

NBUF takes on the ideas and issues of the '80s

GRASSROOTS NEWS, N.W. — "Essentially, what is required is that we learn to be tolerant, understanding and flexible regarding each other's philosophies, programs and political ideologies as long as these various philosophies, programs and ideologies promote in some way the kind of fundamental cultural, political, economic and social change for Black people envisioned and championed by the National Black United Front" (Article III, Par. 3—Constitution of the National Black United Front).

Land, Power and Self-Determination

The meaning of this section of NBUF's constitution was displayed in the workshop on Land, Power and Self-Determination where participants interviewed said three different solutions were offered to the national delegation to solve this crisis of the Black experience in America.

Omari Tahir, a citizen from the Republic of New Afrika, defined the principles of the Republic. He said, "We are fighting for five states in the South where Black people have traditionally lived and where we have been enslaved." The five states the RNA wants seceded from America are Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama and Louisiana.

This concept of land incorporated in the ideology of the Republic of New Afrika, according to Tahir, raises the struggle of Afro-Americans from Civil Rights to that of Human Rights. "By emphasizing the land question we are able to stand up in the world and be recognized as a people who are colonialized."

He said he learned this international principle of land from the Minister of the Interior for the Afrikan State of Ghana. "The number one thing he told me was, 'As long as you are not struggling to liberate some land there is no government on the earth who can help you with your problem!'"

Tahir said this concept of land was introduced in the 20th century by Malcolm X who developed it from the Honorable Elijah Muhammad who led The Nation of Islam. "Elijah Muhammad said we must have some land to call our own because everything you need to survive on comes from the land. You can't have any type of economic system unless you have some land to base it on."

The citizens of the RNA believe the economic status of Afro-Americans in America is steadily eroding. "Afro-Americans were brought here for one thing. And that was to help develop America. America is now developed and she has no more use for the Afro-American — other than as consumers."

The Republic of New Afrika wants those five states in the Black belt South turned over to the majority of blacks who live there to create an independent government consisting of various branches of administration.

Community Love and Consolidation

Brother Oba T'Shaka, from the San Francisco chapter of NBUF and the National Coordinator for the Pan-Afrikan Secretariat, said the Black Liberation Movement is in the process of consolidation and rebuilding.

Brother T'Shaka said Afro-Americans must come to grips with their historical situation. "It is romantic for us to treat our situation as though we were living in Afrika. It is insane for us to treat our situation as though we were living in the People's Republic of China. It is romantic for us to think that a situation where Blacks are in a majority on their own land base is the same as where blacks are not on a land base that we have yet to agree on. If we think they are the same, then we have been confused about the nature of our historical situation."

T'Shaka said the nature of Afro-Americans' historical situation is, "We occupy the same economic, geographical and political space as does our oppressor. This is the reality that separates us from most of the situations in the world today. We have to look at this reality inside of a declining power. However, it is still the most powerful industrial and technological nation on earth."



Voting on issues during a meeting.

"This proximity to our oppressor comes in many different forms. One is that Blacks have always been much more affected by the shifts in the economy. Whatever time this economy has gone into contractions, racism, which is the prime enemy of our people, has become more serious. Whatever gains Blacks have made will be taken back and it has meant that the Right Wing, which has been vicious and harsh, will become even more vicious and harsher. I don't need to tell you we are going through that period right now."

He says he believes that the Afro-American community in America needs to develop more confidence in itself and, most importantly, love. "If we don't develop an undying love for our people, if we don't develop a sense of nationalism or revolutionary Pan-Afrikaism which means a love not only for Black folks in America but for Blacks throughout the world, we can forget about land. No one is going to pay you for that struggle. The will to struggle comes from within."

Brother Oba T'Shaka concluded by stating that the Afro-American of the 1980s occupies a unique presence historically. "We are not only an Afrikan people but a new Afrikan people, with the mixture of the experiences of America and Afrika. In the bosom of our people evolved the only unique culture in the history of this country. We must build on the positive aspects of that culture if we are going to build a nation among our people."

Revolution

Jamila Rogers addressed the panel from the League of Revolutionary Struggle and the St. Louis chapter of NBUF. She received a silent, but respectful, reception from the assembly. "The L.R.S. is a multinational communist organization that is committed to the overthrow of the system of Monopoly Capitalism. We adhere to the principles of revolutionary thought of Marxism, Leninism and Maoism."

Although her philosophy differed from those of the other panelists, Rogers praised the concept of the NBUF. "The kinds of discussions that are going on here in Portland, Oregon are crucial in raising the theoretical level of understanding in the Black Liberation Movement. Right now, we all understand there is no singular view giving leadership to the struggle. It is important for us to understand those views, along with our differences and our unity. Because finally, it will be the masses of Black people that will determine what program of liberation we will pursue."

Rogers supports the demands of the Republic of New Afrika but hopes a program is created for those who have lived in that region who are not of Afrikan descent. And she called her Marxist, Leninist and Maoist ideology a scientific, universal principle which could be applied to the struggle of Third World people living in the United States.

Economic Independence and Development

The other workshops conducted by the National Black United Front at their Fourth Annual Convention were Police Brutality and Killings, Issues Affecting Black Women, Organizing Techniques for BUFs, and Economic Independence and Development.

The Economic Independence and Development workshop was headed by Robert John Abrams of Washington, D.C. For the past ten years Abrams orchestrated an economic symphony which resulted in one of the most successful community



Rev. Herbert Daughtry, National BUF Chairperson

owned and operated food cooperatives serving low to moderate income families ever to have been established along the Atlantic seaboard. It was called Building Community Art 25-Cent Food Co-op.

"We as Afro-Americans have the economic clout to develop economic independence inside of the United States of America. We have it at every level of Black society. If we as individuals or collectively choose to we could have, at this very moment, in abundance, the goods and services that we need to support human life."

Abrams said that over fifty thousand Black people in Metropolitan Washington have chosen to control their food expenditures by joining the BCA's 25-cent Food Co-op. The first part of Abrams' experiment was the 25-cent Egg Workshop. He explained, "We distributed to over two thousand Black households over 124,000 dozens of large grade AA eggs at the unchanged price of 25 cents per dozen. This was during the time when the United States inflationary economy was experiencing the highest rate of inflation in the dairy industry. Black people did this because they chose to do so."

He said the first step to accomplish this task was taking control over the means of production. "You can control the price of the food you eat, the quality and how the food will be distributed. You can build this system on unchanged prices. Because Black people are locked into fixed incomes that only change downward. We must build an economy that reflects, embodies and uses this reality."

With the basic membership fee of 25¢, consumers were entitled to purchase a variety of fresh produce at the unchanged price of two pounds for 25¢. They were also expected to pay \$1.00 in monthly dues and pre-order and pre-pay for their food.

"We arrived at the understanding," Abrams said, "that it is extremely difficult to persuade Black people to make value judgments and decisions. You must find a way to trap people into making life decisions. We do this by creating an offer the people can't refuse. In the instance of food we produced a life trap. We produced and distributed the finest quality of food at the unchanged price of two pounds for 25¢. No person who knows he has a need for food can refuse that. By saying I choose to have two pounds for 25¢ of the finest food, he is participating in creating an alternative food system that affects himself, his family and all others who participated in it."



Bro. Oba T'Shaka

The many faces of the Black United Front
(Photos by Richard J. Brown)



Education workshop.



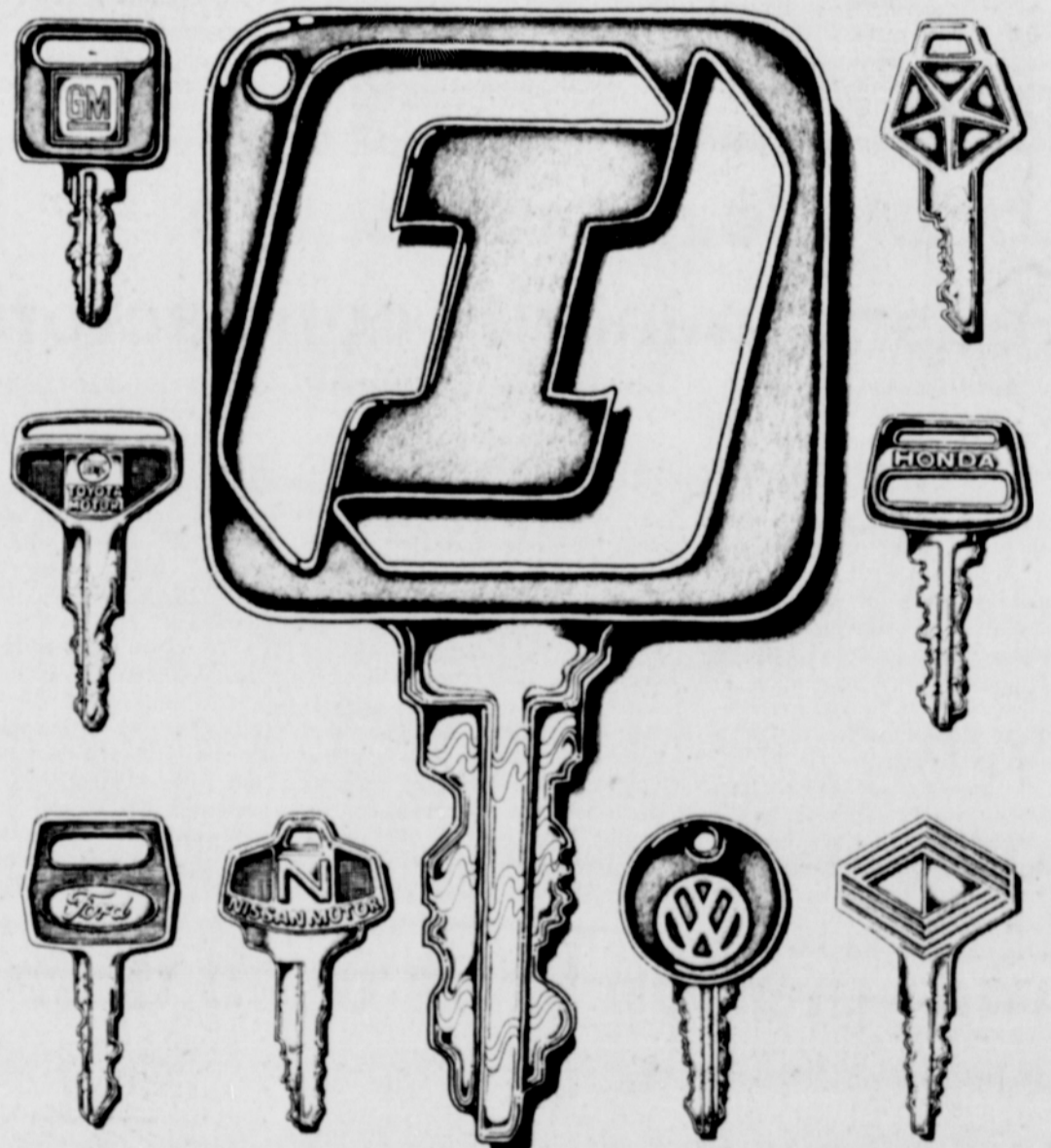
Workshop on issues affecting Black women.



Joan White, NW Regional representative, makes a point.



Robert John Abrams



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