle…requires professional revolutionaries. And we must see to it, not only the masses ‘advance’ concrete demands, but that the masses of workers ‘advance’ an increasing number of such professional revolutionaries (Lenin, 1902:107).

Lenin’s ideas on the tasks of professional revolutionaries in a vanguard party training workers to become socialist propagandists and agitators were similar to Gramsci’s thought on the importance of the revolutionary party in the education of working-class organic intellectuals (Holst, 1999:411). Soon after the decline of the Turin factory council movement in 1920 due to the socialist party’s inability to lead the insurrection, Gramsci responded to this crisis by helping found a national Leninist vanguard party to transcend the limitations of reformism in the PSI by providing the working-class with revolutionary leadership:

. . . a revolutionary movement can only be founded on the proletarian vanguard and must be conducted without prior consultation, without the apparatus of representative assemblies. A revolution is like a war. It must be minutely prepared by a workers general staff, just as a war is prepared by the general staff of the army. . . The task of the proletarian vanguard is to keep the revolutionary spirit awake in the masses. . . no revolutionary movement will be decreed by a national workers’ assembly: to convocate an assembly means to confess one’s own lack of faith (qtd. in Femia, 1987:149-150).

Lenin’s theory of professional revolutionaries functioning within a vanguard party was the basis of Gramsci’s notion of working-class organic intellectuals, because it was created to overcome the limits of spontaneity in the post-war Italian working-class movement, by educating and training workers to operate within a party organization.
which had the political, organizational, and ideological capacity to coordinate local struggles into a *national* revolutionary movement for a socialist state.

The legacy of communist education in the Nicaraguan Revolution confirms the importance of Marxist-Leninist vanguard parties in advancing the struggle for hegemony. Barndt’s (1991) study of the role of popular education in the Nicaraguan revolution used the concept of *accumulating forces in silence* to account for the communist education facilitated by the FSLN in the pre-revolutionary period (1967-1974). After the defeat of the FSLN’s guerrilla army at the Battle of Pancasan in the late 1960s, popular education became a major tactic in the strategy to build mass support amongst the majority of workers, peasants, and Christians in order to build alliances between the different class forces and win hegemony over the dominant institutions of bourgeois civil society, such as the universities and Catholic Church:

Consciousness-raising was always linked to organization-building, and the FSLN worked at many different levels and in many sectors to build a base of popular organization: with peasants in the countryside, workers in the urban areas, poor residents in the barrios, students in the schools and universities, and with the growing ‘popular church’…This education took the form of biblical reflections, literacy classes, or agricultural training programs, but it was always linked to the development of organizations for the poor, workers, and peasants. All of these educational activities served not only to raise consciousness but also to strengthen the organizational capacity of the people. The immediate task was organizing to overthrow the dictatorship…It was this “work of ants”, the years of educating and organizing at the grassroots level, that prepared the Nicaraguan people for the final offensive against the Somoza regime (1991:34-35).

In the case of the FSLN, communists utilized popular education to prepare workers, students and peasants to become a new hegemonic bloc in Nicaraguan civil society, as a pre-condition of gaining power over the bourgeois state. This experience suggests that radical adult education in the popular movements under the direction of a revolutionary vanguard party is more likely to contribute to the daunting tasks of national liberation and socialist construction in a world dominated by capitalist imperialism.
Since the struggle for socialism will involve widespread political education in all spheres of Bourgeois civil society, the type of revolutionary praxis conceptualized by Paula Allman will be required if working-class organic intellectuals are to succeed in winning proletarian hegemony. Allman (2001) developed an innovative model of radical adult education she refers to as critical/revolutionary praxis based on Marx’s revolutionary theory of consciousness. Allman contends Marx correctly affirmed that despite the limitations the internalization of Bourgeois ideology placed on our thought processes, humans were capable of overcoming this by learning his theory which teaches us to think dialectically (p.167). The primary goal of critical/revolutionary praxis is to “overcome [Bourgeois] ideological thinking by developing the ability to dialectically conceptualize the world” (Ibid:169). If the process of working-class organic intellectual formation is guided by a critical/revolutionary praxis, it will serve as an important prefigurative socialist educational experience that helps communists develop the capacity to transform capitalist social relations in all their manifestations (Ibid).

The influential educational theory of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1962, 1978) can also be used to understand the educational dimensions of organic intellectual learning and development in revolutionary parties. Au (2007) contends Vygotsky’s dialectical theory of adult learning and development on the role of teachers or more experienced peers in the development of spontaneous everyday conceptions of life into scientific concepts (conscious awareness) is directly correlated with Lenin’s conception of the role of vanguard political leadership in the development of spontaneous working-class consciousness into conscious political class-consciousness (Au, 2007:275). Like Gramsci, Vygotsky developed his educational theories within the Marxist-Leninist
tradition. According to Vygotsky, the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978:86). Lenin did not reject the spontaneous radicalism of oppressed classes but embraced their spontaneous actual level of development (ALD) as “consciousness in embryonic form,” and it was the task of communists Vygotsky would have referred to as “more advanced peers” to develop this spontaneity into a socialist worldview through political-education, propaganda and agitation (Au, 2007:276). By educating workers and other oppressed groups to develop their spontaneous conceptions of everyday experiences of capitalist oppression and exploitation (ALD) along the ZPD into a dialectical-materialist conception of reality, they would begin to develop a political class consciousness that reveals to them that they are in contradiction with the entire capitalist system (Ibid:281).

What Vygotsky’s analysis suggests is that the radicalism inherent in the social movements of oppressed classes, does not automatically produce revolutionary organic intellectuals who understand the necessity of moving beyond capitalism and organizing a new socialist society (see Chapter 5). Gramsci (and Lenin) understood that the difficult task of educating radical workers to become organic intellectuals required the assistance of traditional intellectuals (i.e. academics, civil servants), who demonstrated a commitment to the revolution through their party membership:

This element of ‘spontaneity’ was not neglected and even less despised. It was educated, directed, purged of extraneous contaminations; the aim was to bring it into line with modern theory [Marxism] – but in a living and historically effective manner (1971:198).
Following Lenin, Gramsci understood that the educational activities of a mass vanguard party were critical in producing working-class organic intellectuals because it was the only radical adult learning centre in bourgeois civil society that could provide the working-class with communist adult educators, in the beginning drawn from the progressive elements of the middle-class and bourgeois intelligentsia. Eventually, the petit-bourgeoisie would be outnumbered by increasing numbers of organic intellectuals from within the working-class as the party expanded by educating and training workers to become communist activists. Thus, organic intellectuals are not born in social movements, they must be “formed through the educational activities of working-class parties” (Holst, 2002:109-110). According to Sanbonmatsu, Gramsci’s conception of organic intellectuals overcame the negative bureaucratic tendencies inherent in traditional Leninist parties (which Gramsci referred to as “bureaucratic centralism”) that prevented revolutionary leaders of mass movements from being promoted into the party leadership.

In Gramsci’s party:

Intellectuals or militants from within the mass itself…rise to positions of authority or leadership from within the working class, playing a key role in helping the class define itself. The overall effect thus would be ‘continual adaptation of the organization to the real movement, a matching of thrusts from below with orders from above, a continuous insertion of elements thrown up from the depths of the rank and file into the solid framework of the leadership which ensures continuity and the regular accumulation of experience (Sanbonmatsu, 2004:174).

Gramsci revised the classic Leninist party of professional revolutionaries, who were mainly traditional intellectuals from the bourgeois intelligentsia, with his conception of a mass vanguard party, the majority of whose leadership was comprised of working-class organic intellectuals, who were either workers or traditional intellectuals who committed what Cabral referred to as class suicide and became an organic component of the
revolutionary working-class movement (Cabral, 1969:89). Gramsci’s revolutionary party thus contained the following three elements: 1) a mass element whose membership was based on “discipline and loyalty” rather than “creative spirit or organizational ability”; 2) a principal cohesive element with the “power of innovation”, the ability to provide ideological direction, and the “centralizing, and disciplinary powers” necessary to unify oppressed peoples movements into a national “complex of forces which left to themselves would count for little or nothing”; and 3) an intermediate element that maintains contact between the mass and principle cohesive elements and overall party unity “not only physically but also morally and intellectually” (1971:152-153). Gramsci generally recognized all party members to be organic intellectuals (Ibid:9), because they had a “directive and organizational” function in the struggle for proletarian hegemony which was “educative” (Ibid:16). However, his political-education was particularly concerned with developing the principal cohesive element because they were capable of the highest degree of specialization and innovation:

One speaks of generals without an army, but in reality it is easier to form an army than to form generals. So much is this true that an already existing army is destroyed if it loses its generals, while the existence of a united group of generals who agree among themselves and have common aims soon creates an army even where none exists (Ibid:153).

It is the principle cohesive element that is responsible for organizing “all the activities and functions” in civil and political society (the state) that were necessary for the proletariat to become the new hegemonic class (Ibid:16).

Gramsci offered the following suggestions on how a mass vanguard party could resolve the problem of intellectual formation within the working-class by creating a “new stratum of intellectuals” in a class that did not traditionally have any (Ibid:9). His
pedagogy combined repetition, dialogue, and popular education by engaging in the following activities:

1) Never to tire of repeating its own arguments (though offering literary variation in form): repetition is the best didactic means for working on the popular mentality. 2) To work incessantly to raise the intellectual level of ever-growing strata of the populace, in other words, to give a personality to the amorphous mass element. This means working to produce elites of intellectuals of a new type which arise directly out of the masses, but remain in contact with them to become, as it were, the whalebone in the corset (1971:340).

According to Morgan (2002), Gramsci’s pedagogy for educating communist organic intellectuals was dialogical. Morgan quotes a student of Gramsci’s discussion circles, to illustrate that Gramsci developed organic intellectuals through popular education and dialogue as opposed to rigid party indoctrination, typical of traditional Stalinist parties:

“Gramsci let us talk [. . .] he never acted like a theoretical know all; he set great store by other people's opinions and was a good listener [. . .] When he finally said something and summed up the discussion, we usually saw our mistakes and corrected them ourselves” (qtd. in Morgan, 2002:251). Through dialogue, Gramsci developed the elements of good sense in the common sense of the workers, until a socialist worldview eventually became their new common sense:

A philosophy of praxis [Marxism] cannot but present itself at the outset in a polemical and critical guise, as superceding the existing mode of thinking and existing concrete thought (the existing cultural world). First of all, therefore, it must be a criticism of common sense, basing itself initially, however, on common sense in order to demonstrate that everyone is a philosopher and that it is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone’s individual life, but of renovating and making critical an already existing activity (Gramsci, 1971:330-331).

Coben (1998) identifies three ways for revolutionary parties to develop the common sense of working-class activists so they become organic intellectuals: 1) through the study of Marxism, a “philosophy of praxis” that educates us about the contradictions of capitalism so we can resolve them; 2) critical analysis of common sense to separate the
fragmentary, incoherent myths and folklore from the elements of *good sense*; and 3) helping workers study the ideas of traditional bourgeois intellectuals critically, to assimilate that which is useful into the new body of proletarian knowledge (p. 35-36).

Organic intellectuals are not only responsible for unifying the party’s intellectual leadership and activist rank-and-file, but also unifying the party with the masses of oppressed people through popular education and socialist cultural activism in bourgeois civil society that eventually creates a cultural shift, elevating the “common sense” of the masses into good sense:

In any case one could only have…organic quality of thought if there had existed the same unity between the intellectuals and the simple as there should be between theory and practice. That is, if the intellectuals had been organically the intellectuals of those masses, and if they had worked out and made coherent the principles and the problems raised by the masses in their practical activity…is a philosophical movement properly so called when it is devoted to creating a specialized culture among restricted intellectual groups, or rather when, and only when, in the process of elaborating a form of thought superior to *common sense* and coherent on a scientific plane, it never forgets to remain in contact with the simple and indeed finds in this contact the source of the problems it sets out to study and to resolve? (Gramsci, 1971:330)

Organic intellectuals are communist activists who organize mass consent through a socialist cultural revolution within bourgeois civil society that will lead workers and other oppressed groups to adopt new socialist values and beliefs that challenge the old bourgeois ideology that is hegemonic in the family, community, and religious organizations of the working-class; and cultural, media, and educational institutions of bourgeois civil society. Gramsci contrasts his pedagogy of organic intellectual formation with the Catholic religion, which does not educate the masses to rise above their “simple” common sense worldview to a scientific “conception of life”:

The position of the philosophy of praxis is the antithesis of the Catholic. The philosophy of praxis does not tend to leave the ‘simple’ in their primitive philosophy of common sense, but rather to lead them to a higher conception of life. If it affirms the need for contact between intellectuals and simple it is not in
order to restrict scientific activity and preserve unity at the low level of the masses, but precisely in order to construct an intellectual-moral bloc which can make politically possible the intellectual progress of the mass and not only of small intellectual groups. (1971:332-333)

The revolutionary party educates and trains communists who could in turn lead the war of position in civil society by expanding socialist cultural production (popular music, art) and popular education programs in bourgeois civil society.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the debates over the authenticity of Italian Eurocommunism as a theoretical innovation of Gramsci or departure from his thought to clarify his contribution to Marxism. The class collaborationist party lines developed by right-wing PCI leaders Togliatti, Berlinguer and Amendola that abandoned revolutionary party politics and aligned the PCI with social-democracy, later inspired further misappropriations of his theory by left-liberal post-Marxist theorists. Laclau and Mouffe revised Gramsci to create a “post” Marxist paradigm for identity-based social movements during the 1980s when the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc socialist countries went into decline. In recent decades, the popularity of post-Marxism in the North American Academy resulted in the development of neo-Gramscian approaches to radical adult education that separated the content of Gramsci’s ideas on working-class organic intellectuals, and the war of position for proletarian hegemony in civil society, from the form within which this revolutionary theory was formulated: Gramsci’s lifelong experience as a communist propagandist, educator, and party leader in the PSI and PCI.

As a revolutionary theorist, Gramsci devoted much attention to the educational role of parties in the education of working-class organic intellectuals. Holst’s (2002,
2004, 2007, 2009) recent studies on the relationship between Gramsci’s theory of radical adult education and revolutionary party politics to advance the war of position were examined to reclaim Gramsci’s revolutionary theory and inform this study on the challenges of organic intellectual formation in African-Canadian civil society today. Now that we are clear on the nature of working-class organic intellectual formation, the informal, formal, and inter-generational learning relations responsible for the education of Black communists in North American communist parties and the U.S. Black Power movement are examined to clarify the nature of Black working-class organic intellectual formation in the revolutionary African-American and African-Canadian experience in the 20th century. By looking at historical examples of the different types of organized political-education Black communists underwent, I will verify the centrality of revolutionary parties in the production of organic intellectuals.
Chapter 3
Overview of Marxism, Black Liberation, and Black Working-Class Organic Intellectuals

Introduction

In this chapter I will further explore the under-theorized organic intellectual tradition of Black communist radicalism and militant anti-imperialism in North American communist parties in the 1920s and ‘30s by first reviewing the relevance of alternative frameworks for interpreting and mobilizing action in relation to questions of race, imperialism, capitalism and social struggle. In this regard, we will see that as opposed to the conservative Black-Nationalist ideology of Marcus Garvey that advocated racial separatism and Black capitalism, Black working-class communists in the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), an autonomous revolutionary-nationalist organization inspired by Lenin and the Russian Revolution, unified with the CP USA to advance the revolutionary process in the U.S. The alliance of Black and white communists in the CP USA was initiated by forward-thinking Black revolutionaries at a time when racism and white chauvinism were entrenched in the party.\(^7\) The early history of Blacks in the CP USA was not the liberal integrationist project that became hegemonic in the civil rights movement a generation later. Instead, I argue that this historic alliance was a classic Gramscian project that created a multi-national racially united front in the tens of thousands against U.S. monopoly capitalism during the Great Depression. Gramsci’s (1971) theory of working-class organic intellectuals, hegemony, and the war of position in civil society for

\(^7\) While not oriented exclusively to the communist tradition additional information on the challenges of racism and white chauvinism in North America historically can be seen in Palmer (2004) and Sawchuk (2009).
proletarian hegemony in fascist Italy during the ‘20s could be applied to understand the 
experience of Black communists in the CP USA. Gramsci elaborated a national political 
strategy for the Italian Communist Party (PCI) to succeed in the unification of the 
Northern Turin industrial working-class with the Southern peasantry to defeat the Italian 
Bourgeoisie’s hegemonic alliance with Southern Landowners and Mussolini’s Fascism. 
In Gramsci’s war of position, the PCI’s political educative function in the working-class 
movement was critical to building unity by dispelling the negative myths of the Southern 
peasantry propagated in the Bourgeois press to divide them from the Northern proletariat:

It is well known what kind of ideology has been dominated in myriad ways 
among the masses in the North, by the propagandists of the bourgeoisie: the 
South is the ball and chain which prevents the social development of Italy from 
progressing more rapidly, the Southerners are biologically inferior beings, semi-
barbarians or total barbarians, by natural destiny. If the South is backward, the 
fault does not lie with the capitalist system or with any other historical cause, but 
with Nature, which has made the Southerners lazy, incapable, criminal and 
barbaric (Gramsci, 1978:443-444).

The party’s organized communist education was central in consolidating this new class 
alliance necessary to win proletarian hegemony in Italy. Likewise, as we will see, Black 
working-class communists in the period adopted a similar strategy in the U.S. to unify 
African-American liberation with the revolutionary White working-class in an attempt to 
create a new hegemonic bloc.

The second wave of Black working-class organic intellectuals led the 
development of the most influential U.S. Black Power organizations of the 1960s. These 
Black Power organic intellectuals were educated through informal inter-generational 
relations in the absence of a revolutionary party. During this period, the CP USA did not 
support the development of U.S. Black Power due to its liquidation in 1944 by General 
Secretary Earl Browder into a revisionist social-democratic party that abandoned its
support for African-American self-determination (see CP USA, 2009). Close examination of available (auto)biographical materials shows that, consequently, the U.S. Black Power leadership’s ideological development as organic intellectuals was largely the result of inter-generational and often informal learning relations created by elder Civil Rights organic intellectuals such as Malcolm X, Robert F. Williams, and Grace and James Lee Boggs at the grassroots level in revolutionary organizational forms in the civil rights movement (e.g. Black student groups, study collectives). Additional support for organic intellectual development was also rooted in the way Black Power organic intellectuals were inspired by traveling to investigate the Cuban Revolution and studying the works of popular Third World revolutionaries Mao Tse Tung, Che Guevara, and Franz Fanon. Building on these discussions this chapter will clarify the nature of organic intellectual formation on the Black Left by summarizing the educational relations of Black revolutionaries in North American communist parties and Black Power formations in the 20th century. Through secondary analysis of biographical and auto-biographical materials across first and second wave Black working-class organic intellectual activism, I will highlight the different learning processes that this leadership appeared to depend upon the most: a frame of analysis that has not been adequately highlighted in the research literature before now.

**Leninism, Gramscism, and the Black Organic Intellectual Tradition**

According to Haywood, Lenin was the first to theorize about African-American liberation in the International Communist movement. Lenin’s (1920) *Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Question at the Second Congress of the Communist International*
was based on his study of Black national oppression in America in the early 20th century. In “New Data on the Laws Governing the Development of Capitalism in Agriculture”, based on the U.S. Census of 1910, Lenin (1915) compared the Black peasantry in the southern U.S. to the semi-feudal serfs in the agrarian centers of Russia, arguing these semi-slaves and sharecroppers were victims of an incomplete agrarian and bourgeois democratic revolution (Haywood, 1979:224). In “Statistics and Sociology”, Lenin (1917) contended African-Americans constituted an oppressed nation because they did not win equal rights when the Civil War ended. In addition, the accelerated development of monopoly capitalism in the late 19th century created vast national differences between the oppressed and oppressor Nations within the U.S. and a particularly harsh form of national oppression for African-Americans to endure (Ibid:225).

Lenin’s experience leading the Bolshevik revolution taught him of the significance of the national question for advancing the revolutionary process in the U.S. So he critically advised White American Communists and used his influence to seek to transform the newly formed party into an anti-racist vanguard that would eventually recruit Blacks en masse. When it was brought to his attention at the Second Comintern Congress the Party was not recruiting Blacks, Lenin wrote the CP USA in 1921, encouraging them to prioritize work amongst this oppressed nation (Robinson, 1983:319). Lenin was aware of the national chauvinism in the Party that prevented white communists from understanding the strategic importance of the African-American liberation movement as an ally of the revolutionary proletariat in the struggle for socialism. It was through such efforts that, eventually, Black communists were recruited by the CP USA under Comintern directives to do research and policy development on the
African-American national question at leading party schools in the USSR to advance communist strategy in the U.S. (Haywood, 1979). Once these directives came from the 6th Comintern Congress (1928), White chauvinists were forced to organize Black revolutionaries into the party despite the reality that most of them had a negative view of Black-Nationalism.

Despite the rich history of Blacks in the CP USA, some scholars suggest the relationship between Blacks and communism is incompatible. To give an example, the ideological tensions between cultural nationalists George Padmore and Harold Cruse and the CP USA have been used to argue that the interests of the Black radical intelligentsia and American communism are contradictory (Hooker, 1967; Cruse, 1967, 1968; Padmore, 1971; Robinson, 1983). Perhaps even more important in terms of classic sociological theory on this question, Robinson (1983) contends in Black Marxism that W.E.B. Dubois, C.L.R. James, and Richard Wright are not Black Marxist intellectuals, but rather pioneers of an anti-Marxist “Black Radical Tradition” that transcends the Eurocentric limitations of Marxism to increase our understanding of Black radicalism in the Americas. Robinson dismisses Marxism as a theory based on a “violence-prone Western metaphysic” embedded in European civilization, and argues the Black Radical Tradition, is instead rooted in an anti-materialist metaphysical epistemology whose essence is the absence of mass violence (Meyerson, 2000:3). Robinson contends the Black Radical Tradition is the antithesis of Eurocentric Marxism because the two ideologies are mutually exclusive at the ontological level rooted in pre-capitalist forms of racism and white supremacy (McClendon, 2007:3). Since the Black Radical Tradition is fundamentally rooted in African culture, resistance to both slavery and racial capitalism
takes the form of African spiritualities, such as Obeah, Voodoo, and Black Christianity (Robinson, 1983:310). According to Robinson, from the first slave revolts in the Americas to the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, these revolutionary struggles were ideologically rooted in African cultural traditions and civilization (McClendon, 2007:14). Thus, revolutionary Black consciousness is the practice of African spirituality, not a Europeanized version of “Black” working-class consciousness and anti-capitalist struggle. Consequently, Black communists are not “real” Black revolutionaries because they are a product of Marx’s European radicalism. Robinson concludes the primary contradiction between the Black radical tradition and Marxism is that the latter is rooted in materiality while the former, African spirituality.

In Black Marxism Robinson (1983) attempted to resolve the ideological divide in the African-American Liberation movement, most clearly expressed in the Marxist/Nationalist debates responsible for the decline of the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) in the U.S. and Canada in the mid 1970s, which will be discussed further in Chapter 4 (McClendon, 2007:12). However, despite Robinson’s critique of Marxism as a Eurocentric product of Western Civilization, the ideology of Black Marxism was also inspired by anti-authoritarian European Anarchist and Libertarian Socialist traditions which are also rooted in Europe (Robinson, 1999; McClendon, 2007). Robinson’s (1983) Black Marxism is the most sophisticated defense of the Nationalist position in the Marxist/Nationalist debate in Black intellectual circles during the 1970s and 80s over which of the two ideologies is most suitable to guide the struggle for African liberation (Nimtz, 1984; McClendon, 2007). McClendon proves the ideology of Black Marxism is Marxist in name but anti-Marxist in content (2007:20). “Black”
Marxism is a disguised form of bourgeois-nationalism opposed to the Marxist notion of common class interests as the basis of Black and White working-class unity, solidarity, and proletarian internationalism, which Robinson does not view as a viable strategy for African-American liberation (Ibid:3).

In a similar vein, others contend that there are limitations in the application of Gramsci to the study of race (Hall, 1986; Wilderson, 2005). Hall argues that Gramsci does not offer a general social science that can be applied to the analysis of social phenomena across a wide range of comparative societies (Hall, 1986:5). As such, Hall claims that Gramsci is irrelevant to the study of Black radical movements because he did not theorize the colonial and imperialist oppression Africans experienced from slavery to the present:

...in relation specifically to racism, his original contribution cannot be simply transferred wholesale from the existing context of his work. Gramsci did not write about race, ethnicity or racism in their contemporary meanings or manifestations. Nor did he analyse in depth the colonial experience or imperialism, out of which so many of the characteristic ‘racist’ experiences and relationships in the modern world have developed. His principal preoccupation was with his native Italy; and behind that, the problems of socialist construction in Western and Eastern Europe, the failure of revolutions to occur in the developed capitalist societies of the ‘West’, the threat posed by the rise of fascism in the inter-war period, the role of the party in the construction of hegemony (Ibid:9).

Hall therefore cautions on the perils of substituting Gramsci’s class concepts and analysis of revolutionary working-class politics in post-war Italy for critical studies of race.

In contrast, I show that Gramsci’s theory of working-class organic intellectuals is, in both the historical and contemporary context, useful for understanding the experience of Black communists struggling for liberation and proletarian hegemony in America. Specifically, such struggles represented a broader revolutionary project of hegemonic alliances to construct a new historic bloc between oppressed nationalities and the
revolutionary White working-class movement in the 20th century in virtually the precise way that Gramsci outlined. Moreover, the above are not merely ideological disputes over tools of analysis but also, in fact, different approaches to matters of learning content. In other words, these different programs of change and conceptualization of the nature of race, imperialism, capitalism, society and the appropriate goals, means and process of mobilization are, in effect, statements of ‘curriculum’. Understood in this context, in this chapter, I seek to demonstrate the compatibility of Marxism and Black radicalism by exploring the history of Blacks in the American communist movement: a phenomenon that I will refer to as the Black Organic Intellectual Tradition.

The First Wave: North American Communist Parties and the Education of Black Working-Class Communists, 1920s-1930s

Exploring the available literature on the topic, we find that a diverse range of formal and informal educational relations in the Socialist Party of America (SPA), the Communist Party of the United States of America (CP USA), and the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) were responsible for educating the first generation of Black working-class organic intellectuals. The first Black members to join the CP USA developed through informal self-directed and collective learning in an SPA party club and public forum in Harlem. In the case of Alabama communist leader, Hosea Hudson, the former illiterate southern Black worker was recruited to study at the national Party school to become literate and organize Black workers and sharecroppers in the south during the Depression (Painter, 1979). The first Black Canadian who joined the CPC in Toronto was Lenny Johnston, and the party provided him with an informal communist education that
advanced his own revolutionary praxis as an organizer of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters union (Brand and Bhaggiyaradatta, 1986).

Harry Haywood was trained in organized communist schools in the USSR to become a Black Marxist-Leninist theoretician on the African-American national question (Haywood, 1979). Lastly, pioneer Black feminist and communist Claudia Jones developed as a youth in party schools and the upper echelons of the CP USA’s Young Communist League (Davies, 2008). Through her party education, Jones developed an organic Black feminist praxis using Marxism-Leninism as a framework to understand Black working women’s oppression under capitalism. Ultimately, we see that the first wave of Black communists were educated, trained and developed into organic intellectuals in ways that depended to a significant degree on organized Party schools and cells in North America and the USSR despite the fact that these experiences also included other self-directed learning, informal study groups and learning through engagement in direct action or rather revolutionary praxis.

Informal Learning

The first Black working-class communists to join the CP USA were Otto Huiswoud, a dock worker, Cyril Briggs, an editor, Richard Moore, a professional lecturer, Grace Campbell a school teacher, and Lovett Fort-Whiteman, an actor and cultural critic (Naison, 1983:5). When they joined the Party soon after it was formed, this group was already organized into an underground revolutionary-nationalist organization called the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), founded in 1919 under Briggs leadership. Before joining the CP USA, these early Black activists developed as organic intellectuals
in the SPA through their own revolutionary praxis that entailed self-directed learning, collective group study and the organization of a socialist educational forum.

First-wave organic intellectual Otto Huiswoud was introduced to socialism in the SPA. In 1918, Huiswoud took a summer job on a pleasure boat on the Fall River Line while studying at Cornell University. The International Seamen’s Union was not interested in either unionizing or protecting the ship’s black crew members who, under Huiswoud’s leadership, walked off the vessel in Boston and stood with folded arms on the pier—until the fully booked shipping company was pressured to negotiate for higher pay and better working conditions. At the end of the summer, Huiswoud did not return to Cornell. The SPA had heard about his strike leadership and offered him a one-year scholarship to attend the Rand School in New York (Solomon, 1998:10). There he encountered the future Comintern official Sen Katayama, who became a life-long friend. Assigned by the Socialists to Harlem’s 21st Assembly District, he met activists A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, and joined the editorial board of the Black radical newspaper The Messenger. At the founding convention of the CP USA’s aboveground Workers Party in December 1921, Huiswoud was elected to chair its Negro Commission (Ibid:11). With the Brotherhood’s approval, Huiswoud was assigned by the Party to work in the ABB, where he soon became a member of the Brotherhood’s Supreme Council and was named national organizing secretary of the ABB after his return from the Fourth Comintern Congress in 1922 (Ibid). During the early 1920s his activities veered between organizing tours for the ABB and participating in the deliberations of the Comintern. That intersection would lead him to play a pivotal role in the early black-Communist relationship.
Cyril Briggs was born on the Caribbean island of Nevis on May 28, 1888 and became one of the most influential communists in Harlem during the ‘20s. Briggs moved to Harlem in 1905 and began his writing career with Amsterdam News in 1912. He moved on to become the editor during the First World War until his anti-war stand got him dismissed in 1917 (Naison, 1983:5). In 1918, Briggs organized The Crusader, a revolutionary-nationalist paper that became the organ of the ABB (Ibid). Briggs had a large readership for The Crusader in several U.S. cities, and the support of the West Indian community in Harlem. In the early issues of The Crusader, Briggs’ editorials proved him to be a militant nationalist, along the lines of Marcus Garvey, always promoting African Liberation (Ibid:6). However, by 1920, Briggs was encouraging blacks to make alliances with white liberals and radicals and played a leading role in bringing the ABB into the CP USA (Ibid).

Born in Barbados in 1893, Richard B. Moore belonged to the ABB leadership and the CP USA in the early 1920s. Moore immigrated to New York in 1909 and worked as an elevator operator until he received a job as a raw silk clerk in 1913, which he kept for the next decade (Turner and Turner, 1988:24). When not working, Moore spent his time in newly emerging black-owned bookstores or on street corners listening to soapbox speakers who advocated radical socialism (Ibid:26). Deeply influenced by the likes of Randolph, Owen, and Hubert Harrison he had been listening to since 1916, by 1917 Moore was up on the soapbox educating Harlem audiences about radical politics (Ibid). As a result of his involvement in Harlem’s stepladder speaking tradition Moore became a labor activist in the 1920s, engaged in both the CP's International Labor Defense and the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC). He also led the Harlem Tenants League in
which he organized rent strikes against white and black landlords that halted rental increases and improved housing conditions (Ibid:106).

In 1919, Moore helped Briggs found the ABB. In 1920, Moore launched The Emancipator with W.A. Domingo, a weekly which only lasted 10 issues with regular contributed editorships from Owen, Randolph, and Briggs (Ibid:32). By the mid-1920s Moore moved on to become the editor of the Negro Champion, the ANLC newspaper which propagated the CP USA’s position on the ‘Negro Question’ (Solomon, 1998:56).

In February 1927, Moore represented the ANLC in Brussels at the International Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism. The Congress consisted of 174 delegates from 21 countries, representing a large cross-section of internationalists opposed to colonialism and imperialist aggression. Moore was a member of the committee on the Negro question and played a major role in drafting its resolution (Ibid:59). Like Huiswoud, Moore developed as a local Black communist with an internationalist perspective by doing Party work abroad.

Grace Campbell came from Jamaica in 1912 to study at the Tuskegee Institute, a historic all-black college in Alabama. Soon after, she became an associate of Briggs and joined his cadre of radical Black working-class organic intellectuals in Harlem. As the only female founding member of the ABB, Campbell engaged in a wide range of community activism which included using money from her salary as a parole officer to start up the Harlem’s Empire Friendly Shelter, a home for poor single mothers (Watkins-Owens, 1996:103). She was also a pioneer Harlem’s “Soap Box” street corner speaking tradition, along with other Caribbean immigrant “step-ladder” speakers, such as Moore, Domingo, Black-Nationalist leader Marcus Garvey, and native migrants Randolph and
Owen (Ibid:92). Campbell was the first Caribbean woman to join the CP USA in its early years.

Lovett Fort-Whiteman was an aspiring actor and writer who initially joined the SPA’s interracial Harlem Socialist Club, but by the fall of 1925 was the national organizer of the CP-sponsored ANLC. In 1924, Fort-Whiteman participated in the 5th Comintern Congress and that dealt with further development of their policy on the national and colonial question (Solomon, 1998:48). Shortly after his return from eight months of travel and study in the Soviet Union, Fort-Whiteman wrote “The Racial Question in Soviet Russia” for the May 7, 1925 issue of The Daily Worker, in which he compares pre-Soviet Tsarist oppression to racial oppression in America; and draws parallels between the oppression of Blacks in America to the Jews in Russia, and colonial peoples under imperialism by exposing the arrogance and notions of racial superiority typical of the dominant white working classes of Europe and North America (Ibid:95). As the head of the ANLC, Fort-Whiteman moved to the USSR to participate in the 6th Comintern Congress and teach political science at the Cercerin Institute near Moscow, where he remained until his death shortly before the Second World War (Ibid:58).

Beginning in the summer of 1918 and as members of the Harlem Socialist Club, Briggs et al. organized the Peoples Educational Forum (PEF), a series of public forums on Sunday afternoons in the Lafayette Hall at 7th Avenue and 131st Street. The PEF consisted of a speaker’s presentation, debate, and discussion. These public forums represented the central role of organized learning processes in the development of these organic intellectuals. However, these learning processes did not emerge in isolation from the learning content. Specifically, in the case of the PEF, the membership was moving
further away from what was arguably the reformist orientation of the Socialist Party towards an interest in communism. For example, the PEF began to focus more intensively on the works of Marx and Engels which, in turn, shaped the profile of learning processes as well (Ibid:29).

The Harlem communists also used the forums to win over traditional intellectuals to their movement. The PEF featured such well-known speakers as W.E.B. Du Bois and Hubert H. Harrison, and the forum often-erupted into heated debates in which democratic socialists battled communists in line struggle (Ibid:30). In 1917, the Harlem Socialist Club split into two camps as a result of the Second (Communist) International’s split during the First World War. The club’s founders, Randolph and Owen and their supporters separated from the Black communist faction led by Briggs, because the latter supported the Russian Revolution and aligned themselves with the Third International. Briggs’ faction consisted of Campbell, Moore, Lovett Fort-Whiteman and Otto Hall, who would later form the CP USA-affiliated ABB under Briggs’s leadership. On the other hand, Randolph and Owen sided with the social democrats that remained in the SPA and the social-democratic remnants of the Second International (Haywood, 1979:125-126).

Inspired by the recent victory of the Russian Revolution in 1917, Briggs et al. left the SPA, organized the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), and joined the CP USA to embrace the anti-imperialist politics of Lenin and the Third International.

The ABB was the first independent black Marxist organization of the 20th century. Founded in 1919 by Briggs and based in New York with branches throughout the U.S. and Caribbean, the ABB’s program called for an international federation of organizations, in which it ascribed itself the position of vanguard in the African
Revolution. As a ‘secret revolutionary order’ which emphasized self-defense, race pride, and self-determination, the ABB was inspired by the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist politics of Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution which commanded their attention—not the CP USA, which at the time was racist with White national chauvinism prevalent in all ranks of the party (Naison, 1983:5). In colonial islands, it proposed to build an army of Pan-African revolutionaries; in the U.S., it encouraged blacks to organize independent trade unions and cooperative economic business enterprises. In the South, the ABB advocated democratic rights for Blacks and armed self-defense against Southern terror.

Solomon interpreted Briggs’ ABB in the following manner:

In the beginning the ABB was not a ‘black auxiliary’ of the Communist Party. Although the Brotherhood’s founders were increasingly influenced by communism, it is unlikely that in 1919 the embryonic Communist Party was able or willing to be a progenitor or founding patron of the Brotherhood. The Party as yet had no particular sensitivity to the Negro question…Although Brigg’s interest in communism had been manifest at the founding of ABB, the event was independent of direct Communist influence. By 1921, however, Briggs was prepared to join the CP, and the Party was anxious to make the Brotherhood the arena of ‘mass work’ for its small African American cadre. The ABB was not ‘taken over’ by the Communists, but Briggs and some other leaders were amenable to an ever deepening relationship (Solomon, 1998:10).

The ABB gained notoriety in the early summer of 1921, when the bourgeois press linked the organization to a riot that destroyed the Black community of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Three days after the riots, the New York Times printed a front page report that portrayed the riot as a conspiracy by ABB organizers. By 1922, the ABB dissolved into the CP USA since all of its membership was devoted communists (Ibid). The ABB leadership formed a strategic alliance with the CP USA in order to build a mass movement of Black and White workers that would form the basis of a socialist revolution in the U.S. Importantly, the ABB leadership did not assimilate into or tail behind the CP USA because they sought integration, but rather incorporated their militant anti-racism into the Party’s
mandate and worked with them despite the prevalence of White chauvinism because they understood the CP USA represented the most progressive forces within the labor movement during that period.

In addition to both self-directed, collective informal learning and more organized education, organic intellectuals of the first wave also developed in the course of revolutionary praxis, that is, through the application of theory within the context of action. For instance, an important element of Hosea Hudson’s development is found in his learning how to organize Blacks into the Party under difficult conditions in Alabama. In 1931-32, Hudson spread the Sunday Worker and Southern Worker newspapers secretly throughout the community on people’s porches and inside their gates at night; distributed the paper hand-to-hand during the day; and put it on church steps Saturday nights before Sunday service, returning the following day to do agitation (Painter, 1979:100). This organizing took place under some of the most difficult of circumstances: anti-communist hysteria and white supremacist terror. Hudson’s description of how southern Blacks developed a socialist consciousness by engaging in struggle can also be applied to his own ideological development as a communist that resulted from his own revolutionary praxis:

The role of the communists, Negro communists, was to try to educate the people…The question of the people educated—education just don’t come from books, it comes through struggle. While they’re struggling to get the right to self-determination, they also learn through the struggle (Ibid:103).

Thus, interwoven with his training at the Party’s Institute, Hudson learned revolutionary organizing skills while engaged in organizing. Hudson continued to do agitation in local centers of Black working-class life such as barbershops educating people about the politics of self-determination and the necessity to get organized against poverty and racist
white terror during the Depression. Hudson also went on to organize CIO United Steelworkers Local 2815 and became its president. In 1938, Hudson founded the Right to Vote Club to help literate Black workers vote amidst racist intimidation in the segregated south (Ibid). Clearly, the CP USA’s formal communist schooling combined with his organizing experience played a critical role in Hudson’s development as an organic intellectual of the Black working-class in the South.

Another case in which revolutionary praxis was a key element in the process of organic intellectual development can be found within the Canadian Communist movement. In 1918 Leonard Johnston was born in Toronto to Jamaican immigrants and grew up experiencing racism on a regular basis because he was unable to find work except as a porter on the railways in the late ‘30s.\(^8\) He would eventually emerge as a key Black working-class communist who became a leading Black labor organizer during that period.\(^9\) In 1939, Johnston began organizing the Canadian branch of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP)\(^10\), the first all-Black union in Canada, and became a card-carrying member of the CPC (Brand and Bhaggyadatta, 1986:150). For Johnston, the party was a revolutionary adult learning centre that taught him the politics of class

\(^8\) From the 1920s-1960s, working as a porter with no room for advancement or upward mobility to become a conductor was the unfortunate reality of most black men in Canada who were victims of racial discrimination in the workforce (See Braithwaite and Joseph, 1998:42).

\(^9\) There is very little written on the experience of African-Canadian organic intellectuals in the Canadian communist movement. One exception is Brand and Bhaggyadatta’s (1986) Rivers Have Sources, Trees Have Roots: Speaking on Racism, an anthology of oral histories on leading anti-racist activists of colour in Toronto in the 1980s. In the book there is an interview with Leonard Johnston where he speaks on his experience as one of the first Blacks in the Communist Party of Canada (CPC).

\(^10\) The BSCP was the first all-Black union to protect Black porters who were discriminated against on the basis of race and unable to join the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees.
struggle, advanced his socialist consciousness, and prepared him to organize Black workers in the railway industry. The CPC was a “school” where Johnston received both informal communist education and cadre training.

In 1942, Johnston organized Black porters into the BSCP, a formally recognized union. In the late 1960s Johnston reemerged as a leading elder Black Power organic intellectual in Toronto’s Black community. As explored in further detail below, in 1968, at the age of 50 and with the assistance of his wife Gwen, Johnston founded the Third World Books and hosted study groups and organizing meetings with the next generation of Black Power organic intellectuals.

Organized Communist Education

However, self-directed and collective learning processes were not the sole source of organic intellectual development in the first wave period. In many ways, a defining feature of organic intellectual development within the first wave period was the contribution made by organized Communist Party schools, study groups and so on, which served to reinforce and systematize lessons derived from informal learning processes.

Harry Haywood was one of the first Blacks in the CP USA recruited by the Party to do advanced theoretical studies in the USSR. Due to the high level of national chauvinism within the party Haywood initially joined the ABB in 1921, and eventually became a member by the end of the year when racial tensions simmered. Haywood developed as an organic intellectual when the party recruited him to study abroad at Moscow’s University of the Toilers of the East (KUTVA) in 1925 with students from Palestine, Algeria, China, Ireland, South Africa and Korea (Haywood, 1979:149). Bill Patterson, another African-American who studied alongside Haywood at KUTVA,
recalled how this foreign instruction abroad advanced their ideological development as communists:

KUTVA was fascinating... Everyone there was seeking to break with an ideology that had kept him tied to colonial oppression. Combined with formal study there was practical experience. Students traveled throughout the Soviet Union to see the national development at many levels. They studied and observed the problems of the colonial peoples who had been held in the tsar’s ‘prison of nations’ and how they were solving them in the ‘family of nations’ for which the Revolution had laid the foundation (Patterson, 1971:105-106).

KUTVA was a Comintern communist school that trained third world anti-colonial activists and African-Americans like Haywood, to lead national liberation movements in their native countries. Lenin and the USSR recognized the strategic importance of training organic intellectuals from the African-American nation to become professional revolutionaries in the CP USA, who could in turn lead their national liberation movement into a united front with the communist party against U.S. monopoly capitalism and imperialism. KUTVA combined formal study with practical experience, allowing Haywood dual membership in the CP USA and Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) to tour the USSR and study how former colonial nations were resolving their problems of historic underdevelopment as Socialist Republics (Ibid).

In 1927, Haywood was assigned to study a 3-year course for advanced Party cadre at the Lenin School, where he received instruction in the following core subjects of Marxist-Leninist theory to advance a policy on the African-American national question: political economy; historical and dialectical materialism; Leninism and the History of the CPSU (Ibid:207-209). In preparation for the 6th Comintern Congress, during the winter of 1928, Haywood joined a sub-committee on the Negro question to prepare a draft resolution for the Negro Commission at the Congress (Ibid:228). With the assistance of his KUTVA and Lenin School comrades, Haywood developed the theory that African-
Americans were an oppressed nation dominated by U.S. Imperialism, and the Black-Nationalist movement in America (formerly Garvey’s UNIA) was a legitimate national liberation movement for self-determination, independent of the struggle of the revolutionary White working-class for Socialism.

After Haywood’s studies in the USSR, he sat on the Party’s Central Committee and waged an ideological struggle against white chauvinists in the leadership who dismissed the African-American movement for liberation as a counter-revolutionary “bourgeois-nationalist” tendency that divided White and Black workers. Haywood’s thesis, “Self-Determination for the Black Belt Nation”, was adopted by the 6th Comintern and soon after by the CP USA.¹¹ This successful war of position within the Party consolidated a new alliance between revolutionary-nationalism and White American communism during the Depression. These efforts began to lay the foundation of the anti-racist organizing and mass protests which eventually came to fruition two decades later in the civil rights movement of the 1950s. Among the various conclusions that can be drawn from this outline of Haywood’s development – its processes and content – is that through his activity and subsequent leadership role as well as publications, he was making a

¹¹ In his autobiography, Black Bolshevik Haywood summarized it as follows: This new line established that the Black freedom struggle is a revolutionary movement in its own right, directed against the very foundations of U.S. imperialism, with its own dynamic pace and momentum, resulting from the unfinished democratic and land revolutions in the South. It places the black liberation movement and the class struggle of U.S. workers in their proper relationship as two aspects of the fight against the common enemy—U.S. capitalism. It elevates the black movement to a position of equality in that battle. The new theory destroys forever the white racist theory traditional among class-conscious white workers which had relegated the struggle of Blacks to a subsidiary position in the revolutionary movement. Race is defined as a device of national oppression, a smokescreen thrown up by the class enemy, to hide the underlying economic and social conditions involved in Black oppression and to maintain the division of the working-class. The new theory was to sensitize the Party to the revolutionary significance of the Black liberation struggle (p. 234).
major educational contribution to Party and organic intellectual development beyond his own.

Likewise, a close look at the life of Hosea Hudson provides some additional insights in this regard. An illiterate worker from the Black Belt South, Hudson also underwent extensive formal radical adult education in the CP USA. Due to both literacy training and communist education Hudson received as a Party member in the early 1930s, he made a quick transition from uneducated illiterate Black worker in Alabama to leading Black working-class organic intellectual who helped mobilize thousands of southern Blacks into the American Communist Party during the Depression.

Hudson was recruited into the CP USA in the early 1930s when party cadres organized widespread literacy campaigns combined with communist education in local cells to educate illiterate and semi-literate Black workers to become organic intellectuals in the party. This was, in fact, an example of the types of activities as well as learning processes that emerged directly from particular programs of action that called specifically for targeted mobilization. Hudson advanced ideologically by participating in study groups organized by the Party to politicize Black workers. The de facto curriculum of this learning was the articles and editorials from the Party press (Painter, 1979:102). Hudson and his black comrades studied the CP paper The Liberator because it contained articles advocating self-determination for the southern Black Nation and recent news on anti-colonial struggles in the Pan-African world.12

12 Kelley explains the significance of the informal study groups for the development of organic intellectuals in the Black Belt South: The Party’s version of Marxist education taught poor blacks to connect their own lives to struggles throughout the world, and the Party’s economic theories provided explanations for a number of phenomena, including the roots of poverty, wealth, and racism. But blacks also found
Like Haywood, Hudson would eventually make an important educational contribution. At the age of 36, he was invited to conduct advanced theoretical studies at the party’s National Training Institute in New York (see Gettleman, 1993). At this formal communist school, Hudson was instructed in classical Marxist economics. Apart from learning Marxist theory, each day consisted of 30-minutes of literacy training so those who were illiterate would eventually become literate (Ibid, 203-204). Hudson returned from the National Training School forever transformed by this extensive revolutionary adult learning experience provided by the party. Hudson’s formal radical adult education within the Party combined with his participation in grassroots organizing transformed him into an organic intellectual.

The CP USA was also responsible for the first wave of revolutionary Black Feminism in the U.S. by fostering the ideological development of Claudia Jones when they recruited her to the youth leadership and party press. Jones was a working-class Trinidadian immigrant who grew up in Harlem in the 20s and joined the CP USA’s youth movement at the age of 21 in 1936, where she became an important organizer in the Scottsboro Boys Campaign in Harlem, the party’s main anti-racist effort at that time. Jones quickly rose to the highest ranks of the Young Communist League (YCL) in the late 1930s and developed as an organic intellectual by attending conferences and organizing Black youth into the Party.

_within these study groups a source of pride, for after all, many were now receiving what white society had too often denied them—an education (Kelley, 1990:94).

13 In Alabama, March 1931, nine African-American boys were taken off a crowded freight train from Chattanooga to Tennessee, and charged with raping two White women riding on the same train. The Scottsboro boys were tried and as a result of the mass mobilizations of the Communist left, only one of the nine were sentenced to death while the remaining eight were sentenced to death row for years and in the worst cases decades. (Barry, 1992:140-142).
Initially, Jones began writing a column called “Claudia’s Comments” for a Black newspaper that was the ideological organ of the Federated Youth Clubs of Harlem. Soon after joining, Jones became editor of the Party’s Weekly Review, and Secretary of the Executive Committee of the YCL in Harlem. In 1937, Jones attended the Party’s six-month National Training Institute, and by the following year she was the New York State Chair and National Council member of the YCL (Davies, 2008:xxiv).

As a Black communist journalist for the Party press, Jones went on to become a leading theorist of Black Feminism a quarter century before the “first-wave” emerged as a critique of Second Wave Feminism and Black Power in the late 1960s (Davies, 2008:18). In “An End to the Neglect of the Problems of Negro Women” (1949) Jones analyzed the historic super-exploitation of Black working women in terms of their wages and labor as domestics, which she argued explained the militancy of Black women, a force that remained unorganized by both the Communist left and White Feminists due to male chauvinism and racism (Ibid:37-38). In this article, Jones proposed that unionizing Black domestic workers would advance the class struggle and anti-imperialism in the U.S. by organizing them around their economic issues. In “We Seek Equality for Women” (1949), Jones pioneered the theory of interlocking race, gender, and class oppression in the lives of Black working women, arguing that the struggle for the political, economic, and social equality of Black women was in the interest of the struggle for White women’s equality and the White working-class movement more generally (Ibid:39-40). In other words, through her formal party education
and leadership of the YCL, Jones became an ideological authority on the question of Black working-class women’s oppression in the U.S. communist movement, twenty years before the “introduction” of Black feminist theory in the late 1960s.

First wave Black working-class organic intellectuals developed through the form, content, and location of communist education in national and international Communist Party schools in the U.S. and USSR. In particular, Haywood’s international educational experience in the USSR combined with his informal learning through revolutionary praxis to successfully advance a party line in support of African-American self-determination amongst the Party’s leadership, contributed immensely to first wave organic intellectual formation in the CP USA. Haywood also created an infrastructure for international learning through his own inter-generational relations on the Black Left that would sustain the development of second wave organic intellectuals in the U.S. and Canadian Black Power movement a generation later (chapter 4). Likewise, Hudson and Jones education in the CPUSA’s national Party school and Johnston’s informal education in the CPC confirmed that North American communist parties played a foundational role in the initial development of the Black organic intellectual tradition.

The Second Wave and the Organization of U.S. Black Power in the 1960s

The Black organic intellectual tradition was also responsible for the organization of U.S. Black Power in the 1960’s. Muhammad Ahmad of the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), General Baker of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW), Huey Newton of the Black Panther Party (BPP), and Marian Kramer (LRBW) were all key leaders who developed the most
significant U.S. Black Power organizations. Ahmad and Newton are generally credited with being the first Black Power organic intellectuals to introduce Marxism-Leninism into the movement by organizing vanguard parties (RAM, BPP) and advocating revolutionary-nationalist struggle against the contradictions of internal colonialism. Baker and Kramer organized Black rank-and-file auto workers against a type of double exploitation they endured at the point of production in auto plants as well as within the UAW organization in Detroit itself (LRBW).

To further elaborate a theory of Black working-class organic intellectual formation in Black revolutionary movements, I will first look at how inter-generational learning led by Malcolm X, Robert F. Williams, and Grace and James Lee Boggs in the left-wing of the Civil Rights movement was responsible for mentoring Ahmad, Newton, and Baker, who went on to lead the development of U.S. Black Power by the end of the decade. Next, I will examine how Newton developed as a revolutionary by listening to Malcolm X speak. Then I will explore how Baker developed through collective study of the writings and radio program of Robert F. Williams while a member of the Black socialist student group UHURU. Similarly, Newton engaged in informal self-directed studies of Maoism and other Third World revolutionaries to advance his own strategy. Finally, Ahmad’s experience organizing RAM, Newton’s leadership in the formation of the BPP, and Baker and Kramer’s consolidation of the LRBW will demonstrate how revolutionary praxis, the struggle to create revolutionary vanguard parties with varying degrees of success, transformed militant Black students in the left-wing of the civil rights movement into
Black working-class organic intellectuals who led the most influential U.S. Power organizations. One of the conclusions that will be drawn in analyzing these experiences will be the learning content and learning processes that were involved that distinguished first wave and second wave organic intellectual development in some ways, whereby the latter was primarily based on inter-generational relations on the Black Left and informal self-directed learning, while the former, organized communist education in revolutionary parties.

*Inter-Generational Learning*

Ahmad was one of the foremost leaders of the U.S. Black Power underground who played a leading role in founding RAM, one of the earliest U.S. Black Power organizations in the mid-‘60s. Ahmad’s inter-generational learning and political organizing with Malcolm X played a foundational role in his ideological development as a revolutionary-nationalist. Ahmad met Malcolm on Thanksgiving Day 1962, and worked closely with him from the latter’s break with the Nation of Islam in June 1964 until his assassination on February 21, 1965 (Ahmad, 2007:29). Ahmad organized with Malcolm while building RAM and was influenced by his day-to-day program which taught him the following: 1) African-Americans were an oppressed nation whose national consciousness was under-developed and must be raised by Black revolutionaries; 2) African-Americans must struggle against capitalism by “any means necessary”, including armed self-defense to win self-determination; 3) revolutionary internationalism was critical in the struggle against global capitalism; and 4) a Black revolutionary party independent of the Democratic and Republican parties was necessary to advance the struggle for national liberation (Ibid:29-30). In June 1964, Ahmad developed an organizational framework
with Malcolm for the movement he envisioned, whereby the OAAU would be the broad Black united front and RAM, the underground vanguard party and people’s army (Ibid:126).

Malcolm also had a tremendous inter-generational influence on BPP founder Huey P. Newton when he was a student activist in the Afro-American Association at Merritt College in Oakland, California. Newton heard Malcolm speak at McClymonds High School and was impressed by his ability to politicize Black working-class students by combining his street wisdom with a coherent revolutionary-nationalist ideology (Hilliard, 2006:17-18). Malcolm appealed to Newton because he, like other militant Black youth, was disillusioned by the liberal reformism of the civil rights movement. Newton was also inspired by Malcolm’s call in the mid-1960s to organize a revolutionary party for African-American liberation. In his autobiography Revolutionary Suicide, Newton (1973) explained how the BPP was organized in 1966 to fulfill Malcolm’s legacy after his death. In his biography of Newton, Hilliard (2006) quotes him at length to demonstrate the extent to which Malcolm’s example influenced him to organize the party:

A new militant spirit was born when Malcolm died. It was born of outrage and a unified Black consciousness, out of the sense of a task left undone…The Black Panther Party had been formed in the spirit of Malcolm; we strove for the goals he had set for himself… (qtd. In Hilliard, 2006:88/Newton, 1973:184).

Ahmad contends that the BPP’s formation in 1966 was in response to Malcolm’s “Ballot or Bullet” speaking tour in April 1964, which called for a Black Nationalist party-building conference to be held in August of that year, but was never realized because he was touring Africa at the time (Ahmad, 2007:28). Malcolm was only 39 years-old but he was still an elder civil rights organic intellectual, because he played an inter-generational
educational role in Newton’s ideological development. Thus, it is not surprising Newton organized according to Malcolm’s vision of an independent Black revolutionary party when he died.

Similar to Newton, LRBW leader General Baker also developed as an organic intellectual through inter-generational learning relations with veteran civil rights radicals. In 1963, Baker played a leading role in building UHURU\textsuperscript{14} at Wayne State University (Baker, 1994:306). While in UHURU, Baker was mentored by James and Grace Lee Boggs, elder civil rights organic intellectuals in the Group on Advanced Leadership (GOAL), a Black socialist organization in Detroit. GOAL’s leadership consisted of Reverend Albert Cleage, a radical Black Nationalist, and the Boggses, two former students of C.L.R. James’s Autonomous Marxist study group, Facing Reality. Throughout 1963, the Boggses mentored UHURU members in their home, where they provided them with insight on the concepts, goals, strategy and tactics of revolutionary socialism (Ahmad, 2007:242). For Baker, GOAL bridged the gap between Detroit Black working-class radicalism of the 1940s and ‘50s and the emerging ‘60s Black Power Movement, then in its embryonic form as tiny Black student organizations like UHURU.

Baker was also influenced by Malcolm’s revolutionary-nationalism when he heard him speak in Detroit during the civil rights movement. This type of informal education was not simply carried out either one-on-one or in small groups; at other times it was done through speaker series events for larger audiences. In November

\textsuperscript{14} UHURU means “Freedom” in Swahili and the group’s membership consisted of the following Wayne State students who later became the future leadership of the LRBW: General Baker, Luke Tripp, John Watson, and Charles Johnson.
1963, for example, GOAL organized the Grassroots Leadership Conference, where key note speaker Malcolm delivered what many describe as one of his most influential speeches, “A Message to the Grassroots”, at King Solomon’s Church. Baker and UHURU attended this event and he became deeply inspired to more militant action. In a 2004 interview, Baker said Malcolm’s speech was a call-to-arms that really inspired him to devote his life to the struggle:

‘Message to the Grassroots’...was kind of a life changing speech. When Malcolm would come to town it was something to hear him ‘cause he not only was a good speaker, but he inspired you to do something...Right after that speech I went downtown the next morning, and chartered me a Fox and Wilson Rifle Club, and we came back and built us a rifle club based on the inspiration we got from Malcolm...That was a material inspiration that I had and we transformed that into a material form of organization...what I’m trying to express to you is how he inspired people to get up off your butt and go and do something. Just don’t do the same old thing (Baker, 2004:3-4).

Malcolm’s contribution to Baker’s ideological development as a Black Power organic intellectual was his emphasis on the necessity of learning through revolutionary praxis, as opposed to learning within the reformism that typically characterized the civil rights movement. Inseparable from the more informal learning processes in such situations was the specific content that drove a form of learning through mobilization of a particular kind. In the case of the curriculum and learning processes embedded in the reception of this speech. Malcolm encouraged listeners to become increasingly militant and steer the movement away from the bourgeois liberal leadership who advocated peace and non-violence as opposed to armed self-defense against racist white terror.

*Informal Learning*

With the first wave, self-directed learning played a critical role in the intellectual development of the U.S. Black Power leadership. While a student in college in early 1960s Oakland, California, Newton developed his intellectual capacities through intense
self-directed studies of Marxism and the Chinese Revolution. In his autobiography, Newton (1973) recalled making the difficult transition from Black-Nationalism to revolutionary internationalism during the civil rights years by studying the experience of Third World revolutionaries. This enabled him to develop a radical perspective on the colonial oppression of African-Americans in the U.S. Disillusioned with the sectarianism and dogmatism of the White socialist left, Newton immersed himself in the study of Maoism which he believed provided a sounder ideological framework to build a national liberation movement in the U.S.:

It was my studying and reading in college that led me to become a socialist. The transformation from a nationalist to a socialist was a slow one, although I was around a lot of Marxists. I even attended a few meetings of the Progressive Labor Party, but nothing was happening there, just a lot of talk and dogmatism…I read more of the works of Socialists and began to see strong similarities between my beliefs and theirs. My conversion was complete when I read four volumes of Mao Tse Tung to learn more about the Chinese Revolution. It was my life plus independent reading that made a socialist – nothing else (Newton, 1973:69-70).

Through intense study, Newton became a revolutionary intellectual who wrote the Panther program and built the initial party organization in Oakland. Newton’s example reminds us of the need to combine independent socialist studies with revolutionary praxis in the education of Black working-class youth so they become revolutionary vanguard activist-intellectuals rather than spontaneous anti-intellectual activists.

Similarly, by studying the radical civil rights leader Robert F. Williams’ writings and listening to his radio program alongside UHURU, Baker furthered his understanding of revolutionary-nationalism. Williams (1962) Negros with Guns, written in exile in Cuba, was mandatory reading for Baker and UHURU members and it influenced his thinking in the debate over civil disobedience versus armed self-defense in the civil rights movement. The book is Williams’ own account of his leadership of the Monroe, South
Carolina chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) that successfully resisted White Ku Klux Klan Terror in the ‘50s. Black Power organic intellectuals embraced Williams because, in Baker’s view, he gave the clearest analysis of the necessity of revolutionary violence in the struggle for African-American Liberation up to that period (Baker, 1994:306). Baker was also politicized by subscribing to Williams’ Crusader, an independent newspaper he published in exile from Cuba.

Baker and UHURU also gathered on a weekly basis to hear Williams’ short-wave radio show broadcast live from Havana, Cuba. Throughout 1963, Free Radio Dixie was broadcast live every Friday night at 11 PM, played the latest Jazz, soul, and rock ‘n’ roll, and offered news coverage of the most recent developments in the movement (Tyson, 1999:285). In the early 1960s Williams fled to Cuba because his revolutionary activism in the civil rights movement threatened the American ruling class to the point where they brought him up on trumped up murder charges (Ibid). Baker recalls how Radio Free Dixie was another significant cultural artifact that mediated the learning of UHURU:

As a student, we would get together in my little apartment and listen to Robert Williams broadcast from the radio every Friday night and it was just uplifting. This was back in ’63 now remember this. He would come with the latest songs from the states-side, the Miracles stuff ‘I got a lover way over there and I know that’s where I should be’. And then he’d come on blowin’ ‘White man’s nigger no more’ and ‘Truth crushed to the earth shall rise again’. And it was just really an uplifting experience. I don’t know if you can really think back to how uplifting that kind of word and that kind of message on the radio was back in that day (Baker, 2004:4).

By broadcasting Radio Free Dixie live to air from Cuba each week, Williams educated Baker and UHURU about the politics of revolutionary-nationalism and inspired them to action against U.S. Imperialism.

Ahmad developed as an organic intellectual through his own revolutionary praxis as the lead organizer of the underground Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM) in the
mid-60s. From May 1-4, 1964 Ahmad attended the first Afro-American Student Conference on Black Nationalism at Fisk University, a formative event in the transformation of elements disillusioned with the bourgeois liberalism of the civil rights movement into a revolutionary-nationalist tendency that later became known as Black Power. At the conference, RAM leader Dan Freeman circulated an article he wrote for the fall 1964 issue of Black America that criticized the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and NAACP as bourgeois-nationalist organizations (Ahmad, 2007:117). During the conference, Freeman instructed Ahmad to radicalize the movement by doing political-educational work in SNCC’s voter registration campaigns in Greenwood, Mississippi; the latter ended up teaching political science at a Freedom School for Southern Blacks in the area (Ibid:120-121). Ahmad also helped organize SNCC armed self-defense units in Mississippi to respond to the Klan’s drive-by shootings on their office. When Ahmad returned to Detroit to meet the Boggses and his UHURU comrades, RAM was created with them in the leadership. RAM was an underground revolutionary-nationalist formation mandated to bring the armed self-defense units throughout the U.S. under one national vanguard organization (Ibid:122).

Apart from organizing RAM, Ahmad developed as an organic intellectual by participating in ideological debates within the organization where he and the revolutionary-nationalist wing argued African-Americans were an oppressed nation and internal colony struggling for national liberation in the South. On the contrary, the Boggses argued Blacks were the most exploited section of the working-class and RAM’s efforts should be concentrated on organizing Black working-class power in the urban
centres—not nation building in the South (Ibid). In 1965, Ahmad formed an alliance with the Deacons for Self-Defense, a radical Christian civil rights organization in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi who agreed to become the armed wing of RAM. So when the Watts Rebellion\(^\text{15}\) erupted in August 1965, Ahmad led an armed self-defense campaign against police repression during this spontaneous mass rebellion (Ibid:141). As the Field Chairman of RAM, Ahmad also contributed to the radicalization of the civil rights movement by organizing in the Black student movement (Ibid).

Through his Maoist praxis, Newton became a leading Black Power organic intellectual who organized the most influential revolutionary party in the U.S. during the ‘60s. As a student activist at Merritt College, Newton was disillusioned with the armchair revolutionary tendency in the Afro-American Association and the Soul Students Advisory Council, a RAM front organization, so he set out to create a Black Power organization that was more effective in applying revolutionary-nationalism to transform colonial relations in the Black community (Hilliard, 2006:22-23). Newton drafted the Panther program to build a revolutionary party by studying all four volumes of Mao’s (1961) *Selected Writings*, Che Guevara’s (1961) *Guerilla Warfare*, Franz Fanon’s (1961) *Wretched of the Earth*, and Williams (1962) *Negroes with Guns*. Inspired by Williams armed self-defense units, Newton wanted to create an action-oriented group that would go beyond the passivity and militant rhetoric typical of many Black student groups, and actually mobilize the community against the bourgeois capitalist state. At the War on

\(^{15}\) The Watts Rebellion in August 1965 was one of the largest African-American urban revolts of the 1960s that involved 30,000 people, took 34 lives, and resulted in 1023 injuries and 4000 arrests. Watts was a mass uprising that expressed local residents’ frustrations with the racism, poverty, and class inequality they were forced to endure (see “Watts Rebellion” on Blackpast.org).
Poverty Office where fellow Panther Bobby Seale worked as a community liaison,
Newton drafted the Panther Ten-Point Program and studied law to find a legal loophole
that would allow Blacks to arm themselves to defend the community against the violent
police repression they endured (Ibid:27-28). Ahmad credits Newton’s Panther program
with developing the national question further than any other group of the period by
recognizing that U.S. Blacks in urban ghettos were an internal colony struggling for self-
determination:

Huey Newton developed revolutionary nationalism to a higher level with the
BPP ten-point program. The ten-point program raises the question of power and
self-determination of the African-American national community. The Black
Panther Program advanced the line that African-Americans were a kind of
colony, which are oppressed for racist and economic reasons by the U.S.

Among other things, the BPP ten-point program can be seen as the archetypical
curriculum for informal learning through revolutionary praxis, a curriculum which in turn
tended to generate a specific mix of informal learning processes. For Newton specifically,
it was through critical reflection on his failed experience in the Black student movement
combined with studies of Maoism and Third World revolutionaries, that he was
introduced to Marxism-Leninism and the necessity of organizing a vanguard party – to in
effect attempt to re-establish what in Gramscian terms would be a war of both position
and movement -- to defeat U.S. monopoly capitalism and imperialism. In this early
period in Newton’s ideological development, it is arguable however that he did not
succeed in an adequate application of Maoism, by confusing the relationship between
above-ground and underground paramilitary structures in revolutionary vanguard parties.
However, he did succeed in becoming what I have defined here in this thesis as a Black
working-class organic intellectual as well as the most influential U.S. Black Power

98
leader. From the outset, Newton created a Black revolutionary-nationalist organization in hegemonic alliance with revolutionary organizations from other oppressed nationalities, such as the American Indian Movement (AIM), Mexican-American Brown Berets, the Puerto Rican Young Lords, Chinese-American Red Guards, and the revolutionary white student group, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).

In 1964, Baker and UHURU traveled to Cuba to defy the travel ban imposed by U.S. policies reflecting its imperialist orientations that sought to prevent Americans from traveling to Socialist countries. In Cuba, Baker met Robert F. Williams then in exile, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and the African Marxist ideologue Muhammad Babu (Ahmad, 2007:137). Baker recalls how the trip enabled him to make an ideological leap as a communist who began to better understand the practical application of Marxism-Leninism in revolutionary movements (Baker, 1994:306-307). While in Cuba, Baker also met with a variety of revolutionary activists and national liberation fighters from throughout the colonial world whose activity was guided by the science of Marxism-Leninism. On the question of UHURU’s collective informal educational development in Cuba, Baker recalls a series non-formal learning engagements with various Asian, African, and Latin-American Communists, who expanded his past informal lifelong learning experiences or events up until then:

And when I got to Cuba it was a brand new day for a couple of reasons. I was fortunate enough to have a chance to play baseball with Fidel Castro. Fortunate enough to meet with Che Guevara while he was still alive. The more important thing I thought for me though in a lot of ways was Robert F. Williams living in Cuba then...when I got to Cuba, Cuba was a revolutionary laboratory. And I got a chance to meet revolutionaries from all over the globe. I met fighters from Vietnam, fighters from Zimbabwe, South Africa, some who’d been wounded were down there. Fighters from the West Indies and all over Latin America, Peru, Venezuela, Brazil, people struggling in Europe, the Albanians, it was a real revolutionary upheaval for me and a real laboratory. So I think that’s the thing that really hit me was all this revolutionary fervor. On the U.S. passport at that
time, the purpose we took the trip, was to break the travel ban. The United States government had just put Cuba as one of the countries on the passport that you could not travel to. And we were going down to defy that travel ban. It’s interesting to note, if you look at U.S. passports in that day they had five countries you couldn’t go to: you couldn’t go to China; you couldn’t go to Korea; you couldn’t go to Vietnam; and you couldn’t go to a little country called Albania; and they had just added Cuba. So you know with my youthful logic, I was 22 years old; when I got to Cuba and start seeing what was what, I thought I should go see the people from each one of these embassies, ‘cause if they say they’re bad there must be something good about them, you know. So I made the rounds to each one, I didn’t know nothing about Albania. Went into this Albanian embassy, and these people come in here, and they tell me they been fighting imperialism since Julius Ceaser. I said ‘Damn’, and fell over (laughs). I said “listen, my goodness…”’. But anyway I’m just tryin’ to let you understand the kind of uplifting stuff I had. So I thought that the trip to Cuba, the Malcolm speeches all adds up, the King marches, all that combined to make me take the stand I took when I opposed the draft (Baker, 2004:4-5).

After the Cuba trip, UHURU disbanded and re-emerged as the Afro-American Student Movement (ASM). The major campaign Baker worked on was the “September 10th Movement”. Upon receiving his draft notice, Baker and the ASM organized a mass rally to protest his induction into the Vietnam Draft, set for September 10, 1965. Baker protested by writing an anti-imperialist letter to the draft board denouncing U.S, European, and South African imperialist aggression against national liberation movements in South-East Asia and Africa. The ASM responded by circulating leaflets and threatening the draft board with a press announcement stating that 50,000 Blacks would show up at the Wayne County Induction Center on Baker’s induction date to protest the U.S. Army. Although the ASM only mobilized eight demonstrators on that day, the threat of mass protest resulted in the U.S. Army acquitting him from service on the grounds that he was an ‘unsuitable’ candidate (Ahmad, 2007:24). Baker was the first
African-American to defy the Vietnam draft, and the September 10th Movement signified the new militancy amongst Black students in the Civil Rights movement who directly challenged U.S. imperialism at home by demonstrating their solidarity with the Vietnamese Revolution abroad.

In 1967 Baker participated in the organization of Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement’s (DRUM) newsletter, the *Inner City Voice* which exemplified the heightened national consciousness of Black workers in the aftermath of the Detroit rebellion. Baker’s comrades Mike Hamlin, John Watson, and Ken Cockrel, studied Lenin’s *What is to be Done?*, debated revolutionary tactics, and resolved to organize a vanguard newspaper to enhance the socialist consciousness of Detroit’s Black working-class (Ibid:245-246). Baker used the *Inner City Voice* to do agitation in the plants and this was successful because it expressed Black workers’ grievances and called them to action in their own language. By printing the *Inner City Voice* in 1967, Baker developed as an organic intellectual through in-plant agitation for better working conditions as an autoworker and union representation. By the time the LRBW was organized in 1969, Baker had nearly a decade’s experience organizing in the left-wing of Detroit’s civil rights movement.

The transformation of DRUM into the LRBW is credited to Black Feminist organic intellectual Marion Kramer. Initially, Kramer was an anti-poverty activist in the Welfare Rights Organization recruited by DRUM in 1967 to type and edit the *Inner City Voice*.  

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18 One of the largest rebellions of the civil rights movement, the 1967 Detroit Rebellion consisted of five days of rioting, 43 deaths, 1189 injuries, and 7000 arrests. The origins of the rebellion are attributed to police brutality, lack of affordable housing, racial and economic inequality, and the rising influence of Black militancy from the Civil Rights movement. See Detroit Riots 1967 online at: www.67riots.rutgers.edu/d_eventshtm
Voice (Ibid:255). BPP leaders Bobby Seale and Fred Hampton requested that Kramer, as a DRUM organizer, help organize the Detroit chapter of the party.\textsuperscript{19} After working extensively alongside other women typing the newsletter, doing leafleting and agitation to organize community support, and participating in demonstrations, Kramer criticized the Black patriarchy in the movement, whereby the male leadership delegated most of the ‘mundane’ work to the women. Consequently, the LRBW was organized out of Kramer’s internal Black Feminist organizing within DRUM to resolve the tendency of women doing all the work and receiving none of the credit from the male leadership. Kramer took the lead in pressuring the central committee to establish an organization that would offload some of the printing and administrative work from DRUM women to men in the half-dozen Revolutionary Union Movements (RUMs) that emerged spontaneously throughout Detroit:

The women…were constantly pumping those things (leaflets) out…(and) laying out the Inner City Voice, it was us that was doing a lot of that. So women…noticed some problems that were creeping up in the League and we had some uneasiness too because we were getting more and more of the work on us. And we said, look we got to have some kind of organization to bring together all these entities. And so through some of the fighting we were doing, it lay the groundwork for the League of Revolutionary Black Workers to come together…The women were very instrumental in developing that organization (Kramer, 2004:1-2).

\textsuperscript{19} In an interview with Marian Kramer on February 24, 2004, she recalled that In the late 1960s DRUM and the BPP had a temporary alliance despite their ideological differences, which resulted in the Panther leadership’s request that she help organize the Detroit chapter of the party: See now we were in the Panthers. One thing that had happened during that period of time, Bobby Seale, who else? Fred Hampton, they came to us about helping them to organize here in Detroit. So part of our organization were assigned to go and help build the Panthers, and I became a part of the central committee, and all that type of stuff. So through the League, through the RUM movement I’m talking about, we helped build the Panther party (Kramer, 2004:3).
Through the organizing efforts of Kramer and other women in DRUM’s Black Women’s Committee, they called a meeting on January 21, 1969 with over 100 in attendance to air their grievances and the LRBW was founded on that day (Ibid:258-259).

**Conclusion**

This chapter traces the origins of the Black organic intellectual tradition to the first generation of Black communists who were educated in the CP USA in both informal learning networks and organized communist schools and study groups. The first wave of Black working-class organic intellectuals were educated and trained to be communist party leaders, theoreticians, and rank-and-file militants in organized communist schools and the party press. Briggs and the Harlem communists under his leadership developed through informal learning in the Social Party organizing the PEF as members of the underground ABB – the first independent Black communist organization in North America. Haywood was recruited to study abroad in the USSR at KUTVA to assist in the development of a policy on African-American liberation for the CP USA. Hudson was trained at the National Training Institute to organize southern Black workers and sharecroppers into the party. Jones developed as the first major Black feminist in the CP USA by writing extensively for the party press.

In the second wave of Black organic intellectuals that emerged in the 1960s, the primary type of educational relations that produced organic intellectuals were inter-generational learning relations whereby elder organic intellectuals from the first wave and elder civil rights leaders, Malcolm X and Grace and James Lee Boggs provided Black Power organic intellectuals Ahmad, Baker, and Newton with mentorship and
informal political education in study groups and organizing meetings. Black Power organic intellectuals also developed through informal learning by engaging in extensive self-directed and collective study groups. In the case of LRBW female leader, Kramer, she developed as a Black feminist organic intellectual by resisting the day-to-day experiences of Black patriarchy exhibited by her male comrades.

This chapter clarified the formal and non-formal communist educational relations responsible for the formation of Black working-class communists in the 20th century. Consequently, this summation will be used as a framework to examine the Black organic intellectual tradition in Canada to better understand the educational relations that produced the leadership of the Canadian Black Power movement in Toronto in the 1970s. Similar to the first and second wave in the U.S., Canadian Black Power organic intellectuals were formed through their solidarity efforts with U.S. Black Power organizations, organizing political education in the Canadian Black Power movement, and participating in inter-generational learning relations in both the U.S. and Canadian Black Left.
Chapter 4
Canadian Black Power, Organic Intellectuals and the War of Position in Toronto (Canada), 1967-1975

Introduction

This chapter seeks to explore the organizational and educational development of those who led the Canadian Black Power movement from 1967 to 1975 -- a watershed period of radicalism under-represented in current scholarly literatures. I will clarify the role of African-American vanguard organizations in the expansion of Toronto’s Black Left; in doing so, I will rely on ideas from Antonio Gramsci’s (1971) *Prison Notebooks*, in which he identifies the centrality of a revolutionary party in the formation of working-class organic intellectuals (communist activists) actively engaged in an anti-capitalist war of position in civil society. I contend that the U.S. Black Power movement led the ideological development of Black-working-class organic intellectuals, the pioneers of Canada’s first African-liberation movement.

During the 1960s and ‘70s Toronto’s Black Left grew rapidly under the influence of the Black Panther Party (BPP), the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW), and the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC).²⁰ From 1967 to 1971, Canadian

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²⁰ When the U.S. Black Power movement went into decline in the early 1970s, the leadership debated how to re-build the movement after it was defeated by the FBI’s successful counter-insurgency program COINTELPRO, which undermined the African-American Revolution in the 1960s. These discussions inspired the leadership of former Black Power organizations to unite and rebuild a Black revolutionary united front that mobilized all the progressive elements in the Black community regardless of their class background rather than solely focusing on the black working-class majority and growing underclass in the urban centers of North America. In 1971, the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) chapters in the U.S. as well as Canada (Montreal and Toronto) consisted of a broad united front of cultural nationalists and revolutionary-nationalists who came together to build material support for the national liberation movements against Portuguese colonialism in southern Africa during the 1970s.
Black revolutionaries were inspired by the Panthers and the League inviting them periodically, to help educate and organize Toronto’s Black working class against Canadian imperialism. The BPP and LRBW helped Toronto Black Power organic intellectuals understand their own experience of *internal colonialism* as an oppressed national minority in Canada -- a White settler capitalist imperialist nation. From 1972 to 1975, the Toronto chapter of the ALSC was organized to build material support for national liberation movements in southern Africa.

**The Role of U.S. Black Power in the Production of Canadian Black Power Organic Intellectuals**

Canadian Black Power was influenced by U.S. activists who came to live in Canada during the 1960s. In 1967, African-American Black Power activist Norman “Otis” Richmond came to Toronto to protest his induction into the Vietnam Draft at the age of 21, and worked alongside local Black radical youth and elders to organize Canada’s first Black Power organization. Prior to his arrival, Richmond recalls studying and organizing a Maoist Study Group with future Panther leaders Bunchy Carter and Masai Hewitt, as a student in Los Angeles that same year:

> As a native of California, I studied at the Los Angeles City College in 1967. I went to school with Bunchy Carter. At that time I joined a Maoist study group, and we had close relations with Bunchy who brought Eldridge Cleaver to speak to us at a local community centre when he had just got out of prison. There was

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21 Inspired by the anti-colonial national liberation movements against European colonialism and imperialism in Africa during the 1950s and 1960s, the theory of internal colonialism was initially espoused by Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr. in the civil rights movement to explain the racial oppression of African-Americans (Brohmer: 1998). This framework which saw racial oppression as colonial oppression was developed further in the late 1960s by U.S. Black Power leaders Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee in *Black Power* (1967) when they argued African-Americans were an oppressed nation that required political independence and economic independence.
also Masai Hewitt, who joined our study group but soon after became a leading Panther as well... When our group merged with the Panthers by the end of 1967, Bunchy became Minister of Defense, and Masai, the Minister of Information (Richmond, 2007:5).

In Toronto, Richmond helped found the Afro-American Progressive Association (AAPA) with Jose Garcia, an Arubian Trotskyist in the Communist League, and other revolutionary-nationalists from the U.S. The organization was called “Afro-American” because the leadership adopted Malcolm X’s view that all people of African descent in the Western Hemisphere were the descendants of African slaves in the Americas (Ibid:2).

During that early period, Richmond met elder and Toronto Black left pioneer Lenny Johnston, who joined the AAPA a year after its formation. As discussed in Chapter 3, Johnston was the first African-Canadian to join the Communist Party of Canada (CPC) in the late 1930s. When the AAPA was formed, Johnston worked at the CPC’s bookstore and co-founded Third World Books and Crafts in 1968 with his wife Gwen. Soon after the AAPA was formed, Johnston left the CPC to join the organization because of the Party’s refusal to recognize the national oppression suffered by Blacks in Canada. Third World Books was Toronto’s first independent Black bookstore and the headquarters of the AAPA from 1968 until the latter’s demise in 1971. It was also a popular meeting place for Black Power organic intellectuals and others in the Black community to discuss the politics of anti-colonialism in Canada, Marxism, African History, and participate in local grassroots organizing (Harris, 2005:60).

The AAPA began a war of position in African-Canadian civil society by organizing rallies and international solidarity campaigns in support of U.S. Black Power, attended by hundreds in the Black community to counter the bourgeois liberal reformism of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the mainstream civil rights movement. Representatives
from the Panthers and the LRBW were invited to educate African-Canadians about their struggles against U.S. imperialism and the possibilities of building a similar movement in Canada. On April 2, 1970, the AAPA sponsored a rally in Toronto featuring two Panther leaders. The meeting was attended by 200 African-Canadians who came to hear the Panthers speak about their struggle against white imperialist hegemony in America. In commenting on the success of this event to help Blacks understand the politics of African-Canadian colonization and liberation, an AAPA member observed:

As far as the Black community is concerned I think the opportunity to meet some members of the B.P.P.; the opportunity to experience two hundred beautiful Black people under one roof have reinforced the hopes of a lot of Black people who have become disheartened by the previous apparent lack of unity that was displayed in Toronto. We intend to work much harder to try to bring about an even stronger and broader base of unity among the Black community through education and we hope that our other Brothers and Sisters will do the same (Contrast, 1970, April:10).

As a revolutionary vanguard party, the Panthers played a significant role in the development of organic intellectuals in the AAPA leadership, who in turn pioneered their own model of anti-colonial education that hundreds of African-Canadians underwent during this period.

The AAPA also organized solidarity events with the LRBW to debate their ideological tensions with the Panthers. On November 13, 1970, a rally was organized featuring LRBW spokesperson Edward Cooper. At the event, Cooper spoke about the LRBW’s ideological differences with the Panthers. Although the LRBW organized the Detroit chapter of the Party in 1968, the two organizations had separated over ideology by this time. Cooper criticized the Panthers for laying too much emphasis on mobilizing the Black lumpen street element against the police, which only brought further repression in African-American communities (Contrast, 1971, December:13). According to
Richmond, the two organizations had tactical differences over which class force should be mobilized to advance the revolutionary process in America: “While the BPP held the lumpen proletariat up as the leaders of the Black revolution, the League maintained the Black working class were the natural leaders or vanguard of that struggle” (Richmond, 2004:7). Ideological tensions between the Panthers and LRBW remained unresolved during the Black Power era.

Despite their importance, the AAPA’s international solidarity events with the LRBW and Panthers also revealed their lack of ideological clarity and inability to fully comprehend the contradictions of Canadian imperialism and African-Canadian colonization. As a lesson in historical specificity, Rodney warns against modeling one’s own liberation project after the example of successful foreign movements because each national context has its own particular race and class contradictions:

> People are searching for answers, but to be frank, sometimes searching for them in somewhat uncreative ways, because it really isn’t creative to turn around to somebody else and ask what is the answer…There is a tendency to believe that somebody somewhere has the key (Rodney, 1990:82).

It is true that there was a certain lack of originality in the war of position Toronto Black Power organic intellectuals initiated in the late 1960s. However, the AAPA is to be credited for recognizing the similarities between the national oppression experienced by Blacks in the U.S. and Canada. Since the Panthers organized a revolutionary-nationalist political party with an internationalist perspective, it is not surprising the AAPA followed their ideological orientation without addressing the specificity of African-Canadian colonization.

By 1969, AAPA organic intellectuals themselves were divided over the politics of Black-Nationalism. Richmond recalls how internal disputes over the direction of
Canadian Black-Nationalism (i.e. Black capitalist or anti-capitalist?) split the organization into a revolutionary-nationalist (Marxist) and conservative nationalist wing:

While I was there, a struggle between people who wanted to be more Marxist and Black Nationalist, began to split the organization…and from that point on, the Nationalists formed a youth group called the Black Youth Organization (BYO). And Jan Carew, Jose Garcia, and Lenny Johnston formed a Marxist group called the Black Liberation Front (Richmond, 2007:1).

One concrete gain that came out of the BYO’s formation was the establishment of a united front between Left-wing and Right-wing Black Power organizations in Toronto. On July 26, 1970, BYO formed an alliance with the AAPA and Sundiata and Ebony Services. After a public debate that lasted for three hours in which the three groups tried to establish a common program, a united front was established to coordinate their efforts to empower local Black working-class youth through: 1) the implementation of a bridging program to increase Black student enrollment at George Brown College; and 2) the formation of an African cultural community center to deliver programs to African-Canadian youth (Contrast, 1970, August:4).

After the AAPA split, organic intellectuals in the BLFC continued to advance a Black liberation agenda in Toronto. The BLFC was launched in July 1969 with the first issue of Black Liberation News, as a Leninist vanguard organization concerned with increasing the race- and class-consciousness of African-Canadians by educating them about Third World Revolutions. The BLFC’s monthly newspaper carried articles ranging from critical coverage of the Vietnam Revolution and the struggle for Palestinian liberation, to monthly updates on the Panthers. Black Power organic intellectuals in BLFC also produced Black Liberation News to educate the Black community about the role of Canadian imperialism in exploiting the natural resources and labor of South Africa, Jamaica, Guyana, and Brazil (Black Liberation News, July 1969a).
In the summer of 1969, the BLFC implemented a summer program for working-class African-Canadian youth that consisted of Black History classes, a film series, and guest speakers. They also offered tutoring for Black students to help them improve their academic performance (Black Liberation News, July 1969b). On July 25-27, 1969, the BLFC held a rally against police brutality at Rochdale College, where they organized a Citizens’ Review Board to increase police accountability and charge officers guilty of excessive use of force (Ibid). At another rally there were guest speakers from the LRBW, who spoke about the political-economy of racism in the U.S. and the relationship between African-American and African-Canadian liberation (Black Liberation News, August 1969:1).

The contradiction between revolutionary-nationalists and conservative cultural-nationalists in the U.S., who supported the ideology of Black capitalism, began to develop locally when influential conservative leaders came to Toronto. For example, Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones) spoke at the historic Black People’s Conference organized by BYO, York University, and University of Toronto students in the Black Student Union. In this conference held at Harbord Collegiate on February 19-21, 1971, Baraka encouraged the 2,000 delegates in attendance to undergo an “internal revolution” still narrowly defined as cultural nationalism. Contrast, a local Black independent newspaper reported the following coverage of Baraka’s keynote address:

Addressing an open session on Saturday, February 20th, Brother Baraka said an internal revolution would require Black people to get themselves sorted out, to remove themselves from a mental commitment to slavery, relate themselves to their point of origin and develop a Pan-Africanist attitude…Dealing with the question of Black unity, he said that as African people we must focus on our African heritage as this is the only unifying source (Contrast, March 6, 1971b:1).
Before he converted to Maoism in the mid-1970s, Baraka was a conservative nationalist who perceived the struggle strictly in terms of a racialized identity politics focused on individual transformation in the same way that post-modern cultural-nationalists would reduce African liberation politics to the Africentric worldview and way of life a generation later (Woodard, 1999). Ideological divisions between revolutionary Marxists and conservative nationalists eventually led to the decline of Canadian Black Power in the early ‘70s.

**The Role of Inter-Generational Learning Relations**

The tradition of ‘inter-generational' lifelong learning, in which elders teaching the young within a family structure, within a community, within an organization, and within a social movement, has been understood for some time to be a key learning relationship across a variety of cultures and historical periods. These learning relations are no less important to the subject of this research. To take an important example, Lenny and Gwendolyn Johnston are two first wave elder organic intellectuals who were pillars of the Black community in Toronto because they dedicated their lives to the emancipation of Blacks in Canada and to the fostering of these inter-generational learning processes.

In 1968, the Johnston’s founded Third World Books, the first Black-owned bookstore in Toronto and carried literature on a wide range of subjects from Third World People’s History to African Political Economy (Braithwaite and Joseph, 1998). The bookstore contained the largest selection of African Political Economy and Marxist literature from Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and U.S. On any given day, one could find books written by Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Dubois, Huey P. Newton, Frantz Fanon, Jomo
Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah, H. Rap Brown, and Jullius Nyerere. There were also cultural materials such as posters of Malcolm X, Elridge Cleaver, Stokely Carmichael; and transcripts of speeches by the likes of Dick Gregory, Malcolm X, Rap Brown, and Elaine Brown. Also a variety of newspapers and periodicals from the international independent Black Press was also available at the store: Black Panther, Contrast, Crusader (Robert F. Williams), Uhuru, Black Voice, Muhammad Speaks, Inner City Voice (LRBW), Peoples World, and Peking Review (see Contrast, 1972, March 2:5). According to Johnston he opened the bookstore to educate Canadians in general and Africans in particular about their culture and history: “The sole purpose of starting the bookstore was to bring understanding to the Black community and other places where people are ignorant of the hardships of two-thirds of the world” (qtd. in Braithwaite and Joseph, 1998:42-43). Third World Books was also the headquarters of the AAPA from 1968 until its demise in 1971 (Richmond, 2002). It was also a popular meeting place for radical activists and other members of the Black Community to come together and discuss Black-Nationalism, Marxism, and African History to develop strategies and tactics for mobilization. The Johnston’s ran the bookstore until Lenny’s death at the age of 80, on April 30, 1998.

This is a key example not only of the way 'informal educational resources' and artifacts were circulated in Toronto, but also of the Johnston’s function as elder Black Power organic intellectuals by running Third World Books for 30 years. For many, Third World Books was the only Black working-class institution where extensive learning and inter-generational lifelong learning exchanges could take place in the community. The Johnston’s mentored Canadian Black Power activists like Richmond in particular,
orienting and shaping this new generation of organic intellectuals who surrounded them to learn from the wealth of knowledge and information they provided on revolutionary movements and political developments in Africa and the rest of the Third World. Toronto Black Power organic intellectuals were indebted to Third World Books because it provided them with the information necessary to engage in self-directed learning and informal study groups that would not have been possible without the Johnstons’ ongoing efforts to aid them in their political-education.

From the perspective of inter-generational informal education, the Johnston’s also played a critical role in the spontaneous re-production of organic intellectuals in the absence of a vanguard party by bridging the gap between activism in a key historical period (the 1930s and ‘40s) and the emerging forms of activism such as Black Power movements in the 1960s and ‘70s. As such, these movement elders and the community, organizational and educational resources they generated were a key example of how knowledge storage and transmission, and with it the development of a new generation of radical, black intellectuals, actually came about. Moreover, Lenny was active in the Marxist/Nationalist organic intellectual debates of the time in order to nurture the political-educational development of Toronto Black Power organic intellectuals by passing down his knowledge of Marxist theory and Black working-class movements at his “meeting place”, Third World Books, where critical debate was always encouraged. For example, when asked by a writer from Contrast about the relevance of Pan-Africanism to the Black Nationalist movement in the Caribbean and North America, Johnston responded in the December 1, 1971, issue
that grassroots mobilization was necessary to make the vision of Pan-Africanism a political reality that benefited the masses of diasporic African people:

Black people living in North America and the Caribbean have always been leaders in the struggle for Pan-Africanism. These are men who were not born in Africa and whose concept of Pan-Africanism is one of returning home. I suspect that when the Afro-American and the man from the Caribbean, with their capitalist, bourgeois background speak of Pan-Africanism they are speaking of claiming a piece of Africa for themselves…The North American Black still has been programmed through a capitalist-oriented educational system, and he still thinks like the man. Any attempt to take a piece of Africa as against sharing Africa with Africans runs counter to the socialist thinking of Africans, who with their great land mass, have always thought of sharing. Pan-Africanism was started by the intellectuals and it is still a matter of academic discussion. Until we get some action, until the grassroots people get involved, no progress will be made (Contrast, 1971, December 1:13).

According to Johnston, debates over the relevance of Pan-Africanism were not useful to African people if they mystified the relationship between the race and class struggle on the one hand, and remained an exclusively petit-bourgeois ideological debate on the other. As a veteran of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) and CPC from the ‘30s-‘50s, Johnston understood the importance of Black working-class praxis and took the time to educate new (and potential) activists about the primacy of revolutionary theory and practice, as well the problems with methods of Black struggle such as passive ‘armchair revolutionary’ intellectualism or pragmatism. It was hardly a coincidence that, six months after the publication of Johnston's comments, the African Liberation Day (ALD) demonstration emerged in Toronto led by local Black Power organic intellectuals, many of whom frequented Third World Books for literature, inter-generational informal education, and also to organize the community.

Another influential first wave elder significant to Richmond’s ideological development was Black Power organic intellectual Harry Haywood. Richmond lived with Haywood in Detroit while organizing as a Central Committee member of the LRBW, and
travelling back and forth from Toronto in the early 1970s. Haywood was recruited to
Detroit by the LRBW to provide them with advanced theoretical training in the study of
Marxism from an African-American working-class standpoint. While living at the
Watson Household with Haywood and others, Richmond remembers his lifelong learning
experiences and the important role ideological debates played in his development as a
Black Power organic intellectual:

I lived with Harry Haywood in Detroit. He lived at John Watson’s house so I
actually learned off of the Black Bolshevik who was once in the Communist
Party, and he was writing his book Black Bolshevik when I lived in the same
house with him. For quite a while…and me and him used to have all these
debates…You know, he wanted to talk about Marxism and I wanted to watch the
Temptations, and… he used to fight with me about being so sectarian…And I
remember he used to tell me these stories about Marcus Garvey and Cyril Briggs,
who was the head of the African Blood Brotherhood (Richmond, 2002:20).

Despite minor quarrels which existed due to the generation gap between the two, the
experience of living in the same household with Haywood expanded Richmond’s
informal education to include inter-generational resources. The presence of first wave
ever elder organic intellectuals in the movement was critical to the spontaneous education of
Black Power organic intellectuals in their early stages of development because there was
very little literature written about past Black working-class movements. Thus,
storytelling, intellectual debate, and study facilitated informally by elder organic
intellectuals aided the Black Power generation develop a critical ideological framework
from a conflict perspective. Critical lessons from past struggles in the African Liberation
project enabled emerging activists to refine their praxis by learning from the mistakes of
the past; in this case tensions between Blacks Communists in the CP USA and UNIA
leader Garvey, who represented two different ideological poles in the African-American
revolutionary-nationalist movement of the 1920s. In a Black working-class non-formal
learning context, Haywood instructed Richmond about the detrimental effects of anti-white sectarianism and black national chauvinism for the Black working-class movement that ultimately requires multi-national unity to become hegemonic. Haywood, who had been in the struggle for decades, was ideal for teaching the current generation important lessons about Blacks in the American communist movement that could, by default, only be transmitted orally due to the relative lack of written sources in the 1970s.

Moreover, inter-generational informal education did not function in only one direction. Haywood himself also went through a tremendous lifelong learning experience as an elder organic intellectual living in the same household as the younger activists such as Richmond. It was during this period in the early 1970s when Haywood was inspired to complete his 700-page autobiography that eventually became published as Black Bolshevik (1979), a memoir of his 30 years of anti-racist struggles against White chauvinism and Soviet-revisionism in the CP USA that eventually culminated in his expulsion from the Party in 1957 on charges of ultra-leftism (Georgakas and Surkin, 1998:236). In the early 1970s, Haywood then in his mid-seventies continued to struggle ideologically through conflictual and cooperative learning relationships with other Black Power organic intellectuals over the successes, challenges, and failures of African-American revolutionary struggles in the Communist movement and beyond.

**Black Power Organic Intellectuals and the Two-Line Struggle within Toronto African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC)**

When the U.S. Black Power movement went into decline in the early 1970s, the leadership debated how to re-build the movement after it was defeated by the FBI’s successful counter-insurgency program COINTELPRO, which undermined the African-
American Revolution in the 1960s. These discussions inspired the leadership of former Black Power organizations to unite and build the U.S. African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC): a Black revolutionary united front designed to unify all the progressive elements in the Black community regardless of their class background rather than solely focusing on the black working-class majority and growing underclass in the urban centers of North America. Canadian Black Power organic intellectuals continued to develop as organic intellectuals within the organizational context of U.S. Black Power through their participation in the ideological debates in the U.S. ALSC. These contentious debates questioned the relevance of Marxism and Black-Nationalism in the struggle to rebuild the movement which suffered from the decline of leading organizations like the Panthers and LRBW due to a combination of internal contradictions (e.g. ideological disputes, factionalism) and external imperialist state repression (e.g. COINTELPRO). The early ‘70s was a watershed period for organic intellectual formation because Canadian Black revolutionaries learned Marxism and revolutionary-nationalism to contribute to polemical discussions that divided the movement during the period. Despite the lack of sophistication, the debate in itself contributed to organic intellectual development even if no ideological agreement was reached. Participation in Marxist/Nationalist debate also advanced the praxis of Canadian Black revolutionaries by informing their efforts to rebuild the Black Power movement.

In 1971, U.S. Black Power leader Owusu Sadauki experienced an ideological transformation from cultural-nationalism to Marxism-Leninism upon his return from traveling to the liberated zones in Mozambique to consult with Samora Machel, leader of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO). Kelley affirms the Sadauki-led
delegation to Mozambique and their engagement with Amilcar Cabral a year later in America transformed U.S. Black Power into a revolutionary Pan-African movement:

FRELIMO’s president Samora Machel and other militants persuaded Sadauki and his colleagues that the most useful role African Americans could play in support of anticolonialism was to challenge American capitalism from within and let the world know the truth about FRELIMO’s just war against Portuguese domination. A year later, during his last visit to the United States, Amilcar Cabral, the leader of the anticolonial movement in Guinea-Bissau and the Cape Verde Islands, said essentially the same thing (Kelley, 2002: 104).

In 1971, the U.S. ALSC emerged as a united front, uniting African-Americans from the grassroots to politicians in the U.S. Congress (Johnson, 2003). The ALSC chapters in both the U.S. and Canada (Montreal and Toronto) consisted of a broad united front of cultural nationalists and revolutionary-nationalists who came together to build material support for the national liberation movements against Portuguese colonialism in southern Africa during the 1970s (Elbaum, 2002:84). Following the example of the U.S. leadership, Toronto Black Power organic intellectuals developed as Canadian Black revolutionaries by supporting the national liberation movements against Portuguese colonialism in Southern Africa. In May 1972, the U.S. ALSC was established, with a Toronto chapter organized by local Black Power organic intellectuals to build material support for the following national liberation movements in southern Africa: 1) FRELIMO; 2) the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands (PAIGC); and 3) the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). They did this by organizing the annual African Liberation Day (ALD) demonstrations in major cities throughout the Caribbean and North America beginning on May 27, 1972 (Contrast, 1972, May:19).
Thanks to the organizing efforts of Toronto ALSC, 3,000 African-Canadians attended ALD ’72. The event was held at Christie Pits, renamed “Henson-Garvey Park” to memorialize the historic Black leaders, Marcus Garvey and Josiah Henson. The keynote speaker was Canadian Black Power leader Rosie Douglas who spoke alongside U.S. ALSC leaders, Julian Bond and John Conyers (Johnson, 2003:489). Guest speakers spoke to the community on the relationship between the western imperialist conquest of Africa and the national oppression experienced by Blacks in Canada; and the centrality of mass mobilization to overcome this oppression. ALD ’72 was the first serious attempt of African-Canadians to protest in solidarity with oppressed nations on the continent (Black Labor, 1975, May:6). The success of this first demonstration was evident in the subsequent expansion of the ALSC which grew from an annual international solidarity campaign into a dynamic revolutionary Pan-African movement in the U.S., Canada and Caribbean (Johnson, 2003:490).

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22 In 1972, ALD was attended by 30,000 in Washington; 5,000, San Francisco; 6,000, Dominica; 10,000 Antigua; 3,000, Grenada. See Front Story, “African Liberation Day”, (Contrast, 1972, June 15:1).

23 Josiah Henson (1789-1883) was an African-American slave born in Kentucky who eventually escaped through the Underground Railway to Ontario at the age of 40. Henson played a leading role in establishing the ex-slave African community in Ontario with the greatest economic stability. As a minister and laborer, Henderson purchased 3,000 acres of land and built a saw mill and produced timber exported all over the world. As a result, he built a school to educate runaway slaves, brought over 200 slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad, and constructed a waterway between Dresden, Ontario and Detroit, that became a federal waterway (see Contrast, June 15, 1972:8).

24 Rosie Douglas was a leader of the 1969 Sir George Williams Rebellion, a Black anti-racist student rebellion at Concordia University in Montreal. Julian Bond was a founding member and Communications Director, of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (for more information see www.ibiblio.org/sncc/). John Conyers was a Democratic Congressman in Detroit, Michigan.
In 1974, a two-line struggle emerged in the U.S. branch of the ALSC, eventually dividing the movement in Toronto. Ultimately, the ideological struggle between Marxists and Nationalists on the one hand, and Maoists and Soviet Marxists on the other, led to the collapse of the organization in 1975 due to ultra-left sectarianism. In the last year of the movement, ALD ‘75 split into three different demonstrations organized by each of the three Toronto ALSC factions (Richmond, 2002:14). The ideological struggle within the U.S. branch of the ALSC, in turn, led to the development of a similar tension in Toronto where many local organic intellectuals experienced a qualitative shift in their revolutionary consciousness by adopting Marxism-Leninism. The Marxist/Nationalist debate within Toronto ALSC represented a significant transformation because it demonstrated the majority of leftists within the organization were beginning to challenge capitalism and imperialism in addition to White settler hegemony.

The transformation of Black Power organic intellectuals from Nationalism to Marxism-Leninism resulted in part from the Marxist/Nationalist debate at the U.S. ALSC’s first national conference at Howard University in 1974, entitled Which Road Against Racism and Imperialism for the Black Liberation Movement (Johnson, 2003:492). Attended by 800 delegates from across North America, the conference debate focused on a question central to the progress and unity of the movement: which ideological faction will lead the African-American Revolution? The right-wing saw the ALSC as a Black Nationalist organization that sought to unite all Africans, continental and Diasporic against White supremacy. Meanwhile the left-wing saw the ALSC as an anti-imperialist organization that must mobilize material support to help advance Socialism in Africa. In an article in the May 1975 issue of Black Labor, an independent
Toronto Black Power newspaper, the object of the ALSC Marxist/Nationalist debate was to achieve ideological clarity and discourage right-wing nationalists who had devised a “pure race theory” of African-American liberation without any anti-capitalist analysis:

…a number of discussions emerged concerning the…two ideological lines within ALSC, representing two different theoretical positions, two different sets of concrete programs based on two different class realities. One was a pure race theory, and the other a theory of class struggle with a correct analysis of racial oppression with a program of mass involvement based on the necessary leadership of the black working-class. These positions were clearly brought to the fore at the ALSC conference held in Washington, D.C. in May 25-26, 1974 with the Toronto African Liberation Support Committee supporting the latter (Black Labor, May 1975b:6).

The Marxist faction dominated the debate and many conservative nationalists left the U.S. organization. When Canadian delegates returned, they spearheaded the debate in Toronto ALSC; and the Marxists became hegemonic in the organization.

By 1974 Toronto ALSC had entered a new phase of line struggle where members were divided over the Sino-Soviet conflict. As in the rest of the International Communist movement, Toronto ALSC split into two ideological camps engaged in a two-line struggle between China and the USSR. The debate centered on which country was the legitimate leader of the Socialist bloc in the post-Stalin years, with China claiming authority because the USSR had degenerated into state capitalism. One group of

25 In June 1963, the Chinese published The Chinese Communist Party’s “Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement” (June, 1963). Soviets responded with an “Open Letter of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union” that ended up being the last formal communication between the two parties. By 1964, Mao claimed that there was a counter-revolution in the Soviet Union and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat was conquered by a rising bourgeois class (represented by Kruschev) that restored capitalism and historically arose from the ranks of the Soviet State bureaucracy that was the ruling class since the victory of the Socialist Revolution. Although the Sino-Soviet split began as a two-line struggle in the international communist movement between the two dominant parties, it soon divided the entire communist movement into two ideological “war of position” (imperialist Canada) and “war of movement” (in colonial Africa) against the other factions. For example, China had antagonistic relations with the so-called Soviet satellite states that came to power in Africa during the mid-70s. Source (Elbaum, 2002:209-210).
Toronto ALSC organic intellectuals adopted Maoism while the other, Soviet Marxism. Richmond contends Maoism was more appealing than Soviet Marxism because China was recognized as a former colonial nation, whereas the Soviet Union was falsely perceived to be a “White” imperialist nation:

...we loved Mao Tse Tung because Mao wasn’t White. So he was supposedly a Marxist, but he wasn’t White so we came to Socialism through a Chinese, as opposed to Marx, Engels, or Stalin or Trotsky and those white dudes because we probably wouldn’t have studied Scientific Socialism if it wasn’t for Mao Tse Tung--because Mao Tse Tung wasn’t considered white at that time. We were still very much anti-white. And we were anti-Soviet because we didn’t know at the time that the Soviet Union was a multi-national nation-state, we just thought everybody was white. So, I mean that’s how naïve we were, being born in America...at least I was (Richmond, 2002:12).

This later period in Canadian Black Power was characterized by intense debates during organizing meetings and study groups where Maoist and Soviet Marxists took positions on which country was providing the most aid to the African liberation forces in the Portuguese colonies. Toronto ALSC’s Maoist faction blindly supported the groups that received aid from China, although those groups, like the United Party for the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), tended to be more reactionary.26 On the other hand, the Soviet Marxist faction supported the USSR because they aided the real vanguard forces in Portuguese Africa: FRELIMO, PAIGC, MPLA (Elbaum, 2002:115).

26 UNITA was formed in 1966 when its leader, Jonas Savimbi broke with the FNLA to form it. The FNLA (1957) was a conservative African-Nationalist party funded by the Communist Party of China (CPC). China’s reactionary foreign policy was a result of the two-line struggle between the USSR in the ‘60s and ‘70s and resulted in its lending material support to a conservative bourgeois-nationalist liberation organization to eliminate the Soviet-sponsored MPLA, although that was the true vanguard of the people. UNITA’s leadership comes from the Ovimbundu Tribal group and its policies were formally Maoist although it was aligned with South Africa and later U.S. Imperialism in the ‘80s. (Elbaum, 2002:217-219).
In its fourth year of existence, sectarianism soon engulfed Toronto ALSC causing the organization to go into decline, with each clique merging with different Maoist and Soviet-backed communist parties on the Canadian Left. In 1975, the Maoist faction formed a party-building cell called the Black Study Group (BSG), which studied and debated Lenin and Stalin’s writings on the national question in an effort to develop a theory of internal colonialism for Blacks in Canada. They aimed to unify with other oppressed nationalities and White Maoist groups to build a new multi-national communist party; however, the group disbanded within a year. Meanwhile, in January 1975 the Soviet faction led by Rosie Douglas formed the short-lived Black Workers Alliance (BWA) -- a revolutionary black labor organization that struggled for Black workers’ rights in the workplace (Auguste, 1975:2).

BWA organic intellectuals were also involved in organizing Black Power rallies to educate the Black working-class about liberation politics. African Marxist Scholar and activist, Walter Rodney spoke at a BWA conference in Toronto on May 2, 1975, attended by 700 people. Rodney addressed the relationship between Black Liberation and Socialism alongside Amiri Baraka. Dudley Laws, who at that time was the leader of Toronto’s Universal African Improvement Association (UAIA), spoke about the relationship of Black Power to the legacy of Marcus Garvey. Rodney clarified the revolutionary Pan-Africanism and anti-imperialism of the ALSC and discussed its relationship to the Vietnam Revolution and the revolutionary process in Southern Africa, which had dealt significant blows to U.S. imperialism (Black Labor, 1975a, May).

27 Through various conversations with some elder activists in Toronto’s Black working-class community the history of the African-Canadian Black Power Movement was recovered.
Rodney continued the process of organic intellectual development in Canada by participating in the BWA as a leading ideologue. The BWA also sponsored a series of events throughout 1975 that featured Douglas who was fighting to remain in the country after being charged for leading the 1969 Sir George Williams Rebellion in Montreal.\(^{28}\) When the BWA disbanded by the fall of 1975 most of its members had joined the CPC.

The major reason for the Toronto ALSC’s decline was the internal weaknesses of the Canadian Black Power leadership, still in their early stages of ideological maturation. BSG Maoists and Soviet Marxists failed to identify their common interests to build a dynamic African-Canadian liberation organization in Toronto. Mao stated that contradictions among the people should be handled differently than those between the masses and imperialism; namely through criticism and debate to unify opposing groups on the Left and achieve a higher level of unity (Mao, 1966:322). Because Maoists and Soviet Marxist organic intellectuals in Toronto ALSC did not see their common interests as an oppressed national minority, they split into two separate organizations which both degenerated into ultra-left sectarianism within six months. Toronto ALSC failed to achieve organizational autonomy so it suffered greatly when U.S. Black Power went into decline.

\(^{28}\) On January 31, 1975 Douglas spoke at 334 Queen St. West about the BWA anti-racist campaign to appeal his deportation order set for the following week (Black Labor, 1975c). Douglas also spoke out against Ottawa’s racist immigration policy that sought to deport him back to Dominica for his leadership in the Black student rebellion. On another occasion, Douglas spoke at a BWA rally for Black History Week 1975, entitled “A Tribute to Malcolm X”. The event commemorated Malcolm on the 10th anniversary of his death on February 21 at St Michael’s All Angels Church Hall (Black Labor, “Black History Week”, 1975). On May 11, the BWA held a rally at the Ethiopian Orthodox Church attended by 300, to protest the police murder of 15 year-old Michael Habib (Black Labor, May 24, 1975c).
In defense of the organic intellectuals who developed as Marxist-Leninists during the Canadian Black Power era, I turn to Rodney’s critical reflection on the ALSC experience whereby he concluded that despite their limitations, the debates advanced the struggle for Pan-African liberation in North America:

Although there are many criticisms that I have of the character of the current debate, one must come out very clearly at the beginning and understand that the debate itself is another facet of the liberation movement, irrespective of the validity of the arguments or however misguided some people participating in it may be. I think this must be got very clearly, because there are some people who would not like to have a debate in actual fact, because the debate is raising questions about the nature of the capitalist system…that is part of our revolution (Rodney, 1990:94).

For many, the ALSC debates confirmed the idea that capitalism and imperialism was the root cause of Black national oppression in North America.

The Role of Gender Contradiction in Black Feminist Organic Intellectual Formation

In addition to participating in the two-line struggle within Toronto ALSC, some Black women in the movement began to cultivate a Black Feminist consciousness by critiquing the patriarchal relations that characterized all Black Power organizations during the period. Black working women were rarely to be found in the leadership of U.S. or Canadian Black Power organizations although they did play an important role as rank-and-file organizers. The AAPA, BYO, BLFC and Toronto ALSC did not include Black women in their leadership, and although they did perform subordinate roles, women’s issues went largely under-recognized so that a Black patriarchy disguised as Black working-class unity could be maintained. Organic intellectual Dionne Brand recalls how her black feminist consciousness initially developed as a negation of the sexism in Toronto ALSC alongside other emerging Black Feminists:
In the black liberation movement in Toronto there was a group of...very forthright women who would call down guys on certain questions [such as]...the idea that the revolution had to come first and then they’d deal with women’s issues. We discussed what was more important, black struggle or black woman’s struggle...I started to think that my role wasn’t to support black men to establish a black patriarchy (qtd. in Rebick, 2005:131).

By the early 1970s, Black women challenged men who wrongly perceived women’s liberation as a deviation from the struggle for African-Canadian liberation against White imperialist hegemony.

Black Feminist organic intellectuals questioned gender contradictions in the movement by writing in Toronto’s independent Black press. In a 1971 article in Contrast a pioneering Toronto Black Feminist argued that since Black women during slavery played a leading role in ensuring the race’s survival, they were qualified to lead the struggle for Black Power alongside men:

There is no question today that the resources which initiated and established modern industrial capital were the Slave Trade and the enslavement of Black people in the Americas. Neither is there any doubt that these same Black people are the architects of social change and a new humanity. Among the architects there has always existed women like HARRIET TUBMAN, MAMMY PLEASANTS and SOJOURNER TRUTH, who played valiant roles in the struggle to end oppression. Let me make it quite clear...Our women were plowed into slavery and were found to be as equally efficient and profitable as the men. And it seems to me that that is the only equality they have ever known...Our women have acted as domestics and concubines to white society, and as soldiers and protectors to Black society (Contrast, 1971, Mar 6:1).

This article suggests that Black Feminism was the product of Black Feminist organic intellectual resistance to Black patriarchy in the movement. Similarly, the BWA paper Black Labor also contained Black Feminist articles in a section called “Perspectives on the Woman Question.” To give an example of the type of articles written by Black Feminist organic intellectuals, in the May 24, 1975 edition, there was an article on women in the MPLA, the Angola People Army. The BWA advocated Black working
women’s participation in African Communist wars of movement as the only means of alleviating race, gender, and class oppression from their lives:

For black women and other women of colour under capitalism…They are oppressed not only as workers and as women, but also as members of ‘minority’ races. They are in many ways the most downtrodden, and are subjected to forms of contempt, humiliation and degradation…Women who had experienced similar or worse conditions were only able to realize a change in their situation by participating actively in the national liberation struggles and fighting to overthrow capitalism (Black Labor, 1975, May 24:6).

These newspaper articles indicate that Black Marxist Feminist cultural production was at best marginalized in the war of position led by Toronto Black Power organic intellectuals during the 1960s and ‘70s.

**Conclusion**

The Canadian Black Power leadership developed as organic intellectuals by setting up organizations, rallies, and protests from 1967 to 1975 and there are several insights to be drawn from examining this process. First, socialist consciousness did not emerge spontaneously in the Canadian Black Power movement; it was brought to the movement by U.S. Black Power’s leading vanguard organizations, the Panthers and the LRBW; elder Toronto organic intellectuals Lenny and Gwen Johnston at Third World Books; and African Marxist ideologue Walter Rodney. Second, inter-generational learning led by elder Canadian Black Power organic intellectual Lenny Johnston, and the African-American first generation elder organic intellectual Harry Haywood, made an important contribution to the educational development of Norman Richmond and others on the Black Left in Toronto. Third, debate was central to organic intellectual development in this period. As members of the AAPA, the BYO and the BLFC (1967-1971) organic intellectuals established the first Black Power organizations in Canada.
When former AAPA, BYO, and BLFC activists joined the Toronto ALSC, they developed as Black Power organic intellectuals (1972-1975) by participating in the Marxist/Nationalist ideological debates that raged within the organization. The tension between Marxists and Nationalists, and later Maoist and Soviet Marxists, was never resolved and Toronto ALSC degenerated into ultra-leftism with half of its leadership splitting into the Maoist BSG and the remaining forming the short-lived Soviet BWA.

The war of position waged by Canadian Black Power from 1967 to 1971 in the AAPA, BYO, and BLFC continued with the formation of Toronto ALSC in 1972. In Toronto ALSC, Black Power organic intellectuals were educated about Marxism and the politics of revolutionary-nationalism through their participation in the Marxist/Nationalist debates spearheaded by the U.S. branch of the organization over the relevance of Marxist-Leninism to the African-American Revolution. By building material support for the national liberation movements in Southern Africa from 1972 to 1975, Toronto Black Power organic intellectuals advanced their war of position in civil society and staged the largest anti-imperialist mobilizations in African-Canadian History.

The war of position initiated by Canadian Black Power from 1967 to 1975 was a watershed period for the development of the Black Left in Toronto and created a small group of organic intellectuals who have remained active in Black anti-racist organizations in the proceeding decades. Canadian Black Power produced organic intellectuals through the development of local Black revolutionary organizations, intellectual debates, and international Pan-African solidarity efforts against Portuguese colonialism in southern Africa. However they did not sustain themselves and contributed to the decline of revolutionary anti-imperialist politics on the Black Left. Consequently, most of the Black
Power leadership who developed during that era went on to become leading social-democratic anti-racist and Black labor activists in the following contemporary organizations as the revolutionary Black Left went into decline: the Black Action Defense Committee (BADC), the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), the Black Women’s Congress (BWC). Despite the turn to reformist anti-racist politics a few Canadian Black Power organic intellectuals went on to join the CPC in the late ‘70s or organize revolutionary-nationalist/Pan-African coalitions like the African Liberation Month Coalition, the Biko-Rodney-Malcolm Coalition, and Anti-Apartheid solidarity efforts in the early ‘80s (O.Sankara, Personal Communication, December 20, 2003).
Chapter 5
BADC’s Freedom Cipher Program and the Challenges of Black Working-Class Organic Intellectual Formation in 21st Century Canada

Introduction

In the mid-1970s the war of position led by Black Power organic intellectuals to construct a revolutionary-nationalist movement in African-Canadian civil society went into decline due to the internal sectarianism between revolutionary and conservative nationalists in Toronto ALSC. Nevertheless, the Canadian Black Power movement produced a small group of Canadian Black revolutionaries who retreated from revolutionary politics to do reformist anti-racist organizing against police brutality beginning with the murders of Buddy Evans in 1978 and Albert Johnston in 1979. The transition from African Liberation politics to issue-based, social-democratic anti-racist activism against police brutality was inspired by the militancy and radicalism of Canadian Black Power, but I argue signified an ideological shift in the struggle for African-Canadian liberation. Former Black Power organic intellectuals became Black anti-racist activists who largely abandoned the goals of socialist transformation in favor of broad anti-racist movements to reform the Canadian capitalist state. In the late 1970s and 80s, mass protests to end police murders of Black civilians under the leadership of former Black Power organic intellectuals became the primary focus of the Black left, culminating in the organization of the Black Action Defense Committee (BADC) in 1988.

BADC is a grassroots organization with a thirty-year history of Black militancy against police brutality in Toronto. As a result of BADC’s legacy, I thought it was the
most suitable organization to educate and train Black working-class youth to become revolutionary activists because it is the only Black protest organization in Toronto with a rich tradition of mass struggle. From 2007-2009, I therefore coordinated the Freedom Cipher program: an anti-racism education initiative designed to lead the ideological development of a new generation of Black working-class organic intellectuals in the 21st century.

BADC was funded to provide temporary employment training and leadership development opportunities to unemployed Black working-class and lumpen youth in gangs who are being displaced by the new global economy. However, this contradictory anti-racist education project in the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC) was not only developed by BADC to provide Black working-class youth with employable skills like similar public sector gang-exit initiatives, but also to educate them to become organic intellectuals who could in turn lead anti-capitalist campaign organizing, popular education, and the production and dissemination of revolutionary Hip Hop music in their neighborhoods. Despite its radical objectives, the Freedom Cipher reflects the contradictory trend in radical adult education of utilizing state funding to implement “radical” adult education projects in capitalist civil society.

This chapter will begin with a brief history of BADC and an examination of the state repression which ultimately led the organization into decline, in order to contextualize the Freedom Cipher’s efforts to rebuild the organization by cultivating revolutionary leadership. Then, the Freedom Cipher’s model will be described and assessed to demonstrate the advances BADC has made in educating and training BADC youth to become Black anti-racist activists in the city. I will utilize Vygotsky’s
conception of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to analyze my efforts to develop BADC youth into Black working-class organic intellectuals in the Freedom Cipher.

Vygotsky defined the ZPD as an ever-expanding educational project of student-centered learning led by teachers or “more capable peers” where instruction leads development:

> The discrepancy between a child’s actual mental age and the level he reaches in solving problems with assistance indicates the zone of his proximal development...In the child’s development...imitation and instruction play a major role...What the child can do in cooperation today he can do alone tomorrow. Therefore the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it...instruction must be oriented toward the future, not the past (Vygotsky, 1962:103-104).  

To educate and train organic intellectuals in the Freedom Cipher I created an informal learning ZPD within the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC) and from without that entailed activist training on community radio, political-education classes, a Hip Hop cultural production program, participation in an informal “Intellectual Discussion” group at BADC, participating in aboriginal solidarity at Six Nations, and organizing radical campaigns with Basics Community Newsletter, a communist student newspaper in Toronto. However, despite the ZPD I created in the Freedom Cipher to educate and train the three BADC youth activists with the greatest revolutionary leadership potential, they did not become communist organic intellectuals. The challenges of educating Black...

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29 It should be noted that for Vygotsky the discussion of child psychology rejects what he referred to as the (non-dialectical) “two world” thesis (1987:84): i.e. the notion that the study of child learning cannot contribute to a theory of human learning generally (adult and children). It seems clear from Vygotsky’s work that the types of bourgeois presumptions about the inherent capacities of children (as well as parents or formally uneducated adults for that matter) were largely if not completely overturned by his studies which directly challenged views of leading psychological theorists of his day (and in many ways ours) such as Jean Piaget and Sigmund Freud. Indeed, the confusion over the study of children and adults was used by soviet officials in his own time as a key rationale for the suppression of his work until well after World War Two in the Soviet Union (i.e. officials at the time read his use of examples from child psychology as infantilizing rural workers undergoing farm collectivization at a time when pan-Soviet integration was an active, and incomplete project (see Fenwick, Edwards and Sawchuk, in press).
working-class youth Quanche, Keisha, and Dashawn at BADC will be discussed to demonstrate why the Freedom Cipher succeeded in educating social-democratic anti-racist activists, but ultimately failed to produce any communist organic intellectuals who could continue the war of position for Black proletarian hegemony initiated by Canadian Black Power in the 1960s.

The Role of Canadian Imperialism in the Defeat of BADC


30 Dudley Laws is a Jamaican-Canadian civil rights activist and Executive Director of the Black Action Defense Committee (BADC). Laws was born in Jamaica on May 7, 1934 and originally immigrated to England in 1955 at the age of 19 to work as a welder and mechanic by trade. In the 1950s Laws formed the Brixton Neighborhood Association to defend the Black British community against anti-Black racism and white terror. In 1965 Laws came to Toronto, Canada and soon after became a leader of the Universal African Improvement Association, a Garveyite organization that existed in the city since the 1920s (See Cotroneo, December 19, 2005).  

After more than a decade of mass protests against police killings, the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) was created by the province in the 1990 Police Services Act to increase police accountability in the investigation of civilian murders.\footnote{The SIU was set up to be the first organization staffed by civilians instead of police homicide investigators. However, it ended up being staffed by retired officers who were promoted by the force as the only “civilians” competent enough to investigate these incidents. See “A Short History of Community Organizing Against Police Brutality in Toronto: the History of B.A.D.C. and Beyond”, Basics, March 20, 2008. Available Online: \url{http://Basicsnewsletter.blogspot.com/2008/03/short-history-of-police-brutality-in.html}.} Despite the limitations of the SIU, the reform was a victory for the Black community because it indicated the Canadian state admitted that anti-Black racism and police brutality was a systemic problem that required institutional reform (Ibid). As a result of the protracted struggle BADC engaged in against the police, it won an important anti-racist reform that benefitted the Black working-class in Toronto by reducing the number of police killings in the city. However, the organization was undermined by a level of imperialist state repression, comparable to the COINTELPRO campaign against U.S. Black Power initiated by the U.S. Imperial state in the 1960s and ‘70s.

The Canadian imperialist state played a central role in the coercion and entrapment of BADC, the only radical protest organization mobilizing Toronto’s Black working-class in the 1980s-90s. In 1991, BADC leader Dudley Laws was a victim of entrapment by the RCMP and Toronto Police who charged him in a public immigrant smuggling scandal (Wilkes, 1991:A8). On October 15, 1991, Laws was arrested by the RCMP and charged with several counts of conspiracy to smuggle illegal immigrants into Canada and possession of property obtained by fraud (Gombu, 1991:A8).\footnote{According to the investigation, people were charged fees of up to $1500 to be transported across the border. The charges were laid in the aftermath of a $1 million three-month federal immigration crackdown in 1991.}
really an immigrant smuggling ring at BADC, a militant Black anti-racist organization?

According to Guelph University History professor Clarence Munford, Laws conviction was similar to the illegal activities of COINTELPRO to de-stabilize U.S. Black Power, and demonstrates the ongoing effort of North American capitalist states to silence and undermine Black revolutionaries who successfully mobilize Blacks against the status quo:

Frame-ups are an essential feature of the criminal justice system. They have been occurring with increasing regularity since the Civil Rights-strained 1960s…railroading an entire generation of Black political dissidents from H. Rap Brown to Dhoruba Bin Wahad to Assata Shakur. In Canada too, smashing Black critics of white racism sits at the top of the agenda. Ontario’s Dudley Laws, leader of the Black Action Defense Committee, has felt the crackdown. He was entrapped, jailed, tried, and in February 1994 convicted (Munford, 1996:355).

During Laws trial in 1994, a secret police intelligence file was discovered by his lawyer, Peter Rosenthal, which tracked the political activism of BADC members/supporters, dating back to the late ‘70s when Toronto anti-racist activists initially began organizing against the police shooting of Albert Johnson (Barber, 1994:A18).

The Metropolitan Toronto Police Force Confidential Report, dated April 25, 1989, contained the activist profiles of 18 Black activists and 13 activist groups. The report clearly stated BADC’s anti-racist police reform agenda:

The majority of persons mentioned in this report are self-appointed spoke persons or so called leaders within the Black community…The main objectives of these new groups are to stamp out racism in the police force, Mandatory Affirmative Action and the establishment of an Independent civilian police review board to restore confidence in the public. The current review board is hampered because police conduct the initial review of a complaint (Toronto Police, 1989:5).

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investigation conducted by the RCMP and Metro Police, who set up an observation post right across the street from BADC’s office near Vaughn/Oakwood (Downey, 1994:A14).
During Laws trial, Constable Denny Dias who conducted the investigation, testified the report was made to determine whether leading BADC members were “a threat to the community” or “terrorist groups” (Barber, 1994:A18). In 1994, Laws lost the trial, was fined $5000 and sentenced to nine months in jail for his involvement in a scheme to smuggle three undercover officers across the Canadian border for $1,500 each (Downey, 1994:A14). In the early ‘90s, Laws was also charged with domestic assault by his wife which was later dropped; and an allegation of sexual assault by a stepdaughter, which ended in his acquittal (Di Matteo, 1997:4). Like similar COINTELPRO initiatives against U.S. Black Power, this state-led smear campaign was a success: BADC suffered a significant blow to its credibility and many supporters in Toronto’s Black community lost all confidence in Laws and the organization after these public scandals. By the end of the 1990’s, BADC had degenerated into a marginal protest organization that could do little more than bring scant media attention to Black issues.

The Freedom Cipher as a Zone of Proximal Development: An Attempt to Educate Organic Intellectuals in a Capitalist State-Funded Anti-Racism Program

In the aftermath of two decades of BADC struggle against police brutality, a new problem of unprecedented Black-on-Black killings began to emerge in Toronto from 1997-2007. Progressive Conservative Premier Mike Harris’s Common Sense Revolution resulted in the implementation of neo-liberal economic policies in the

34 Elected in the province for two terms (1995-2002), Progressive Conservative Premier Mike Harris’s Common Sense Revolution (CSR), refers to the neo-liberal economic model implemented in Ontario, inspired by similar projects implemented by conservative governments in England and the U.S. during the same period. Inspired by the economic platforms of former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and U.S. President Ronald Reagan, the neo-liberal CSR
province in 1995. Under Harris, the deindustrialization of Toronto which began in 1988-89 with the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) by the Conservative Mulroney Government continued. There was a massive loss in manufacturing jobs in the city that were normally held by the Black working-class, replaced by low-paying service sector jobs with little job security and no possibility of career advancement (Bania, 2009:101). The Harris Government had a devastating impact on un-skilled Black youth who were economically displaced and became what Castells (1995) refers to as “excess baggage” adopting “day to day” survival strategies, which led to a sharp increase in internal violence over the past decade (Ibid). Consequently, the rise in unemployment during the mid-1990s recession meant that a large number of Black youth who would have entered the working-class instead went into the illegal drug economy (Harris, 2008:77-78). BADC responded to this crisis with an “End the Shootings, Stop the Killings” campaign. In August 2001, BADC published this independent media campaign in Share, Toronto’s largest Black newspaper to condemn the rising violence. The campaign was initiated to profile the one-hundred shootings which occurred in the Black community over the previous five years (1996-2001) and to promote four anti-violence rallies organized in four Black neighborhoods throughout the city. The rallies were attended by hundreds of Black people concerned with ending the senseless violence plaguing the community. In recent years, BADC continued its work to implemented significant tax reductions, reducing the role of the government in the economy, and the promotion of individual economic responsibility in order to significantly reduce government spending on the welfare state; and balance the budget which was at a record $10 billion under the previous NDP government. Harris was in power for so long because the conservatives gave the impression that they balanced the provincial budget; however when they left office it was discovered that they hid a $5 Billion deficit from the public (Reshef and Rastin, 2003:27-28).
reduce the number of Black-on-Black killings by implementing the Freedom Cipher program in 2007.

It was within this context that the Freedom Cipher program was established. The Freedom Cipher is a grassroots anti-racism education initiative that emerged in the early 2000s. The program was called “Freedom Cipher” to educate Black and Native working-class youth by deconstructing the meaning of Canadian Imperialism, capitalism, colonialism, and racism as political-economic systems of oppression in two alternative high school programs in the Toronto District School Board (TDSB): 1) the Native Learning Centre (Native Child and Family Services); and 2) the Nighana Afrocentric Program (Eastdale Collegiate Institute). In the Freedom Cipher, youth discussed their experiences of racism and colonial oppression in Canada; and more importantly, alternative programs to create fundamental social change. The Freedom Cipher was formed in a housing project community in Richmond Hill in 2000 and operated at the grassroots level without state funding from 2000-2006 with the exception of one year (2001-2002), where it was funded by the National Crime Prevention Strategy and operated out of For Youth Initiative (FYI), a local non-profit organization.

In January 2007, BADC’s Freedom Cipher was funded by the City of Toronto’s Youth Challenge Fund (YCF) with $450,000 over three years to hire a team of youth workers to organize and facilitate an employment training and mentorship program with street-involved Black youth in gangs in the Jane/Finch, Lawrence Heights, Jane/Weston, and Vaughan/Oakwood communities. The program was primarily focused on educating, employing, and training six Black working-class youth to become revolutionary activists, so they could in turn organize their peers into a Black anti-racist youth movement. The
Freedom Cipher module of anti-racism education consisted of the following three types of revolutionary adult learning to educate BADC youth to become Black working-class organic intellectuals: 1) Informal learning through organizing a Hip Hop Music Program and Set It Off Girls Groups; 2) Inter-generational learning by producing Freedom Cipher Radio, a BADC youth news segment with Norman “Otis” Richmond on CKLN, 88.1 FM; 3) organized Marxist Anti-Racism Education in the form of political education classes in Jane/Finch and Lawrence Heights community centers; and 4) a bi-weekly Intellectual Discussion Group at the BADC office. The Freedom Cipher was a genuine attempt to replicate the type of organized political education and inter-generational learning relations responsible for the formation of first and second wave Black working-class organic intellectuals in North American communist parties and Black Power movements in the 20th century (see Chapter 3 and 4).

The Role of Informal Learning

I attempted to develop BADC youth into Black working-class organic intellectuals by creating radical informal learning opportunities in the program. By informal learning, I mean learning by engaging in practical day-to-day grassroots community organizing from within the NPIC. In the Freedom Cipher, the aim was for youth to develop as organic intellectuals by learning to produce revolutionary Hip Hop music with anti-racist lyrical content; and organizing Set It Off female-specific youth programs.

BADC’s freedom cipher hip hop music program.

Apart from revolutionary organizational forms, Hip Hop, the most advanced expression of Black working-class culture today, could play a fundamental role in the
political education of Black youth by transforming them into communist organic intellectuals. In recent years, the Freedom Cipher developed a spontaneous revolutionary Hip Hop pedagogy to organize an anti-racist cultural movement led by BADC youth to wage an ideological struggle against mainstream gangsta rap, a bourgeois ideology which influences the common sense of Black working-class youth through the promotion of negative stereotypes, gangsterism, and African genocide.

When the Freedom Cipher began, it implemented a Hip Hop Program at Blacklight Studios. The program consisted of weekly recording sessions at a professional studio that provided youth with the opportunity to produce Hip Hop music and integrate it into BADC’s youth organizing. In the first year of the Freedom Cipher, the Hip Hop Music program released 15 year-old Freedom Cipher youth worker Quanche’s (2007) debut mixtape, *Youngest in Charge*, to much praise from hundreds of Black youth in Vaughan/Oakwood and Lawrence Heights specifically, and more broadly in the Westend. Quanche, recorded most of the material on the mixtape the previous year as a 14 year-old Grade 9 student from Vaughan/Oakwood who attended Oakwood Collegiate Institute. *Youngest in Charge*, contained unapologetic lyrics about racial profiling, police brutality, and the mass imprisonment Black working-class youth are subjected to in Toronto:

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The Government is cheating thinking we not seein’
Like why do we pass high school infrequently
Peep the sequence, kids who on the streets is
Seeked by police and the undercovers sneaking
To trick ‘em in the system, and the system where they keep ‘em
The evidence of injustice is leakin’
Still you see the chief on TV and he preachin’ about
How they uppin’ the fuckin’ budget on policing
[They] try to catch us breachin’ but never try to reach us
It’s so facetious and oh so indecent
The treatment is leavin’ the community in pieces
We need unity or brutally be beaten (Quanche, 2007).
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The production and distribution of 300 copies of this mixtape in the city’s Westend not only contributed to Quanche’s development as a BADC anti-racist activist, but it also performed a political-educative function increasing the race and class consciousness of local street-involved Black youth by providing them with increasing ideological clarity on their daily experience of bourgeois state coercion through anti-Black racist police terror and their entry into the prison industrial complex. In the following verse, Quanche continued to advance within a type of ZPD, first in relation to the types of intellectual and material resources made available to him, and in turn helped constitute a broad, if diffuse ZPD in relation to others (in effect creating new resources, i.e. radical hip hop mediators or artifacts in Vygotskian language) as an organic intellectual by educating his peers about the role of Canadian imperialism in the neo-liberal deindustrialization of Black working-class communities in Toronto, thus creating conditions of mass unemployment that propel youth into the drug trade and rising levels of Black internal violence:

Little kids hustlin’, community suffering
Working-class struggling and Stephen Harper loving it
Oppressed by the Ku Klux Tory Government
With police deployment, no youth employment
No solutions to the shooting, just more fingers pointed (Ibid).

Despite his young age and low level of ideological development as a communist, Quanche’s politically charged lyrics are a clear indication of his development along the ZPD through attending Freedom Cipher political education classes and listening to my music where I coined the term “Ku Klux Tories”, comparing the Conservative Tory government’s colonial rule of African-Canadian communities through the expansion of the prison industrial complex in Canada to the Ku Klux Klan on the song “At-Risk” (see Wasun, 2006). Quanche’s political education and training as a Hip Hop artist and BADC organizer occurred through my extensive mentorship, encouraging him to become a
revolutionary popular rapper with organic links to the African-Canadian community and the ability to organize around a Black Left agenda. By the end of the first year Quanche became a leading up-and-coming rapper in the Toronto underground hip hop scene.

*Set it off girls groups.*

Before the Freedom Cipher was funded, 22 year-old Keisha began volunteering in the pre-program development phase from January to June 2006 and started moving within a ZPD and developing under my instruction to learn how to become a social-democratic anti-racist organizer at BADC. She was a part-time undergraduate student at Ryerson University in the Bachelor’s of Social Work program, and former teenage mother from the southside Jane/Weston area. Keisha recently joined BADC and began her training by working closely with me to recruit street-involved Jane/Finch youth into a Hip Hop Program, which operated on a limited volunteer basis at Blacklight Studios before it received state funding. As a volunteer assistant-coordinator Keisha helped provide youth with music recording opportunities to rap and speak out against the daily injustices of racism and class oppression in their lives growing up in Jane/Finch. Also, Keisha co-facilitated the weekly program which operated in her Jane/Finch apartment before it was funded by the state. According to Keisha, her initial involvement in organizing the Freedom Cipher in her Jane/Finch apartment with Wasun (Chris Harris) before it was funded by the NPIC, played a foundational role in her ZPD as a BADC youth engaged in voluntary leadership training:

I remember at times, us having to run this group out of my apartment. For a whole year, us having to always be the ones to buy the refreshments, pay for the clients’ studio time. It was like an investment and we were not even looking at it as an investment. We were looking at it as giving back to our community trying to create something for the youth. And I don’t think we even recognized how strong the power of the Freedom Cipher was until it was actually recognized on the bigger picture as a model, right. But once you see that and you go back and
see what we really did, it’s like wow: these are two individuals within the community that took it upon themselves to recognize there was a need; recognize there was a gap, and we really tried to deal with that gap through [building] leadership in the community. We were not the ones that identified what the youths issues were – they were the ones that identified their issues. And coming up with the Freedom Cipher was a space and opportunity for the youth of Jane/Finch to actually come up with something that they could own. I think that was a very powerful initiative because it really brought a lot of people on different levels now. It shows a lot because it developed into other things, like the Set It Off (Keisha, Personal Communication, December 11, 2010).

During the first year of the Freedom Cipher from March-October 2007, Keisha utilized her volunteer experience in the program development phase to implement a female-specific girls group called Set It Off in Lawrence Heights with BADC Youth Outreach Worker Tasha.

Set It Off was organized after my own internal criticism of the Freedom Cipher’s exclusive focus on organizing a Black male patriarchal youth leadership that was unable to respond to the needs of Black female youth or organize them. After a series of meetings I encouraged Keisha and Tasha to organize with other female youth in the Freedom Cipher, and they decided to form support groups to empower young Black women in West end high schools. Keisha remembers the experience as her introduction to Black Feminist organizing:

After recognizing how the Freedom Cipher went, for me as a woman, as a single mom with many of the issues that I come with, it’s always been very important to create programs for young moms, for young Black women. Set It Off started with me and Tasha, and it was something that was very close to our hearts because she herself is also a young mom who has been through struggles just like me. So for us, we really wanted to create the same kind of thing like Freedom Cipher, give that ownership to these young women (Keisha, Personal Communication, December 11, 2010).

A women’s organizing committee was formed and met at Keisha’s home on April 3, 17; May 1, July 3, and 17, 2007. At these meetings Keisha organized in her apartment, BADC women discussed the problems of Black female youth and teenage moms on
welfare living in Toronto Community Housing buildings and developed a strategic plan
to organize a network of support groups for young Black women in local high schools:

It definitely made you aware of the many issues that are in your community. When you are organizing in your community on the issues that are very close to your heart, because you are living in the community and raising your kids in the community, it’s very important to you that you are able to make that change. Another thing too, it really got you to understand many of the issues. And it really got you to want to have a strategic plan as to how you could organize on all levels: not just in your community, but systematically too. Understanding the impact that all of these things are having on the community, then you know how the system is contributing to that and how the community is contributing to that. Being able to really see the problem from all different angles was a really good way to kind of tackle it (Keisha, Personal Communication, December 11, 2010).

Most of the women in the group were single teenage moms who raised their children under the welfare bureaucracy and organized Set It Off to resist racist and classist welfare case managers. In their summer meetings, Keisha and Tasha developed a proposal to organize girls groups in Jane/Finch and Lawrence Heights in the fall.

On September 4, 7, and 19, 2007 the BADC women organized some final outreach and partnership development meetings to finalize the program. An unwelcoming response by Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) in Lawrence Heights encouraged them to begin looking for program space in local high schools as an alternative to community recreation rooms that had to be approved by the property manager. After six months of organizing, planning, and outreach the first Set It Off was launched at Sir Sanford Fleming Academy in Lawrence Heights on October 18, 2007.

By the end of the second year (2008), Set It Off had organized three girls groups that met on a weekly basis in Jane/Finch (Westview Secondary), Lawrence Heights (Sir Sanford Fleming Academy), and the BADC office at St. Clair/Oakwood. Weekly women’s empowerment workshops for Black female high school students focused on self-esteem, healthy relationships,
budgeting/financial planning, post-secondary preparation, sexual health, employment counseling and teenage pregnancy and prevention. Many of the young women in Set It Off graduated high school, and some enrolled in post-secondary education, partly due to their mentorship in the program:

We gave them a space where they could talk about things and different workshops. A lot of our focus was also on sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy prevention. You know, we did a lot of that with our women because we really wanted them to go the right way. And many of our women now have graduated, are in college or university doing very well. And they never forget their involvement in Set It Off. Here and there, they will still be in contact with us. And for Set It Off, because we work with youth in high school, we always make sure they graduate and move on (Keisha, Personal Communication, December 11, 2010).

In the final year of the Freedom Cipher, however, interest dwindled in Jane/Finch and Lawrence Heights Set It Off, as many young women were either busy working or preparing to graduate high school, so the leadership decided to begin organizing adolescent girls at Oakdale Park Middle School in Jane/Finch and Lawrence Heights Middle School in the third year of the program.

Despite her extensive involvement in the initial organizing of the Freedom Cipher, Keisha withdrew from Set It Off halfway through the second year due a lack of sustained interest in grassroots organizing. As a part-time undergraduate student, Keisha began to focus increasingly on gaining experience in a variety of social service agencies and completing her baccalaureate social work degree at Ryerson University. Keisha’s lack of sustained interest in Set It off organizing while the girls groups continued to expand, led her ZPD to become adaptive
instead of transformative\textsuperscript{35} as she withdrew from the Freedom Cipher to focus more on professional career advancement in social work.

\textit{The Role of Inter-Generational Learning}

Freedom Cipher Radio provided the opportunity for BADC youth workers to develop through \textit{inter-generational learning} relations with Norman “Otis” Richmond. As discussed in Chapter 4, Saturday Morning Live Host Richmond is a veteran U.S. and Canadian Black Power organic intellectual who collaborated with the Freedom Cipher youth to develop the monthly segment into a professional and ideologically coherent radio program. In the first year of the program, Richmond co-hosted each show with Quanche, and Wasun and passed down his knowledge of African liberation politics and Marxism. Also, when adults called in to express their views and debate the issues, youth learned from their experience as elders, like Richmond, had already been through the struggle for survival as an oppressed national minority in Canada.

\textit{Freedom cipher radio.}

Freedom Cipher youth collaborated with Black Power elder Norman “Otis” Richmond to produce a monthly youth-run BADC news segment on Saturday Morning Live, CKLN, 88.1 FM, Ryerson University. The radio show played an important function in the program by engaging Quanche, Infra Red, and Keisha in inter-generational learning. On March 31, 2007 Freedom Cipher Radio premiered with 30-minute live-to-air

\textsuperscript{35} The terms ‘adaptive’ and ‘transformative’ ZPD emerge out of the explicitly Marxist line of contemporary development of Vygotskian thought (e.g. Stetsenko 2008; Sawchuk 2006b). In basic terms they refer to trajectories of learning and development understandable as either individuals/groups changing to better fit a given environment/circumstance (adaptation) primarily, or individuals/groups changing their environment/circumstance to better meet their needs (transformation).
news segments every fourth Saturday of the month, from 10:30-11:00 am. The segment reached a wide audience because Richmond hosts the most popular Black community news show in Toronto. Saturday Morning Live was critical to Quanche’s educational development as an organic intellectual because it provided him with a space to discuss and debate political, economic, and anti-racism issues with Richmond and other adults from the community who called up to share their views.

The content of Freedom Cipher Radio was similar to the issues discussed in the political-education classes, except that it extended the debate to the broader community. On Saturday, May 26, 2007 Wasun interviewed Muhammad Ahmad (2007) to promote his new book on the U.S. Black Power movement: *We Will Return in the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations, 1960-1975*. Ahmad was a close collaborator of Richmond during those years, and the show was an opportunity to sum up the important lessons of US Black Power for emerging BADC youth activists. In the May edition, Freedom Cipher Radio argued against Bill C-9, C-10, and C-27 introduced by the federal Conservative Government in the House of Commons that month to expand the Prison Industrial Complex in Canada by implementing 10-year mandatory minimum sentences and Three Strikes laws for drugs and gun charges. In opposition to the Conservative’s Law and Order agenda, we argued that criminalized African-Canadian youth should be enrolled in alternative programs like the Freedom Cipher that could provide opportunities often denied to them, such as professional music production, organizing community programs and co-hosting community radio.

In the second year, Freedom Cipher Radio was critical in the development of the Hood2Hood campaign and Set It Off Girls Groups. On Saturday, April 26, 2008,
Freedom Cipher youth mentor Infra Red was interviewed by Wasun and spoke about his daily experiences of colonial oppression growing up in the southside Jane/Trethewey projects that included witnessing police brutality and racial profiling daily in the streets, and anti-Black racism in his local high school, Weston Collegiate Institute (C.I.). Infra Red also spoke about the Hip Hop underground hit single “I’m From Jane” he had recently produced for Southside Jane rapper Sling Dadz. He suggested this song could be used to help unify street-involved youth along the Jane strip by promoting Hood to Hood unity and reducing neighborhood tensions. On Saturday, February 23, 2008, Set It Off founder Keisha was interviewed by Wasun and she discussed her community mobilization strategies which educated Saturday Morning Live listeners about her attempts to organize Black female youth into Set It Off Girls Groups in Jane/Finch and Lawrence Heights. Keisha also discussed her personal development from being an oppressed Black teenage mom in the welfare system, to a BADC youth leader and undergraduate social work student at Ryerson University who organizes female-specific youth programs.

Infra Red is a 29 year-old rapper, actor and Hip Hop activist from the Jane/Trethewey area who played a leading role in producing, organizing and designing the album cover of the Underground Railroad Mixtape launched in June 2008. The mixtape was used by Infra Red and other Freedom Cipher youth workers to organize revolutionary working-class African-Canadian youth in the westend into a unified Hood2Hood campaign for peace and unity. Infra Red is a former Southside Jane Crip who now works as a youth worker in the On the Move neighborhood centre at Jane/Trethewey. Infra Red is also a leading Hip Hop producer in the West end who recently produced Sling Dadz’ underground hit “I’m From Jane” as well songs for Wasun, Capital V, and Quanche, that will appear on the Underground Railroad, Vol.1.
Organized Marxist Anti-Racist Education

I developed a series of political education classes and bi-weekly study group sessions we refer to as “Intellectual Discussions” at BADC to introduce Freedom Cipher youth to Marxist Anti-Racist theory to inform their activism in the various NPIC programs they organized in African-Canadian civil society. Freedom Cipher political education classes and intellectual discussions were originally conceived by BADC elder Dudley Laws, and I used them to introduce the youth to basic anti-racist, Marxist, and Black Feminist concepts and analysis so they could better understand the race, gender, and class contradictions of their day-to-day organizing in the NPIC as Freedom Cipher youth workers.

Political education classes.

From February to June 2007, Quanche attended Freedom Cipher political-education classes on Monday afternoons at Da Spot Youth Centre inside Yorkgate Mall in Jane/Finch. Political-Education utilized a popular education methodology to teach youth anti-racism education. During each class a youth worker led a discussion on a particular problem of African-Canadian colonization, such as: the political-economy of Black internal violence; the War on Drugs; Canadian capitalism and the expansion of the Prison Industrial Complex in Ontario; and the problem of Globalization and Black youth mass unemployment in Toronto. In reflecting back on the political-education classes Keisha helped organize in the first year of the Freedom Cipher, she explains how they were designed to create a space for youth to develop a critical consciousness about Black internal violence so they could move beyond participating in local acts of gang violence:

Recognizing that living in the ‘hood, living in poverty is gonna’ have an association with certain behaviors. So how do we teach these youth to get out of that? How do we prep these youth for their future. And the youth who haven’t
151

got involved [in gangs], what kind of strategies do we use to help them not get involved [in the future]. So I think as an organizer you really begin to understand the gaps and try to really come up with solutions along with the community to try and deal with that. But also focus on prevention for the future (Keisha, Personal Communication, December 11, 2010).

On February 26, 2007 Wasun taught a class on the political-economy of racism and the rise of the Blood and Crips in South Central Los Angeles in the 1970s; and the role of Mike Harris’s neo-liberal economic policies in the emergence of a similar gang crisis in Toronto over the past decade (1997-2007). On March 5, 2007 Wise, the BADC Assistant-Coordinator, led a class on the Willie Lynch Speech a fictional 17th century American slave-owner’s speech penned by an unknown author to show the divide-and-conquer techniques used during slavery. The second half of the workshop dealt with the relationship between slavery and the rising internal violence in the African-Canadian community today. On Friday March 9, 2007 Cape Town rap pioneer, writer and activist Shaheen Ariefdien facilitated a workshop on the History of Hip Hop in Apartheid South Africa, and how it functioned as a tool of anti-colonial resistance in the Anti-Apartheid movement in the 1980s. On Monday, March 26 Yusuf led a class on the expansion of the Prison Industrial Complex in Ontario and its role in the re-colonization of African-Canadian youth. On May 9, 2007 Wasun led a discussion with some Bloods in Lawrence Heights and spoke about the need to build a Black anti-racist youth movement to unify gangs in different neighborhoods into a political force for change.

Quanché participated in all of these political-education classes and this accelerated his politicization in the first year of the Freedom Cipher. In terms of organic intellectual learning and development Quache advanced along his ZPD because he was immersed in a dialogical learning environment where he could develop his own perspective on the intersections of race and class oppression Black working-class youth
experienced on a daily basis in the streets, schools, and prison industrial complex. A look at Quanche’s lyrics reveals the extent to which his worldview was influenced by Freedom Cipher political education during the first year of the program.

When Quanche completed the Youngest in Charge in July 2007, he began to retreat from participating in Freedom Cipher political-education classes and Hood2Hood organizing to resolve his legal issues as a young offender and pursue more professional artist development opportunities. In reflecting on the experience of mentoring Quanche and other youth who did not complete their mentorship, Keisha revealed that the Freedom Cipher did play an important role in facilitating their entry into the working-class as professional artists and/or BADC activists:

I mean we had a lot of youth who would be labeled ‘at-risk’ and what I find so great about the Freedom Cipher is, even if a youth did not last through the whole period they still took something from it. It was still at a level of where you see them in the community, and now they’re organizing or they’re a part of some coalition. So although they didn’t make it in the Freedom Cipher, they still took something very important…and I think that was the whole point…Although as leaders we strive to make sure that everybody made it, it is a reality that not everybody is going to make it because there’s going to be barriers. Everybody is going to have their own issues that they’re dealing with. But it’s the fact to be able to take something from this very unique initiative I think is what we’re kind of aiming for. Whatever little difference we make was a difference (Keisha, Personal Communication, December 11, 2010).

Despite the advances Quanche made by developing as an anti-racist Hip Hop artist, his ZPD became adaptive; a shift that was signaled most clearly through his disengagement with political education classes and BADC intellectual discussions at the end of the first year of the program.

*Intellectual discussion group.*

In the second year of the program I began to implement bi-weekly Intellectual Discussions to develop the critical thinking skills and intellectual capacities of the
Freedom Cipher youth workers. The dialectical unity between theory and practice was most clearly expressed in these two-hour meetings that were designed to increase the youth’s ability to critically reflect on their anti-racist organizing and develop an appreciation for the centrality of radical theory to movement-building efforts on the Left.

In the third year of the Freedom Cipher I led intellectual discussions on the following articles to develop a revolutionary Black feminist and Marxist anti-racist perspective in the Set It Off leadership at BADC. In January 2009 we studied Chapter One of bell hooks’ (1981) Ain’t I A Woman to understand the race, class, and gender contradictions of the Black female slave experience in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. In February, I screened Remember Africville, a documentary by the National Film Board of Canada (1991) and discussed the Africville Genealogy Society’s The Spirit of Africville (1992). This intellectual discussion contextualized the gentrification of Lawrence Heights today as a form of internal colonialism by comparing it to the forced relocation of Black Nova Scotians in the 1960s. In June we studied Burrowes et al.’s (2007) “On Our Own Terms: Ten Years of Radical Community Building with Sista II Sista” to explore this New York-based organization’s resistance strategies that prevented their radical anti-racist organizing in the NPIC from being co-opted by non-profit funding. And in July there was an intellectual discussion on former American Indian Movement activist Madonna Thunder Hawk’s (2007) “Native Organizing Before the Non-Profit Industrial Complex” to explore with Set It Off leaders the contradictions between Black (and Native) revolutionary organizing in anti-capitalist national liberation movements in the 1960s and 1970s, and social-democratic anti-racist organizing in the NPIC today. In the July reading of Thunder Hawk’s article, I also screened a clip from the Black Panther
documentary *The Murder of Fred Hampton* (Alk, 1971) to compare revolutionary Black communist leadership in the U.S. Black Power movement to the reformist Black anti-racist youth leadership at BADC today who have been ideologically co-opted by state funding. At these meetings, the youth workers and volunteers were encouraged to develop an organic BADC praxis by reflecting on the theory introduced in the intellectual discussions, and linking it to the organizing Set It Off was collectively engaged in. The bi-weekly intellectual discussions that did not involve theoretical study and debate, were converted into BADC organizing meetings where BADC youth struggled to build unity and resolve the personality conflicts and tensions that arose in their daily work.

Despite the heavy emphasis on Black feminism in the intellectual discussions during the second and third year of the Freedom Cipher, Keisha only participated occasionally in these political education classes because she was not working at BADC or involved in Set It Off’s community organizing in the final year of the program. As a result, she did not benefit from the experience of struggling over the meaning of these texts with the Set It Off leadership, many of whom she recruited and mentored in the previous year, but had become quite distant from since her departure from the day-to-day organizing at the grassroots level.

**The Role of Revolutionary Activism Outside of the NPIC in Organic Intellectual Formation**

In coordinating the Freedom Cipher program I was aware that I would have to integrate BADC youth into revolutionary campaigns and organizations *from without* the NPIC where they could develop through informal learning by participating in anti-capitalist organizing. By creating informal learning opportunities in collaboration with
Basics Community Newsletter, I expanded the Freedom Cipher ZPD beyond the NPIC so three BADC youth I was mentoring could receive additional training to develop as communist activists by organizing aboriginal solidarity and revolutionary campaigns in collaboration with this newspaper. Basics is a communist student newspaper closely allied with BADC. In the case of BADC youth I mentored outside of the NPIC, their ZPD was an ongoing informal educational process that extended not far ahead of their continually expanding Actual Level of Development (ALD) as BADC activists. In order for them to develop as revolutionary activists from their ALD as social-democratic anti-racist activists organizing in the NPIC I created an additional sphere of informal learning in collaboration with CUPE 3903 and Basics to contribute to their development as Black working-class organic intellectuals.

From 2007 to 2009 Freedom Cipher youth were integrated into BADC’s Six Nations solidarity work and two mass campaigns organized in partnership with Basics: 1) the Justice for Alwy anti-police brutality campaign; 2) the Hood2Hood Movement, a campaign against Black internal violence.

Six Nations Solidarity

Both Quanche and Keisha initially became politicized through their participation in BADC’s solidarity work outside of the NPIC to actively support Six Nations national liberation movement for self-determination. As a BADC leader I formed a partnership with the York Teaching Assistants and Contract Faculty Union, CUPE 3903, to create informal learning opportunities for BADC youth workers to engage in solidarity work with Aboriginal youth from the Six Nations Territory who participated in a historic land
reclamation struggle in Caledonia in 2006. On April 1, 2007 the Community Friends for Peace and Understanding with Six Nations and CUPE 3903 sponsored the Freedom Cipher to travel to the reserve to build solidarity relations with Six Nations youth. On that trip, Quanche and other Freedom Cipher rappers recorded a collaboration track with the Six Nations rap group Tru Rez (Shilo, James Blood, Jonathan Jeex). The Six Nations MCs rapped about the contradictions of Aboriginal colonialism in their daily lives on the reservation and how they became politicized by participating in the land reclamation. The track also featured Wasun and three other Freedom Cipher youth workers who rhymed about the colonial oppression Black working-class youth experienced in the city growing up in Toronto Housing communities. In addition, Tru Rez’s Shilo and Jeex taught BADC youth about the history of the Six Nations Confederacy and their national liberation movement against Canadian Imperialism. On Saturday, June 9, 2007 Quanche returned to Six Nations with other Freedom Cipher youth to perform in the Hip Hop for Six Nations Solidarity Concert at Chiefswood Park to raise funds for the legal defense of political prisoners criminalized in the land reclamation (Keefer, 2007). The experience of traveling on a Black/Native solidarity trip from without the NPIC and recording with Tru Rez contributed to Quanche’s ideological development as an organic intellectual.

A delegation of Six Nations activists and youth came to a solidarity event at the BADC office on June 1, 2007 where they shared their experience of the land reclamation. Meanwhile BADC youth discussed their anti-racist youth organizing in the Freedom Cipher. The June 30th edition of Freedom Cipher Radio was co-hosted by Shiloh to

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37 For a more detailed information on the 2006-2007 Six Nations Reclamation struggle see www.reclamationinfo.com
discuss his role in Six Nations organizing. Shiloh and the Freedom Cipher youth spoke with Richmond and Wasun about the importance of Black/Native solidarity to advance the struggles of oppressed nations in Canada; and the possibilities of using Hip Hop to educate Black and Six Nations youth about the politics of anti-colonial resistance against Canadian Imperialism.

In the second year of the Freedom Cipher, BADC youth continued to do solidarity work with Six Nations youth to build mutual support for their organizing efforts. On August 22-23, 2008 a half-dozen Freedom Cipher youth attended the Convergence Peace and Friendship Gathering at Chiefswood Park with over one hundred activists from Toronto to build solidarity across a variety of anti-racist, student, environmental, and Six Nations organizations. Convergence was an activist conference organized by a grassroots committee of Six Nations residents and non-Native supporters that included anti-racist, labor, and environmental justice youth and student activists from Toronto and South-Western Ontario. Keisha developed as an organic intellectual by volunteering on the Convergence organizing committee from January-July 2008. The gathering featured traditional teachings on Six Nations history and language; organizing updates on other First Nations territories; solidarity workshops with labor, environmental, and anti-racist organizations; workshops on movement protest tactics and techniques; and popular entertainment from Six Nations and revolutionary Hip Hop provided by BADC (see http://peaceculture.org). BADC youth contributed to the conference by doing Black anti-racist cultural work. For instance, Hood2Hood MCs Wasun, Infra Red, and Thesis performed a revolutionary Hip Hop concert, and InfraRed led a viewing and “Talk It
Out” discussion of the award winning Black independent film *A Winter Tale*\(^{38}\) (2008) he starred in earlier that year.

In the third year of the Freedom Cipher, BADC youth continued to organize with Young Onkwehonwe United (YOU), a Six Nations youth movement that grew out of the reclamation struggle. On Wednesday, June 29, 2009 YOU attended a solidarity meeting at BADC’s office to provide youth with organizing updates about their efforts to build a youth centre at Six Nations and their second annual Youth Rally to be held, August 22-23, 2009. This meeting contributed to the ideological development of BADC youth because Onkwehonwe youth educated them about the challenges of overcoming the genocidal impact of residential schooling on Six Nations by reclaiming their indigenous knowledges and politicizing youth about their history and the centrality of anti-imperialist resistance to achieving self-determination.

*Justice for Alwy.*

A *Basics* campaign I used to train Quanche as a communist activist and rapper was organized around the police shooting of 18 year-old Alwy Al-Nadhir on October 31, 2007.\(^{39}\) Quanche was integrated into the Justice for Alwy campaign to develop him into a

\(^{38}\)Staring BADC youth organizer Infra Red, *A Winter Tale* is a moving film by Frances-Anne Solomon about the internal violence in Toronto’s African-Canadian community set in Parkdale, when a ten-year-old boy is shot dead by a local drug dealer. The film won the following international awards: 2007 Tony Lee Williams Award for Outstanding Canadian Feature, Reel World Film Festival; 2007 Special Mention/Outstanding Screenplay Category, Reel World Film Festival; 2007 Audience Award Best Feature, T&T Film Festival; 2008 Best Foreign Language Film, San Diego Black Film Festival; 2008 Remi Award (Best Editing), Weldfest Houston international Film Festival; 2008 Award for Best Editor, Zuma Film Festival; 2008 Award for Best Film, Festival of Black International Cinema Berlin (see Online: [http://awintertale.ca/web/](http://awintertale.ca/web/)).

\(^{39}\)The Justice for Alwy campaign was another communist youth campaign organized by *Basics* in partnership with BADC, inspired by the organization’s legacy of militant protest against police brutality in Toronto. The J4A campaign was yet another effort to develop BADC youth into
revolutionary organic intellectual who was not only a politically conscious rapper but an effective anti-racist organizer. In January 2008, Quanche attended Justice for Alwy organizing meetings, and was particularly passionate about this issue because he happened to be close friends with Alwy’s cousins who were also active in the campaign. On March 15 Quanche was a vocal participant in the demonstration outside Toronto police headquarters attended by 150 protestors, expressing his frustrations to a Now journalist over the contradictory anti-gun message promoted by Toronto police yet to be reflected in their policing of racialized youth:

> Cops are supposed to lead by example. They’re on us about how we have to get bad on gun violence. How are we supposed to listen to them when they’re shooting us?...While this protest is in the name of Alwy, it is really focused on the rest of the inner-city youth that the police continue to harass, beat up and kill (Now Magazine, March 20-26, 2008).

By speaking out at this mass demonstration and providing a critical analysis to the bourgeois press, Quanche developed the leadership and public speaking skills necessary for him to become an organic intellectual. Later that evening Quanche performed at the Alwy Al-Nadhir Benefit Concert at Holy Trinity Church (10 Trinity Square) to help raise funds for the campaign. On Saturday May 31, 2008 Quanche performed at a Justice for Alwy rally at Central Neighborhood House (349 Ontario St.), a non-profit community centre in the Regent Park area where Alwy grew up.

_Hood2Hood._

revolutionary activists in the non-profit sector by integrating them into a mass campaign under the leadership of a communist youth organization.
Hood2Hood was designed by Wasun and Kabir in Basics to organize Bloods and Crips in the Westend of Toronto into a network of revolutionary youth. The campaign was created independent of BADC to organize Freedom Cipher youth outside of the NPIC into an alternative revolutionary anti-imperialist mass organization. Hood2Hood was partly inspired by U.S. revolutionary Hip Hop group dead prez, which does similar work in African-American communities. In the first year of the program, M-1 from dead prez dropped by a Freedom Cipher community BBQ in Lawrence Heights on August 11, 2007 when he was in town to perform at a concert that weekend. M-1 was brought uptown to this Toronto Housing community by local Hip Hop activist La Bomba and gave a free concert to demonstrate his solidarity with BADC and the Freedom Cipher youth. M-1 also vouched to return to Toronto in the fall to speak at a Hood2Hood rally to help BADC advance its peace-building work with the Bloods and Crips. Keisha helped organize the August rally where M-1 made a surprise guest appearance and performed alongside local youth.

On Tuesday, November 20, 2007 the “Hood2Hood Movement” campaign was launched by BADC and Basics at the M-1 Speaks rally in partnership with Syme-Woolner Neighborhood Centre at Rockcliffe Middle School. M-1 spoke to a crowd of 200 youth at this school in the Southside of Jane. Keisha spoke as a lead panelist at the M-1 Speaks rally, emphasizing the importance of Black female youth leadership in coordinating the Set It Off girls groups and the need to organize against the racist, classist, and sexist oppression single Black teenage mothers experience in the Ontario Works (OW) welfare bureaucracy. By providing strong leadership in organizing
community events and doing public speaking on behalf of Set It Off, Keisha developed into a dynamic BADC youth leader.

As a rank-and-file communist activist in Basics, I formed the Hood2Hood campaign as an attempt to resolve the contradiction of communist movement-building with non-profit funding from the bourgeois state (to be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6), by transferring BADC’s revolutionary political work to a communist organization independent of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC). To ensure ideological autonomy from the social-democratic reformism of BADC and the Freedom Cipher, all Underground Railroad mixtapes and Hood2Hood events organized in the second and third year of the program were financed entirely by Basics and revolutionary Hip Hop activists in the Black community.

Launched in July 2008, the Underground Railroad Mixtape series was created to organize a collective of revolutionary Hip Hop artists, some of whom were former Blood and Crips in the 1990s, to promote neighborhood unity amongst the current generation of youth gang banging in the Westend today. On Friday, July 13 the Underground Railroad Vol. 1 was launched at the Six Nations Youth Rally, July 13-15, 2008 organized by YOU at Chiefswood Park. Hood2Hood rappers Wasun, Lameck, Shing Shing Regime and School of Thought, a group of revolutionary White working-class youth from Barrie, performed to demonstrate their solidarity with Six Nations youth. Over thirty free copies of the mixtape were handed out to Six Nations youth to politicize them about BADC’s Hood2Hood organizing in Toronto.

The revolutionary Hip Hop tracks on the Underground Railroad, Vol. 1 were compiled by Hood2Hood leader Wasun to educate Black working-class
youth about the war on drugs, guns, and gangs created by the bourgeois state to re-colonize African-Canadian youth through the expansion of the prison industrial complex in Ontario. The politically charged lyrics of Southside Jane rapper Reason on the track “You’re Not alone”, illustrate the extent to which the music captured the experience of African-Canadian colonization in Westend Toronto Housing communities:

Little Keisha growin’ up without a father/ The buzz gets media coverage, male gunned down possible drug or gang crime/ News brief: Chief of Police working overtime.../ See Commissioner Gordon got orders from the Warden/ To fill vacancies in his Hotel, a Hell/ While we snoring they make a living off of Black male soaring incarceration rates can’t you tell?.../ Crime puts food on the plate of these judges/ While niggas just sit in the box and bake/ The correctional facilities...more being built/ While our seeds feed off of breast milk/ You see the Beast [police] gets an annual budget of $ 900 million/ To play a game of cops and robbers.../It’s 60 Gs a year they paid to cage you (Underground Railroad 1:2008).

Not coincidentally, Reason’s father (Tidy Francis) was a former U.S. Black Power organic intellectual in the 1960s, and BADC leader in the 1980-‘90s; and his music continues the legacy of the Black Power generation by providing an anti-imperialist ideological response to the war on drugs against African-Canadian youth. The Underground Railroad, Vol.1 was also created to become an organizing tool to train the rappers on the mixtape to become cultural leaders in their neighborhoods and organize local unemployed youth in gangs into the Hood2Hood campaign.

When BADC youth attended the Convergence Peace and Friendship Gathering at Six Nations on August 22-23, 2008, a left activist conference outside of the NPIC, Freedom Cipher youth debated the program, strategy and tactics of
the Hood2Hood campaign formulated by Wasun in June 2008. The following Hood2Hood program was approved at this historic gathering:

1) **We want to end mass unemployment in the Black community and the inability of the new economy to provide jobs for the hood.** Many Black youth selling drugs are unemployed or underemployed workers who are being pushed out of the new economy. With the loss of tens of thousands of manufacturing jobs in the past decade, replaced by new temporary, part-time minimum wage jobs with little or no job security, a number of unemployed Black youth are turning to the drug trade as a survival strategy in capitalist society.

2) **We want an end to the War on Drugs, Guns, and Gangs.** This policy was implemented by Toronto Police following the example of the U.S., to over-police and incarcerate Black youth who are labeled as gang members, drug dealers and guns runners by the state. The *War on Drugs, Guns and Gangs* has allowed the police to become an occupying force in the Black community.

3) **We want to end gangbanging in the Westend.** Gangs are not a problem: they are street organizations that could potentially perform a revolutionary function in the Black community (i.e. Black Panther Party). Gangbanging is a problem because it is a form of *African genocide* that is destroying the community whenever youth bang out on each other. We want to end gangbanging because it is being used by the state as a rational for advancing the War on Drugs, Guns, and Gangs to incarcerate a generation of Black youth. Instead, we want to bang out against capitalism because that is the real enemy.

4) **We want to end the construction of new prisons to expand the Prison Industrial Complex in Canada.** The Provincial Government is spending $81 million to build a youth superjail in Brampton to warehouse Black young offenders. We agree with the 81 Reasons campaign (prisonjustice.ca) that our tax-payers dollars would be better spent on jobs for youth, new community centers, and alternative programs that prevent incarceration.

5) **We want community-control of Black-Focused Schools.** Black inner-city high schools are *colonial schools* that colonize the minds of the youth. Black-focused schools under the control of the TDSB will be *neo-colonial schools* because they will be run by Black teachers but controlled by white school administrators who are outside of our community. We want community control of Black-focused schools so they can become *liberation schools* independent of the Canadian imperialist state (C. Harris, Personal Communication, August 23, 2008).

The main objective of Basics’ Hood2Hood campaign was to organize Black revolutionary youth in the Bloods and Crips in Jane/Finch, Lawrence Heights, and Vaughan/Oakwood, into a communist mass organization: a grassroots network that could agitate local gangs to resist the war on drugs, guns, and gangs targeting the Black community by abstaining from the gang conflicts in these neighborhoods. At the
Convergence conference in Six Nations, Wasun organized a group of BADC youth workers and volunteers into a Hood2Hood collective that continually met on a bi-weekly basis from September to November 2008 to develop a revolutionary mass organization independent of BADC. However, the group fell apart after three months of meetings, due to a lack of sustained interest in the project. Quanche was absent from these meetings because he left Hood2Hood in January of that year to focus on pursuing his music career. On December 10, 2008, Basics collaborated with the Freedom Cipher’s Set It Off to organize a Hood2Hood event at the d’AnitAfrika Dub Theatre (62 Fraser Ave.). The event was attended by 80 youth and began as a political rally with speakers from Hood2Hood, Set It Off, and Basics No Cops campaign. During the rally, Hood2Hood youth politicized the Lawrence Heights, Jane/Finch, and Vaughan/Oakwood youth in attendance by educating them about the campaign, the weekly Black women’s empowerment workshops in the Set It Off girls groups at Sir Sanford Fleming Collegiate and Westview Secondary School, and Basics introduced their “No Cops” campaign struggling to remove Toronto police from inner-city high schools with a significant Black student population deemed unsafe by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB).

The rest of the evening consisted of a community dinner, and revolutionary Hip Hop concert featuring headline performer Quanche and up-and-coming rappers, singers, and dancers. On February 20, 2009, Hood2Hood organized a live Hip Hop event at Ellington’s Jazz Café (805 St. Clair West) in solidarity with CKLN’s Saturday Morning Live that was canceled in December 2008. Hood2Hood organized the event to build support for BADC elder Richmond because he had played an important role in the
ideological development of Quanche and other BADC youth by co-hosting Freedom Cipher Radio with them. At this event, youth who hosted Freedom Cipher Radio were afforded the opportunity to give speeches and performed revolutionary Hip Hop music to build community support and get the show back on the air.

The most significant experience in developing revolutionary leadership for the Hood2Hood campaign was from my prison correspondence with a 29 year-old inmate I will refer to as “Dashawn”. In the beginning of the second year of the Freedom Cipher he requested that I assist him in organizing a prison newsletter that could be used to organize youth within the prisons and educate the public about the racist conditions Black inmates are forced to endure. I decided to mentor Dashawn to assist him in the hopes that he would join the Hood2Hood campaign upon his release in May 2009. In a letter written May 29, 2008, Dashawn provided critical feedback in regards to Hood2Hood on the necessity of doing an extensive social investigation of the history of Toronto westend gangs, to assist with the development of Hood2Hood based on his experience as a former crack dealing youth in the 1990s:

The ongoing community projects you mentioned in your letter sound worthwhile and worth doing. You made mention of working with various youths in the gangs in the Westend. Have you looked into various histories of the gangs and youths need for them? The gangs place in the community? The starting of various gangs? Did they stem from older gangs who used to have roots in the community? These are just a few things you need to consider when working with these youths. Knowing the answer to these questions may give you the “whys” and in knowing the “whys” you may find your solution to reaching out to the youths and pulling them out and away from the violence and gangs in the community. Have you also looked into the various reasons behind the so-called beefs between the various gangs? I like the idea of touring the different hoods in the dot (Toronto) to promote the mixtape you mentioned in your letter. But you never said how you were promoting the mixtape while touring the various hoods (Dashawn, Personal Communication, May 29, 2008).

Dashawn provided me with great insight on the need to organize outside of the NPIC by interviewing former gang members from the first wave of Bloods, Crips, and Gators in
the 90s. As suggested by Au (2007), I too possessed my own ALD and ZPD as a Black communist traditional intellectual, and was being trained by Dashawn based on his experience as a former street youth on how to build the Hood2Hood campaign against internal violence into a mass movement. In the educational relations communists enter to educate organic intellectuals both the teacher and student are teacher-students learning and re-learning themselves (Au, 2007:291). By mentoring Dashawn, I began to develop further along my own ZPD from being a spontaneous Black communist traditional intellectual in a doctoral equity studies program at the University of Toronto (UT), into a Black working-class organic intellectual in the Hood2Hood movement. In vanguard communist movements, it is not only workers that must be trained to assume the position of revolutionary leadership, but traditional intellectuals as well. In speaking on the necessity of remolding traditional intellectuals into professional revolutionaries, Lenin stated: “the masses will never learn to conduct political struggle until we help to train leaders for this struggle, both from among the enlightened workers and from among the intellectuals”(qtd. in Au:289). In the following correspondence, I responded to Dashawn’s criticisms by outlining the day-to-day organizing I was doing outside of BADC’s Freedom Cipher to organize Hood2Hood at the grassroots level with the Vaughan/Oakwood Bloods:

There is a documentary called Bastards of the Party directed by Antoine Fuqua (Training Day) I have been circulating in my ‘hood (Vaughan/Oakwood) and discussing with the youths and the older man ‘dem. This doc is really powerful because it goes through the history of South Central Los Angeles and breaks down the pre-history of the Bloods and Crips… There are many parallels between the history of the Bloods and Crips in L.A. and Toronto… Since the drug trade was the only employment option for many young black males who would have filled the assembly line a generation earlier, the War on Drugs became the quickest way to recycle them in the jails and expand the prison system into a prison industrial complex warehousing hundreds of thousands of African-Americans whose labor is no longer required as a source of cheap labor in the

Through my letters explaining Hood2Hood’s attempt to organize youth in gangs against the bourgeois state’s police occupation of the African-Canadian community, I was also attempting to develop Dashawn’s spontaneous conception of Black mass imprisonment and the colonial police occupation of the African-Canadian community into scientific concepts such as the “Prison Industrial Complex” to understand this imperialist policy executed by the Canadian ruling class inspired by similar developments in the U.S.

When I began mentoring Dashawn he had already developed a spontaneous Black radical consciousness through his experiences of spending ten years in the streets as a crack dealer, combined with an additional seven years in and out of various young offender and adult prisons since the mid-90s. In the following passage from a letter dated October 23, 2008 Dashawn’s critique of U.S. President Obama’s ascendency to the presidency revealed he already possessed a basic understanding of how hegemony is maintained by arguing the Obama campaign was a bourgeois hegemonic project. In recalling a conversation with an inmate, Dashawn wrote: “We were talking politics from the Conservative party to Obama and how the States might be manipulating things using a Black presidential elect to control the masses” (Dashawn, Personal Communication, October 23, 2008). The challenge of my mentorship through prison correspondence was to develop Dashawn into a vanguard communist leader who could help lead the Hood2Hood campaign upon his release the following year. In the same letter quoted above, he provides the following observations on how the bourgeois media sensationalizes the internal violence in the Black community by promoting the ideology
that all Black youth are criminals, providing a rationale for the expansion of Toronto police and the prison industrial complex in Ontario:

The media glorifies the violence in our communities as a tool for their own means to garner more money from the working people. To what? To fund their anti-gun and gang task force, to hire more cops. To fund the building of more prisons throughout Ontario and the rest of Canada, crying how this is the solution to the youth and Black-on-Black violence in our communities. That this is how we'll bring an end to the gangs plaguing Toronto’s communities wherein they could be using these same monies to fund more community resources, job training, and after school programs to help steer the youths away from the gangs, drugs, and guns that plague our communities (Dashawn, Personal Communication, October 23, 2008).

At this stage of his political-ideological development, Dashawn’s ALD is social-democratic anti-racist consciousness, whereby he recognizes the importance of fighting for anti-racist reforms like the Freedom Cipher in the NPIC (i.e. job training, after school programs etc.) funded to mentor and train youth as a gang exit strategy. However, the object of my political education through correspondence was to move beyond the limitations of social-democratic anti-racist consciousness (i.e. police reform, job creation) to the broader anti-capitalist struggle which requires entering a broad united front with all other oppressed peoples movements, be they First Nations, Labor, Women, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Trans-gendered Queer (LGBTQ), and other national minorities. In their long protracted struggle to construct proletarian hegemony in bourgeois civil society, Black working-class organic intellectuals must not only innovate socialist cultural and educational activity in African-Canadian civil society, but also engage in revolutionary party-building, and building solidarity alliances with other social movements on the left. While I was instructing Dashawn in his ZPD to make a transition from spontaneous Black radical to vanguard organic intellectual, I was attempting to prepare him to lead Black working-class youth in gangs from their African-Canadian colonial consciousness
(ALD) along their own ZPD towards a revolutionary-nationalist/class consciousness as under/unemployed Black workers and lumpen street-involved youth in Ontario’s post-industrial neo-liberal economy:

In the Hood2Hood, the struggle is against “gangbanging” not gangs, because the Bloods and Crips are here for good – they are not going anywhere. Today, more than ever we need to figure out a way to organize all of the progressive Black youth within the gangs and those from without (i.e. high school students), so we can start to deal with politics and change our relationship to this oppressive society (i.e. prisoners of war, unemployed, drug dealers etc.). Dashawn, I see men like you who are now 30 years-old playing the most important role in Hood2Hood because you could be a positive mentor/role model. *I think your mentorship of the youth in gangs would go much further than mine because you actually came up in the streets and can relate to their struggle on a whole different level than I ever could. For now, read the Hood2Hood program and provide me with some critical feedback so that it can be improved (i.e. maybe there needs to be a point on inmates/political prisoners—since all blacks are ‘political’ prisoners) (italics added)* (C. Harris, Personal Communication, July 15, 2008).

As a 29 year-old inmate who had formerly been in the drug economy since his adolescence, I was confident Dashawn would be an even better candidate than me to mentor youth in gangs, despite having 10 years experience as a professional social worker doing this type of work. Apart from engaging in informal learning through self-directed study of the letters I wrote on Hood2Hood organizing, Dashawn was already experiencing informal learning in mass struggle by participating in a spontaneous work stoppage protest at the C.B.I. prison in Kingston, Ontario from August to October 2008. In a letter dated October 21, 2008, Dashawn critiques the limitations of this spontaneity (revolutionary consciousness in embryonic form) amongst the inmates due to a lack of political leadership and low level of inmate organization in this particular prison:

On another note I think I made mention of the peaceful protest (work stoppage) we initiated here, though it seems our efforts are for ‘naught and it’s not because we initiated the protest without good reason. The ‘naught comes from the planning behind the protest, the lack of a paper trail behind the issues we’re arguing, as well as community backing. It’s because of these three points both national, regional, and Corrections are taking our protest for a joke. In my
opinion Asses are the type of people we have here. They’re the type that’ll complain and argue that this and that ain’t right but when it comes time to back their talks they coward, cry and move all for self, talking how they don’t want to lose this or that, how they don’t want the guards to black ball their visits and mail and so on. I lost out on my program completion, my transfer and my opportunity for early release on day parole in December because they wanted to protest and now I gotta’ sit here and hear these fools cry about how they want to end the protest with no change for our efforts. Now that’s some bullshit and will make all this for nothing. At present we’re still protesting, but I don’t think it’ll last much longer (Dashawn, Personal Communication, October 21, 2008).

Dashawn’s summation of this mass protest demonstrates his potential to become a “principal cohesive” organic intellectual with the “powers of innovation” capable of providing ideological direction to anti-capitalist movements (Gramsci, 1971:152).

In order to train Dashawn as an organic intellectual, I supported him by providing input on how to set up the prison newsletter. He requested my assistance in this matter, to expose the racial contradictions in the prisons so I thought it was a good opportunity to develop Dashawn as a mass organizer inside the prisons. I connected Dashawn to a woman from the Anarchist Black Cross Federation (ABCF) who published 4Strugglemag, a U.S. anarchist prison newsletter:

I am going to meet up with my friend from 4strugglemag, a prison newsletter that features revolutionary prisoners from across North America, to get her suggestions on how she can support your newsletter. I will also speak to some other friends in the indie media business to see what support they can offer. I want you to do the following on your end:

- Organize a small group of inmates who can work together on this with you (even if you can only find one other person)
- Start mailing me the name of the newsletter, articles, and topics you would want to cover in the first issue
- Mail me an outline of exactly what you want me to do to support this newsletter (i.e. images?, article research?, write articles?) (C. Harris, Personal Communication, July 15, 2008).

In a letter written on October 22, 2008, Dashawn provided me with an update on his prison organizing for the newsletter, frustrated with the lack of interest and limited response from other inmates he agitated to get involved with the project:
I’ve written an outline for what I want in the newsletter as well as what I think it should be about and it’s purpose. I’ve made efforts to talk to people here about the creation of the newsletter and spark their interest, but it seems my efforts are in vain because that’s all I’ve managed to do is spark their interest. Not one of the people who said they were going to make a contribution has. In a way it’s understandable, everyone is caught up in their own shit, that it’s hard to think outside of themselves even for a minute without something concrete to grasp or see and I ain’t got nothing concrete for them to see, but how can I when my resources are limited. At present all I have is inspiration, a few good ideas, a pen and a pad of paper. There are things I want to write and say but without access to outside resources and materials I’m limited as to what I can actually do and accomplish. It’s alright I got just over seven months left ‘till my release and when I leave I’ll be leaving people here that’ll serve the cause so what I’m planning to do is write and put the newsletter together from the outside and then mail in a few copies to certain people as a means of showing the people something concrete and to garner as well as emphasize the importance of their contributions as in the newsletter is supposed to be their voice. I’ve started to write a piece I’m thinking of calling A Sad Revelation of Truth: My Collins Bay Experience for the newsletter…I know what I want to say in the piece but I’m not sure to -- how should I say illustrate my views without offending anyone…I need to concrete and cement this newsletter but that’s only going to happen when I touch the free world again. (Dashawn, Personal Communication, October 22, 2008).

While the newsletter failed to materialize and Dashawn was not confident enough to connect with the contact I provided him, he was still progressing along the ZPD by developing a plan of action to produce the newsletter upon his release the following spring. Through prison correspondence I was creating a ZPD that Vygotsky argued helped awaken “internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child (or adult) is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers” (Vygotsky, 1978:90).

In a letter dated November 22, 2008 I enclosed a speech I delivered at the Anarcho-Communist journal, Upping the Anti’s Public Forum on Anti-Racist Organizing, on October 17, 2008 where I reported on the contradictions between my BADC program management and Hood2Hood organizing. In this speech I discussed the Hood2Hood campaign as an anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist project from without to
resolve the contradiction between organizing for radical change and operating a social
justice non-profit program in the NPIC. On December 31, 2008, Dashawn responded and
requested that I clarify some of the abstract Marxist concepts I used in the speech:

you enclosed the speech you delivered in October about the Hood2Hood. I liked
it, but I was wondering if you could define certain things for me: the Canadian
imperialism and the Canadian Capitalist class. I understand the gist of your
speech and I wish I could be more opinionated. But I have never been part of the
movement and though certain on-goings have always interested me, I’ve always
been more a part of the problem than the solution (Dashawn, Personal
Communication, December 31, 2008).

In my next letter I enclosed handouts I had written on Labor Power and Capital for my
Global Citizenship equity course at Centennial College, as well as Clifff Conner’s (1995)
History of Imperialism: A Short Course on How Capitalism Came to Dominate the
World, an introductory Marxist pamphlet on Imperialism. Over the next three months,
Dashawn’s ZPD was stagnant because he did not have the discipline to begin advancing
his everyday spontaneous concepts that formed the basis of his understanding of
Hood2Hood towards the scientific concepts of Marxism. In a letter dated February 16,
2009, Dashawn explained why he still had not read the materials I sent him three months
after I sent them:

I have yet to read the material. Reason being my head isn’t in the right place
today. It happens from time to time, more often than I like. I wish I could use
being in jail as a justification for this feeling, but sadly with me this is a common
occurrence. Simply put this feeling/occurrence is my own personal conflict
between what I know is right and to be wrong and what (bourgeois) society
insists, no, defines or deems to be right and wrong; as well as a conflict between
the person I am and person I would like to be… (Dashawn, Personal
Communication, February 16, 2009).

Although Dashawn did not read the pamphlet and introductory lesson plans on Marxism I
submitted to him, he was busy developing self-directed learning skills by studying
Christianity, Bob Marley and the history of South African liberation to prepare him for
his re-entry into a community college diploma program in social work upon his release:
To make up for my lack of schooling, I’ve started a Bible study course, which I despise doing because the church’s organization of the Bible and Christianity is in actuality a white, political restructuring of God’s truth. I do the course simply as a means of disciplining myself into good study habits for when I go back to school. Also I’m reading 4 books, all at once: Catch A Fire: The Life of Bob Marley, The Color Complex: The Politics of Skin Colour among African-Americans; A Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela; and Tom Lodge’s Mandela: A Critical Life, which I find reads like a poorly written essay, jumping from one subject to the next and back again. As I read these books I make notes like I’m researching for a paper or an essay to better my note taking skills. Even though I’m doing all this in an effort to further focus my mind, I have to admit my mind is still lacking focus and my thoughts are still drifting in the abyss of no direction (Dashawn, Personal Communication, February 16, 2009).

I contend that these efforts were significant in his ZPD because they provided him with some experience in developing spontaneous conceptions of African Liberation politics (i.e. the Mandela and Bob Marley biographies) that I could utilize to develop scientific concepts in the future. After that letter, there was no more correspondence between us and the focus changed to setting Dashawn up with a stable living arrangement so he could be successfully integrated into Hood2Hood organizing when he was released in May 2009. Nevertheless, Dashawn made a leap in his ZPD from May 2008-May 2009 during the last year of his two-year sentence due to the correspondence experience.

Prior to his release date I requested that Dashawn speak to the students in the equity class I taught at Centennial College so he could develop as an agitator in Hood2Hood. Immediately upon his release, on Thursday, May 28, 2009 Dashawn gave a lecture to my Global Citizenship (GNED 500) class about his experiences growing up as a child around drugs and violence with two parents who were victims of the crack epidemic in Toronto during the late ‘80s. In this speech, Dashawn also spoke about the racist colonial conditions Black working-class youth and lumpen elements are forced to endure in Ontario prisons due to the Toronto police occupation of the Black community with its war on drugs, guns, and gangs. Clearly, this experience helped him advance his
ALD to a higher level along the ZPD by providing a guest lecture to a group of college
students shortly after his release. The following day on May 29, 2009, I sent Dashawn to
our next Hood2Hood open mic event at Piazza Sports Bar in Vaughan/Oakwood so he
could begin to observe Basics mass organizing and participate in the launch of the
Underground Railroad Vol. 2, featuring Hood2Hood artists, Shing Shing Regime,
Quanche, Wasun, Thesis, and D-Squad from Jane/Trethewey.

I also trained Dashawn as a Hood2Hood organizer by integrating him into
BADC’s solidarity work with the Six Nations Land Reclamation struggle. On
Wednesday, June 29, 2009, Dashawn attended a solidarity meeting at BADC’s office
with YOU where they provided BADC youth with organizing updates about their efforts
to build a youth centre at Six Nations and their second annual Youth Rally. Then a month
later he attended the 2nd Annual Six Nations Youth Rally on Saturday, August 22, 2009 at
the Kanata Mohawk reclamation site in Brantford, ON. At the event he spent the day
networking with Six Nations youth and sharing his experiences organizing Hood2Hood
in Toronto.

Upon his release from prison, Dashawn developed his potential as a mass
communist organizer by coordinating a Hood2Hood event that would be used to unify
youth from Blood and Crip neighborhoods in the Westend of Toronto. On Friday,
October 9, 2009 Dashawn played a leading role in organizing “Less Than a Week’s
Notice”, a Hood2Hood Hip Hop Open Mic event at Ellington’s Jazz Café (805 St. Clair
West). The event was hosted by his 9 year-old daughter Lucky Charms. The open mic
began with spoken word poets Derek Asante, Ebony Prince, Black Rose, Hood2Hood
Poet Black Chiney, and Afua Cooper (2006) who performed a poem from her collection,
Copper Woman. In addition to coordinating the open mic, Dashawn co-wrote with me an article for Basics about this event. On Tuesday, November 3, 2009, Dashawn wrote the following summation about this event he organized with other BADC youth he was mentoring:

Hip Hop was provided by the upcoming Westend artists: Priceless, Krymez, Dude Mania, Kolumbus K.O. all First Class representatives. Thesis and Wasun, Hood2Hood foundation. Spawks and Heartless representing Vaughan Rd./Oakwood Ave and upcoming Weston Rd./St. Clair West female MC Shiki who more than represented for her ends. The majority of the youth at the event were students at Oakwood Collegiate Institute and Vaughan Rd./Oakwood Bloods who came to support local artists on a positive unity building vibe. At the event, Wasun stated on the mic that Hood2Hood is beginning at home, but the object is to unify Bloods, Crips, Gators, and students into a revolutionary youth movement throughout the city. Besides, the H2H youth who came through from Pellum Park, Southside Jane/Trethewey, Lawrence Heights, and Etobicoke, there was no violence – only positive vibes (Wasun, 2009a:8).

Apart from the Hood2Hood article, I also taught Dashawn how to utilize Basics as a tool to build an anti-police brutality mass campaign by writing an article in his presence on a Jane/Finch police raid by 31 Division on the Toronto Housing townhouse unit of Dorolee Miller, her 18 year-old son Brandon Miller, and 14 year-old daughter Shaquel Miller where the family was brutally assaulted and there was no drugs or guns found (Wasun, 2009b:2). The article was printed in the same issue as Dashawn’s Hood2Hood article and provided training on communist indie media activism, which continued his development along the ZPD from a social-democratic anti-racist activist towards a new ALD as a communist organic intellectual.

Apart from Hood2Hood organizing outside the NPIC, I integrated Dashawn into BADC so he could gain some work experience in the social work profession by coordinating the Freedom Cipher. Throughout July and August 2009 Dashawn developed a political education class on the Prison Industrial Complex, utilizing scenes from the Blood and Crip documentary Made in America: Crips and Bloods (Peralta, 2009).
Wednesday, August 5, 2009 he presented the workshop module to BADC Freedom Cipher youth workers. In addition to this, Dashawn coordinated the Freedom Cipher Hip Hop Program at BADC every Saturday from September 12 to October 31, 2009 to gain experience in mass organizing and project management in the NPIC. However, contrary to developing Dashawn as a communist organic intellectual, placing him in charge of the Freedom Cipher program actually contributed to his development as a social-democratic anti-racist activist at BADC. By the end of the year, Dashawn abandoned Hood2Hood organizing because he lost interest in doing political organizing with gangs and decided to remain at BADC as a youth organizer in the NPIC. On October 31, 2009, I brought Dashawn and the Freedom Cipher Hip Hop Program on a fieldtrip to attend the Racism and National Consciousness Conference at New College, UT to hear APSP Chairman Omali Yeshitela speak on the politics of multi-national working-class unity and African Internationalism against U.S. Imperialism and the Obama Administration.

To facilitate his entry into the working-class as a former hard-core lumpen youth in the drug economy, Dashawn enrolled in the Pre-Community Service academic upgrading program in September 2009 at George Brown College in the hopes of becoming registered in the Social Service Worker diploma program in September 2010. As a George Brown student, I encouraged Dashawn to attend OCAP’s Anti-Poverty March on Thursday November 5, 2009 since they were one of BADC’s allied organizations. The OCAP March was the first mass protest he attended along with two other BADC youth he recruited to join him, and this contributed to his growth along the ZPD since OCAP is a revolutionary anarchist organization independent of the NPIC.
Under my instruction, Dashawn was beginning to learn how to become a mass organizer, bringing the Hood2Hood campaign to a community college campus at George Brown. Dashawn promoted the second Hood2Hood open mic on the George Brown campus to recruit students to this event he helped organize at Ellington’s on Friday, November 5, 2009. The second open mic launched the leading Toronto independent rap artist Frankie Payne’s (2009) mixtape Street Wisdom and featured Hood2Hood artists First Class (Priceless, Krymes, Kyana, Kolumbus, Dude Mania), Spawks, Thesis, and Wasun. Although no George Brown students attended despite Dashawn’s outreach efforts, the second open mic was attended by over 20 youth, a few from the Vaughan/Oakwood Blood gang despite the fact that others were banned by the owner from attending this event for promoting gangbanging at the first open mic on October 9, 2009. In spite of the low attendance, the event helped advance the campaign in that community by exposing local youth to the revolutionary Hood2Hood peace and unity campaign we were organizing in the Westend.

On Wednesday November 12, 2009, 18 year-old Vaughan/Oakwood youth Robert “Bubba” Flagiello was gunned down in what Toronto Police argued to be the result of the Turf War in the neighborhood between rival gangs in the neighborhood (Police Close, 2009). The retaliation shooting occurred a day after a shooting at Dufferin/Eglinton where two youth were shot multiple times in the legs and back, with non-life threatening injuries (Police Seek, 2009). In response to these tragic events which sparked an escalation in the turf war in my neighborhood, I penned a verse on “Moving Left” promoting Vaughan Rd/D-Block unity to be used to advance our Hood2Hood organizing on this issue in the lead single to my sophomore Wasun (2010) album, The Prison.
The song was recorded on November 24, 2009 at the independent label Broken Records in Barrie run by Legitimate, a revolutionary white working-class Hip Hop activist who signed me to his label in solidarity with Hood2Hood. In the song I offered the following political program for advancing Hood2Hood peace and unity at Vaughan/Oakwood and Eglinton West by referencing a local neighborhood unity track recorded by Vaughan/Oakwood’s Thug Mentality in 2006, in the hopes of building a case for Vaughan Rd./D-Block unity today. This verse honored the life of Bubba (an Italian-Canadian youth) and all the other Black youth whose lives were claimed by the internal violence in the Vaughan/Oakwood and Eglinton West area over the past couple of years:

All these Vaughan Rd Bloods grew up hearing Wasun
Took my CD in, but they still aimin’ shotguns
At D-Block Thugs aimin’ back Merry Poppin’
While 13 Division and TAVIS got us boxed in
RIP Bubba, did they really need to pop him?
The Oakwood cemetery filled with young coffins
“Eglinton West 4 Life” was real see the verse with
Wolfe and Shelrock unified the turf with
A hood anthem since then lost in thin air
Jamal, Amon, Goon n Frost dead, I’m in tears
Youngins been murdered on the strip, its been years
Drax, Bajan, who no longer with us – still here
Those sayin f**k Wasun, I say f**k you
As a revolutionary I’m a still come through
And organize Africans who already been through
Worst days, like slaves in chains, moving in 2s
All my Filipino, Portuguese working illegal
Mexican undocumented workers here I see you
build united fronts, communists for the people
organize step by step, transparent see through
(Wasun, 2010).

Upon hearing this song, Dashawn enjoyed the music aesthetically, but thought the Hood2Hood campaign of ending the Vaughan Rd./D-Block beef was a waste of time because it would not do anything to stop these youth from killing each other. As a former crack dealer who spent his entire life growing up in the streets, Dashawn was not ready to
do Hood2Hood organizing with the gangs because he was still developing as an organic intellectual along the ZPD to become a communist, from his ALD as a social-democratic BADC activist. Also, Dashawn suffered trauma from witnessing a number of friends he grew up with get murdered in the streets, so it was difficult to do Hood2Hood organizing around Bubba’s murder for this reason. By the end of that year, Dashawn completely withdrew from Hood2Hood mass organizing, thus ceasing his training as a communist activist.

The final informal learning experience outside the NPIC whereby I instructed Dashawn was engaging him in the collective study of Malcolm X’s autobiography and final speeches to complete an essay assignment in George Brown’s Pre-Community program. On Sunday, December 6, 2009 we both read and re-read Malcolm X’s “Message to the Grassroots” and “Ballot or Bullet” speeches, along with chapters from The Autobiography of Malcolm X, so I could use these texts to help him develop an understanding of the Marxist-Leninist concept of Imperialism. Dashawn wrote:

(Malcolm) acknowledged that we are all human and equal despite complexion or race and that we are all entitled to be treated as such and that we should not be asking for our civil rights. His new ideology leading to Malcolm’s emphasis of human rights was done to link the African American civil rights movement struggle with the international one of third world nations against U.S imperialism and white supremacy. Malcolm was stating that African Americans were not only an oppressed people but oppressed nation whose human rights were being violated like the Vietnamese (Dashawn, Personal Communication, December 6, 2009).

In the passage quoted above, we can see Dashawn beginning to understand this scientific concept through his reading of Malcolm X with my assistance as a more capable peer in Vygotskian terms.

In the following weeks I struggled with Dashawn ideologically over the Hood2Hood program but he became increasingly disinterested in organizing the
campaign and eventually withdrew to focus more on running the Freedom Cipher Studio program at BADC as a social-democratic anti-racist activist in the NPIC. Consequently, his training as a communist mass organizer came to an end and his ALD consciousness remained spontaneous Black radicalism. Instructing students in the ZPD is not a linear process of educational development, but full of ruptures and retreats, as much as it is filled with advances and leaps in cognitive development.

The Limitations of Spontaneity in the Production of Black Working-Class Organic Intellectuals

In the Freedom Cipher the major obstacle to organic intellectual formation was not so much the form and the content of the learning, but the organizational context. The location of the Freedom Cipher in the NPIC created a contradictory capitalist state-funded learning environment in bourgeois civil society that diverted the Freedom Cipher youth’s attention away from grassroots organizing for transformative change, to a focus on individual professional artist and career advancement. As a spontaneous state-funded Black anti-racism education program in the NPIC, the Freedom Cipher did not produce any revolutionary activists in African-Canadian civil society. By the end of the second year, Quanche and Keisha, whom I provided with the most extensive training, left the program due to a lack of sustained interest in political organizing. In this section I will discuss why the program failed to produce organic intellectuals despite all of the communist education and anti-racist organizing Quanche and Keisha engaged in due to the political contradictions of the NPIC.

First, I will critique the limitations of my own revolutionary praxis responsible for the poor integration of communist education, inter-generational learning relations, self-
directed learning and collective study in the Freedom Cipher module to develop Quanche and Keisha into Black working-class organic intellectuals. As a Black communist traditional intellectual, I failed to employ the correct methods of mass and advanced education necessary to fulfill the task at hand. By organizing the Freedom Cipher spontaneously without the assistance of a group of experienced vanguard communist adult educators, I did not possess the political experience required to develop a comprehensive communist pedagogy that could educate and train BADC youth to become organic intellectuals. This was largely the result of my own incompetence as a communist activist who did not have the intellectual capacity in the first two years of the Freedom Cipher to develop this type of advanced political education. Since I did not seek out more advanced elders and activists on the Left to assist in this matter, Quanche and Keisha did not receive adequate instruction in Marxism in the first two years of the Freedom Cipher.

Second I will explain how Quanche and Keisha’s bourgeois liberal values combined with my professionalization of BADC activism, typical of Left establishment organizations in the NPIC, prevented them from developing as organic intellectuals. These factors were key mediating identity artifacts that remained unreconstructed in the course of ZPD activities because their learning was uneven and contradictory, eventually giving way to primarily adaptive rather than transformative types of ongoing engagement.\(^40\) I spent the most time training Quanche and Keisha because they had the

\(^{40}\) The concept of ‘identity artifact’ is roughly equivalent to how Sawchuk (e.g. 2003, 2006b) speaks of ‘habitus’, or, earlier, how Vygotsky appropriated the basic psychological concept of ‘schema’. It refers to a specific aspect of personality, generally clustered around specific social roles (i.e. role identity) though not completely limited to these roles, internalized in relation to
spontaneous leadership qualities, artistry, passion, and intelligence that are necessary
preconditions of becoming revolutionary communist organic intellectuals. Unfortunately,
their interest in BADC dwindled by the end of the second year and a key factor in this
was the Freedom Cipher’s incorporation into the NPIC actually transformed this former
voluntary grassroots anti-racist activism in the previous year into temporary state-funded
employment opportunities in hip hop music production and social work professional
development that satisfied their individual self-interest in music and career advancement.
When the Freedom Cipher became funded, Quanche participated less in political-
education and community organizing, and more in professional vocal recording, music
production and CD manufacturing. This supported learning and ongoing development in
a particular way: it produced new aspects of identity (the ‘professional recording artist’),
or identity artifacts, which mediated activity within his ZPD making it more adaptive as
opposed to transformative. In Rita’s case, her identity artifact as a ‘social worker in
training’ minimized her participation in Freedom Cipher political-education, and she
directed her attention towards youth-engagement organizing in the non-profit profit
sector, thus culminating in an adaptive ZPD for her as well.

Third, I will examine the positive experiences of educating Quanche, Keisha and
Dashawn from without the NPIC. I will explain how their role in organizing Six Nations
solidarity, developing an innovative revolutionary Hip Hop pedagogy that led to the
consolidation of the Hood2Hood campaign, and prison correspondence with Dashawn
contributed to their development as Black working-class organic intellectuals in

existing participation in activity (what more generically would be thought of the social structure
of experience) and in turn used to mediate a person’s ongoing practices.
bourgeois civil society. In Dashawn’s case, he developed the furthest along a transformative ZPD towards becoming an organic intellectual because his mentorship through correspondence and activist training in Hood2Hood occurred completely from without the NPIC. Ultimately the need to move beyond the political-ideological limitations of the NPIC to educate Black working-class organic intellectuals in African-Canadian civil society will become increasingly clear.

Inter-generational learning in the Freedom Cipher did not move beyond the development of spontaneous everyday conceptions of anti-racist organizing in the NPIC. Due to my approach of focusing primarily on spontaneous youth organizing and insufficiently on scientific concept formation (i.e. the missing political-educational instruction), inter-generational learning relations were limited in terms of contributing to organic intellectual formation. Both Quanche and Keisha experienced basic inter-generational learning by co-hosting Freedom Cipher Radio with BADC elder Richmond however there was no advanced political education to develop Marxist (i.e. Vygotskian) scientific concepts in Quanche and Rita’s ZPD. From a Vygotskian learning perspective, this is one of the major explanations for the emergence of adaptive versus transformational learning in fact. As a former Black Power organic intellectual, Richmond could have lead an advanced communist study group for them to learn Marxism and the history of African Liberation politics in North America in the 20th century. A study group that entailed individual readings and collective study to introduce Quanche and Keisha to Marxist concepts that would help lead their development as Black working-class organic intellectuals by studying the following: introduction to Marx’s theory of historical and dialectical materialism; the Political Economy of racism in
Canada; the history of Canadian Imperialism and African-Canadian internal colonialism; the history of African-American and African-Canadian Liberation movements in the 20th century; the Legacy of Black Communist Women and Revolutionary Black Feminism. In the absence of a revolutionary party, Black communist elders and adult educators must put inter-generational learning in service of teaching advanced political education to raise the intellectual and cultural level of Black working-class youth to understand Marxism and apply it in their struggles for self-determination. To resolve this weakness in the Freedom Cipher, future efforts must strengthen inter-generational learning relations combined with self-directed and collective study of Marxism to ensure BADC youth undergo the ideological maturation necessary to become communist organic intellectuals.

As a communist adult educator, I was concerned with educating and training Quanche and Keisha to become revolutionary activists who could do anti-capitalist, anti-racist, and Black Feminist organizing in African-Canadian civil society, however their involvement in the Freedom Cipher continued to forefront and cultivate objectives and motivations rooted in their own individual self-interest. Both Quanche and Rita entered their ZPD with a specific identity artifact as a ‘rap artist’ or ‘social worker in training’ that mediated their selection/attention to experiences, their interpretations of those experiences and in turn their action based on those experiences. Quanche’s case was particularly clear, because not only was his identity artifact firmly in place as a rap artist, but additional resources were available for music recording and production, which accentuated his identity artifact rather than problematized it in order to lead the development of a new identity transformation and hence alternative learning pathways.
Evidently, their individual self-interest was never adequately reconstructed through a transformative ZPD for the following reasons. Quanche worked in the Freedom Cipher to develop as a professional recording artist, and Keisha’s motivation was to receive further training as a professional social worker. Despite Quanche’s anti-racist cultural work from without in the Justice for Alwy and Hood2Hood campaign as a BADC Hip Hop activist, he was primarily concerned with advancing his career as an independent rap artist. Thanks to the generous funding BADC received from the state, there were plenty of resources for Quanche to receive hours of free studio time to perfect his rapping skills. The release of Quanche’s (2007) *Youngest in Charge* increased his profile and popularity in the Toronto urban music industry and he received a record deal with EZ-Mak Records, an independent record label in the Vaughan/Oakwood community. As Quanche began focusing more on his music career in the second year of the program, he left BADC to engage in professional artist development. In Keisha’s case, her motivation to organize the Freedom Cipher and Set It Off girls groups was to gain further employment experience to advance her career in the social work profession. Although Keisha received training to become a social-democratic anti-racist organizer in the Jane/Finch area, she was organizing at the grassroots level, from the standpoint of a liberal social work professional. By volunteering as the Freedom Cipher assistant coordinator and organizing girls groups, Keisha acquired more experience in non-profit management to add to her resume and become more competitive in the social work field. In future efforts to educate organic intellectuals, the construction of an effective ZPD in these terms, would have had to introduce new identity artifacts, self-conscious goals, but more importantly a broader motive framework that effectively make it impossible to
proceed along bourgeois adaptive trajectories of development. In the future, the most effective way of proceeding, would not be to further reject the notion that the organic intellectual in training needs to obtain employability experiences of one kind or another, but the communist adult educator must develop a broader frame of meaning, or motive structure in Vygotskyian terms, that locates these individualized achievements within the context of developing and contributing to mass anti-capitalist and anti-racist organizing at the grassroots level.

Despite the program’s limitations, integrating the Freedom Cipher’s revolutionary Hip Hop pedagogy into Six Nations solidarity work, Hood2Hood organizing, and the Justice for Alwy campaign, demonstrated the possibilities of utilizing Hip Hop music and other forms of Black working-class popular culture to educate organic intellectuals. Quanche, Keisha, and later Dashawn traveled to Six Nations on numerous occasions to organize the Hip Hop solidarity concert in July 2007, convergence conference in August 2008, and the YOU rally in August 2009. Keisha was trained as a revolutionary activist by joining the convergence organizing committee in the winter of 2008 and working to build the summer conference. Likewise, Quanche performed revolutionary Hip Hop at Six Nations to bridge the gap between Black working-class youth in Toronto and Native youth on the rez. Ultimately, the experience of building anti-imperialist solidarity between an oppressed nation and national minority who suffer internal colonialism in Canada definitely was not insignificant in Keisha and Quanche’s ideological development. In the Hood2Hood campaign, Keisha developed by organizing the Freedom Cipher’s Hip Hop program, and speaking on a panel at the M-1 Speaks event in November 2007. Quanche developed as a lead artist on the Underground Railroad
mixtapes, and performing at cultural events for Hood2Hood and Justice for Alwy where he used his talents as the most popular upcoming artist in the Freedom Cipher to advance these revolutionary campaigns. The Freedom Cipher experience proves that when Hip Hop activism within the NPIC is used to advance revolutionary campaigns from without, it has great potential to play an important role in organic intellectual formation on the Black Left. It is not clear whether Dashawn will continue along this path of organic intellectual development in the future by returning to Hood2Hood or elsewhere. However, I am certain that this type of experience in revolutionary organizations from without will make a far greater contribution to organic intellectual formation than the contradictory task of engaging working-class youth in political education from within the NPIC.

The Freedom Cipher organized a social-democratic anti-racist youth movement, but, in the end, likely no organic intellectuals because I was unable to resolve the contradiction between the revolutionary adult education in the program and the ideological parameters created by our funders to meet their liberal program outcomes. In reflecting on his experience as a “revolutionary” NPIC activist in the San Francisco Bay area in the late 1990s, Rodriguez (2007) contends the political practice of Left establishment organizations in the NPIC is radical in form but liberal in content (p. 34). However, in the case of the Freedom Cipher, the ZPD activity of Quanche and Keisha was uneven and contradictory in form and content. Particularly in Keisha’s ZPD, the activity was liberal in form because it came to be dominated by the motive of career advancement in the field of social work, despite the radical content that was included in her ZPD. The fact is it was a contradictory struggle at virtually every step in Keisha’s
experience between a radical and liberal form which shifted back and forth over the
course of her organizing in the Freedom Cipher. As a communist adult educator, I failed
to resolve the contradictory form and content of the Freedom Cipher operating within the
parameters of the Youth Challenge Fund’s (YCF) bourgeois liberal ideology of youth
engagement. The YCF was created by the province in February 2006 in partnership with
the private sector to raise $45 million towards funding local training and job programs to
create “youth engagement opportunities” for “at-risk” criminalized Black youth.
However, the YCF was not implemented to advance a “youth-engagement” agenda, but
rather a “bureaucratized management of fear” of Black youth in White civil society who
have been systematically displaced by capitalism (Rodriguez, 2007:21). The YCF was
implemented after one full-year of anti-Black racist representations of Black youth in the
bourgeois media following the 2005 Boxing Day murder of Jane Creba, a white 15 year-
old innocent bi-stander of a gang shootout on Yonge St.\footnote{In January 2006 in response to the Jane Creba murder, a \textit{Tri-Level Committee on Guns and Violence} was formed with senior representatives from the municipal, provincial, and federal government to tackle the problem of gun violence in the “13 Priority Neighborhoods”, in Toronto’s inner city suburbs that account for a disproportionate number of the city’s gang and gun violence. See Bania (2009) “Gang Violence Among Youth and Young Adults: (Dis) Affiliation and the Potential for Prevention”, available Online: http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/ipc/eng/documents/IPCR3Bania.pdf} BADC was funded $450,000
temporarily over three years (2007-2009) to help resolve the problem of gang and gun
violence in three of the westend’s “priority” neighborhoods. Despite the positive anti-
racism education, employment training, and mentorship the Freedom Cipher engaged in,
the YCF successfully de-politicized BADC youth by giving them the false impression
they could be paid to do grassroots anti-racist organizing within civil society to change it.
As the coordinator, I failed to do any extensive political education on the contradictions

\footnote{In January 2006 in response to the Jane Creba murder, a \textit{Tri-Level Committee on Guns and Violence} was formed with senior representatives from the municipal, provincial, and federal government to tackle the problem of gun violence in the “13 Priority Neighborhoods”, in Toronto’s inner city suburbs that account for a disproportionate number of the city’s gang and gun violence. See Bania (2009) “Gang Violence Among Youth and Young Adults: (Dis) Affiliation and the Potential for Prevention”, available Online: http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/ipc/eng/documents/IPCR3Bania.pdf}
of the Freedom Cipher itself in relation to NPIC forces: the reality that the YCF was not
created to respond to the systemic racism and internal colonization of Black working-
class youth due to the collaborative efforts of the Toronto police, Toronto District School
Board, and expanding Prison Industrial Complex (i.e. province’s $81 million Brampton
Youth Jail). On the contrary, this funding was created for African-Canadian civil society
organizations like BADC to manage the fear of the white imperialist settler nation by
enhancing the state’s ability to monitor and control the civic life of the Black community
through an artificial web of liberal youth engagement programs for “at-Risk” Black
working-class youth. In Vygotskyian terms, this was the broader, collectively shared
motive of the activity from which myriad individual self-conscious goals emanated and
co-existed in the ZPDs of the youth workers I attempted to educate to become organic
intellectuals and myself as the Freedom Cipher Coordinator.

As a leader on the Fledgling Black Left in Toronto who failed to produce any
revolutionary activists in the Freedom Cipher, I can relate to Gramsci’s sobering
assessment of the difficulties of organic intellectual formation within the working-class in
the Italian communist movement: “the process of creating intellectuals is long, difficult,
full of contradictions, advances and retreats, dispersals and regroupings, in which the
loyalty of the masses is often sorely tried” (Gramsci, 1971:334). In year one and two
when Quanche and Keisha were active in the Freedom Cipher, I was not negating the
Canadian imperialist Bourgeoisie but expanding their hegemony in African-Canadian
civil society by masking rather than confronting and resolving the ideological
contradictions of the NPIC. Instead of educating these BADC youth workers about the
inability of state-funded programs to advance revolutionary politics, I was uncritically
engaging them in my own idealist conception that I could transform the funders bourgeois liberal ideology of youth engagement into an innovative model of revolutionary anti-racist non-profit activism. In actuality, I mistakenly encouraged Quanche and Keisha to buy into the myth that they could create anti-racist change by working in the NPIC as youth workers, when they were in fact maintaining the status quo.

**Conclusion**

This chapter provided an overview of the legacy of BADC as a militant Black anti-police brutality organization where the Freedom Cipher was located to cultivate a new Canadian Black revolutionary youth leadership. While the Freedom Cipher failed to produce any Black working-class organic intellectuals, I completed my own development as a Black communist by coordinating the program and negating the NPIC through the organization of Hood2Hood independently of BADC. Although I experienced a transformative ZPD as a communist adult educator who managed this program, the youth I mentored to become Black working-class organic intellectuals were unsuccessful for the following reasons. One, BADC is a social-democratic anti-racist organization in the NPIC that received state funding to organize youth-engagement programs with African-Canadian youth in gangs to reduce the internal violence in their communities and increase their employability skills. However, my intention in the Freedom Cipher was to develop an ever-expanding transformative ZPD for Quanche and Keisha so they could participate in the following organic intellectual activities: Hip Hop cultural production; youth program development; Aboriginal solidarity work; and the organization of radical
mass campaigns in collaboration with Basics, a communist student newspaper independent of the NPIC. Quanche and Keisha participated in contradictory educational and community organizing activities that were both radical and liberal in form and content, precisely because it was located in the NPIC: an ever expanding sphere of bourgeois civil society. Thus, Quanche and Keisha were learning in adaptive ZPDs which I mistakenly located in the NPIC and this prevented their educational development as Black working-class organic intellectuals.

Despite the Freedom Cipher’s unsuccessful attempt to educate Quanche and Rita, it will be the task of Hood2Hood to recruit and re-integrate them into the movement so they can continue their development as organic intellectuals in the future. Currently, Quanche is the premiere upcoming artist on EZ-Mak records and Keisha is successfully working in a permanent full-time position at the YWCA. The release of Quanche’s sophomore mixtape, The Prelim on EZ-Mak in May 2010 (see HipHopCanada.com), reveals there is still great potential to re-integrate him into the Hood2Hood movement in the future and continue to guide his development along a transformative ZPD. The majority of the album is geared toward mainstream commercial success in the Canadian urban music industry, however one particular track “Robbed”, recorded in the Freedom Cipher in 2008 stands out. The song reveals Quanche’s ongoing solidarity with First Nations due to his travels to 6 Nations, collaborating with Tru Rez and learning about the history of their national liberation movement:

I’m talking about Europeans, English and French
Who came to this land, found man made friend
And then snaked them took advantage of trust and they raped ‘em
Oh Canada, the land stolen from the Natives
And First Nations, People driven to starvation
They kidnapped their children and put them into placements
Forced assimilation, its like slave rakin’
Now ‘nuff of them are sniffin’ glue or stayin’ wasted
Just another race erased more recent…
The working-class getting robbed by the government
Poor people evicted for condos and luxuries
Our Native people are robbed by the government
Who really believe what they show you on TV? (Quanche, 2010)

The rupture in Quanche and Rita’s adaptive ZPDs is to be expected when we consider the day-to-day survival issues confronting Black working-class youth and working women supporting their families. As Hood2Hood organizing is re-organized in the upcoming years there are real possibilities for them to help rebuild Hood2Hood since they are still working and living in the Westend, keep in touch with Hood2Hood activists, and have sunken deep roots in this long-term protracted war of position to end gangbanging in the Westend.

Despite my failure to develop Quanche and Keisha into Black working-class organic intellectuals, the Freedom Cipher dramatically furthered my ideological development along a transformative ZPD by revealing the contradictions of the NPIC. In the first two years of the program, I was organizing as a spontaneous middle-class Black communist traditional intellectual (UT PhD Candidate) in a social-democratic anti-racist organization --not a vanguard Black working-class organic intellectual in a revolutionary party/organization. However, by mentoring Dashawn through prison correspondence from without the NPIC; studying scientific Marxist concepts on the contradictions of the NPIC (i.e. INCITE, 2007) for this dissertation; and failing to produce organic intellectuals in the Freedom Cipher after 10 years of doing youth development work in the NPIC. I completed my own development as a Black working-class organic intellectual in the second year of the program by committing class suicide and organizing the vanguard Hood2Hood movement in African-Canadian civil society from without. By
removing my Basics communist activism from BADC’s Freedom Cipher which entailed mentoring Dashawn through prison correspondence and consolidating the Hood2Hood program and organizing group at the Six Nations Convergence conference, I resolved the contradiction of organizing communist education in a social-democratic anti-racist organization in the NPIC, a sphere of bourgeois civil society.

What are the implications of the communist education in the Freedom Cipher for this study on the education of Black working-class organic intellectuals on the African-Canadian left? In my work as a communist adult educator, I find Gramsci’s theory of revolutionary working-class organic intellectuals to be useful, when applied within the context of the Freedom Cipher I coordinated at BADC from 2007-2009. I find Gramsci to be an invaluable tool in the struggle to educate and train a new generation of youth to become organic intellectuals in a more planned, ideologically coherent, and systematic manner. The types of experiences I have just recounted in fact support the argument that the misappropriation of Gramsci’s Marxism by Western Eurocommunism and post-Marxism only leads to reformist educational projects in civil society. On the other hand, Gramsci’s theory of hegemony and war of position, combined with his vision of mass Leninist vanguard politics, could be utilized to develop a framework to educate and train Black working-class organic intellectuals in African-Canadian civil society organizations. In the absence of a communist party, other revolutionary organizational forms on the Black Left are necessary to cultivate organic intellectuals. A synthesis of Marxist-Leninist organization, socialist popular education, and Hip Hop cultural production must be combined by the Black left if it is serious about the education of Black working-class organic intellectuals.
Chapter 6
Moving Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC): The Case for Liberation Schooling in African-Canadian Civil Society

Introduction

Despite the successes of the Freedom Cipher in building a social-democratic youth movement in the Westend, it failed in the historic task of producing organic intellectuals with the political, ideological, and organizational capacity to wage a communist war of position in the trenches of African-Canadian civil society to achieve self-determination from Canadian Imperialism. In this chapter the contradictions of using state funding to develop Black working-class organic intellectuals in the Non-Profit Industrial Complex (NPIC) will be examined in more detail to reveal the limitations of the Freedom Cipher as a communist education project. I argue that in the absence of a genuine communist party on the Canadian Left, the number one concern of revolutionary adult education must be the construction of a new communist party—not the production of organic intellectuals. It is my contention that integrating Black working-class youth into this type of revolutionary party-building initiative will produce organic intellectuals more effectively than BADC. In the absence of a genuine communist or revolutionary party/organization, I suggest revolutionary party building must be the first priority, so the task of Black working-class organic intellectual formation may be more effectively undertaken by an anti-imperialist organization independent of the state that cannot be undermined by the hegemony of the Canadian Imperialist Bourgeoisie in the NPIC. Since the Black Left project of constructing a revolutionary African-Canadian party-building mass organization requires extensive communist education, inter-generational learning,
and revolutionary praxis, I argue this will result in the formation of Black working-class organic intellectuals in the same way that North American Black Power organic intellectuals developed by organizing their own vanguard party/organizations in the 1960s.

The Freedom Cipher as an Extension of Bourgeois Hegemony in African-Canadian Civil Society and the Cooptation of the Black Left

The experience of BADC’s Freedom Cipher program raised a central question: is it possible to develop revolutionary communist organic intellectuals in a state-funded social democratic anti-racist organization in the NPIC? To answer this question I will engage in a critical evaluation of the Freedom Cipher to reveal the contradictions of this failed communist education project. I agree with Ireland who maintains that utilizing a radical pedagogy for the education of organic intellectuals requires ongoing self-criticism and evaluation by the communist educator because the field of popular education largely inspired by Gramsci is full of ideological tensions that must be resolved to complete this difficult task (1987:70). Perez (2007), a U.S.-based organizer of Sisters in Action for Power (SPRIT), experienced the same disillusionment I did after ten years of organizing in the NPIC:

As a young organizer, I was introduced to this work with the idea that it could be a career, housed in a non-profit structure and funded by foundations, and that these structures could sustain the movement. Ten years later, I think we need to re-examine the model, assess its sustainability, and determine its political direction. Foundation funding and non-profit management not only exhausts us and potentially compromises our radical edge; it also has us persuaded that we cannot do our work without their money and without their systems. Many of the problems we face in our organizing work today is derived from the model of business structures and corporate culture that now dominates the movement (p. 98).
Perez thus rejects the bourgeois myth of non-profit activism for social change because the NPIC has successfully depoliticized Left organizing by keeping it within the ideological parameters of the Bourgeois state and civil society. As the following Upping the Anti editorial on the limitations of social-democracy argues, the bureaucratization of radical social movements on the Canadian Left by state funding seriously undermines their ability to struggle against capitalism and imperialism:

Many social movements in Canada have sought institutional status…However, as they have maneuvered for government funding their power to mobilize has been limited by accommodation to a social democratic framework. While government support and funding can be vital to community health, social movements with radical roots have all too often jettisoned their commitments to social change in the process of becoming bureaucratized (Thompson et al., 2007:42).

Given the reality BADC recently received a $450,000 grant from the City of Toronto to do what it considers to be charitable work in the African-Canadian community, it led to the organization’s co-optation by the NPIC, a sphere of bourgeois civil society managed by political society (the state) to maintain the hegemony of the capitalist class.

After organizing and facilitating anti-racism education programs in the NPIC for the past 9 years, it was not until the final year of the Freedom Cipher, that I understood the contradiction between my subjective consciousness as a communist adult educator, 42 From 2001-2002, I organized an innovative program module as the Program Director of For Youth Initiative (FYI), the city’s first youth-engagement organization in the Westend and coordinated the original Freedom Cipher Program: a $50,000 grant from the National Crime Prevention Strategy, Community Mobilization Program, to do anti-racism in education in two TDSB alternative schools: 1) the Nighana Afrocentric Program (Eastdale C.I.); 2) the Native Learning Centre (Native Child and Family Services). In 2003, I coordinated the Scarborough Program Aimed at Reaching Employment (S.P.A.R.E.), which employed 120 at-risk youth from Malvern and Glendower to engage them in life skills and pre-employment training to re-enter school and the workforce. In 2006 I re-organized the Freedom Cipher on a voluntary basis at BADC. And from 2007-2009, I worked at BADC as the Coordinator of the Freedom Cipher Program: a three-year $450,000 youth employment gang exit strategy that combines music and healing arts therapy to engage at-risk African-Canadian youth in the production of Hip Hop music.
and my objective location in the NPIC as a Black bourgeois organic intellectual. While I perceived my non-profit activism and communist political education as a form of organic revolutionary praxis inspired by Gramscian theory, in actuality I was performing the organizational function of a bourgeois organic intellectual. Gramsci defines organic intellectuals as activist-intellectuals who are either responsible for organizing the new proletarian (i.e. socialist) hegemony of the oppressed classes (i.e. workers, minority nationalities) or maintaining the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. As the Freedom Cipher Coordinator, I was actually contributing to the expansion of bourgeois hegemony in African-Canadian civil society by training Black working-class youth to become the next generation of Black bourgeois non-profit activists in the NPIC. Flemming warns against the post-Marxist romanticization of “radical” adult education in civil societal social movement organizations, because it is in these same “movements” remolded into non-profit organizations (i.e. BADC) where the ruling class exercises its own hegemony (1998:7).

Although the Freedom Cipher was revolutionary in educational form, it was reactionary in economic content, due to BADC’s integration into the Canadian capitalist economy as a state-funded non-profit organization in the NPIC. Gramsci understood that ruling class hegemony was not only cultural and educational, but economic as well: “for though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity” (1971:161). Ireland correctly observes that in the West “where civil society is strong, a true revolutionary process must first concern itself with transforming the social relations and organizations of civil society” (1987:29-30). However, the
opposite occurred in the Freedom Cipher through its economic incorporation into the NPIC, an ever expanding layer of bourgeois civil society. As an NPIC organization, BADC actually reversed the Gramscian strategy of building proletarian hegemony in bourgeois civil society through autonomous Black working-class organization, by becoming a bourgeois “non-profit” corporation employing temporary non-unionized part-time and full-time contract workers. Similar to Perez’s experience organizing with SPIRIT into the NPIC (2007:93), BADC had to supply the YCF with lengthy funding proposals, work plans, articles of incorporation, job descriptions, liability insurance, and personnel policies to qualify for funding. In recent years, the NPIC transformed BADC into a corporate entity with a board structure that more closely resembled the private sector than its roots in grassroots protest – and apparently it is not the only organization. Burrowes et al. contend the NPIC has systematically undermined a number of Left organizations by economically restructuring them so they no longer create “spaces for organic community participation and collective power” independent of the state (2007:231).

For instance, Native Friendship Centres that began as grassroots community spaces were increasingly co-opted by Canadian Imperialism in the ‘70s. According to indigenous sovereignty activist Gord Hill of the Kwakwaka’wakw First Nation in British Columbia, the Canadian government funded Native Friendship Centres that were self-organized by activists at the grassroots to “pacify” and assimilate them into the ongoing project of Aboriginal colonization:

…people were self-organizing Friendship Centres. Consequently, the government came along and started funding all these…agencies in order to co-opt them and now Friendship Centres are…very conservative, very hostile to activism…Friendship Centres do serve a purpose and meet the needs in the community. But they meet those needs because people have been so controlled
that they’re unable to self-organize. And now people don’t think of organizing things like Friendship Centres because they’re already being funded by the government. They present a façade of being almost like grassroots institutions (Hill, 2007:63).

By removing the agency from grassroots activists so they would lose their ability to self-organize the masses, the NPIC undermined the national liberation struggles of First Nations whose revolutionary leadership made a transition from being enemies of the state to becoming “friends” or clients of Canadian Imperialism.

If the Freedom Cipher hopes to ever fulfill its goal of organic intellectual production, it will have to become a revolutionary socialist project independent of the financial and ideological hegemony of the ruling class. Although the Freedom Cipher appears to be mobilizing at the grassroots, it is not so clear whose interests are being met. Like the Native Friendship Centres, the Freedom Cipher in its current form is actually advancing the political interests of Canadian imperialism because it too became a “façade” that appeared to be “grassroots” but was really a sophisticated colonial tool of African-Canadian colonization. The only reason BADC received state funding as a Black anti-racist organization was to co-opt their potential youth leadership into becoming state-funded Black bourgeois organic intellectuals positioned in African-Canadian civil society to prevent any revolutionary initiative from developing into a mass-based national liberation movement. The only way to resist bourgeois hegemony in the NPIC and its role in the colonization of African-Canadian civil society is the creation of autonomous revolutionary parties and mass organizations independent of the state that can wage a protracted ideological war of position against these colonial relations in the NPIC. In addition to communist education, strengthening the organizational capacity of the
oppressed classes is a necessary precondition of building a new hegemonic force capable of challenging bourgeois hegemony (Ireland, 1987:30).

When BADC received a massive increase in state funding through its YCF grant, it became a successful bourgeois hegemonic project in African-Canadian civil society for the Canadian ruling class. Non-profit funding wins the consent of the African-Canadian community by misleading them to think the state is operating in their interest by investing in temporary employment opportunities for Black working-class youth. Funding the Freedom Cipher expanded bourgeois hegemony in the African-Canadian working-class by co-opting BADC youth leaders and de-politicizing their activism, transforming what was once radical organizing into a bourgeois liberal profession in social services (Kivel, 2007:139). Former American Indian Movement (AIM) activist Madonna Thunder Hawk warns revolutionary youth organizing in the NPIC today, that non-profit activism actually serves ruling class interests by co-opting dissent into temporary, limited contractual paid work:

> When you start paying people to do activism [it can]…change those of us who are dedicated. Before we know it, we start to expect to be paid and do less unpaid work than we would have before. This way of organizing benefits the system of course, because people start seeing organizing as a career rather than as involvement in a social movement that requires sacrifice (2007:105).

Unfortunately, as long as the Freedom Cipher remains in the NPIC it will continue to produce *Black bourgeois non-profit professional activists*—not communist organic intellectuals.

As an YCF funded program, the Freedom Cipher was a bourgeois hegemonic project, whereby the state entered into a temporary alliance with a Black social-democratic anti-racist organization to create temporary employment training opportunities for Black working-class youth in African-Canadian civil society. Gramsci
warned that ruling class hegemony involved making “economic-corporate” compromises with subordinate groups so they buy into the myth that the ruling class is helping them achieve their political and economic goals (in this case Black youth employment creation) without challenging the status quo:

Undoubtedly the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed—in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind. But there is also no doubt that such sacrifices and such a compromise cannot touch the essential (Gramsci, 1971:161).

One of the main reasons the project received such a large operational budget was to create limited employment opportunities for Black working-class youth and pacify the African-Canadian community with an increase in resources for three years until the Black-on-Black murder rate declines.

If the Freedom Cipher was an independent African liberation youth program at BADC run entirely by revolutionary Black working-class organic intellectuals, they would be critical of non-profits despite their obvious benefit to the community because they are not being funded on a permanent but temporary basis to serve the interests of the imperialist state. BADC organic intellectuals would perform the function of communist adult educators who educate and mobilize the African-Canadian community against these reformist “social justice” projects (while recognizing their limited benefits) and the necessity of struggling for greater reforms in order to continue expanding the

43 On the question of the role of limited reforms in advancing the revolutionary process whose object is to defeat social democracy Lenin rightly affirms that:

…Marxists recognize the struggle for reforms i.e. for measures to improve the conditions of the working people without destroying the power of the ruling class. At the same time, however, the Marxists wage a resolute struggle against the reformists, who directly or indirectly, restrict the
democratic rights of African-Canadians. Unlike the type of reformist anti-racist activists BADC actually produced in the Freedom Cipher, Black working-class organic intellectuals operating within a revolutionary vanguard organization would educate the community about the reality of the Freedom Cipher: it is a 3-year bourgeois state-funded project to co-opt the emerging Black youth radicalism at BADC into a social-democratic reformism, so the youth workers do not move beyond clientele colonial relations with Canadian imperialism and the philanthropic struggle for more resources when it shuts down in three years.

The Gramscian project of organic intellectual formation will take longer than three years, and there was no sustainability plan at BADC to continue this work when the funding ended in December 2009. Consequently, an alternative Canadian Black revolutionary organization will have to be created to carry this project forward to its completion. It will take many years to develop the “intellectual leadership” of the Black working-class in particular, because Gramsci understood that “The proletariat, as a class, is poor in organizing elements and does not have its own stratum of intellectuals”, so it “can only create one very slowly, very painfully” (In Ireland, 1987:27/Gramsci, 1978:462). In reflecting on my own ideological development as an organic intellectual it took nine years (2000-2009) of spontaneous organizing on the Toronto Black Left and educating youth in the NPIC, combined with varying degrees of mentorship from former Canadian and U.S. Black Power organic intellectuals Norman Richmond, General Baker, aims and activities of the working-class to the winning of reforms (qtd. In Read:2007:99/Lenin Collected Works:19:372).
Marian Kramer, and Owen Sankara, to complete my own ideological development as a Black working-class organic intellectual. Ultimately, a Canadian Black revolutionary organization would systematize the political education of Black working-class cadres more effectively than I was able to do at BADC, so they could be educated more sustainably than my spontaneous informal educational development which did not occur under any vanguard organizational leadership.

**Conclusion: Towards A Party-Building Liberation School in African-Canadian Civil Society**

In the absence of a revolutionary party that is ultimately responsible for the ideological education and training of organic intellectuals, what alternative educational institution could be constructed to perform this task? What is the relationship of revolutionary party building on the African-Canadian Left to organic intellectual formation? What contribution can revolutionary Hip Hop pedagogy potentially make in organic intellectual formation? In theory, I created the Freedom Cipher to educate and train Black working-class youth to become organic intellectuals in the trenches of African-Canadian civil society (i.e. non-profit organizations, community centers, community radio). However, in practice this was difficult to achieve because there was no revolutionary party/organization directing the communist education in the Freedom Cipher.

Since the task of rebuilding a multi-national communist party in Canada is going to take years to achieve, an alternative Communist School under the leadership of a party-building mass organization will have to be created to educate and train Black working-class organic intellectuals on the Black Left. Let us not forget that Gramsci
originally constructed his theory of working-class organic intellectuals to advance his own party-building efforts in 1920s Italy. A number of challenges confront the Canadian Black Left in the 21st century, which has not managed to rebuild a single revolutionary organization since the decline of Canadian Black Power in the 1970s. In order for the Hood2Hood movement to become more successful in the education of organic intellectuals, it must develop a more sophisticated political strategy than BADC’s resource mobilization in the NPIC. I suggest, in the future the work of this ongoing mass campaign contribute to the development of a Gramscian communist school. An independent Black working-class education centre under the leadership of a group of communist adult educators is necessary to succeed in the education of Black working-class organic intellectuals. A formal communist school could also facilitate the development of a revolutionary-nationalist African-Canadian mass organization that is part of a broader multi-national working-class movement to advance the socialist project for proletarian hegemony in Canadian civil society. Instead of improving bourgeois civil society by extending the NPIC in the African-Canadian community, a communist school would function as an alternative to the NPIC that prepares Black working-class youth and adults to struggle against bourgeois hegemony in all of the spheres of African-Canadian civil society from the family, local church and community centre, to TDSB public schools.

In the U.S. in recent years, there have been similar attempts to rebuild the Black Left by mobilizing thousands of activists from various social movements to construct an independent African-American radical political party for the 21st century. However, these
efforts failed thus far. If the Freedom Cipher wants to be more successful in its mission to educate and train Black working-class organic intellectuals it will have to use these limited resources in the short-term to help organize a formal communist school in the African-Canadian community, completely independent of the state. This Black working-class adult learning centre will educate and train Black working-class youth and adults to become organic intellectuals in the leadership of the struggle for African-Canadian self-determination from Canadian imperialism; and more broadly the multi-national working-class movement against Canadian Capitalism and Imperialism.

In order to successfully produce Black working-class organic intellectuals through organized communist education, the school will have to develop the type of comprehensive communist schooling examined by Boughton (1997) in his study of the different levels of political education within the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) in the ‘40s. According to Boughton, the CPA operated formal communist adult learning centers they referred to as Marx Schools, responsible for educating 20,000 communists who enrolled in them by 1945 (Boughton, 1997:1). The Marx Schools were coordinating centers of all of the CPA’s educational activity, and became the model whereby party members conducted communist education in the trade unions and social movement

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44 In Chicago, June 1998, two-thousand anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, Black Feminist, and Queer scholars and activists participated in the Black Radical Congress (BRC), with great optimism at this most recent attempt to reconstruct the African-American left by founding a united front organization (Chu-Jua, 1998; Boyd, 1998; Black Radical Congress, 1998; Marable, 1998; Lang, 1998; James, 1999). One of the results of the Youth Caucus meetings at the founding BRC congress was a proposal for the formation of an Organizers Institute (OI) that would facilitate inter-generational knowledge of Black Liberation movements from previous generations of struggle in the 20th Century. Unfortunately the BRC never consolidated into a national organization.
organizations that ranged from the anti-fascist and women’s movement, to immigrant workers and the anti-colonial struggles of indigenous people (Ibid:8).

The Marx Schools educated and trained party members through a number of stages. There were introductory *Sunday night lectures* that consisted of public forums open to all members and supporters led by experienced party lecturers and public speakers (often party leaders and central committee members) who presented a communist view on topics of interest, or broader historical and theoretical questions. Then, the first level of internal party education for new members was *elementary courses*, offered within factory or locality branches based on a syllabus prepared by party educators who were trained in a tutor’s school. There were night courses offered at the central Marx School to party members who completed their elementary courses on specific topics of interest (Ibid). The second level of training once these basic courses were completed were *two-week ‘advanced’ schools* run centrally within the Marx Schools, training party members to take on more leadership roles in their local, factory, union, or social movement organization. The Marx Schools also offered *specialist schools* for trade unionists, party organizers, and tutors combined with regular *education conferences* where tutors, organizers and leading cadres discussed and debated the problems of party and movement education (Ibid:9). I find this type of extensive political education and training offered at the Marx Schools is the type of radical adult education that is necessary to produce organic intellectuals.

In order to succeed in the Black working-class organic intellectual project, a communist school must also incorporate a revolutionary Hip Hop pedagogy based on the best practices of the Freedom Cipher model. Its limitations will also have to be
considered, so as to distinguish revolutionary adult education from “social justice” modules of the Freedom Cipher variant that had radical musical content, however the programs were divorced from communist movements (i.e. Basics) outside of the NPIC. As former Black Panther and political prisoner Wahad (1993) warns, hip hop culture cannot be used to develop a liberation pedagogy if it is disconnected from revolutionary movements. Wahad is skeptical of the claims of post-modern cultural theorists who argue that rap music is a post-modernist cultural revolution (Bowling & Washington, 1999; Hamilton, 2004), and warns that it is useless as a cultural tool in the African liberation project if it is not practiced within the context of a revolutionary organization:

The culture that evolves from the underclass has the potential to speak to the underclass in ways that other cultural forms cannot...so rap music in a sense has the potential, like all other art forms, to serve a revolutionary purpose, but it doesn’t mean that in and of itself it’s revolutionary. There are some people who try to say that rap music is revolutionary in and of itself. I would have disagreement with that...But it does have the potential to be revolutionary. If we develop a liberation movement in this country that speaks to the needs of Black people, one of the ways that we can communicate is through cultural forms. But you have to have a movement...organized in a way in which these cultural forms express their struggle (p.111).

If Hip Hop is going to be used as an liberation pedagogy for the education of Black working-class organic intellectuals, it must be directed by a communist organization. Unlike Bowling and Washington, who offer a post-modernist interpretation of rappers as organic intellectuals, I am not trying to suggest that Black working-class Hip Hop artists with an organic relation to the Black underclass due to their membership and residence in the community, are automatically qualified to become organic intellectuals because they spontaneously utilize knowledge as a tool for “empowering” (1999:6). Instead, revolutionary Gramscian Hip Hop activists could develop the common sense of Black working-class youth into good sense by waging an ideological struggle against capitalist
values at the foundation of mainstream Hip Hop, particularly gangsta rap. A look at the contradictions of the independent Cuban Hip Hop music scene will clarify this point.

In Cuba, rap music and Hip Hop culture grew out of the high density housing projects heavily populated by Black working-class communities such as Old Havana, Central Havana, Sancto Suarez, and Playa. Cuban hip hop arose as a local response to the black working-class’ experience of displacement, mass impoverishment, and racial discrimination which increased during the “Special Period” in the early 90s. The Cuban economy was restructured in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union to become a mixed market socialist economy thus creating new racialized contradictions within the working-class between an emerging White Cuban entrepreneurial class and the Black working-class (Fernandes, 2003:361). In Cuban Hip Hop there is a contradiction between the underground and commercial music whereby the former promotes collectivism and socialist ideals while the latter, individual consumerism and materialism (Ibid:363). These contradictory forces in Cuban Hip Hop are inspired by similar contradictions in the U.S. between socially-conscious Hip Hop artists on the Left (e.g. Talib Kweli, Paris, Mos Def, Common) and the mainstream commercial rap in the multi-national music industry; which help explain why commercial Cuban rappers glorify capitalist consumption (Ibid:361). In commercial rap, practices of street hustling and consumerism have been encouraged as a political survival strategy during the special period, while underground rap groups discredit street lifestyles amongst Afro-Cuban youth, promoting values of hard work and education as a means of rising out of the poverty brought about during the special period (Ibid:365). Fernandes explains the ideological contradictions of Cuban Hip
Hop as a struggle between socialist and pro-capitalist jineterismo (street hustlers and prostitution in the tourism industry) in the special period:

Underground rappers do not share the views of more commercial rappers such as Orishas; they reject the paths of jineterismo as a way of surviving in the special period, suggesting instead that it is important to maintain a belief in socialist values of honesty and work in order to raise oneself up. The criticism of jineterismo in ‘underground’ rap music is a polemic against consumerist mentalities that have been emerging with increased access to a market economy, and a condemnation of the desire of young people to find an ‘easy fix’ rather than working hard to achieve their goals and the goals of the revolution…values of vanity and consumerism are presented as highly antithetical to revolutionary values (Fernandes, 2003:367).

I propose that the communist school build a political education program based on the positive lessons of the Freedom Cipher as well as the Cuban experience to cultivate Black working-class youth artists into organic intellectuals by educating them about Marxism and creating the opportunities to produce Hip Hop music with anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist lyrics. This could in turn provide Black working-class youth with a critical self-consciousness of their struggle for daily survival under late capitalism, and the types of radical political resistance that are necessary to achieve self-determination from African-Canadian internal colonialism.

The experience of African-American rap group dead prez who received extensive political education and organizing experience in the African Peoples Socialist Party (APSP), reveals the possibilities of incorporating a revolutionary Hip Hop pedagogy into an African-Canadian party-building mass organization. M-1, in reflecting on ten years of political activism as a youth leader in the National People’s Democratic Uhuru Movement (NPDUM), a mass organization under the leadership of the APSP, prior to becoming the world famous hip hop group dead prez, says his involvement in a revolutionary vanguard party facilitated his ideological development as an organic intellectual:
Once we joined the Uhuru movement I felt like we were back in the Black Panther Party days. We joined full-heartedly and went out into our communities, organized our central committees, and started to do the work. It was fantastic to be training that way because they don’t teach you that in school. This organization was an alternative to the colonial bourgeois education of the ruling class. It is how we learned to organize our own community for community empowerment (M-1:2008:38).

M-1 reveals the Uhuru movement functioned as a liberation school that taught him political education and how to organize as a Black working-class organic intellectual. The mistake I made in the Freedom Cipher’s revolutionary Hip Hop pedagogy was not the form of the program because it made a definite contribution to the ideological development of Quanche as an organic intellectual, but rather its political context by placing it in a social-democratic organization. Like the APSP, a revolutionary Hip Hop pedagogy in the Canadian context, could be used to organize an African-Canadian party-building mass organization. Certainly, Hip Hop Gramscian organic intellectuals will emerge out of this type of movement building experienced on the African-Canadian left in the same way that dead prez was produced after ten years of organizing in the APSP.

This doctoral thesis makes an important contribution to understanding the conditions central to the formation of organic intellectuals on the African-Canadian Left in 21st century by reclaiming Gramsci’s revolutionary theory and proving its relevance for rebuilding the Black Left in Toronto. In Chapter 2, I argued that the revisionist Eurocommunist and post-Marxist interpretations of Gramsci’s Marxism misappropriated his revolutionary theory of communist organic intellectuals into a social-democratic theory of post-Marxist petit-bourgeois intellectuals in the academy struggling over post-modern discourses and reformist social movements limited to identity politics. In addition, I argued that the formal and informal learning processes that led to the formation of working-class organic intellectuals must be organized by revolutionary
vanguard parties because they are the only institutions capable of organizing comprehensive communist schooling, and opportunities for radical informal learning through dialogical and popular educational relations with communist adult educators, as well as learning through praxis by engaging in anti-capitalist mass struggles. Once they are educated by the vanguard educational relations of the communist left, working-class organic intellectuals are qualified to wage a war of position against the ruling class in bourgeois civil society to organize alliances between workers, First Nations, and oppressed nationalities, and innovate socialist cultural traditions such as revolutionary Hip Hop music to discredit the dominant culture and values that prevail under late capitalism.

In Chapter 3, I traced the Black Organic Intellectual Tradition in North America during the 20th century. The first wave of organic intellectuals were Black Communists in the CP USA and CPC educated through vanguard informal and organized communist education within the party to become communist leaders of the revolutionary Black working-class in the 1920s and ‘30s. In the absence of a revolutionary communist party during the civil rights era, second wave of organic intellectuals in the U.S. Black Power movement were educated largely through spontaneous informal and inter-generational learning relations on the left-wing of the Civil Rights movement during the early ‘60s.

Chapter 4 entailed a case study on the informal learning and development of the second wave Canadian Black Power organic intellectuals who developed spontaneously by learning how to organize revolutionary-nationalist organizations under the direction of leading U.S. Black Power vanguard organizations from 1967-1975. Ultimately, Canadian Black Power organic intellectuals developed by organizing solidarity relations of learning
with U.S. Black Power vanguard organizations by inviting Panther and League leaders to speak to the Canadian Black Power movement so they could understand the politics of revolutionary-nationalism more clearly. In addition, Canadian Black Power organic intellectuals developed as revolutionary-nationalist and communist activists by participating in the Marxist/Nationalist debate in Toronto ALSC in the early ‘70s which pushed revolutionary-nationalists towards different variants of Maoist and Soviet Marxism.

The second case study in this thesis examined the possibilities and limitations of educating Black working-class youth to become communist organic intellectuals in BADC, a social-democratic anti-racist organization in the NPIC. BADC was a former African-Canadian social justice organization that made a transition into the NPIC over the past decade and the Freedom Cipher operated within the ideological parameters of bourgeois civil society. In this chapter I demonstrated the possibilities of using a revolutionary Hip Hop pedagogy to contribute to the education of Black working-class intellectuals on the Black Left in the 21st century. I also discussed the limitations of utilizing both informal learning and formal anti-racist educational programs to produce organic intellectuals in the NPIC despite their revolutionary content. As this chapter suggests, using state-funding to develop Black working-class organic intellectuals in the Freedom Cipher was limited for the following reasons. One, the Freedom Cipher was spontaneously coordinated by a Black communist traditional intellectual still developing along the ZPD towards becoming a Black working-class organic intellectual. I did not possess any previous experience in the research and development of communist educational content/curriculum within revolutionary parties or party-building vanguard
organizational forms (i.e. collective study groups, mass organizations etc.) in part due to the absence of a revolutionary communist party currently active on the Black Left in Canada. Second, my professionalization of left activism in the NPIC led to the cooptation of dissent into temporary social work jobs, which extends bourgeois hegemony in African-Canadian civil society by creating employment opportunities for Black working-class youth to enter the capitalist political economy rather than overturn it.

In conclusion, BADC’s Freedom Cipher program contributed more to the cooptation of the Black Left than organic intellectual learning and development, because it helped transform BADC youth workers with the potential to become Black working-class organic intellectuals into social-democratic anti-racist activists who organized the consent of the bourgeoisie in African-Canadian civil society by running grassroots community development programs in the NPIC. To resolve this contradiction in organic intellectual formation, I argue that future efforts must integrate progressive Black working-class youth into revolutionary campaigns outside of the NPIC, communist study groups and the organizational development efforts of revolutionary party-building organizations on the Canadian Black Revolutionary Left. I also want to propose that the communist school be funded by labor and other social justice organizations outside the NPIC. Financing the communist school from without would negate the NPIC by joining the anti-capitalist wing of the ever-expanding Canadian social economy (i.e. cooperative economic alternatives to capitalism) and integrating youth formerly in the drug economy into social enterprises capable of defeating the hegemonic capitalist cultural values inherent in bourgeois civil society.
In this chapter I explained how the state’s bourgeois liberal ideology of “youth engagement” masked the capitalist exploitative relations the youth worked under as low-paid precarious workers in the non-profit sector, and complicated the process of organic intellectual development. I created the Freedom Cipher to educate and train Black working-class youth to become organic intellectuals by teaching them how to do anti-racist organizing in the trenches of African-Canadian civil society (i.e. non-profit organizations, community centers, community radio). However, the Freedom Cipher failed to accomplish this because I implemented a communist education program in a reformist organization and ended up producing social-democratic anti-racist activists—not revolutionary organic intellectuals. Although the program taught Black working-class youth about the contradictions of African-Canadian colonialism they experienced in their daily lives, they learned within the context of a project that did not transcend the ideological limitations of bourgeois hegemony by working in a state funded youth leadership training program.

Building on Lenin who equated vanguard politics with revolutionary working-class education (Shandro, 2007:309), Gramsci proved that working-class organic intellectuals could not be produced in social-democratic movements or any other institution of bourgeois civil society without the intervention of a revolutionary party. If the African-Canadian left is seriously concerned with the reproduction of Black working-class organic intellectuals today it will have to consider the task of creating revolutionary organizational forms that can accomplish this task. Since there is no genuine multinational communist party in Canada that could lead the political education of Black working-class organic
intellectuals, the Black Left must develop a communist school that could direct the education and training of BADC youth in African-Canadian civil society. If this does not occur, there will be no one with the capacity to resist the forces of African-Canadian colonization today: the problem of mass unemployment and underemployment in minimum wage precarious work; the mass criminalization of working-class African-Canadian youth by Toronto police through the bourgeois state’s war on drugs, guns, and gangs; the expansion of the prison industrial complex in Ontario; the segregation of Black students in deteriorating underfunded inner-city schools, with increasing collaboration between administrators and police to criminalize them. The only way for the Black Left to overcome this, is to create the revolutionary organizational forms necessary to produce organic intellectuals equipped with the ideological and organizational capacities necessary to resist this state-sponsored coercion orchestrated by Canadian Imperialism against a historically colonized national minority within its borders.
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