



# Black Agenda Report

News, commentary and analysis from the black left.

---

## INTERVIEW: Por qué Luchamos los Negros/What the Black Power Struggle is About, Stokely Carmichael, Havana, 1967

[Editors, The Black Agenda Review](#)

28 Jun 2023



*When Kwame Ture was still Stokely Carmichael he gave an extraordinary interview in Havana in 1967 on Black Power politics, Third World Solidarity, imperialism, and revolution.*

In 1967, while attending the first Latin American Solidarity Organization conference in [Havana, Cuba](#), Stokely Carmichael granted an interview to Mario Menéndez Rodríguez, the first person to interview Fidel Castro after the Cuban revolution and the editor of the Mexico City periodical *Sucesos para Todos*. Published in the August 26, 1967 issue of *Sucesos* under the title “Por qué Luchamos los Negros,” the interview is lengthy, wide-ranging, and a remarkable demonstration of Carmichael’s intellectual and political clarity. Menéndez Rodríguez’s questions are short and to

the point; Carmichael's answers are serious, engaged, and expansive. Carmichael discusses the origins and purpose of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the politics and ethics of violence, guerilla warfare, nuclear proliferation, Third World solidarity and Puerto Rican independence, the Cuban Revolution, and the US war in Vietnam, and much, much more.

The obvious importance of the interview was such that by October, 1967, it had been translated and reprinted in the global left press service *World Outlook* and in *Inner City Voice*, the Detroit Black community newspaper published by the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. It was also included as an appendix to Carmichael's 1970 testimony before the Senate's McCarran Committee investigating the so-called subversive activities in the United States.

The editors of *Inner City Voice* urged their audience "to read it in its entirety to understand the nature of the revolution taking place" in the late 1960s. But we must also understand why Carmichael, along with his SNCC colleagues, was on a solidarity mission to Cuba, and how that mission linked what Fidel Castro called "Latin American and African American solidarity." We argue that Carmichael words are as relevant for the present. We reproduce his interview below.

### **Por qué Luchamos los Negros/What the Black Power Struggle is About**

#### **Stokely Carmichael interviewed by Mario Menéndez Rodríguez for *Sucesos para Todos*, Havana, 1967**

*Question. What is the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee?*

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee is the organization for which I work and a group of young black people in the United States who decided to come together to fight racial and economic exploitation.

*Question: When and why was it founded?*

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was founded in 1960 by a group of young black students who felt the need to come together and actively fight against racial segregation in the United States. They came together because they

felt the older organizations were not doing an effective job and were not actively participating. Most of them were taking their troubles to the courts and we felt that you could not take a problem of injustice by some white people to black people to the courts if those courts were again all white. You were taking an unjust problem to the people who themselves were unjust. It could not be solved that way. The only way to solve it was in the streets.

Now, we used the word *nonviolent* because at that time Martin Luther King was the central figure of the black struggle and he was still preaching nonviolence, and anyone who talked about violence at that time was considered treasonable, amounting to treason, so we decided that we would use the word *nonviolent*, but in the meantime we knew our struggle was not about to be nonviolent, but we would just wait until the time was right for the actual [word indistinct] name. We came together, we would coordinate activities between the students wherever we would have a nonviolent demonstration.

However, a year later we came to the conclusion that these pacifist demonstrations were not an adequate answer for our problems; the young people had to be organized. We moved into the state where racial segregation is of unbelievable dimensions -- Mississippi. There we began to organize our people and train them for the struggle. And now we have come to the point where it's our duty to rouse our youth, our people, to fight.

*What are the political, social, and economic goals pursued by your organization?*

Politically, we want the black people of America to free themselves from their oppression. We also want the peoples of the Third World to get their freedom, especially the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America; because we know our liberation depends on their liberation and that, vice versa, their liberation depends on ours. Therefore, we must carry out the same struggle.

Politically, I mean that in the United States we're pressing for the right to control the communities in which we live; because these communities where we're up against incredible poverty, these communities called ghettos, are politically controlled by

whites. Actually, in a tragically real sense, we are colonies inside the United States, colonies like most Latin-American countries; because it is no secret that these countries are controlled by the United States. To sum it all up: both the Latin-American countries and the American black ghettos are part of the colonial empire of the United States.

Economically, we would like our people to be able to enjoy, to get everything they need to enjoy a decent standard of living without having to work as hard as they do now because they are exploited, because they are victims of the political structure of American imperialism. We want power not only to control the wealth within our communities but to divide up this wealth according to the needs of each community. We don't want to establish black capitalist system; on the contrary, we want to destroy capitalism economically because this system always goes hand in hand with racism and exploitation. It is no secret that wherever capitalism has been kept up these two characteristics are certain to be seen. Consequently, it is our duty to destroy the capitalist system which enslaves us at home and enslaves the peoples of the Third World abroad.

Socially we want what most people aspire to in life: a happy people, free and independent, who can make all the decisions they think right and in the interests of the majority—a people who participate in all decisions and never feel ashamed of their skin or their culture.

Psychologically, physically, morally we want a people that feel equality in their entire being, who definitely cast off capitalism.

*What is the relationship between the black people of the North and the South in particular and throughout the United States in general?*

Most of our people—and this is fundamental for a better understanding of the problem of the black people – emigrated from the South because racial discrimination was most brutal in that region and because they heard that in the North people weren't concerned about the color of your skin, that all that counted was work. We were told, "There are opportunities left and right; good jobs

everywhere; all you have to do is work hard.” We believed this nonsense; and because we believed it we packed our suitcases and headed north. But when we got there we saw how equal everything was. The lesson we learned was this: we will never be able to enjoy a decent life in the United States under the capitalist system. So today you will not find a single black man who holds any hope for decent conditions under the prevailing system in the United States.

As a result, relations are much closer among American black people because the black man in the South no longer looks to the North as a way of escape – no, today all American black people understand that we must join hands as a single people to win our freedom. So what in fact existed in the United States is a feeling of solidarity among all black people no matter where they find themselves. And this means that when the whites touch a black man today they have to deal with all of them – one big family, and I’m not just saying this, the unity of the American black people is quite easy to see. Every time a racist policeman shoots at one of us, he finds he has to face a whole city and what is more this no longer holds for a single city but for several, for many cities in the United States. This feeling of solidarity is real.

*Some people believe that black people of America think of their struggle only as a racial conflict, that is, a struggle against the white race, instead of understanding it is a class struggle. What is your opinion about that?*

On this question, I think it is important to note this: racism is so strong in the United States that it is virtually impossible to get whites to fight shoulder to shoulder with black people. When most poor whites or white workers organize in the United States, they don’t fight for redistribution of the land; they fight for more money all they want is more money. They have no conception of dividing up property, because their main concern is economic and not social. What is happening is that the ruling classes in the United States has centered its attention on the countries of the Third World with the aim of increasing profits, profits which it shares to a small degree with the white working class of the United States.

Let's understand one indisputable fact: the American ruling class never reduces its profits; just the opposite, it increases them by dint of the oppression to which it subjects the underdeveloped nations. From this it follows that when it shares its gains with the white working class, the white workers become part of the capitalist system and both of them enjoy the money gotten by bleeding other peoples. The result is that the white working class is unable to fight the capitalist system, because it has become a part of it by accepting tainted money.

Consequently, it is hard to develop a revolutionary consciousness in the ranks of white workers. So what we are faced with is a group of white citizens fighting to protect their money. This is also why we aren't able to find white working-class people opposed to the war in Vietnam, they would be attacking the system and injuring their own interests.

Unfortunately, the whites don't realize that if they destroyed this system they could build a better one. So what we are faced with is a group of white citizens fighting to protect their money. This is also why we aren't able to find white working-class people opposed to the war in Vietnam; the genocide brings them certain advantages. If they opposed the war in Vietnam, they would be attacking the system and injuring their own interests.

In reality, it is the black people who constitute the vanguard and who are leading the struggle in the United States. And if this struggle has been interpreted as a conflict between black and white, it is due solely and exclusively to the fact that the white working class, out of contemptible fear of losing the little it has, has joined with the privileged group that oppresses the majority. We believe that a revolutionary consciousness can develop in the white working class only when the United States begins to lose its profits, profits which it gets from the entire Third World. Once this process begins, it will have to seek ways and means at home to maintain its relative prosperity. Then and only then will the white working class develop a revolutionary consciousness, because once their sources of profits in the Third World are curtailed, the rules of the American capitalist system will stop sharing what it used to share with the white workers.

This means that today only the black people are struggling. Certainly it would please us if the white working class joined in this struggle. Whether or not this happens, however, does not change the present situation. Because we blacks will fight until we win. And when the white working class decides to join this struggle, we will welcome them. In the meantime, and until then, we will continue in the vanguard.

It cannot be denied that the ruling class of the United States recognizes Marx's concept of the inevitable class conflict that will take place sooner or later. In order to avoid it, to postpone it, they cling desperately to the profits provided by the Third World in order to give a minimal share to the white working class. What the ruling class of the United States has achieved is postponement of the inevitable class conflict. Today the Third World has become the proletariat and the white society of the West is playing the role of the bourgeoisie. So that when we draw lines based on skin color, these are also class lines because of the ways in which white Western society has "won over" the majority of its working class.

This is exactly what Europe did when the imperialist nations there divided up Africa and Latin America among themselves, thus staving off the inevitable class conflict in those countries.

Nevertheless, there can be no more postponement because the confrontation is at hand. Moreover, I think that people outside the United States must remember that, unlike any other people, we were the only people brought in from abroad and enslaved on this continent by those who still exploit us. Other peoples have been slaves in their own countries so that when they fought they could develop a nationalist conception as a point of unity to rally around. We, I repeat, were brought to the United States and cannot develop a nationalist conception. Consequently, our conception must center on the color of our skin, since it was, in fact, due to this black color that the whites resolved to make us slaves. In a certain sense, the color of our skin represents our nationality. Because what the white man did was to scatter Africa around to bring black people to the United States, to disperse them through all the countries of the continent, without any nationality whatsoever.

Cuba's case is different because here the African has a conception of nationality, since side by side with the white man, he was the victim of oppression and merciless exploitation by the privileged groups. The black people of this Caribbean island, especially after the revolution, feel they are part of the Cuban system, and even before that they called themselves Afro-Cubans.

Unfortunately for us, this is not the case in the United States and cannot be. For 400 years we have been the victims of a brutal fascism and, with the exception of John Brown, no white man has come out in our defense. Many have spoken and now speak in our defense, but no one is ready to fight to destroy the system of which we are a part.

*What do you think of the other black organizations in the United States, such as the one led by Martin Luther King?*

Publicly, it is very important to present a united front and for this reason we support the organizations now fighting for the black people of America. When we feel we have succeeded in gathering a considerable number of people, we will eliminate the other organizations. At present, in order not to divide those participating in the struggle for the demands of the black race, we support a united front. But the time will come very soon when there will be no reason to discuss and nothing to discuss and then we will simply eliminate those who put obstacles in the way of the real liberation of the black people. Here and now, many black Americans have set out on the road to real freedom.

*What is the relationship between the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Movimiento Pro Independencia de Puerto rico [MPI–Movement for Puerto Rican Independence]? What is your view of the interrelationship between the Puerto Rican people's struggle for independence and the struggle of the black people in the United States? How do you view the struggle of the black people in the United States as aiding the Puerto Ricans? And what is your view of unity between the two organizations?*

Brother Malcolm taught us that we must internationalize our struggle. In an effort to carry out some of his teachings, we started with Puerto Rico; we started with



Puerto Rico for many reasons. No. 1, it is very close to the United States in terms of geographic position. No. 2, it is a real colony of the United States in every sense. And thirdly, a large number of people who live inside the ghettos of the United States with us are Puerto Ricans.

But it used to happen that we fought against Puerto Ricans— instead of uniting to fight a system which oppressed us, the American ruling class made us fight each other while the white police watched and laughed at us. Then we decided that one way to begin to awaken the political consciousness of our people to establish ties with the Puerto Ricans was to come out publicly in favor of Puerto Rican independence. And we achieved this unity. Because if up until recently, when the police attacked Puerto Ricans, the black people did nothing and, in fact, were more likely to join the white police than the Puerto Ricans – and vice versa – now, when this happens in New York, in Newark, or in Chicago, the black people and the Puerto Ricans rush together to fight the police.

To sum it all up: We have raised our people's consciousness and now we are meeting to discuss the most effective methods to fight the capitalist system which oppresses black people and Puerto Ricans alike.

The agreement we have with MPI is based on the following points:

1. The Movement for Puerto Rican Independence and the Federacion de Universitarios Pro Independencia [FUPI --Student Federation for Independence] recognize the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) as a fraternal organization in the forefront of the struggle for the liberation of the American black people and against the white power structure of the United States.
2. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) recognizes the Movement for Puerto Rican Independence as the vanguard of the struggle of the Puerto Rican people for their national liberation and the Student Federation for Puerto Rican Independence as the organization representing

the Puerto Rican students in their struggle against imperialism and as the vanguard of the students in their country.

3. The MPI and the FUPI offer full full assistance to the black people of America in their struggle to win political and economic power in their communities, which is expressed as the struggle for black power.
4. SNCC declares its support for the Puerto Rican people's struggle for national independence.
5. SNCC, the MPI and the FUPI recognize that they are in common struggles like the struggle against drafting the youth of their peoples into the United States army, the defense of the cultural integrity of both peoples, recovery of their economic heritage, etc.; and therefore make available to each other their resources and efforts in the common struggle.
6. SNCC, the MPI and the FUPI recognize that the struggle of the Puerto Rican and black people in the urban ghettos of the United States for political and economic control, for better housing, for adequate education and for better living conditions in general can be waged on common bases and through joint actions.
7. SNCC, the MPI and the FUPI believe that the struggle against the draft and in opposition to American aggression against the people of Vietnam can be reinforced through joint activities by these organizations.
8. SNCC offers its assistance to the Puerto Rican organizations MPI and FUPI in their fight to get Puerto Rico's case as a colony speedy consideration by the United Nations.
9. The MPI and the FUPI offer their assistance in giving international prominence to the oppression of the black people of America and in getting this problem recognized as one which concerns all mankind rather than solely being an internal problem of the United States?

*What kind of struggle will develop in the United States against the policy of imperialism? Do you think that armed struggle is the only kind of struggle left open to the American people to win control of the government? What is your opinion about opposing reactionary violence with revolutionary violence.*

Let me make it quite clear that the only solution is a black revolution and that we are not interested in peaceful coexistence. Armed struggle is the only way, not only for us but for all the oppressed people in the world

The people who talk about peaceful co-existence today are talking about maintaining the status quo because the only way to destroy an imperialist system is through force, since talking about it doesn't get you anywhere. That is something that is especially clear because most Afro-Americans in the United States have been talking for 400 years, talking and nothing more. They lost sight of the fact that when you talk you are playing the game of the imperialists, who invented the talking game.

But today we have a new game called guerrilla warfare. It's a game the imperialists can't take in. And if you want to win a game, you must make the rules. If anybody else makes the rules, he always wins. The imperialists established the rules for talking; and so when you sit down to talk with them you can't possibly win. They always find a reason why they can't do it now or why they can't do it next, and they appear very reasonable. If you sit down with them and try to argue according to their point of view, in their own terms, how can you win?

In the first place, they have no right to oppress people, so there is no need to bring up oppression for discussion. They have no right to exploit anybody. So starting a discussion about freeing yourself from exploitation and oppression is ridiculous. It's something like a slave sitting down with his master to talk about when he must free him. It doesn't make sense because the master doesn't want to free him. What must the slave do? The answer is simply: rise up and kill his master if he refuses to stop exploiting him. That's the only solution.

So, it is completely clear as far as we are concerned that armed struggle is the only road. We have talked and talked and talked and talked for too long. We must destroy this system by force.

Besides that, reactionary violence can be legalized by the people in power. For example if I killed a slant-eyed man, there would be two different reactions

depending on whether I did it in the United States or in Vietnam. If I killed thirty slant-eyed men in Vietnam, I would get a medal, since I would be in the army of course. But if I killed thirty or killed one in the United States, say in New York, I would end up in the electric chair for committing murder.

So the question is not violence, but who can legalize violence. That's all there is to it. A policeman can shoot at anyone he pleases or kill anybody he likes for any reason and come before the court and say: "I did it in the line of duty. And they let him go. But anyone responsible for the death of a policeman would automatically land in jail.

So, violence should not be discussed. What should be discussed is whether or not you can legalize it. The oppressed peoples of the world must legalize violence in their minds in order to solve this problem. Once they have legalized violence, the raising of questions and looking for answers is over with—[what is] left is to take what belongs to them.

So the reactionaries manage to stay in power solely by means of arms but they legalize their violence and then preach with an unheard-of cynicism that it's not right to use their violence. Take away their guns and their imperialist forces and we will see how many people listen to them; take away the bases they have in Santo Domingo, Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, and throughout Latin America, and the arms they have in these places, and you will see nobody paying any attention to them. But because of their arms the people find themselves compelled to listen to them. And so the only thing to do is to become accustomed to the use of arms and have the will and determination to struggle. Then you've got the right answer.

For example, take a good look at the pacifists and all the nonsense connected with pacifism. The United States, Great Britain, France, and the USSR developed atomic and hydrogen bombs. After they developed them, they met and declared: "We are going to put an end to nuclear testing; there will be no more tests." And the whole world sat there and believed all that nonsense because they told them: "We don't want bombs to spread; if other peoples have bombs it will lead to violence."

But what they were doing, since they were the ones who had the bombs, was to keep other peoples from developing the same striking forces. So, they were not dealing with the others on an equitable basis. If there was equality for all, everyone should have the bomb.

And so we have an example of how the West utilizes violence to hold other peoples back.

Israel has the atomic bomb, which it got from the United States. On the basis of equality, since Israel has the atomic bomb, Egypt needs to have it too. Otherwise, Israel can threaten to drop the bomb on Egypt and that country will become the victim of atomic blackmail. The whole world must have the atomic bomb; this is all too clear. So, there can be no talk about putting an end to nuclear testing as long as all the countries have not yet developed the bomb.

When all the countries of the world from little Cuba to big China have the hydrogen bomb, then you can say: "We are all going to put an end to nuclear tests." Before then it is absurd to talk about it.

Another example of this is Cuba and the United States. The Americans can threaten Cuba since they have weapons which they can drop on the island. This is a rather recent example, of course; it happened to the Soviet Union when the United States threatened to drop bombs and the USSR said its rockets would be withdrawn.

The United States compelled the USSR to withdraw its rockets. ONce they were withdrawn, Cuba was at the mercy of the United States, except for a little something which I think makes the difference in today's world: dignity and the will to fight until victory is one.

The West has plainly developed the best weapons system in existence at present. But there is still another small item, and that is that weapons can never overcome the will of men to struggle. That is just what today's world is all about- the oppressed peoples have the will to struggle and are struggling against those who oppress them.

So, as Mao said, this is a war of weapons against the will of men. And we believe that weapons can never triumph over the will of men to struggle.

A good example of that would be Vietnam where the United States, with all of its weapons, cannot defeat a little nation as small as Vietnam because they have the will to fight and they're willing to fight to the death rather than to let the United States enslave it.

When the United States talked about using bombs and the missiles against Cuba, it declared that that Caribbean island had no right to defend itself. It also declared that there was no reason for Cuba to have any kind of missiles. And the rest of the world was more on Cuba's side than on the side of the United States because there was no reason for the United States to foment aggression against Cuba any more than there was later against Vietnam. And what is happening is that the Vietnamese people are not only waging a defensive war but a defensive kind of propaganda campaign; for they have every right to drop a bomb on the United States and to begin bombing that country and to equalize the terms of the struggle in that way. That would be real equality but instead of that they find themselves in a defensive war. And this was also Cuba's position regarding the missiles. They were fighting a defensive war.

The point in [Regis] Debray's book *Revolution in the Revolution?* What made the most impression on people was that they must go beyond a defensive war and that the next step for the peoples of the Third World is to go beyond a defensive war.

*What do you think about guerilla warfare as a means by which the American continent can gain its freedom? What is your opinion concerning utilization of this type of struggle by the colored people in the countryside and cities of the United States of America?*

The imperialists have taken everything by force. For example, they annihilated the native population of Cuba and took possession of the land. So, the only way to win freedom is by force. And the only way to initiate it is to begin guerilla warfare right now; and it must never be discussed in terms of whether or not it is good or evil. It is the only way to put an end to exploitation and oppression. To discuss whether or

not it is right is playing the imperialists' game. When you are at war nothing is good or evil; you are only concerned with the need to gain your objective. And that is what we must understand, those of us who live in the world of the oppressed. There is no doubt at all—guerilla warfare is the only way. We will not question whether it is good or evil; we will only raise the tactical question about when to utilize it. That is the only question that ought to concern us.

We are moving toward guerilla warfare in the United States. We are going to develop urban guerilla warfare and we are going to beat them in this field because there is one thing the imperialists do not have: their men don't want to fight, they don't want to fight what they call guerilla warfare, which is really hand-to-hand combat. You see, their men are cowards. White America is the most cowardly nation in the world. They can send a million men to Vietnam but they cannot wipe out the Vietnamese people and that people will annihilate them in hand-to-hand combat. What the imperialists do is say that there is a guerilla war in Vietnam, and people think that guerilla war is a dirty war, that it is not a clear kind of war. Then they declare that they are sending a lot of planes to drop bombs to win against the guerilla war. No one asks: What is more revolting than sending a man in an airplane that can drop fifty or sixty bombs on helpless women and children or use napalm on them and burn them to death? Don't you think that hand-to-hand combat is much more honorable? That is the question. The question is simply when to employ it. URban guerilla warfare is the only means by which we can win in the United States because they cannot use bombs against us, since we are inside their country. They will have to fight us in hand-to-hand combat and we will defeat them.

The counterpart will be in the South, which is the part of the country where we know the terrain, where we worked the land for years, where the white man has taken the fruits of our sweat, moving us around the whole region. He really did us a big favor because we have gotten to know the area and when we go up into the mountains we will inflict another defeat on him in a guerilla war waged there. Guerilla warfare is the only way we can bring them to their knees, it's the only kind of war where they can't use their big guns and bombs. And this is the road we must follow, because they have no guts.

*What is your feeling about solidarity among all countries struggling to liberate themselves?*

It's the only answer. I think that what we fail to grasp, what we haven't grasped in the past, is that capitalism has become international and that we are fighting against international capitalism. So, against international capitalism, you must wage an international struggle. In the past what occurred, for example, was when a nation was fighting, everyone wished it good luck but no one saw its struggle as part of their own – even when they could see that it was the same countries oppressing them that were also oppressing the other country, they still didn't get it fixed in their minds that there was a common enemy. What we have done today is to get this situation straight in our minds. We see a common enemy; we are fighting against an international structure that enslaves us, and the only way to defeat it is to internationalize our struggle. This way, one international power will be pitted against another. That's the only way we can win, because if we do as Che says – create two, three, many Vietnams – we will have them fighting on all fronts at once and then they can't win. When a struggle is isolated, imperialism can turn all its power against one country and that country is lost.

But they cannot fight us all at once. So, even if we don't have the same ideas, the same ideology, we have a common enemy–imperialism. And that will unite us more than anything else.

*What do you think about the Organización de Solidaridad de los Pueblos de África, Asia y América Latina [OSPAAAL – Asian, African and Latin American Solidarity Organization]? What does an organization like yours expect from OSPAAAL?*

Well, one thing is that we are now beginning to concretize our relations with these groups. The first thing we must do is just meet all the fighters; sit down with them and discuss with them and exchange ideas. Then when we have done that, we can begin to act together and jointly plan the strategy for liberation. But we can only do that when we begin to internationalize our struggle because the enemy has its CIA espionage system and all its intelligence agencies, which are international and work



together in a coordinated way. So, they can carry out assassinations and organize coups against governments beginning to fight for liberation.

Once we have taken power – because we will— the problem will be to start building an international system with no room for capitalism, in which we can trade with each other on the basis of our needs and what each country has, instead of trying to control the world market where prices are set in accordance with profits and not by the needs of humanity. We will find when we take power that, unless we have the spirit, the will, and the intelligence of Cuba's leaders, many of us will end up in the same way as all the other countries which fell victim to coups d'état, or here taking power ended with acceptance of the whole bureaucratic structure that the imperialists imposed on their countries and where they are not in position to fight. Thus we might begin.

The other thing we must begin is exchanging fighters with the peoples of Africa and Latin America who are struggling for freedom. Thus we can set up an international network of guerilla warfare, and, for example, if people want to come to the United States to help us fight when we are able to start fighting the real war there, well and good. We want to do the same thing; we will want to go away and fight, because that's what the capitalists do. Every time one of the countries they control is in trouble they send aid to that country.

This is clear and that is what happened in the case of Israel, a capitalist country supported by Western imperialism. When it was in trouble, they all came to its aid, including France. What we must do is recognize that once the struggle begins, we must have the determination to aid the forces of liberation with our men, just as the imperialists have the determination to aid each other with their guns, their money and their men.

*What do you think about the Organización de Solidaridad para América Latina [OLAS – Latin-American Solidarity Organization]? What do you expect from an organization like OLAS?*

This is the first OLAS conference and we feel more than honored, pleased and happy to be here and to be able to be a part of it, for many, very many reasons. The first is that Latin America is very close to us geographically. Latin America is one of the continents the United States exploits. Many Latin Americans come to the United States. And so it is for all these reasons, plus the proximity of Latin America, we have to begin to act. Cuba is part of Latin America and the United States really wants to crush Cuba; and Cuba is an inspiration, a hope, a hope not only for the black people in the United States but for all the Latin American countries, an inspiration to begin struggling, to begin fighting. So it is right and proper for OLAS to meet in Cuba and for us to have come here to demonstrate our solidarity, not in words only but determined to offer our lives on the firing line of the Latin-American struggles.

We want to explain to the countries of Latin America that our struggle is just beginning, because the only news they get comes from the AP and UPI which are part of the imperialist-controlled communications media. ON the other hand, we cannot get any news from the Latin-American countries except through the UPI and AP and again that means the imperialist-controlled media. So, what they tell us is that there are bandits, or that there are groups of rebel forces, or that the Communists are fighting in Venezuela, or that rebel forces are fighting in the streets of Guatemala or Santo Domingo or Panama. And only because of our political awareness that these groups are fighting for their countries can we read between the lies and propaganda and tell what is happening.

This is the first time we have had an opportunity to meet the people who are actually struggling to liberate themselves and begin to study their ideologies to see if we have a common base, to get an understanding of their struggle and to explain ours to them without having to have imperialist propaganda interpret our struggles for each other. That is the first thing. The second is that we must carry forward our struggles jointly; and our mere presence here is accomplishing that. Thirdly, to begin to counteract the OAS [Organization of American States] and the mere fact of our holding the conference here is already doing that; it will neutralize the OAS and begin to minimize its importance in the minds of our peoples, nad one of the most

important battles being waged today is the struggle to win the minds of the people. When we have succeeded in doing that, there will be no doubt that we are ready to fight and to develop systems and channels of aid and mutual support.

*What do you have to say to guerilla leaders like Douglas Bravo of Venezuela, Fabio Vásquez and Marulanda of Colombia, César Montes of Guatemala, and the leaders of the Bolivian guerillas?*

We want to say to our brothers, to our comrades, that although they may not know it, there are many of us here who follow all the news about their struggles very closely and with great attention. We know that they are conducting a victorious, brave and good struggle. And in spite of the fact that we don't control the communications media, we can say to them that they must never lose hope, because they are our inspiration and hope.

*What do you think about the aggression in Vietnam?*

I think that it is the most revolting aggression in the world today. I think that it shows the hatred and cowardice of the United States. I think that it's the dirtiest war there ever was and because of that I think that, in the face of the determination of the Vietnamese people, the United States will lose the war.

*What brought you to Cuba?*

I was a boy when the Cuban revolution began and I was very interested in it then. The fact that the prime minister of Cuba, Fidel Castro, stayed in Harlem with the black people when he came to the United States increased my interest. He stayed at the Hotel Theresa and that was a sign that our relationship with Cuba had become something real; in the sense that Cuba's prime minister, in contrast to all the prime ministers who had come to our country, came to live in the ghetto with us while he was in the United States. We always felt we should repay Cuba for Fidel's visit.

In the second place, we have always known that the Cuban revolution was a good revolution. Although many people in the United States doubted the Cuban revolution, we never did. We knew that it was good. We came to Cuba just to learn

and in the few days we have been here we learned things about the Cuban revolution we could never have learned from books, films, or any other medium. Here I have been able to stay among a free people and to understand and see how they are solving their problems. That is what we came for; we came to learn and we have learned a good deal.

*What do you think of Cuba's prime minister, Fidel Castro?*

He is the greatest man I ever met.

*What is your feeling about Che Guevara and the things he has said concerning the revolution in Latin America and throughout the world?*

We agree 150 percent with Che; he is becoming one of the most widely read men in black America today. Everywhere you go black people are reading Che; and not only that, he is being read throughout the world. One of the reasons I think is that Che is a man who has never just talked about revolution but has made a revolution. He is a man who, even after winning revolutionary struggle for power in this country, left his wife to go to other countries, risking his life to help initiate the struggle there. We don't come across such a man everyday.

*The struggle you are waging in the United States is giving some people the impression that you have signed your death sentence. What do you think about that?*

Brother Malcolm used to tell us that there are several different kinds of death. I think that dehumanized people who don't respond to blows are dead people. The WEst has been able to do that to most of us. It has dehumanized us to the point where we don't even hit back. Once you begin to strike back you are alive, you are alive and bullets won't kill you. If you don't hit back against the blows you are dead and all the money in the world can't bring you back to life. Today we are alive, we are alive throughout the whole world; all the oppressed peoples are coming back to life, they are striking back, they are fighting for humanity. When you are dead, when you do not rebel, when you are not fighting to live, then you are already dead. But we are alive and we love life so much that we are ready to lose it. We are alive. Death cannot stop us.

Stokely Carmichael: *What Black Power Struggle is About*, *World Outlook* 5 no. 32 (October 1967). Translation of "Por qué Luchamos los Negroes," *Sucesos de Todos*, August 26, 1967.

**Kwame Ture**

**Cuba**

**SNCC**

Do you need and appreciate Black Agenda Report articles. Please click on the DONATE icon, and help us out, if you can.

Donate



## RELATED STORIES



Editors, *The Black Agenda Review*

## FACT SHEET: The Palestine Problem: Test Your Knowledge, Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, 1967

17 May 2023

Do you know that the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) published a fact sheet in 1967 detailing the truth about the history of



Editors, *The Black Agenda Review*

## EXCERPT: Howard University: Every Black Thing and Its Opposite, Kwame Ture

01 February 2023

Kwame Ture reminds us that the Black university is a place of contradictions – and a potential site of struggle.



Kim Ives

## Colia Clark Presente!

16 November 2022

Colia Clark was a veteran of the Black Liberation Movement who worked with Medgar Evers, who was also affiliated with the NAACP and who served



Editors, *The Black Agenda Review*

## DOCUMENT: The Decline of the United States Empire, James Boggs, 1963

08 June 2022

James Boggs was a Detroit auto worker, activist, and author.



*Black Alliance For Peace*

## The Black Alliance for Peace Calls on Latin American and Caribbean Nations to Boycott the Summit of the Americas

18 May 2022

The failure of the U.S.



**Ahjamu Umi**

## From Black Power to Pan-Africanism with Mukasa Dada

03 May 2022

Mukasa Dada was a leader in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and is an unsung hero of the liberation movement.



**Editors, The Black Agenda Review**

## ESSAY: Racial Prejudice in Cuba

15 September 2021

Contemporary conversations about racism in Cuba appear to have forgotten what it was like for Africans on the island republic before the Revolu





Erica Gaines

## The Limits of "Lived Experience"

15 September 2021

The mantra of "lived experience" can be a dangerous cover for reactionary politics.



Margaret Kimberley, BAR senior columnist

## Freedom Rider: Standing with the Cuban People

23 July 2021

The current Black-centered Cuban protest operation is very well orchestrated and if Black people in this country are not careful, they will end up

# BELLY *of the* BEAST

Semassa Boko and Jeanette Charles

## Reflections on Cuba's Black Radical History, Revolutionary Health, and Grassroots Media

29 April 2021

It is vitally necessary to bridge the gap in knowledge and dismantle US misinformation campaigns against Cuba's realities for international English

[MORE STORIES](#)

---



---

Margaret Kimberley, BAR Executive Editor and Senior Columnist

## OceanGate and How the Wealthy Kill

28 Jun 2023

A mass attack of derision occurred when the facts about the Titan submersible were revealed. Laughter at the expense of an incompetent rich man is understandable but skirts the issue. The rich get...

---



• **Ann Garrison, BAR Contributing Editor**

---

## Human Suffering Worsens in DRC, the Heart of Africa

28 Jun 2023

A million more Congolese people have been displaced to satisfy the resource hunger of the industrialized world.

---



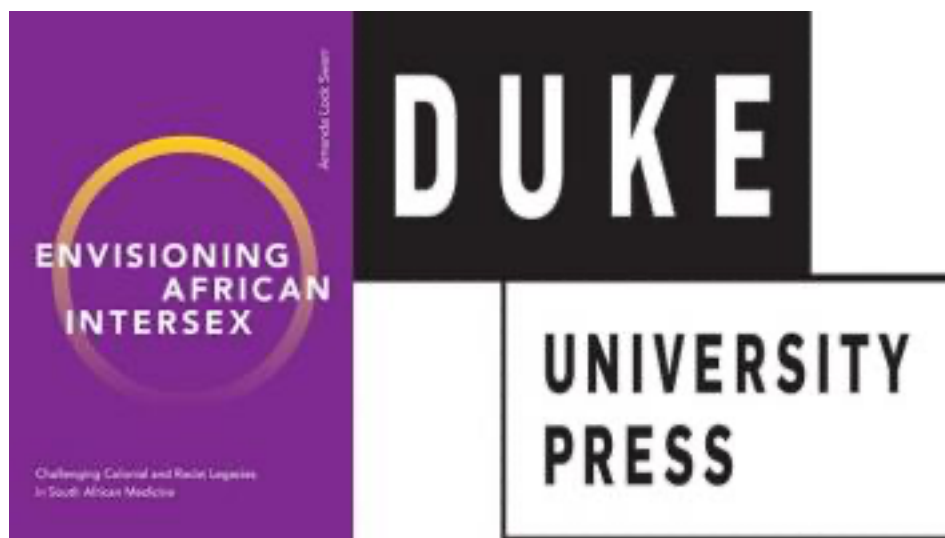
Raymond Nat Turner, BAR poet-in-residence

## Bipartisol and the ailing body politic

28 Jun 2023

Bipartisol and the ailing body

politic



Roberto Sirvent, BAR Book Forum Editor

## BAR Book Forum: Amanda Lock Swarr’s Book, “Envisioning African Intersex”

28 Jun 2023

This week’s featured author is Amanda Lock Swarr. Swarr is Associate Professor of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Washington.

---



---

[Black Alliance for Peace US Out of Africa Network](#)

### AFRICOM Watch Bulletin #47

28 Jun 2023

Black Agenda Report Contributing Editor Ann Garrison analyzes the continued plunder of the Democratic Republic of Congo by U.S. allies Uganda and Rwanda in the latest Black Alliance for Peace AFRICOM...

---

- [Load More](#)