"The Voice of the Black Protest Movement:" Notes on the "Liberator" Magazine and Black Radicalism in the Early 1960s

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"The Voice of the Black Protest Movement:" Notes on the *Liberator* Magazine and Black Radicalism in the Early 1960s

by Christopher M. Tinson

Introduction

When the LCA (Liberation Committee for Africa) was formed in June 1960, it had in its purview the winds of national liberation blowing throughout Africa. Formed in a political milieu sliced in two by the Cold War, splintered by the emergence of New Left politics, and defined by the continued struggle for civil and human rights for African Americans in the U.S., the LCA was but a small formation dedicated to domestic and international black liberation and committed to radical social transformation.

Many historians of the period have made reference to this group and its membership, yet few have explored the formation of the group itself. While scholars have focused on the political milieu in which groups such as the Nation of Islam, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, American Society of African Culture, and Fair Play for Cuba Committee emerged, the Liberation Committee for Africa, and its information organ, the *Liberator,* have escaped close scholarly attention.[1] My research therefore seeks to fill a gap in our understanding of the complexity of the Black Liberation movement (1955-1975),[2] by focusing attention on the LCA, a group of activists, artists and intellectuals concerned with the political and cultural struggles of African and African-descended peoples throughout the world. The *Liberator* was an incubator of radical Black Nationalist thought in the critical period between the Civil Rights and Black Power movements.

The LCA embraced a basic Pan-Africanist perspective through an internationalism centered on African independence. As will be shown in this essay, African independence movements drove the activity of the committee and occupied the majority of the *Liberator*'s contents, especially in the first few years of its publication. As it is generally understood, Pan-Africanism consists of the belief in and commitment to the political and cultural unity of African descendants.[3] Though not all black internationalist perspectives are based on a belief in African and African American unity, the LCA was one organization that articulated this unified vision. The Committee unwaveringly supported African independence, and maintained the view that African independence weighed heavily upon the fight for equality and political power in the U.S. Moreover, it reflected the view that African and African Americans should have a place at the table of world leadership.

The LCA was among a number of New York based Nationalist groups interested in the liberation of African people and descendants worldwide in the 1960s. The Council on African Affairs, though it had been forced to disband by 1955, influenced the African liberation support and political activism of this period.[4] Educational/professional organizations, such as the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, founded by Carter G. Woodson, were also a part of this milieu, and many LCA members participated in local chapters. Groups such as On Guard for Freedom, led by Calvin Hicks,[5] the United African Nationalist Movement, led by James Lawson, as well as the Universal African Legion, Inc., and the African Nationalist Pioneer Movement led by Carlos Cooks, among a number of other groups, all viewed the liberation of Africa as part of the struggle for black liberation in the United States.[6]

As James Smethurst points out in his history of the Black Arts Movement, New York City was a veritable altar of Black Nationalist

literary and political activity in the 1960s.[7] As such, the history of the *Liberator* should also be seen as a part of New York history itself, as many of the members had been a part of local political struggles and were members of intellectual groups prior to and during their work with the *Liberator.*

PROCLAIMING ITSELF "The Voice of the Black Protest Movement" across its masthead, the *Liberator* published articles that demanded the right to self-government, the right to self-determination, and the struggle for political, economic and cultural autonomy. Equally central to its outlook was its criticism of capitalism's function in the perpetuation of African and African American exploitation. In fact, the LCA, like many other internationalist-oriented organizations, saw capitalism as the nemesis of all freedom seeking peoples who, in turn, engaged themselves in the overthrow of colonialism and imperialism. It therefore wrestled with a socialist solution, though owing to its ties to the old Black Left, it sought to avoid sectarianism. Above all, the *Liberator* stressed independence, whether that was found in its support of political independence in the U.S. and abroad, or in the media representation of the black liberation struggle.

Freedom Fighters

IN JUNE 1960 the LCA issued a press release that announced the basis of its formation and provided its Statement of Aims. Its aims describe the principles and values that the organization stood for and the goals it would work toward. Its opening statement connected the struggles of African people to black people in the United States, stating: "freedom and equality for Americans of African descent is inextricably linked with the freedom of Africans in their home lands."[8] It went on to pinpoint four aims that reflected its belief in the inextricable bond between African and African American struggles. Its stated aims were:

> To work for and support the immediate liberation of all colonial peoples
> To provide a public forum for African freedom fighters
> To provide concrete aid to African freedom fighters
> To re-establish awareness of the common cultural heritage of Afro-Americans with their African brothers[9]

These broadly conceived aims did not provide a blueprint of how these goals would be accomplished, nor did they reveal a particular ideological perspective. Yet they do reflect the LCA's attempt to provide a platform for the critical exchange of ideas and where the politics of African and African American liberation could be explored.

From its inception, the LCA sought support from both the black community and whites who saw themselves as allies. In 1961, under the title "What Africa Means to Americans," the LCA placed an ad in the *The Nation,* where it stated that its membership "includes Americans of all races" and importantly expanded on its stated aims. The LCA sought to "make permanent that unity of purpose and effort" recently displayed at the protest at the United Nations against the assassination of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba in February 1961, adding that its intention was to "give Africans a voice here in the United States."[10] Lastly, recognizing its function as a disseminator of information, it sought "to inform all Americans of Africa's proud heritage, long obscured by racist myths."[11]

Daniel H. Watts, Richard Gibson, and Lowell Pete Beveridge were the founders of this organization. Watts was an ex-corporate architectural engineer who left the high-profile firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill and began his public engagement with the Black Liberation movement. Gibson, who worked for CBS News and was later a correspondent and English-language editor for the radical Algeria-based newspaper, *Revolution Africaine,* was a longtime friend of Watts since they were both living in New York City in the late 1950s and 1960s.[12] Beveridge, a white Harvard and Columbia educated man who had majored in African history, but who made a career as an interior designer, had met Watts through an earlier organization called the Committee for the Advancement of the Negro in Architecture, in which Watts served as Executive Secretary.[13] This group was organized after Watts, a highly talented

architect, was not made partner at his firm. Early organization letterhead indicates Watts as Chairman, Gibson as Executive Secretary and Beveridge as Research Director and editor. Beveridge served as editor of the *Liberator* from 1961-1965, when he departed the organization due to the heightened sense of racial autonomy and the growing intolerance towards whites supporting the Black Liberation movement.[14]

FROM THE BEGINNING, the LCA distinguished itself from the Civil Rights establishment. It did not agree with nor support a steadfast adherence to non-violence when black people were confronted with violence in the North or in the South. And it was distrustful of liberalism and gradualist approaches to social change. In June 1961, the *Liberator* carried an unsigned article on the Freedom Rides, which provides an example of its viewpoint regarding the Civil Rights struggle taking place throughout the South.

The *Liberator* hailed the importance of the Freedom Rides for "giving new life to the liberation struggle at home." The Freedom Rides had not only demonstrated to the world that race relations in the U.S. were still marked by acts of white savagery, but also that the rides had "quickened the pace and raised the level of struggle." However, they did not support the riders' steadfast adherence to non-violence. Moreover, the LCA expressed, "By announcing ahead of time that they will not fight back, the Freedom Riders have given license to the most degraded and cowardly elements to indulge in mob violence."[15] Though supportive of the Freedom Riders' efforts to test the Supreme Court's prohibition of segregation in interstate travel, the LCA shared the belief of many others that the riders must have government protection. Recognizing that nonviolence would not prevent violence nor guarantee protection, the LCA expressed support for the African American community's right to self-defense. This position made it the natural adversary of established black leadership, including individuals such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Whitney Young, and James Farmer, figures whom it routinely criticized. Instead, the LCA promoted the activism of Robert F. Williams, Mae Mallory, Malcolm X, Gloria Richardson, Adam Clayton Powell and Albert Cleage, and championed the Pan-Africanism of W.E.B. Du Bois and Kwame Nkrumah.

Militant Action

THESE FACTORS contributed to historian John Henrik Clarke's consideration of the LCA as reflecting a new sense of militancy, which he wrote about in an essay, "New Afro-American Nationalism."[16] According to Clarke, viewing African and African American struggles as inherently unified in the struggle to defeat imperialism marked a simultaneous shift in identity. Clarke, an early associate of the LCA, placed it, along with On Guard for Freedom and the Provisional Committee for a Free Africa, as one of the most active of the groups formed in response to the assassination of Lumumba. As has been noted by several scholars, the assassination of Lumumba had a galvanizing effect on Black Nationalist and black radical organizations in the U.S.[17]

In an organized, if not planned, act of defiance, Black Nationalist organizations based in Harlem joined the above groups at a meeting of the United Nations Security Council on February 15, 1961, a week following Lumumba's murder. A riot broke out, according to the *New York Times*, when, during the speech of United States Security Council representative Adlai Stevenson, guards arrested a woman who stood up to protest his speech. According to Dan Watts, as reported in the *Times* article, the demonstration was intended to be a peaceful one. But when Stevenson announced his support for United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold, the person many knew to be responsible for the protection of Lumumba, a woman stood up in protest and "guards rushed for her."[18] There are at least two other recollections of this event.

According to Gibson, "it was [Robert F.] Williams who inspired that much publicized and highly effective demo in the United Nations Assembly after the American-inspired murder of Patrice Lumumba." He added:

> It was led by Mae Mallory, a close associate of

> Williams...and Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln who lived upstairs in the same Park West Village building on Columbus Avenue as I did. My wife and I had given a small party for Rob the evening before. Neither Rob nor I could attend because he had to leave for a speaking engagement elsewhere and I was working at CBS News.[19]

Though Watts indicated to the press that the demonstration wasn't intended to be more than a display of civil disobedience, Calvin Hicks remembers it differently. As he recalls, the demonstration was intended to be disruptive. During Stevenson's speech a visiting Cuban student in solidarity with the protesters stood up and threw an object in Stevenson's direction. As guards hurried towards the student, chaos broke out in the chamber. In Hicks's words, "we tore the place up."[20] This act of protest appeared to have emerged out of purely political concerns, but the action also revealed deeper personal ties.

MANY MEMBERS of On Guard for Freedom were also members of the Harlem Writers Guild.[21] Some Guild members, such as novelist Rosa Guy, spoke and read French. Guy's work as a writer and activist would allow her to meet and befriend many of the Congolese students and government representatives visiting or studying in the United States. These organizations had already been paying close attention to the crisis brewing in the Congo. And many had already written statements of solidarity or support for Lumumba. For example, on January 21, 1961, the LCA issued an immediate press release, a copy of a telegram sent to the attention of Mrs. Patrice Lumumba in Leopoldville. Signed by Dan Watts, it stated:

> [Y]our husband, Premier Patrice Lumumba, remains the legitimate head of the Congo, and the symbol of liberation for all Africans at home and abroad. The arrest and public abuse of Premier Patrice Lumumba has aroused the sympathy of many Americans, black and white.[22]

Watts then called for all interested to petition the United Nations and demand the immediate release of Lumumba. Although the news was not released to the world press, Lumumba had been killed three days prior to Watts's press release. The deaths of Lumumba and his associates, Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito, were not announced until February 13, 1961.[23] When the news was finally made public, the LCA mustered up another press release. This time it denounced the U.S. government, United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold and his assistant, Ralph Bunche, as the individuals responsible for Lumumba's abduction and murder.[24]

Upon receiving news of Lumumba's assassination On Guard, Harlem Writers Guild members and others felt it was their responsibility to demonstrate their anger and discontent in front of the world leaders assembling at the United Nations. These activists demanded that someone be held accountable for the heinous and tragic murders of Lumumba and his close associates. Hicks could not recall exactly the specifics of the plans for follow-up after the protest, but the consensus among all of the groups involved in the demonstration was that the United States was complicit in this murder.[25] From that moment forward the Liberation Committee for Africa saw its charge as exposing the role of the United States government in disrupting the political and economic freedom anticipated throughout newly independent Africa. The pages of the *Liberator* would be dedicated to documenting and disseminating information about the struggles for black liberation around the world.

INSPIRED TO BUILD on the energy captured at the protest, the *Liberator* would utilize the passion and talents of a politicized group of cultural workers who would become stalwarts in the Black Arts/Black Power movements and those whose work was influential to these movements. Though the *Liberator* would eventually publish the writings of Julian Mayfield, Carlos Russell, Askia Touré (then Rolland Snellings), Amiri Baraka (then Leroi Jones), Abbey Lincoln, Richard B. Moore, Sonia Sanchez, James Baldwin, Larry Neal, Toni Cade (Bambara) and others, it initially relied solely on the work of a tiny cadre of three individuals: Watts, Beveridge and Gibson.[26]

As the United Nations, located close by on First Avenue and 46th Street, became a target

of protest, in August 1961, the Liberation Committee for Africa announced that its office was moving to a new location across the street. With its relocation to 244 East 46th Street in New York City, it also listed the editorial board of the *Liberator* for the first time, indicating L.P. Beveridge, Jr. as editor, alongside John H. Clarke and Daniel H. Watts.[27] In December of that year they announced the members of the LCA executive committee, which listed Watts as Chairman, Beveridge as Secretary and Evelyn Battle as Social Director.[28] Though Watts, Beveridge and Clarke were listed as the initial editorial board of the *Liberator*, Watts and Beveridge were primarily responsible for the collection of articles, the meeting of deadlines, copyediting, printing and distribution.[29] The four-page review of African and African American struggles against colonialism and racism was slowly growing into a respectable magazine of radical thought, and proudly announced that it had reached a modest circulation of 1,500 by September of that year.[30]

WATTS HAD OBTAINED a printing deal through family ties. His wife at the time, Marilyn, was the niece of a Brooklyn printer named Maurice Golden. Watts arranged to have the *Liberator* printed through Golden's shop at a lower price than he would normally charge. Watts and his associates were responsible for the distribution. According to Marilyn, distribution was a problem Watts regularly lamented.[31] About a year later, Rose and James Finkenstaedt joined the *Liberator* staff. Rose got involved through her evolving political consciousness and willingness to play a supporting role in black liberation efforts while working toward a Ph.D. at Columbia University. James Finkenstaedt, who was vice president of William Morrow publishers, got involved through his wife's urging. James (also known as "Fink") and Charlie Russell, another staff writer and the brother of basketball star Bill Russell, took over the responsibilities of magazine distribution. According to Rose, newsstands in Queens, Brooklyn, Greenwich Village and the Lower East Side sometimes carried the magazine. Regarding national distribution, she recollects Watts saying that the *Liberator* was being read in San Francisco and Detroit, but "otherwise it was a New York operation."[32] Nonetheless, the letters to the editor reveal that by 1965 the *Liberator* was being read in Detroit, Michigan, Silver Springs, Maryland, Lake Charles, Louisiana, Memphis, Tennessee, Berkeley and Downey, California, Laramie, Wyoming, and Seattle, Washington.

Watts and Beveridge used their personal finances to cover the costs of publishing the magazine, and according to Beveridge, the costs were generally more than they were able to recoup through memberships, subscriptions and other forms of revenue.[33] Though there are no indications of exactly how many members the LCA had, a summary of finances published in June, 1961, indicated that membership dues, literature sales, magazine subscriptions and contributions donated to cover costs for ads in the *New York Times* brought in $4,395. Their overall expenses at the time totaled $3,218.[34] Though a good public gesture, this was the last time the LCA published a financial summary of this type. And although many writers and artists published in the *Liberator*, very few were actually members of the LCA.

ACCORDING TO GIBSON, Watts was inspired to engage in the international black freedom movement by Gibson's work with the United Nations and his role in the leadership of the New York chapter of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC).[35] Between 1959-1960 Watts and Gibson were neighbors in Park West Village on the Upper West Side. After his time at CBS News, Gibson acquired a position with the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) Observer Mission to the United Nations while living in New York. He worked at CBS News until the FPCC became belabored with controversy concerning its origins and membership. Gibson's activities in this period ranged from serving as Acting Executive Secretary of the FPCC, to participation in the Monroe Defense Committee (MDC), "a broad, non-partisan defense committee." As Calvin Hicks, the committee's Executive Secretary stated in a letter soliciting support for the MDC:

> The committee was organized and is sponsored by many individuals who may not agree with each

other on the way in which full equality for Afro-Americans is to be achieved. However, they do agree that the oppression, brutality and travesty of justice in Monroe, North Carolina, which forced Robert F. Williams to flee for his life must be rectified.[36]

THE MDC SPONSOR LIST as identified in Hicks's letter contained the names of a number of important political and cultural figures including James Baldwin, John Henrik Clarke, Richard Gibson, Jesse Grey, Leroi Jones, Paule Marshall, Julian and Ana Mayfield, Bayard Rustin, Dan Watts, Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln, Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis, and Maya Angelou, among others.[37] Angelou was at this time married to Vuzumsi Make of the Pan-African Congress of South Africa. According to Gibson, Make "the darling of black militants" in New York City, was also a key influence on the formation of the Liberation Committee for Africa. "Like Williams," Gibson wrote, "[Make] was convinced that an armed struggle would be necessary to end white rule in South Africa..." Make's role in supporting the liberation struggle in the U.S. for black rights was an extension of the struggle against South African apartheid.[38]

Make was a featured speaker alongside authors John O. Killens, Baldwin, and journalist William Worthy at a May 1961 public forum entitled "Nationalism, Colonialism and the United States" and hosted by the LCA. In April of 1962, one of the few articles Make published in the U.S was printed in the *Liberator*. In the article, Make, in seeking to provide a context for the on-going struggle against apartheid South Africa, tellingly demonstrated the complicity of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries in the apartheid regime's massacring of black South Africans. NATO "aid," Make wrote, assisted the build up of a military state in South Africa. Make pointed out how ammunitions and tanks purchased from Britain were used in the Sharpeville and Langa massacres of March 21, 1960. Since that time, he warned, "the South African regime has been preparing for...a civil war."[39] The *Liberator* reflected the growing sense of urgency to rid the world of colonialism with a critical eye on the world's largest perpetuator and beneficiary, the U.S. And its guiding perspective viewed the victory over imperialism squarely in the fight against racist capitalist oppression in the U.S.

IN ITS ROLE as watchdog of U.S. foreign policy towards Africa, the *Liberator* also highlighted efforts to uproot colonialism on the continent. Again, its pan-Africanist perspective is evident in the following editorial, discussing the importance of the All African Peoples Conference:

> This Conference, attended by over 200 delegates representing 69 parties, organizations and unions from 36 African countries was virtually ignored by the American press. The Liberation Committee for Africa and all other African friends of African freedom must take the speeches and resolutions of the Cairo conference as a direct challenge to demonstrate solidarity with the Freedom Fighters of Africa by opposing and exposing the racist, imperialist policies of the foremost Neo-Colonial power not only in the Congo and Liberia; in Laos and the Philippines; in Cuba and Brazil; but in Alabama and Mississippi as well.[40]

The relationship of the Civil Rights struggle of black people in the U.S. to the anti-imperialist struggle in Africa and across the globe positioned the LCA as a direct beneficiary of the internationalism inspired by the Bandung conference of 1955.[41] Its efforts to follow the developments at the United Nations, coupled with close attention paid to the African press and the relationships between Africans and African Americans in the U.S., shaped its outlook.

In the years 1961-1965 the *Liberator* welcomed several talented writers to its staff. Including Ossie Sykes, Carlos Russell, Larry Neal, Clayton Riley, C.E. Wilson, Askia Touré (Rolland Snellings) and Harold Cruse (notably from 1963-1964), these figures would help to shape the overall perspective of the *Liberator*. John Henrik Clarke, listed as an original member of the editorial staff, published only two book reviews, in 1961 and 1963 respectively. Cruse, arguably the most perceptive, and without a doubt the most obstreperous of the writing staff, contributed some of his most influential writings and conceptualizations of Black Nationalism and Black Liberation in the pages of the *Liberator*.

Harold Cruse and the *Liberator*

IN CRUSE'S FAMOUS BOOK, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual,* he criticizes the *Liberator* for a variety of reasons; a central point of his criticism was its lack of ideological coherence.[42] Yet I find Carlos Russell's description more palatable in evaluating the success or failure of the magazine. As an early member and staff writer throughout the magazine's existence, he argued the *Liberator* was "eclectic."[43] By this he meant that, though they all shared the commitment to black liberation, its writers consisted of people from different backgrounds, experiences, motives, aspirations and ideological perspectives. Their coherence came through a commitment first to understand the transnational situations black people faced and a shared acceptance of the responsibility to black liberation struggle. This eclecticism was arguably its greatest attribute as it called into focus the diversity of black radical thought among activists and intellectuals in this period. As the publication grew in popularity in movement circles and at bookshops, it attracted more up-and-coming writers.

As mentioned, many of the writers above would become major theorists of the ensuing Black Power/Black Arts Movement. These figures played increasingly significant roles in affirming and emphasizing African Americans' non-Western cultural heritage and values.[44] Moreover, their work in many ways reflected Harold Cruse's call for a cultural revolution. Highlighting some of the generational differences that surfaced among *Liberator* staff, Askia Touré commented, "Larry and I were 'young Turks' working with our elders. So from time to time minor differences would occur, as in any family."[45] Touré, for example, published a number of influential articles. These include "The New Afro-American Writer," published in October 1963, "Toward Repudiating Western Values," published in November 1964, "Afro-American Youth and the Bandung World," published in February 1965, and "Malcolm X: International Statesman" in February 1966.

THE FIGURE who was often at the center of the disputes referred to by Touré was Cruse. Despite his disagreements with Dan Watts, Cruse offered penetrating analyses on the state of African American progress and published several seminal articles in the *Liberator* from 1963-1964. His four-part series "Rebellion or Revolution?" was published from October 1963-January 1964. In this series Cruse called for a Cultural Revolution in which black people would acquire ownership of American cultural communication, "i.e. films, theaters, radio and television, music performing and publishing." This, he argued, was the only way that African Americans could move the struggle from a rebellion to a revolution. In the November 1963 issue he wrote an article entitled "Third Party: Facts and Forecasts," which analyzed the viability of forming an all-black political party and the possible effects on the American political landscape. "The Roots of Black Nationalism" was published in two parts in March and April 1964. Cruse penned the two-part series "Marxism and the Negro" in May and June of that year. And his last series, "The Economics of Black Nationalism" was published in July and August. In these articles, Cruse attempted to provide a critical appraisal of the movement as a whole. He also intended to give the black intellectual community a historical context for its predicament. Cruse's *Liberator* analyses of American society and Black Liberation formed the basis of his book *Rebellion or Revolution?*[46] Yet, his experiences working as a staff writer for the *Liberator* would form the basis of his discussion of the magazine in his now famous *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual,* wherein he offers a historical analysis of the shortcomings of black leadership.[47]

Though Cruse's *Liberator* contacts made *Crisis* possible, in the book he nonetheless excoriated the *Liberator* as a journalistic example of the failure of the movement as a whole.[48] According to Cruse, until the movement could resolve such questions as "What is integration? What is nationalism? What is Marxist Communism, and how does it relate to the first two ideas?" the *Liberator* could not offer a program of its own. Moreover, the magazine did not maximize its ability to clarify these questions.[49]

Ironically, Cruse's articles attempted to tackle the very questions he posed in the *Crisis*. Another uncomfortable issue for Cruse was the *Liberator*'s ties to the Old Left. Though many in the *Liberator* circle interacted on some level with members of the Communist Party, only he and Beveridge had ever been members. Yet it is clear that some members of the *Liberator's* advisory board, such as former Freedom editor George B. Murphy and activist-historian Richard B. Moore, for example, had ties to the Communist Party at certain points in their careers. Though by 1964 Cruse decided that his tenure with the *Liberator* was over, his writings made a lasting impression on the periodical's audience.

Connections to the Old Left

FROM 1962-1964 the *Liberator* carried articles on the expatriate community then living in Ghana.[50] Several of these articles highlighted the work of Du Bois, Alpheaus Hunton, Julian Mayfield and others. As an organization with a Pan-African internationalist outlook, it regarded Du Bois as a hero of the black freedom struggle. The article it published on Du Bois's and Hunton's *Encyclopedia Africana* is an indication of the high regard the LCA held for their work, activism and political perspective. Yet, their support for these men was more than distant admiration. Beveridge, for instance, took classes at the Jefferson School of Social Science, a Marxist adult education institute in New York City that was associated with the Communist Party, USA (CPUSA) in the late 1940s and closed down under the Subversive Activities Control Board in 1956. There he met Du Bois, Doxey Wilkerson and Herbert Aptheker, who taught courses on world history, world revolution and Marxism. He would also interact with Hunton and William L. "Pat" Patterson of the Civil Rights Congress, who would have an immense influence on his ideological maturation.[51]

Beveridge developed lifelong relationships with many of these figures, but he holds that the major influences on his life and perspective were Hunton and Patterson. About them, he wrote:

> Both men had made history, had written and spoken cogently about it, and shared their knowledge and experience with me freely, but it was the warmth and mutual respect of our friendship that I remember more than the content of any particular intellectual or ideological intercourse.

After meeting Hunton while attending a screening of a film entitled "Spotlight on South Africa" sponsored by the Council on African Affairs, where he would also meet his future wife, Hortense "Tee" Sie, Beveridge wrote that he would go on to spend more time with Hunton.[52] The two would remain friends throughout the 1950s up to 1960 when Hunton and his wife Dorothy left the U.S. for Africa.

PATTERSON, a Berkeley-trained attorney and long-time CPUSA member who became the national executive secretary of the Civil Rights Congress, and is perhaps best known for his leadership in the 1951 "We Charge Genocide" campaign, along with Paul Robeson and a number of other notable artists, intellectuals and activists in 1951, was also one of Beveridge's mentors. Of Patterson, Beveridge wrote:

> I first met Patterson about 1950 when as President of Young Progressives at Harvard I chaired a meeting which I had invited him to address. This is what I had to say about it in my memoirs: "Bill Patterson taught me an important lesson the day he spoke: the audience was quite hostile and heckled him, but he handled it very well. At the end of the meeting the atmosphere was so very tense that I went over to him and started to protectively usher him back stage with the intention of smuggling him out the back door. Instead he took me by the elbow and whispered, 'Never let them know you are afraid.' and proceeded to walk right down through the middle of the crowd and out the front door. Everything remained calm."[53]

These influential figures help explain Beveridge's role in the *Liberator* from 1961-65, though due to attitudes of racial rejection, it probably did not end as he would have wished. Hunton and Patterson were his models of radicalism, which enabled him to bring his knowledge of African history obtained from his academic studies and CPUSA study groups to the *Liberator*'s effort to be the voice of international black protest.

THE ACTIVISM of Shirley Graham Du Bois and Dorothy Hunton, though mainly viewed through the work of their husbands, indirectly contributed to the formation of the LCA, and was also influential to a generation of activists both male and female. Nonetheless, in evaluating the presence of women in the *Liberator* it is worth acknowledging that at least two women served on its staff, Evelyn Kalibala, listed on early LCA stationery as social director, and Rose Finkenstaedt who has already been mentioned. Beyond these women, it was a predominantly male organization.[54]

However, the *Liberator* did not ignore the important questions being raised on the role of women in the Black Liberation movement. Though as shown above, women such as Rosa Guy, Abbey Lincoln, Mae Mallory and others played a critical role in the radicalism of this period, the question of the woman's role remained a common question that urged explanation, discussion and debate. In recognition of the increasing attention paid to women's roles and awareness of women's issues in the liberation struggle, the *Liberator* became another space for women to articulate their concerns.

Although, there was never an explicit position statement, the *Liberator* made attempts to display black women's political agency, ideas and perspectives. Black women's *Liberator* articles and poetry often contained critical remarks about the state of the black community, the health of black children, the function of public schools and the education of black youth, and the role of women in American society. As such, the *Liberator* included the presence, role and voice of women, as part of a broadly defined black liberation struggle. Though the articles that dealt with such "women's issues" were small in number in the early years of the magazine, by the mid 1960s the voices of black women were presented more frequently. Reviewing the articles and entries of women will yield greater insight into the *Liberator*'s perspective on the role of women in black liberation struggle.

In 1963, it endorsed female political figures such as Cambridge, Maryland's Gloria Richardson, chairperson of the Cambridge Non-violent Action Committee (CNAC), an adult-led affiliate of SNCC. A picture of Richardson at the speaker's podium at what appears to be a community rally graced the front cover of the magazine that November. Inside this issue, Watts editorialized Richardson's struggle and called for a unified front of black community support for her "courageous and effective leadership."[55] In this same issue, the *Liberator* published an ad announcing the Northern Negro Leadership Conference, to be held in Detroit, Michigan from November 8-10, 1963, which Richardson, Watts, James and Grace Lee Boggs and others attended, and where Malcolm X made the famous speech "Message to the Grassroots."[56]

OTHER ISSUES of the magazine featured articles written by members of the Women's Strike for Peace organization, highlighted Lorraine Hansberry's work, and that of artist Valerie Maynard, and published critiques of integration by black women. In December of 1963, Edith Schomburg's article "The Crux of Black Non-Violence," was published. In this article Schomburg questioned the Civil Rights Movement's adherence to a non-violent philosophy. Couching her critique in her evaluation of the message of Christianity, she wondered if the religion prevented black people from defending themselves in the face of violence and opined, "But non-violence is questionable as a technique for black America's attainment of peace on earth, and out of the question as the single major weapon in the black man's struggle for freedom."[57]

A particularly sensitive issue for many women was interracial marriage. For example, in July 1965, the *Liberator* published a "Letter to Black Men" by Katy Gibson, which singled-out "the 'angry' Black nationalist intellect who has chosen a non-Black mate." She continued stating, "The fact that they have chosen non-Black mates to love, honor, cherish and to bear their off-spring, leaves little doubt in my mind that their pro-Black, nationalistic, angry writings, speeches, etc. should not be taken seriously."[58] While an article summarizing the presentations of a panel on "The Role of the

Black Woman in a White Society" stated: "the role of the Black woman in this period of revolution is to help the Black man reject that society has attempted to destroy him and exploit her,"[59] by the next year other female writers would ask: "Will the real Black man stand up or will the Black woman have to make this revolution?"[60] Anticipating the emergence of black women's radicalism, Betty Frank Lomax's article "Afro-American Woman: Growth Deferred" offered a poignant critique of masculinity and the dilemma many women and men struggled with. "The Black man frustrated by white America," she wrote, "turns inwards to a perverted form of male supremacy in his relationship with the Black woman. Male supremacy is just as immoral as white supremacy, in that it prevents the female from developing and realizing her full potential." However, she did offer an example of manhood that stood as a model of what the black man should be: "Brother Malcolm did more for her Black womanhood than any other so called leader. At last, at long last, there he was, a man, a Black man whom she could really be proud of."[61] Later in the year, a domestic worker named Louise Moore, anticipating Frances Beal's 1969 pamphlet, "Double Jeopardy," located black women's oppression in the context of American culture, politics and economy, commenting, "We are tired of being cheated of our womanhood by Black men, white men, white women and a whole capitalist-military system."[62]

IN THE LATE SIXTIES, these issues would continue to receive coverage in the *Liberator.* These issues ushered in a renewed sense of identity for many black women, informed their consciousness, and served as an early platform on which black women's collectives and organizations were formed. The debates carried out in the Liberator would find full expression in the 1970 anthology, *The Black Woman* (New York: New American Library, 1970), edited by Toni Cade Bambara, who before the arrival of that ground-breaking collection of black women's writings, had published a series of book reviews and a few short stories in the *Liberator,* while publishing her own novels, short stories and essays.[63]

Racism at the United Nations

IN MANY WAYS the LCA came into public awareness through the dramatic protest at the UN in February 1961. Though that unforgettable event galvanized many of the black nationalist groups in New York City, it also embarrassed the U.S. government.

Throughout the mid 1960s, the *Liberator* would continue to track developments at the United Nations through the correspondence of Ozzie Sykes and Richard Gibson, who often reported on African affairs, especially in Northern Africa where he worked as a journalist. For a time, Dan Watts was able to personally attend deliberations at the UN by accompanying a member of the press into the gallery. However, a letter signed by Osgood Caruthers, Acting Director of Press, Publications and Public Services at the UN, states that Watts could only receive a "temporary accreditation" that would expire at the end of a month. The letter, addressed to M. Jacques Verges, Director of *Revolution Africaine,* indicated that Watts was "permanently barred from the United Nations" due to his participation in the February 15, 1961 protest.[64]

Though it had long been viewed as a stage to vocalize the denial of Human Rights to African Americans, Watts found himself at odds with the value of the United Nations. Nonetheless, using his network of contacts, Watts would continue to provide coverage of the UN That April, Beveridge ran an editorial entitled, "Racism in the UN" In this piece Beveridge noted that Watts was denied access to the UN, pointing out that white journalists had no problem receiving accreditation. "Afro-American visitors to the UN are considered suspect by the security guards and often subjected to embarrassment and harassment. It is common knowledge, on the other hand, that white Americans have virtually free access to the Secretariat building..." This incident served as but another example for black radicals and their white allies that U.S. government interests would still determine who could and could not participate in the practice of international government.[65]

Conclusion

HAROLD CRUSE was partially correct: the *Liberator* magazine reflected the complications and contradictions found in the movement as a whole. It sought to give a voice to black liberation struggle and to play a central role in the articulation and expression of independent political thought. It supported the formation of all-black organizations and an all-black political party, yet it allowed in support from selected white writers and intellectuals who served on its production staff. It tried to chart an autonomous route far from the Civil Rights establishment and beyond the reach of the Old Left. And, as Van Gosse notes, the emergence of the New Left should be rethought within the context of the black radicalism the *Liberator* helped to define.[66] Moreover, it strived to demonstrate the interdependence of African and African American struggles for political self-determination and cultural affirmation. And it linked these to the sweeping anti-colonial forces around the world. As the self-proclaimed voice of the black protest movement, the *Liberator* played a critical role in providing an outlet where many of the new ideas of black liberation were thought about, reinterpreted and challenged. As such, it served as an incubator of black radical thought—Black Nationalist, socialist and Pan-Africanist—in the critical transition period between the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements.

Endnotes

1. Peniel E. Joseph, ed. *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Peniel E. Joseph, "Where Blackness is Bright? Cuba, Africa and Black Liberation During the Age of Civil Rights" in *New Formations*, Vol. 45 (Winter 2001-2002): 111-124; Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left* (New York: Verso, 1993).
2. An important recent discussion of the chronology of the Black Liberation Movement is Sundiata Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang "The 'Long Movement as Vampire': Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies," in *The Journal of African American History*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (Spring 2007): 265-288.
3. P. Olisanwuche Esedebe, *Pan-Africanism: The Idea and Movement, 1776-1991*, 2nd edition (Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1994), 5.
4. The Council on African Affairs was founded in 1942 and quickly emerged as the leading voice of anti-colonialism and Pan-Africanism in the United States and abroad before becoming a casualty of Cold War anti-communism in the early 1950s. In 1953 the Council was charged with subversion under the McCarran Act. Its leaders, including Paul Robeson, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Alphaeus Hunton, were subjected to harassment, indictments, and in the case of Hunton, imprisonment. Under the weight of internal disputes, government repression, and financial hardships, the Council on African Affairs disbanded in 1955. Source: Daren Salter, University of Washington, "Black Past" on-line reference guide to African American History. Website: Black Past.org; webpage: http://www.blackpast.org/?q=aah/council-african-affairs-1942-1955.
5. Although published works mention Dan Watts as the leader of On Guard, this is incorrect (see Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within A Nation* and Cynthia Young, *Soul Power*); Calvin Hicks was the actual leader of this organization.
6. Clarke, "New Afro-American Nationalism;" Robert L. Teague, "Negroes Say Conditions in U.S. Explain Nationalists' Militancy: Negroes Explain Extremist Drives," *New York Times* (1857-current file), March 2, 1961, p.1 (accessed September 15, 2007).
7. James E. Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement: Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
8. Liberation Committee for Africa, "Statement of Aims," circa 1960.
9. *Ibid.*
10. News of the assassination of Lumumba led to a riot in the gallery of the United Nations in February 1961. According to John Henrik Clarke, the riot "in protest against the foul and cowardly murder of Patrice Lumumba introduced the new Afro-American Nationalism. ...The demonstrations...interpreted the murder of Lumumba as the international lynching of a black man on the altar of colonialism and white supremacy. Suddenly, to them at least, Lumumba became Emmett Till and all of the other black victims of lynch law and the mob. The plight of the Africans still fighting to throw off the yoke of colonialism and the plight of the Afro-Americans, still waiting for a rich, strong and boastful nation to redeem the promise of freedom and citizenship became one and the same." John Henrik Clarke, "The New Afro-American Nationalism," *Freedomways*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Fall, 1961): 285-295.
11. Advertisement, "What Africa Means to Americans," *The Nation*, May 13, 1961.
12. Gibson found himself at the center of several controversies in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the most significant perhaps is that of being accused of serving as an agent provocateur by some in the liberation movement. In at least two publications from the period, Gibson's credibility is questioned though no facts are provided in either account. See *Revolution Africaine* circa 1965 and *Soulbook* Vol. 1, No. 4, Winter

1965-1966; and Vol. 2, No. 1, Summer 1966. When I asked Gibson about this issue he responded by saying that the statement accusing him "appeared in the last issue of the *Revolution Africaine* when [publisher] Jacques Verges sought to insinuate that the financial ruin of his publication, no longer in Algeria and Switzerland, had been due to some sinister imperial plot. You will note that he did not mention the CIA because I would have sued him for libel. Eventually, I did that years later in London, and won my case and a substantial settlement." (Author correspondence with R. Gibson, September 12, 2007). Gibson is listed as a member of the editorial board of the *Liberator* beginning in March, 1966, though he acknowledges that he merely sent articles to Watts for publication and had no hand in the actual production of the magazine. He had published only one article in the *Liberator* prior to that point: "The Algerian Story: A Million Lives for Freedom," *Liberator*, Vol. III, No. 4 (April, 1963): 4. His name remained on the magazine's editorial staff list from 1966 until 1971, when it ceased publication. He closed the above correspondence by referencing the long essay he published, entitled "Richard Wright's 'Island of Hallucination' and the 'Gibson Affair'" in *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Winter, 2005): 896-920. For an extended account of Gibson's time with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in New York, see Gosse, *Where the Boys Are*, 137-174. See, also, "The Island Affair," by James Campbell, *The Guardian*, Saturday, January 7, 2006. Also see Besenia Rodriguez, "De la Esclavitude Yanqui a la Libertad Cubana': U.S. Black Radicals, the Cuban Revolution and the Formation of a Tricontinental Ideology," *Radical History Review* 92 (Spring 2005): 62-87. (Thanks to Anthony Ratcliff for providing me with the *Soulbook* documentation).

13. Author interview with Pete Beveridge, April 8, 2006.
14. *Ibid.*
15. "Freedom Riders Go Beyond the New Frontier," *Liberator* (June 1961): 1-3.
16. John Henrik Clarke, "The New Afro-American Nationalism," *Freedomways*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Fall, 1961): 285-295.
17. James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999). John Henrik Clarke, "The New Afro-American Nationalism," *Freedomways*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Fall, 1961): 285-295.
18. "Riot in Gallery Halts UN Debate," *New York Times*, February 16, 1961, p.1.
19. Correspondence with author, April 13, 2006.
20. Author interview with Calvin Hicks, June 13, 2007.
21. Smethurst, 118-123.
22. "Copy of Telegram Sent to Mrs. Patrice Lumumba, Leopoldville, Congo," dated January 21, 1961.
23. Ludo De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, translated by Ann Wright and Renee Fenby (London and New York: Verso, 2001).
24. Liberation Committee for Africa, Press Release, dated February 13, 1961.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Interestingly, when I spoke to Beveridge, he mentioned that he never met Gibson though they had been in the same room on occasion. He explained that Watts was a person who kept his contacts separate. Marilyn Watts Lieberman, Watts' first wife confirmed this, indicating that she rarely knew fully all of the projects Watts had going.
27. *Liberator*, September, 1961.
28. *Liberator*, December, 1961.
29. Pete Beveridge, interview with author, April 8, 2006.
30. Op. Cit.
31. Author phone interview with Marilyn Watts Lieberman, October 9, 2006.
32. Rose Finkenstaedt, correspondence with author, May 2007.
33. Pete Beveridge, interview with author, April 8, 2006.
34. *Liberator* (June 1961): 2.
35. Richard Gibson, correspondence with the author, April 13, 2006.
36. Calvin Hicks, Letter—dated September 20, 1961. Robert F. Williams Papers, Microfilm collection.
37. *Ibid.*
38. Gibson, correspondence with the author, April 13, 2006.
39. *Liberator* (May 1961): 1; Vusumzi L. Make, "NATO Countries Aid Military Preparations of Verwoerd Government to 'Shoot the Black Masses,'" *Liberator*, Vol. II, No. 4 (April 1962): 2.
40. *Ibid.*
41. The Bandung Conference of 1955 was a meeting of representatives of Asian and African states, most of which were newly independent, organized by Egypt, Indonesia, Burma, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), India, and Pakistan, which took place on April 18-April 24, 1955, in Bandung, Indonesia, It was coordinated by Ruslan Abdulgani, secretary general of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The conference's stated aims were to promote Afro-Asian economic and cultural cooperation and to oppose colonialism or neocolonialism by the United States, the Soviet Union, or any other imperialistic nation.
42. Harold Cruse, *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: Morrow, 1967), 402-419; Van Gosse, "More than Just a Politician: Notes on the Life and Times of Harold Cruse" in *Harold Cruse's Crisis of the Negro Intellectual, Reconsidered*, edited by Jerry Watts (New York and London: Routledge), 17-40.
43. Carlos E. Russell, interview with author, March 25, 2006.
44. Rolland Snellings, "Toward Repudiating Western Values," *Liberator*, Vol. IV, No. 11 (November 1964), 11-12; James E. Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement:*

Literary Nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 131-132.

45. Askia Touré, correspondence with author, May 15, 2006.
46. Cruse, *Rebellion or Revolution?* (New York: William Morrow, 1968).
47. Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1967), 404-419.
48. Joseph, *Waiting*, 201-202; Van Gosse, "More Than Just a Politician: Notes on the Life and Times of Harold Cruse," in *Harold Cruse's The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual Reconsidered*, edited by Jerry Watts (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 17-40.
49. Cruse, *Crisis*, 407.
50. Kevin K. Gaines, *American African in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).
51. Author interview with Pete Beveridge, April 8, 2006.
52. Gibson, correspondence with author, April 13, 2006.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Finkenstaedt, correspondence with author, May 2006.
55. Dan Watts, "Mrs. Richardson's Revolt," *Liberator*, Vol. III, No. 11 (November, 1963): 2.
56. Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006), 84-92.
57. Edith Schomburg, "The Crux of Black Non-Violence," *Liberator*, Vol. III, No. 12 (December, 1963): 10.
58. Katy Gibson, "Letter to Black Men," *Liberator*, Vol. V, No. 7 (July 1965): 29-30.
59. Writer's Conference Report: "The Role of the Black Woman in a White Society," *Liberator*, Vol. V, No. 8 (August 1965): 4-5.
60. Louise Moore, "When Will the Real Black Man Stand Up?" *Liberator*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (May 1966): 4-6.
61. Betty Frank Lomax, "Afro-American Woman: Growth Deferred," *Liberator*, Vol. 6, No. 5 (May 1966): 18.
62. Louise Moore, "Black Men vs. Black Women," *Liberator*, Vol. 6, No. 8 (August 1966): 16-17; Frances Beal, "Double Jeopardy: To be Black and Female," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, edited by Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: The New Press, 1995), 146-155.
63. Gail Stokes, "Black Woman to Black Man" in *Liberator*, Vol. 8, No. 12 (December 1968): 17; Edith Hambrick "Black Woman to Black Woman" in *Liberator*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (February 1969): 8. Stokes also published in Toni Cade Bambara's *The Black Woman: An Anthology* (New York: Washington Square Press, 2005), 137-139 [New York: New America Library 1970]); See also Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2005).
64. Osgood Caruthers to M. Jacques Verges, letter dated February 8, 1963.
65. Pete Beveridge (unsigned), "Racism in the UN," *Liberator*, Vol. III, No. 4 (April 1963): 2.
66. Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretive History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 111-129.