



"I still say the white man's gotta live like a Black man in order to know his problems."



"Oh, I'm still gonna picket . . . I just want a different sign."

Toward A Psychology of Black Liberation

THE NEGRO-TO-BLACK CONVERSION EXPERIENCE

BY WILLIAM E. CROSS JR.

*A rundown of the stages and
levels of awareness*



IN THE September 1970 issue of *Ebony* magazine, Joseph White, a Black psychologist, called for research and development of a Black psychology. Professor White stated that the so-called neutral value paradigms currently being used to evaluate and conceptualize the behavior of Black Americans are in reality weighted towards the conditions and values of white middle-class America. A Black psychology, according to White, would evolve from an understanding of the behavior of human beings within the context of Black America, i.e., the psycho-social economic and cultural setting of Black communities.

A sub-heading or component of a Black psychology might be the psychology of Black liberation. In fact, one of the first concerns of Black behavioral scientists should be the creation of developmental theories, personality constructs and Black life-styles that promote psychological liberation under conditions of oppression. You will note

my emphasis on the wording—"psychological liberation under conditions of oppression"—for it is taken for granted that the model for complete freedom has been articulated by the late Franz Fanon. But Fanon's model stipulates an important prerequisite to total freedom: an on-going war to off one's oppressor! In the military sense of the word, we are not at war with white America. War may become inevitable, but today Black people are not being freed by the Fanon model. Yet, Black people are experiencing individual and collective change. Many of us can state that we were anti-Black, brain-washed, or "colored" in our perspective a few years ago, while today we see ourselves as having become Afro-Americans, Pan-Africanists, or simply Black persons. Oppressive conditions remain a constant factor; in fact, oppression is greater today than, say, in 1965; however, we have been liberated, psychologically speaking, despite continued oppression. In a sense, we are less susceptible to psychological and ideological domination by the enemy and more receptive to thoughts, values and actions that have revolutionary implications. As we are not in physical (military) combat with the enemy we are not experiencing complete freedom, but it is obvious that some other process or "model" is at work transforming our minds as if to better prepare us for the "unknown" obligations of tomorrow (including the option of war).

Using phenomenological data, scattered interview material, and juxtaposing information obtained by simply interacting with Brothers and Sisters who were going through changes as a consequence of their participation in the modern Black movement, I have attempted to construct a model depicting the various stages persons traverse in becoming Black oriented. In its current form it might best be called a "phenomenological interpretation of the Negro-to-Black conversion experience."

Negro-to-Black Conversion Experience

"I don't want to think of myself as a Negro and it offends me to be called 'black.' If each of us would pay particular attention to self-refinement the degree of racial friction would be significantly decreased."

"Yea, it all started when they shot Brother King. Honkies planned that shit and it really shook me up so bad until I began to see what was really happening to Black people. For awhile I could no longer stand to be around white people. I hated all their guts and on some days I swear I wanted to kill the first honky I saw. You know what, I even began to feel that we were better than they were because we had so much soul and love. . . ."
reverse racism
"To walk around 125th and

thing, can you dig it? With I see so many beautiful Black folks trying to make it, doing everything just to stay alive, yet still being able to sing and dance in such a soulful manner, it just blows my mind and I sometimes want to cry tears of joy. Can you dig it? I'm a part of it all! I see Black, feel Black, oh how wonderful it is to be Black."

"Black power must be more than group therapy. To be effective it must be programmed."

These comments, or ones like them, are being made by Afro-Americans, the educated and the uneducated, well-to-do and the poor, the light-skinned or the dark-complexioned, as each is transformed from a "Negro" into a Black American. When each remark was made, the person felt, thought, and acted differently; yet each statement reflects the qualities of a particular stage for *one* process. All too frequently, analytical articles and commentaries focus on the Black militant, the Black middle-class, or the apathetic Black person, creating the impression that each state or condition is unrelated to the other. A closer look suggests that today's Black theoretician was a well-programmed conservative three years ago and an impulsive rhetorical revolutionary last year! Obviously, Blackness is a state of mind and, as such, is ex-

a Muslim *before* he promoted the Organization of Afro-American Unity; Cleaver was immersed in the hatred of white people and his conversion to a humanist camp *required* the rape of white women; LeRoi Jones' struggle for a masters degree in philosophy preceded his quest for a Black identity. In becoming Black, or in being deniggerized, as Sister Barbara Ann Teer might say, an individual *must* pass through a series of well-defined stages; the Black experience is a process. As we analyze and comprehend the process, we will be moving toward the development of a psychology of Black liberation. The five stages of the process are: pre-encounter (pre-discovery) stage; encounter (discovery) stage; immersion-emersion stage; internalization stage; and finally the commitment stage.

Stage One: Pre-encounter. In the pre-encounter stage a person is programmed to view and think of the world as being non-Black, anti-Black, or the opposite of Black. The person's world-view is dominated by Euro-American determinants. The sociological, political, cultural, and psychological conditions that result from this world-view are the same for both

lower- and middle-class Black people. That is to say, the content of the pre-liberation Black experience within the class system differs but the context is similar since both think, act and behave in a manner that degrades Blackness. Thus, putting lye on your hair as opposed to getting it cut in an "Ivy League" fashion (content) are different styles of Black degradation (context). To continue, the pre-encounter person's historical perspective distorts Black history. It is believed that Black people came from a strange, uncivilized, "dark" continent, and that the search for Black history begins in 1865—that slavery was a civilizing experience.

Brothers and Sisters from the ghetto functioning at the pre-encounter level assume they are more relevant than Black folks who live "outside" the ghetto; ghetto residents will justify and even romanticize hustling or exploiting other Black people as being "necessary for survival." For pre-encounter Negroes a white aesthetic transcends class lines. It is dramatized by deifying the white woman, and is also reflected in the content, themes, vehicles of emphasis, colorations, and mode of expressions in numerous cultural and academic preferences. Even in the ghetto, where purer forms of Black expressions can be found, one discovers the ghetto resident referring to the blues or jazz as something low, bad, or sexy (white cultural value system).

Pre-encounter Negroes are politically naive and are programmed to have faith in the Protestant ethic. There is an extreme dependency on white leadership, and the assimilation-integration paradigm is thought to be the only model for cohesive race relations. Under the dictates of the assimilation-integration paradigm the development of an "American" identity involves affirmation of "White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant" characteristics, and negation, dilution, or even denial of non-WASP behavior. As Western standards are inherently anti-Black, the cruel paradox of the assimilated Negro is that, in becoming a good American, he has also become anti-Black and anti-African. The white man is viewed as intellectually superior and technically mystical; Negroes in the pre-encounter stage tend to become enveloped in the white man's rhetoric, confusing his words for his deeds. Emphasis is on the individual seeking to get "ahead"; the advancement of the race is gauged by how far "I" progress in the system as opposed to how the system relates to the "group". Pre-encounter Negroes typically distrust Black-controlled businesses or organizations and prefer to be called "Negro," "civilized," "colored," "human being," or "American citizen."



Stage Two: Encounter. What experience, information, or event causes a person functioning at the pre-encounter level to become interested in, or at least receptive to, material that will contest a number of his or her basic assumptions concerning Blacks? More simply, what motivates a person (in the pre-encounter world), to encounter or to become Black? A predictable answer is suggested by the word encounter: some experience that manages to slip by or even shatters the person's current feeling about himself and his interpretation of the condition of Blacks in America. The encounter is a verbal or visual event, rather than an "in-depth" intellectual experience. For example, the death of Martin Luther King Jr. hurled thousands of pre-encounter Negroes into a search for a deeper understanding of the Black Power movement. Witnessing a friend being assaulted by the police, televised reports of racial incidents, or discussions with a friend or loved one who is further advanced into his or her Blackness may "turn a person on" to his own Blackness.

Encounter entails two steps: first, experiencing the encounter, and; second, beginning to reinterpret the world as a consequence of the encounter. The second part is a testing phase during which the individual cautiously and fearfully tries to validate his new perceptions. On the outside the person is generally very quiet, yet a storm is brewing inside. The person will

go to meetings and simply listen as he tries to determine the validity of this ominous thing called "Blackness," "~~Black Power~~," or "Black History." "Maybe, just maybe, things are different than I thought them to be and if so, *I want to find the truth.*"

Each individual asks himself very personal questions. The Black intellectual wonders: "Have I been unaware of the Black experience or was I programmed to be disgusted by it?" A ghetto youth asks: "Is it right to kill another Black person or prostitute my sisters?" And the Black college student says: "Do I date white girls, or am I avoiding Black women?"

The tentative answers are obvious, and the person quickly compares the implications of his new insights with the manner in which he had been living (pre-encounter stance). Previously hostile, or at best neutral, toward the Black movement, the encounter jolts the person into at least considering a different interpretation of the Black condition. His heart pounding, hands sweating, and eyes filled with tears, the person speaks the magic words for the first time in his life: "Black is beautiful." At this point guilt becomes a tremendous factor. The middle-class person feels guilty for having "left" the race; the lower-class person feels guilt for degrading his Blackness! At the same time the person becomes increasingly angry as it is realized that he or she has been "programmed or brain-washed" all

these years—and the vicious enemy is the white man and all the white world! Black rage and guilt combine to fling the person into a frantic, determined, obsessive, extremely motivated search for Black identity. A "Negro" is dying and a "Black American" is being resurrected. We have reached the immersion-emersion stage.

**Stage Three: Immersion-Emer-
sion.** In this period the person immerses himself in the world of Blackness. The person attends political meeting, joins the Muslims, goes to rapping sessions, attends seminars, and art shows that focus on Blackness. Everything of value must be Black or relevant to Blackness. The experience is an immersion into Blackness and a liberation from whiteness. Regardless of the opinions of others, the person actually feels that he is being drawn toward qualitatively different experiences as he is being torn from his former orientations. The immersion is a strong, powerful, dominating sensation constantly being energized by Black rage, guilt, and a third and new fuel, a developing sense of pride. As one brother put it, "I was swept along by a sea of Blackness. The white world, white culture, and white person are dehumanized

Yesterday

("honky," "pig," "white devil" and become biologically inferior as the Black person and Black world are deified. Superhuman and supernatural expectations are conjured concerning anything Black. Everything that is Black is good and romantic. The person accepts his hair, his brown skin, his very being as now "beautiful." That a person exists and is Black is an inherently wonderful phenomenon. Black literature is passionately consumed; brothers and sisters who never had an interest in reading teach themselves to read and write. One spends a great deal of time developing an Afro hairstyle, and it becomes common to wear African-inspired clothing. Persons give themselves African names or drop the "American" name, as did Malcolm X; some babies are named after African heroes. Of course, an intense interest in "Mother Africa" develops. The word "Negro" is dropped and the person becomes an Afro-American, Black, Black-American, or even African.

During the immersion-emersion stage, the person has a creative burst, writing poetry, essays, plays, novels, or confessionals; a segment turns to the plastic arts or painting. People who never before sought or experienced creative activity discover they are able to express themselves in a totally new mode; witness the rebirth of LeRoi Jones (Imamu Amiri Baraka). Professional artists speak of profound

and fundamental change in the quality of their work. In explaining the change, these artists state that although they were born in a Black situation, their training and the pressure from society made them look for substance and content outside the Black experience. For example, some wanted to be "pure" and "free," creating art for art's sake, or others admitted that their senses could only receive messages from Europe and white America. With the realization of their Blackness, the professional artist is awakened to a vast and new world of rich colors, powerful dramas, irony, rage, oppression, survival, and impossible dreams! And it is all there within reach; the artist (or scholar) has simply to look in the mirror.

There occurs a turning inward and a withdrawal from everything perceived as being or representing the white world. Yet, ironically there also develops a need to confront the "man" as a means of dramatizing, concretizing, or proving one's Blackness. The confrontation, especially for Black leaders, is a manhood (or womanhood) ritual—a baptismal or purification rite. Carried to its extreme, the impulse is to confront white people, generally the police, on a life-or-death basis. When this impulse is coupled with a revolutionary rhetoric and program, a Black Panther is born. No control or oppressive technique—including the threat of death—is feared. Fanon's thesis of complete freedom through the vio-

lent overthrow of one's oppressor comes into the picture at this point, only the circumstances in the United States force the oppressor's death to be thought about or dreamed of but not actually carried out. Consequently, Brothers and Sisters report day-dreams and rhetoric involving physical combat with white people but few have turned their thoughts into reality.

At this juncture in the conversion experience, a common day-dream or fantasy is the urge to rip-off the first white person one passes on a particular day! "Kill whitey" fantasies appear to be experienced by Black people regardless of age, sex, or class background. Persons who fixate or stagnate at this point in their development are said to have a "pseudo" Black identity because it is based on the hatred and negation of white people rather than on the affirmation of a pro-Black perspective which includes commitment to the destruction of racism, capitalism and Western dominance. When warlike fantasies are nurtured by participation in a Black para-military organization, the dreams are sometimes actualized in the execution of planned attacks on police. In most cases, however, Black para-military groups take on a defensive, provocative, ambivalent, "I dare you whitey" stance. That they never quite devote themselves to the Fanon model suggests that paradigm may not be adequate (practical) for inclusion in strategies for Afro-American liberation.

Sound Samuilan
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Confrontation, bluntness, directness, and an either/or mentality are the primary if not the only basis for communication with other people, Black or white. The much discussed "Blacker than thou" syndrome intoxicates the minds of many people at this juncture. Black people are classified into such neat groups or categories as "Uncle Tom," "militant," "together," "souful," "middle-class," "intellectual snob," etc. Labeling others helps the person clarify his own identity, but this name-calling phase can produce disastrous results (California Panther versus "US" murders). Not only does this person stereotype people, but his view of cosmology is greatly simplified and tends to be racist. To repeat, the person is concerned that his Blackness be pure or acceptable, and the purification rites are energized by a mixture of guilt, rage and growing sense of pride.

Rhetorically, the person shifts preference from individualism to mutualism or collectivism. A constant theme of selflessness, dedication and commitment is evident; the person feels overwhelming attachment to all Black surroundings. His main focus in life becomes this feeling of "togetherness and soul." The zenith of the immersion-emersion stage is the crystallization of these events.

The first half of the third stage is immersion into Blackness; the second is emergence from the dead-end, either/or racist, oversimplified aspects of the immersion

experience. The person begins to "level off" and control his experiences. In fact, the person cannot continue to handle such an intense and concentrated affect level and must find a plateau. The desire and need to level off is greatly facilitated by the direction of the movement as discussed by national and international Black heroes. Malcolm X's trip to Mecca or Cleaver's discussions in *Soul on Ice* swing the person away from a racist ideology. One is able to discard or seriously question the simplistic components of the "Black is beautiful" philosophy, especially the tendency toward reverse racism. Such terms as power, control of one's mind, educational process, economic systems, institutions, programs, and process are considered. The white man is humanized (painfully, white people are recognized as equal to Black people at birth), and synthesizing Black rage with reason becomes the emphasis. [The individual is now at least receptive to the critical analysis of the Afro-American condition from a cultural, political and socioeconomic view.] Accepted factors of the Black experience are incorporated, and the person focuses on, or at least he is highly receptive to, presentations and plans for action for the development (liberation) of the Black community or the necessary transformations of Black life-styles. The rage is still evident, however, but guilt sensations are being replaced by feelings of pride. Whereas the immersion period dominated the

individual, during the emersion phase of the Black experience the individual begins to gain awareness and control of his behavior. When control, awareness and incorporation predominate, the person is progressing into the fourth stage.



Stage Four: Internalization. The fourth stage is the most difficult and complex to explain because the events that occur during the immersion-emersion stage may frustrate or inspire an individual. Consequently, the degree of a person's future (or certainly his immediate involvement) in the Black movement may be either negligible or significant. During the immersion-emersion stage, the individual develops an idealistic, superhuman level of expectancy toward practically anything "Black," in which case minimal reinforcement may carry the person into continued involvement (evolution into the internalization stage). Yet prolonged or traumatic frustration (and contestment) of these high expectancy levels may produce a Black person more deeply rooted in nihilistic expectancies than witnessed in the behavior of individuals functioning at the pre-encounter level. A surface analysis suggests three nonproductive options for persons moving beyond the immersion-emersion state:

Disappointment and Rejection: Some persons have their expecta-

tions frustrated and they resort to a nihilistic, hopeless, even anti-people world-view, perhaps becoming more believers in the white man's "magic" and the Black man's inferiority.

Continuation and Fixation at Stage Three: Individuals who experience particularly painful perceptions and confrontations will be overwhelmed with hate for white people and fixate at the third stage. An aware brother or sister from the ghetto will be more angry than those who can move in and out of the most oppressive Black conditions (college students, the middle-class, or Black researchers).

Internalization: Others internalize and incorporate aspects of the immersion-emersion experience into their self-concept. They achieve a feeling of inner security and are more satisfied with themselves. There is receptivity to discussions or plans of action; however, receptiveness is as far as it goes. The person is not committed to a plan of action. He or she becomes the "nice" Black person with an Afro hair style and an attachment to Black things. Thus, it is possible for a person to progress to a state of psychological Blackness and then stop developing! Fixation and stagnation at the internalization stage is reflected in the arrogant anti-intellectual attitudes of many Black high school and college students. These students seem to believe that having experienced the Negro-to-Black conversion is tantamount to having completed an

intensive intellectual analysis of the Black experience! "I am Black so why should I study the Black experience . . ." or so the saying goes. Feeling "Black and beautiful" becomes an end in itself rather than the source of motivation for improving one's skills or for a deeper understanding of the Black condition. Furthermore, his world-view remains the same—still very American. Cosmologically the person is unchanged, yet psychologically and spiritually the person is significantly different. Generally, the self-concept modifications do make the person receptive to meaningful change in his world-view. In fact, Black revolutionary changes may only be possible *after* Black people have been exposed to a more positive perception of themselves.

The Black theorist, planner, or leader must comprehend that a person does not always experience modification of his political views concurrently with changes in his psychological state. Our audience is not automatically enlightened, but it is now captive.

Stage Five: Internalization-Commitment. I would like to regress for a brief moment in order to introduce a concept that will prove valuable in discussing the qualities of a person functioning at the internalization-commitment

stage. When a person first decides to change his identity from Negro-to-Black, he generally experiences frightening periods of anxiety that are related to his intense concern over whether or not he is "Black enough," according to his internal definition of the ideal "Black militant" and/or according to the definition of a "perfect" Black person he perceives his peers to hold. Let us refer to this anxiety as "Weusi Anxiety," or anxiety over Blackness (*weusi* is the Swahili word for Black). The degree of experienced Weusi Anxiety varies as a function of the internalization of positive Black attitudes.

In other words, when a person is in the early phases of his transformation, we would predict that his new identity has not been incorporated, in which case he will feel insecure with his new and different frame of reference. He is preoccupied with rejection of his old ideas, values and behavior while romanticizing and oversimplifying his new ideal self. His first encounter with Black pride is really based on the negation of his past and hatred of white people, along with a simplistic rigid code of Blackness *rather than* the affirmation of pro-Black ideas, values and actions. The person's uneasiness with the new frame of reference is demonstrated by the level of Weusi Anxiety, degree of anger and lack of control over anger towards white people, and the limited internalization of a Black perspective. All of these factors in part characterize a re-

stricted, withdrawn ego that is protecting itself while "inside" it tries to re-shape, redefine, and rebuild those personality components related to the ego-ideal.

Now let us turn to a description of the person who has reached the fifth stage, Internalization and Commitment. Assuming the person is able to continue his development, it follows that as a Brother or Sister begins to "live" in accordance with a new self-image, he or she will eventually become the new identity. The shift is from concern about how your friends see you (Weusi Anxiety) to confidence in one's personal standards of Blackness; from uncontrolled rage toward white people to controlled, felt and conscious anger toward oppressive and racist institutions; from symbolic rhetoric to quiet, dedicated, long-term commitment; from unrealistic urgency to a sense of destiny; from anxious, insecure, rigid, inferiority feelings to Black pride, self-love and a deep sense of Black communalism. As internalization and incorporation increase, attitudes toward white people become less hostile, or at least realistically contained, Weusi Anxiety diminishes, and pro-Black attitudes become more expansive, open, and less defensive. At this point, I am simply describing the stage four (internalization) person in greater detail. The individual functioning at the fifth stage differs from the person in the fourth stage in that he or she is committed to a plan. He is actively trying to

change his community. His values, like the stage-four person, will probably still have a decidedly Western overtone. He is going beyond rhetoric and into action and he defines change in terms of the masses of Black people rather than the advancement of a few. Academically speaking, should the person develop a comparative referent (non-Western and Western insights) we have the "ideal" Black person.

The significance of non-Western insights is dramatized when considering the problem of liberating Black scholars. The "Negro" scholar hesitates to become involved in the Black experience because his perspective is distorted by the limitations of the philosophy and epistemology of Western science. At least six factors define the constraints that prevent the Black scholar from attaining personal liberation: (1) Western thought relies primarily on *intellectual* factors as it concomitantly suppresses affective inputs; (2) the behavioral sciences, which have evolved from the rational referent, also deify cognitive functions and minimize the value of emotionally energized behavior; (3) the Western science rhetoric suggests nonviolent, rational-intellectual solutions and emphatically rejects violent resolutions as irrational and even "immoral"; (4) racism permeates Western thought to the extent that the social sciences have maintained racism rather than produced models for Black liberation;

(5) social scientists have traditionally been content with a statistical, categorical, static, descriptive analysis of the Black community with minimal time and effort spent on prescriptive analysis for rectifying the Black condition; and (6) a Negro trained in a Western university sees the Black experience as a study in gross pathology or cultural deprivation.

In essence, the Negro Western scholar seeks continued sophistication of intellect as he prays for emotional impotence. Emphasis is on the negation of affect rather than the eruption, embracement and survival of emotion. It is not surprising, therefore, that so-called Negro scholars have not been capable of presenting models for Afro-American liberation, especially when Black liberation must involve two components: first, the discovery, eruption, embracement, and incorporation of affect (Black rage, guilt, and pride); and second, the synthesis of affect with reason. In liberating Black scholars, we should add a third requirement: exposure to non-Western thought.

A final note on stage-five behavior. One of the most striking qualities of many people who are into stage five is the compassion they exhibit towards folks who have not completed the process. They tend to watch over "new recruits," helping them conquer reactionary white hatred, showing them the pitfalls of Black pride without Black skills, prodding the potential Black scholar, artist, or

community organizer to have faith in the Black perspective, or firmly but warmly urging the rhetorical scientific communistic anti-religious super-Black "revolutionary" to recapture his Black humanism (etc.). The compassionate stage-five Black person understands and accepts the necessity of all phases of the Negro-to-Black transition, including the rage, anger, and Weusi Anxiety. On the other hand, I have also met Brothers and Sisters who, upon completion of the conversion experience, turn right around and deny the necessity for all that "symbolism, ritualism, and rhetoric." This type of person is very arrogant and short-tempered with people who are into their "stage-three super-Black bag." My guess is that this is a form of intellectual arrogance that results from the conviction that reason, thought and unemotionalism represent the essence of the Negro-to-Black transformation. Note the issue is not controlled anger or the synthesis of affect (Black pride) with reason (a plan of action), but the tendency of stage-five intellectualizers to underestimate, or even deny, the importance of anger and rage in the development of Black consciousness.

In closing this section, I turn to the wisdom of Malcolm X, who never forgot or degraded the highly emotional experiences that were a part of his own rebirth. In terms of the five-stage model being discussed in this paper, Malcolm's encounters with stages two, three and

four centered around his life as a Black Muslim. Having moved or developed in a different direction with the establishment of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, Malcolm demonstrated great insight into his own renaissance and profound compassion toward the significance of the Muslim movement when he stated . . . "I said I respected the Nation of Islam for its having been a psychologically revitalizing movement and a source of moral and social reform . . ." (p. 359, *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, by Malcolm X and Alex Haley. Grove Press, 1964).

Fate Versus Design

One cannot help noticing the crudity of the process that results because so much is left to chance and the unconscious. The process shows potential for creativity and destruction. It has created new legislation, elected Black officials, created Black Studies Programs, resurrected Black womanhood and manhood, increased the receptivity of the masses to their Black heritage, and cured dope addicts. Yet the process has also been responsible for allowing the death of Malcolm X, the superficial battles between nationalists and Panthers, and students turning against each other in "Blacker than thou-ness." Perhaps the most dreadful irony is that thousands of Black people were "turned on" to the realities of Black life (their encounter phase) by the murder of Martin Luther King Jr.

Until the Black community con-

trols and directs the process, we must continue to rely on the jolting consequences of fortuitous events. The Muslims, Panthers and cultural nationalists have helped to lead the way, but each tends to go into a "Blacker-than-thou" bag. We need a program designed to awaken the masses of Black people and to provide a multitude of options for actualizing one's Blackness.

Implications of the Process

The contemporary Black experience is a tribute to the masses of Afro-Americans. Without the insight and support of a significant vanguard group, the Black masses have formulated and experimented with methods for liberating itself! The oppressed Black scholar has been freed by the crude, stumbling, unrefined, global expressions of lowly Black folks. It is the challenge, if not the obligation, of Black scholars to study, amplify, and develop those processes which have created conditions of Black liberation, even if these conditions are not to be legitimized in the sacred halls of Western scholarship. The implications of the Black experience when viewed as a process are:

1. The process should be viewed as the *Afro-American model for self-actualization under conditions of oppression*. A relevant Black community will be aware that all stages are necessary, including the eruption of Black rage, guilt and pride.

2. The goals of Black self-actu-

alization will be (a) awareness of the condition of the masses of Black people; (b) development of skills; (c) preparation for participating in the mass struggle of Black people. Change will be defined as actions that affect the lives of large blocks of people (relevant reform). Achievement and reward will be correlated with activities related to the collective good of Black people.

3. Black scholars must understand Black rage as genuine human anger that is manifesting itself all over the world. Black rage, in combination with guilt and pride, is the fuel of the Black movement. Our efforts must not mute, distort, or suppress Black rage; rather, we must recognize it for what it is: a potentially creative, productive, and unifying force when programmed by circumstances that are under the conscious control of the Black community.

4. Although he embraces Black rage as a natural and welcome component of the process for discovering the Black referent, the Black scholar must create programs which synthesize affect with ideas that will lead to action.

5. The dynamics of the programs developed to integrate affect and reason must increase the options for participation in the Black movement. Either/or, "Blacker-than-thou," or Panther versus nationalist arguments must be superseded by paradigms that: (a) teach and define the Black referent (Black condition); (b) allow for

the expression of genuine human outrage; (c) synthesize rage, guilt and pride with ideas that lead to productive, creative action; and (d) allow for participation in the struggle on various levels. Even under conditions of revolutionary warfare, not every "revolutionary" is carrying a gun. Therefore, whether we speak of relevant reform or preparation for revolution, the options for participation in the Black struggle must be increased.

This entire discussion has been appropriately titled, "Towards A Psychology of Black Liberation," for several reasons. In the first place, one person cannot capture the essence and spirit of the modern Black Revitalization Movement; thus, a definitive statement from the psychological perspective will result from collaboration with other Black psychologists and psychiatrists, such as William S. Hall, Thomas White and Alvin Pousaint. Furthermore, the conversion model is really an adult experience, while a completed psychology of Black liberation must also create socialization models and child-rearing techniques that will demonstrate to Black parents how to raise children in the image and likeness of Black heroes who resisted oppression. For these reasons the above five-stage model is a step toward the establishment of a psychology of Black liberation. A completed version will include a refined model that depicts the conversion of deracinated Negroes into Afro-Americans; articulation

of socialization or identification models based on the lives of Malcolm, W. E. B. Du Bois, Angela Davis, Marcus Garvey (etc.); and elucidation of child-rearing tech-

niques which will facilitate the actualization of the militant socialization models.

Harambee and Love.



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