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## PATRIARCHY

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Patriarchy is an authoritative male system that is both oppressive and discriminatory. It is oppressive in social, political, economic, and cultural environments. It is discriminatory in its control of access to power, management of resources and benefits, and manipulation of public and private power structures. Patriarchy is grounded in the assumption that the individual European male is a universal reference point and the source of defining visions of the cosmos, society, citizenship, and the individual self within hierarchical concepts of gender, race, and class relations.

Although some authors contend that matriarchy preceded patriarchy, patriarchy did not replace matriarchy. The two social systems originated in different parts of the world, and they are antithetical systems in that they are based on very different principles. In the African conception, a matriarchy is a society in which maternal energy and mother love are socially cohesive forces. Thus matriarchy is not, like patriarchy, a dominating ruling system—it is a social organization focused on the power of women as mothers and on the matrilineal ownership of the home and wealth.

Patriarchy is an authoritative system, in a broad sense, that resulted from the Western European historical and sociological approaches to the development of social and family structures as addressed by Western scholars. Thus, the paradigm that underlies the modern assumptions of patriarchy may have emerged from the insight of specific European authors drawing on the patriarchal basis of Greek and Roman philosophies. These authors saw matriarchy, and the

matrilineal system of the ancient southern societies, as barbaric and sexually promiscuous. This pervasive notion on which patriarchy has based its assumption of superiority has left an undeniable curse on women and it has always been and still is the ultimate reason for the oppression of women in society.

### QUESTIONING THE PATRIARCHAL MODEL

Whether considered from a sex or gender perspective, in terms of male control of women's reproduction, or from a materialistic perspective where class relations and the sexual division of labor in the marketplace as economic and social extensions of male and female roles in the family are mutually self-reinforcing, patriarchy always stands for the totality of oppressive and exploitative relations that affect women in both the capitalist and the socialist systems. Patriarchy is, therefore, an all-encompassing oppressive paradigm whose transformation doesn't seem possible without a revolutionary questioning of every concept involved, beginning with the evolutionary model proposed by the classical theory of 19th-century Western writers.

Questioning the Western model is precisely what Cheikh Anta Diop committed himself to, and he succeeded in fully scientifically demonstrating its invalidity when he established a link between patterns of survival and systems of social organization geographically separated by the Mediterranean in a northern and a southern cradle. Diop clearly demonstrates that rather than a universal evolution, where one could speak of a transition from an inferior to a superior state, the two systems, with matriarchy favored by the agricultural societies of the southern cradle

and patriarchy favored by the nomadic people in the northern cradle, encountered one another and even disputed with each other as different human societies. Furthermore, at certain places and times, the two cradles were superimposed on each other or even coexisted.

Cheikh Anta Diop's presentation of matriarchy from an African perspective appears more complete than the Western male-centered discourse that shapes the Western patriarchal construction with its emphasis on the male as a universal point of departure in conceptualizing human existence. Thus Diop provides an opening for criticizing the ideas based on the assumption of a universal male referent (i.e., representation of the white male as the standard model for all ideological and theoretical positions), ideas that are rooted in biological differences and that account for much of the current hierarchical distribution and attribution of resources and power. This contrasting of matriarchy and patriarchy is a true revolutionary approach that places African cultural patterns at the center of the exploration of a distinctive concept of degrees of importance assigned to male and female subjects in African societies.

This revolutionary approach initiated by Diop, and developed by Afrocentric scholars such as Molefi Asante and Ama Mazama, defines the basis of the quest for an ideology of nonoppression. These scholars have based their views on ideas that derive from African holistic thought, which stresses collectiveness, relativism, nonhierarchicality, egalitarianism, and a balanced construction of life. Their intellectual idea is to confront patriarchy as an oppressive political and cultural system in order to eradicate it.

Indeed, such an Afrocentric task is in line with the harmonizing of the world, a central feature of Afrocentric thought. When one considers the fact that the enslaved African men and women brought to the Americas by Europeans were deprived of family bonds and faced the deepest destruction of family unity, order, and harmony from the 16th century on, it is possible to understand Africans' urgency in working to reclaim balance in society. In addition, slaveholders' sexual harassment, violation, and rape of the enslaved African girls and women could not but leave burning psychological marks in every black female. When the time came for Reconstruction, however, black men and women in America often built their family and social ties in the image of the European models of white America. By imitating the white male

pattern, the black men could not, would not, or were unable to affirm themselves as the alternative male model that black women would legitimately have expected to join in the consolidation of a cohesive African tradition of respectful communal values.

The Afrocentric paradigm as a holistic philosophical approach to the reality of the Africans in the diaspora contains, in its essence, the germ of a generating creative power that pursues a much more humanistic society than the prevailing Western patriarchal society. A genuine Afrocentricity seeks to examine the ancient continental African cultures for patterns of matriarchal social organization, family bonds, and human relations in an attempt to find a basis for a global revolutionary paradigm of female-male relationships in the 21st century.

— Ana Monteiro Ferreira

#### FURTHER READING

- Asante, Molefi Kete. (1994). *Malcolm X as Cultural Hero and Other Afrocentric Essays*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press. Asante's chapter on gender here is especially relevant to discussion of patriarchy.
- Diop, Cheikh Anta. (1978). *Cultural Unity of Black Africa*. Chicago: Third World Press. In this book, Diop exposes the commonalities among different African cultures before the presence of Europeans in Africa.
- Diop, Cheikh Anta. (1991). *Civilization or Barbarism*. New York: Lawrence Hill. Here Diop puts forth the idea that there are two cradles of world civilization, one matriarchal, the other patriarchal.
- Dove, Nah. (1998). *Afrikan Mothers*. Albany: State University of New York Press. This is an examination of the role of women in society, with special emphasis on how women and men participate in certain rituals.

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### THE PHILADELPHIA NEGRO

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In 1896, white aristocrat and reformer Susan P. Wharton, in conjunction with the University of Pennsylvania and the College Settlement Association, commissioned William Edward Burghardt (W.E.B.) Du Bois to undertake a study on Negroes in Philadelphia. Since Philadelphia contained the largest black population north of the Mason-Dixon Line (of all U.S. cities, only New Orleans, Washington, D.C., and Baltimore had larger populations), African Americans residing in the City of Brotherly Love became a logical group for examination. The genesis

of the study originated in late 19th-century reform movements, comprising New Social Science, Social Gospel, and College Settlement House Associations, which were designed to investigate the debased condition of downtrodden urbanites and offer problem-solving suggestions to ameliorate life for the urban poor.

Those who instituted the study held more than altruistic thoughts toward the black community, however, as their ulterior motive for the investigation was self-serving and pertained to politics. Elite reformers became disgruntled by the behavior of the corrupt political machine that derived support from the black electorate. They therefore sought to document the moral and social condition of local blacks. Du Bois, who had studied in Berlin and recently graduated with his doctorate from Harvard, became the ideal researcher for the project. Du Bois's extensive study on research methodology, which he had learned in Germany, and publication of his *Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, the first monograph published in the Harvard Historical Studies, demonstrated he possessed the acumen and preparation for the task at hand. Thus Du Bois easily complied with the stated goals of the benefactors of the research project, who sought to understand the "Negro problem" by focusing on the Seventh Ward, the largest and most diverse black ward in the city.

#### **DU BOIS'S FIELD RESEARCH FOR THE STUDY**

Du Bois's extensive field research and writing conducted on black Philadelphians was completed within the short time span of 15 months and achieved a series of firsts. Indeed, when Du Bois's *The Philadelphia Negro* was published in 1967, it became the first book of modern sociology. As members of a fledgling academic discipline, sociologists traditionally read books, reflected on the information presented, and offered ideas without conducting investigative research. Therefore, the interviews Du Bois conducted with Seventh Ward residents broke new ground in scientific inquiry. A second novel contribution inherent in Du Bois's work pertained to the original analysis that evolved from the format and methodology of his work. After conducting house-to-house interviews with all the black families in the Seventh Ward, Du Bois acquired candid information from 9,675 subjects. Through these investigations, Du Bois gained insight on the condition, aspirations, trials, and tribulations of the black community.

*The Philadelphia Negro* contained information about African Americans never previously presented to interested readers. Conscious of the need to make his work comprehensible to readers, Du Bois divided his study into four parts. The first part describes the history of the black people in the city, their present condition as individuals, their behavior as a social group, and the physical and social confines of their community. The second part is devoted to "the general condition of Negroes" and contains information on age, gender, education, and means of earning a living. The third part focuses on the group life of the black community, including the number of blacks in Philadelphia and their family situations and secular and religious organizations. Here, Du Bois also presents information on social maladjustment and individual deprivation characterized by crime, pauperism, and alcoholism. Finally, Du Bois assesses the physical and social environment, references and analyzes interracial relationships, and offers advice and suggestions for social reform.

Throughout the study, maps, statistical tables, charts, and graphs provide convincing testimony to the accuracy of the work. The ecological map detailing the distribution of the black population by socioeconomic class garnered special interest. Du Bois divided the black population into four categories: (1) the "middle classes" and those above, (2) the working people—fair to comfortable, (3) the poor, and (4) the vicious and criminal classes. Du Bois's study made it clear that African Americans can best be studied and understood within the context of class, consequently, ever since publication of *The Philadelphia Negro*, serious students of black communities have devoted attention to social stratification.

Du Bois intended to do far more than present evidence about the black situation. Prior to any previous scholar, Du Bois presented an assessment and expectations of the black elite. He excoriated the black aristocracy for drawing a line between themselves and the masses, and he chided the elite for being unprepared to lead their race. While the Harvard-trained Du Bois displayed aloofness and aristocratic tendencies himself, he nevertheless believed unequivocally that the better classes should recognize their duty to the masses.

#### **DU BOIS'S EMERGENCE AS A MAJOR SOCIAL SCIENTIST**

Unwittingly, those who contracted Du Bois to perform research on black Philadelphians created

an intellectual activist who never forgot the racism he experienced. Although the University of Pennsylvania listed Du Bois as an assistant professor in the sociology department, it never considered offering him a teaching position. Du Bois never forgot the slight. He later complained that the university never placed his name in the catalogue, and he believed the university's invitation had not been cordial. For most of his life, Du Bois would serve his race by galvanizing and encouraging blacks of higher station to fight relentlessly against racial discrimination. Du Bois and others with talent and ambition bristled at the "color line" that prevented them from acquiring the social and occupational positions worthy of their station.

The scholarly brilliance Du Bois displayed in *The Philadelphia Negro* was immediately recognized as a credit to American scholarship. Reviewers praised Du Bois's objectivity and willingly accepted his conclusions. And yet, few could have predicted that this seminal work on black Philadelphians would have far-reaching consequences that continued throughout the 20th century. The genesis of Du Bois's most important contributions to the black community appeared in *The Philadelphia Negro*—his demands for leadership emanating from the black elite, his condemnation of intraracial dissension caused by class differences, and his persistent expectations that those he termed the "talented tenth" (the 10% of blacks capable of leading the rest) receive proper respect from their white peers and the black masses. Throughout his career, Du Bois engaged in research and writing with a clear focus in mind: He sought freedom, justice, and equal opportunity for all African Americans. One may argue that the research skills he honed and shaped as he worked on *The Philadelphia Negro* served as motivating tools that culminated in the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

— H. V. Nelson

#### FURTHER READING

- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1967). *The Philadelphia Negro*. New York: Schocken Books. Du Bois's report on his study of the black condition in Philadelphia is one of the first urban studies.
- Lewis, David Levering. (1993). *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race 1968–1919*. New York: Henry Holt. This remains one of the most comprehensive portraits of W.E.B. Du Bois.

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### THE PITTSBURGH COURIER

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Established in 1907 by Edwin Harleston, a guard in an H. J. Heinz food-packing plant, *The Pittsburgh Courier* gained national prominence after attorney Robert Lee Vann became the newspaper's editor and publisher, treasurer, and legal counsel in 1910. By the 1930s and 1940s, it was one of the top-selling black newspapers in the country. In fact, with a circulation of almost 200,000, *The Pittsburgh Courier* was once the most widely circulated black newspaper, and on a par with *The Chicago Defender* and the *Afro-American* in Baltimore.

A network of Pullman Porters who worked for the railroad companies helped with the distribution of the paper, especially in the South. Because the paper advocated equal rights and campaigned against lynching and discrimination, sheriffs in the Jim Crow South tried to ban the paper's distribution and frequently destroyed and burned stacks that made their way into town. *The Pittsburgh Courier* launched its "stop and drop" program in 1936 and continued it through the mid-1940s. During that time, railroad porters helped to get 100,000 papers a week into the South. The porters were trusted because they worked under the strong leadership of A. Philip Randolph, a labor and civil rights activist who was the founder and president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Every week the black newspaper would be smuggled in small bundles to the Pittsburgh railroad station, and porters would hide them aboard or under the trains. Once the papers arrived in the South, the porters dropped the papers 2 miles outside major cities and black ministers gathered the papers and held them until Sunday, distributing them to the children in their congregations who served as newsboys and newsgirls.

From its inception, *The Pittsburgh Courier* sought to empower African Americans economically and politically. It called for improvements in housing, health, and education; protested the slum conditions in which black people were forced to live in Pittsburgh and throughout the nation; and encouraged the black community to support black organizations such as the National Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In 1932, Vann helped influence black voters to support the Democratic presidential candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt; for blacks this was a major political shift

from their prior allegiance to the Republican Party, which had been thought of as Lincoln's party.

*The Pittsburgh Courier* was the first black newspaper to publish both national and local editions. At one time, there were as many as 14 editions circulated in states in the North and the South including Texas, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New York. Many of the 20th century's well-known and influential black journalists and intellectuals contributed to the paper, such as George Schuyler, Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Elijah Muhammed, and Zora Neale Hurston. It was also one of the few black newspapers to provide coverage of news in Africa as the countries on the continent moved toward independence.

The paper, which was often known simply as *The Courier*, protested misrepresentations of African Americans in the media and in sports. Thus, in the early 1930s, the paper began a nationwide protest against the *Amos 'n' Andy* daily radio serial, attempting to have the program removed from the air. *The Courier*, which wielded much influence, came out strongly against segregation in professional sports. Wendell Smith, the paper's sportswriter starting in 1938, used his column to denounce segregation in the major leagues, and his efforts contributed to Jackie Robinson's signing with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947.

Ira Lewis, a sportswriter himself, became editor of the paper after Vann's death in 1940. *The Courier* reached its highest circulation under Lewis because of the "Double V" Campaign, which from 1942 through 1943 demanded that African Americans who were risking their lives abroad receive full citizenship rights at home. But in 1948 Ira Lewis died, and without his leadership *The Pittsburgh Courier's* circulation began to decline—especially in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1965, the paper was sold to John Sengstacke, owner and publisher of *The Chicago Defender*. Today the paper, as *The New Pittsburgh Courier*, continues to be an active, responsible voice for the African American community.

— Deborah F. Atwater

#### FURTHER READING

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Dyer, Ervin. (2002, February 24). Porters' "Underground Railroad" Carried Pittsburgh Courier into the South. *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. Retrieved September 1, 2004, from <http://post-gazette.com> Dyer discusses how a network of porters carried the newspaper by train to all areas and helped *The Courier* to become one of the nation's most widely distributed and respected newspapers.

Washburn, Patrick S. (1986). *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press During World War II*. New York: Oxford University Press. In this book, Washburn discusses and documents the pressure applied to the justice department and the White House to indict some black newspapers for sedition until President Franklin D. Roosevelt put an end to it.

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### PLESSY V. FERGUSON

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Abraham Lincoln's success in the Civil War and the end of slavery signaled the beginning of a new era for blacks in America. However, in an attempt to restrict the freedom of newly freed blacks, many Southern states passed "black codes" that limited blacks' right to vote, to engage in certain occupations, and to participate in the judicial system. In response, the "radical Republicans" in Congress passed a civil rights bill and Reconstruction acts to limit the impact of the black codes and guarantee blacks their rights. But lawmakers intimidated by such organizations as the Ku Klux Klan passed laws that segregated blacks from whites. While the Fourteenth Amendment ended slavery, it still left many questions about the relations between blacks and whites unanswered. These questions became a significant factor in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), in which the U.S. Supreme Court decided that a Louisiana law mandating "separate but equal" accommodations for blacks and whites on intrastate railroads was constitutional. This decision provided the legal foundation to justify many other actions by state and local governments to socially separate blacks and whites.

#### A LEGAL CHALLENGE TO SEGREGATION

The arrest of Homer Adolph Plessy (1862–1925) on June 7, 1892 was part of a planned challenge to the constitutionality of the 1890 Louisiana Separate Car Act by the Citizens' Committee, a small group of black professionals in New Orleans. The committee hired the

white lawyer and novelist Albion Winegar Tourgée, who had begun calling attention to separate-car laws in his newspaper column in August of 1891. After the committee successfully led a test case in *State v. Desdunes*, in which the Louisiana district court declared forced segregation in railroad cars traveling between states to be unconstitutional, the committee was anxious for a case to test the constitutionality of segregation on railroad cars operating solely within a single state. Part of Tourgée's strategy was to have someone of mixed blood violate the law, since to do so would allow him to question the arbitrariness by which people were classified "colored." Plessy, a Louisiana Creole of Haitian descent who was a mix of seven-eighths white and one-eighth black, agreed to be the test case.

The committee arranged with the railroad conductor and with a private detective to detain Plessy until he was arrested. This challenge received some silent support from railroad companies, which did not like the added expense of providing separate cars. A month after his arrest, Plessy came before a Louisiana district court presided over by Justice John Howard Ferguson. A native of Massachusetts, Ferguson had ruled earlier in the *States v. Desdunes* case that the separate car act was unconstitutional on interstate trains because of the federal government's power to regulate interstate commerce. When Plessy appeared before the Louisiana district court, the court ruled that a state had the constitutional power to regulate railroad companies operating solely within its borders and concluded that the Louisiana Separate Car Act was indeed constitutional. The decision was appealed to the state supreme court in 1893 and was appealed again to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1896.

By the time *Plessy v. Ferguson* arrived at the Supreme Court, Tourgée and his colleagues James C. Walker and Samuel F. Phillips had solidified their strategy. Tourgée argued that Plessy was denied his equal protection rights under the Fourteenth Amendment and that Louisiana had violated the Thirteenth Amendment by perpetuating the essential features of slavery. Tourgée also exploited the fact that Plessy had only one-eighth African blood and argued that the reputation of belonging to one race or the other was a form of property, in that the financial benefits incurred from being labeled white, Tourgée claimed, were a form of property that was being denied to his client.

## THE SUPREME COURT VERDICT

On May 18, 1896, the Supreme Court rendered its decision. Eight of the nine justices were unconvinced by Tourgée's arguments, and they ruled that neither the Thirteenth nor Fourteenth Amendment was applicable in this case. The majority opinion delivered by Henry Billings Brown attacked the Thirteenth Amendment claims by distinguishing between political and social equality. According to this distinction, blacks and whites were politically equal (in the sense that they had the same political rights) but socially unequal (blacks were not as socially advanced as whites). In effect, Brown believed that legislation was powerless to remove racial differences and that to attempt to do so would only accentuate those differences: If the civil and political rights of the races were equal, one race could not be inferior to the other civilly or politically. If one race were inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States could not put them on the same plane. The majority also attacked Tourgée's Fourteenth Amendment claims by arguing that enforced separation does not "stamp" blacks with a badge of inferiority, because blacks and whites were treated equally under the law—in the sense that just as blacks were barred from white accommodations on trains, whites were forbidden to sit in railroad cars designated for blacks.

## THE VOICE OF THE LONE DISSENTER

The single dissenter who argued in favor of Plessy's case, and seemed to be the only one with a real understanding of equality, was Justice John Harlan, the only Southerner on the Supreme Court at the time and a former slaveholder. Inspired by the infamous *Dred Scott* case, which denied citizenship to all blacks, he wrote his own speech regarding the case and its decision. Harlan asserted that the Constitution was color-blind and did not know or tolerate classes among citizens, and that therefore the decision rendered by the Court would be as pernicious as the decision made in the *Dred Scott* case. Harlan further believed that the decision would stimulate aggression against blacks and encourage the belief that second-class citizenship of the black race was supported by the Constitution. Justice Harlan's words proved to be prophetic. It was not until the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 that "separate but equal" would no longer be the law of the land.

— Garvey F. Lundy

## FURTHER READING

- Lofgren, Charles A. (1987). *The Plessy Case: A Legal-Historical Interpretation*. New York: Oxford University Press. This book provides a very thorough historical account of the Plessy case.
- Olsen, Otto H. (1967). "The Thin Disguise: Turning Point in Negro History." In Otto H. Olsen (Ed.), *Plessy v. Ferguson: A Documentary Presentation (1864–1896)*. New York: Humanities Press. This 30-page introduction to the book provides the essential information about *Plessy v. Ferguson*. The documentation that follows contains personal letters and legal briefs that are invaluable to an in-depth understanding of the case.
- Thomas, Brook. (1997). *Plessy v. Ferguson: A Brief History with Documents*. Boston: Bedford Books. This is an excellent source of information on the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case, which provides both a concise historical overview of the case and the nuances of the legal arguments.

## POPULAR TRADITIONAL AFRICAN RELIGIONS EVERYWHERE (PTARE)

PTARE, the acronym for Popular Traditional African Religions Everywhere, expresses that all African traditional religions have similar conceptualizations and are fundamentally ways of life. PTARE was coined during the early 1990s in the writings of the Temple Afrocentric Circle, which included Molefi Kete Asante, Kariamuwelsh, C. T. Keto, Ama Mazama, Nah Dove, and others. Since few words exist in any African language for religion, it was not possible to discover one word for all the traditions; therefore scholars came up with PTARE to cover the commonalities in all of the African religions.

Whether one is Yoruba, Ibo, Zulu, or Congo, one has certain basic values that are seen throughout African experiences. For example, all African people have a notion of a first deity, a creator deity, who is beyond all other spirits and ancestors. In addition, all African religions have a strong belief in reverence for ancestors. Most African religions place emphasis on nature spirits and have prohibitions or taboos against certain violations of the natural order. There is no concept of guilt in PTARE, but there is a developed concept of shame, because instead of an individual emphasis most African religions have a group or communal emphasis when it comes to values and morality.

Westerners conceptualize religion in Africa merely as rituals involving "fetishes," that is, objects believed

to be imbued with the power to bring either good or evil. The term *fetish*—which is derived from the Portuguese word *feitiso* and the French word *fetich*, meaning "artificial or false"—does not begin to explain to Westerners the methods and significance of African religion. The Western conception of African religion was a misconception from the beginning, one that added to a general misunderstanding of the nature of African ways of life. Such facile explanations of African religion do not deal with the ethical and moral complexity of Africans' beliefs about their relationship to the universe, the community, the living and dead, and the supernatural. Furthermore, there are numerous religious expressions that must be considered as a part of the equation when trying to determine the nature of African religion.

In fact, just as the Christians have several denominations, the Jews several expressions of Judaism, and the Muslims several types of Islam, Africans have many expressions of PTARE. Although there are many forms of PTARE—such as those seen in Yoruba, Efik, Ibibio, Shona, Ga, Ewe, and so on—the religion is singular.

— Molefi Kete Asante

## FURTHER READING

- Blyden, Edward W. (1992). *Christianity, Islam, and the African Race*. San Francisco: First African Arabian Press. This is an enormous work by one of the great African thinkers and contains the best treatment of the role of two world religions and their interpenetration of Africa.
- Kenyatta, Jomo. (1962). *Facing Mt. Kenya*. New York: Random House. No work has yet appeared to equal this straightforward presentation of the life of the Kikuyu in Kenya. This is a standard work for understanding African traditions.
- Mbiti, John. *African Philosophy and Religion*. (1990). London: Heinemann. This is the most quoted book on African religion in the contemporary era. Although Mbiti was a Christian minister when he wrote the book, it has maintained its position as a classic and has been translated into many languages.

## PROTEST PRESSURE

Protest pressure refers to demonstrative, rhetorical, physical, and political actions taken by Africans to reject enslavement, discrimination, racism, and prejudice. Protest pressure may be thought of as having

started with the slave revolts prior to the Civil War and continuing into the 21st century.

In the field of Black Studies, scholars study protest pressure emanating from individual and collective organizations. Articulated primarily through political and physical actions, protest pressure is meant to create tension within the social structures that support white racial domination of African people. Protest pressure evolved during the 17th century as African people began to protest against the abuse, disrespect, and violence of whites. After the end of the Civil War and the brief period of the Reconstruction, Africans were viciously attacked by many white Southerners whose claim to racial superiority had been called into question by the Civil War and the subsequent rise of African American legislators in the South. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was founded in the late 19th century as the reactionary arm of the proponents of white supremacy.

It was not long after the creation of the KKK that the African American community began organizing against the racist group. In 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was formed and quickly became one of the dominant organizations to bring protest pressure against racism. Soon after World War I, the African population began to use large street demonstrations to express censure of discrimination. By the end of World War II, this strategy had gained widespread use and the increase in the expertise of the organizers meant that a demonstration could be called immediately.

Protest pressure has two characteristics: (1) the threat of violence and (2) the moral legitimacy of free speech. It is because of these two qualities that demonstrations such as those led by Martin Luther King, Jr., during the civil rights era were so successful. African Americans had learned from A. Philip Randolph, the founder of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, that protest pressure could be a valuable asset to the struggle for full liberation.

Active propaganda against racism appeared in the early 20th century as a form of literate warfare. Writers like W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, and Carter G. Woodson made it their business to agitate for racial equality and social justice. Soon direct action, a form of protest pressure that involved physical action such as sitting at counters that were ostensibly segregated, sitting in the front of buses that did not permit African people to sit in front seats, and physically occupying offices and buildings, became the most prevalent way of bringing pressure on racist institutions.

Protest pressure has most often been brought to bear in the two directions of economics and culture. Economic radicalism has been concerned with developing boycotts and other forms of economic sabotage on racist institutions. Cultural radicalism has directed its efforts to cultural institutions such as schools, churches, social agencies, and arts and cultural institutions. In the end, the African American community has used protest pressure when necessary to demand Black Studies, women's rights, youth justice, and an end to racial profiling of motorists.

— Molefi Kete Asante

#### FURTHER READING

- Asante, Molefi Kete. (2003). *Erasing Racism: The Survival of the American Nation*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books. This book seeks to outline the main contours of the march toward African American freedom by showing the long distance that has already been traveled and suggesting how protest pressure might bring about a renewal of energy toward reparations.
- Hilliard, Asa. (1998). *SBA: The Reawakening of the African Mind*. Gainesville, FL: Makare. This book demonstrates that African Americans can achieve greater satisfaction with struggles against racism by arriving at greater consciousness through African cultural principles and values.
- Meier, August, Rudwick, Elliott, and Broderick, Francis L. (1965). *Black Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill. This is one of the standard works in black protest thought. It is a compilation of the best works of the early part of the 20th century.

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### **THE PSYCHOPATHIC RACIAL PERSONALITY**

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*The Psychopathic Racial Personality* is a collection of essays written by Bobby Wright, a University of Chicago psychologist, and published by Third World Press in 1982, two years after Wright's death. Wright used his training and skills in the best interest of black people. He took a scientific approach in *The Psychopathic Racial Personality* by outlining the psychosocial characteristics of Western society in relation to racism, methodically addressing the areas of government, military tactics, science, the medical community, religion, and education.

Wright coined the term *mentacide*, which he defined as the deliberate and systematic destruction of a group's minds with the ultimate objective being the



extirpation of the group. The solutions Wright offered for the African community included the creation of a black social theory and the fulfillment of the obligation of African intellectuals to perform black scientific inquiry (i.e., the study of white supremacy and culture, not the oppressed of such culture). He believed in the necessity of reestablishing black culture, and that a black social theory would establish and institutionalize methods and a direction for the liberation of African people.

The essays in *The Psychopathic Racial Personality* include “Black Suicide,” “Educating the Black Child,” and “The Black Child: A Destiny in Jeopardy.” These essays reinforce the warning in the African proverb Wright quotes: “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.” Wright’s concern is that destruction will result for the black community because it lacks direction and a black social theory: “Social theory determines the destiny of a people by establishing guidelines of life and Blacks should therefore develop a Black Social Theory.” The objective of a black social theory is to recreate a black culture that will allow for the liberation of blacks as a people.

In the title essay of *The Psychopathic Racial Personality*, Wright wrote that the answer to blacks’ problems can be found in the works and lives of people like Chaka, Martin Delany, Marcus Garvey, H. Rap Brown, Malcolm X, Chancellor Williams, and others: “For they all looked at the matador or psychopath for what he was and is, and moved against him.”

— Ivory Achebe Toldson

## FURTHER READING

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## PUSH

PUSH is the acronym used first for People United to Save Humanity, and later for People United to Serve Humanity. As the founder and President of Operation: PUSH, Reverend Jesse Jackson began this national civil rights organization in Chicago on December 25, 1971. The main thrust of Operation PUSH was to enhance the living conditions of working and poor black people by helping them obtain economic power. In March of 1972, a regional office was opened in New York, and later offices were opened in other major cities.

The choice of December 25—with its religious symbolism—for the inception of Operation PUSH was intentional and is characteristic of Jackson’s leadership style, which is deeply rooted in his training as a Southern Baptist minister. It is impossible to separate Jackson’s charismatic and forceful personality from Operation PUSH, as the two are deeply intertwined. Operation PUSH was Jackson’s idea, and as a young ambitious activist with the oratorical skills of a preacher and a belief in autocratic leadership, he became the main decision maker within the organization. In the area of civil rights, he chose to change the administrative strategy from nonviolence to militancy for Operation PUSH. Less tolerant in his beliefs of equality, Jackson leaned more toward social justice and shared resources, in contrast to Martin Luther King Jr.’s philosophy of civil rights through nonviolent demonstrations. Jackson publicly stated that under his direction, Operation: PUSH would embrace a philosophy of nonviolence if possible, but violence if needed.

## JESSE JACKSON’S LEADERSHIP

Jackson was gifted at organizing boycotts and gained national recognition as one of the top lieutenants within the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). He had become the director of Operation Breadbasket (1966–1971), an economic arm of the SCLC, and had worked closely with King. Effecting change through boycotts, demonstrations, and controlled consumer spending, Operation Breadbasket was an economic movement designed to lessen the grubstake and dominance that major corporations had on black and underserved communities. Ironically, the word *breadbasket* is slang for stomach, and this endeavor was aimed at restricting or tightening corporate profits.

However, Jackson's life changed on April 4, 1968, when Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis. The tragic death of the most recognized African American civil rights leader startled the world. The movement for racial equality needed a new leader and immediate supervision to safeguard the newly won rights in the areas of politics, social status, and economics. When Ralph D. Abernathy, Vice President of the SCLC and one of its founding members, as well as a close activist friend of King's, became King's successor, Jackson returned to Chicago and began to distance himself from the organization. Jackson's complete break from the SCLC came later, however, when Jackson worked with black businessmen in the Chicago area to organize the fourth annual Black Expo under the auspices of Operation PUSH instead of SCLC, its prior sponsor. In December of 1971 he was chastised by Abernathy with a 60-day suspension for "administrative impropriety" and "repeated violation of organizational discipline." He later resigned from SCLC to devote all of his attention to Operation PUSH.

Strongly committed to the picketing and demonstration strategies so successful in Operation Breadbasket, Jackson used the same model for Operation PUSH with added divisions for housing, welfare, politics, education, and youth affairs. He was aggressively persuasive at enlisting the support of major corporations to hire African Americans and invest in black communities by forewarning of possible boycotts and picketing demonstrations. Burger King, 7-Up, Coca Cola, Southland, Adolph Coors, Heublein, Avon, and Montgomery Ward were some of the many corporate sponsors convinced by Jackson to take their corporate responsibility within African American communities seriously. However, later some of the corporate heads complained that they had been coerced by Jackson for financial contributions. Yet, even with millions of dollars contributed to Operation PUSH in federal grants and corporate funding, there were still administrative problems that plagued the organization. The accusations of financial mismanagement and poor bookkeeping resulted in federal audits and civil claims being brought against the organization.

### **THE POLITICAL AGENDA**

Jackson was well aware that keeping a vigil on program and policy development in the White House and Congress was important to the economic goals of

Operation PUSH. The importance of having political relationships directly with presidents or top ranking presidential aides to monitor national social and economic policy affecting the living conditions of poor and working people could not be underestimated. President Richard Nixon's administration was known to be callous and unsympathetic to African American issues. This served to galvanize black leaders to organize picketing demonstrations. Jackson put aside any philosophical and personal differences with Abernathy and other black leaders to contribute staff from Operation PUSH in many demonstrations against Nixon's programs on welfare, education, and children's rights. In March of 1972, there were over 25,000 people (many of whom were children) at the demonstration in Washington, D.C., against Nixon's proposed \$2,400 a year supplement for a needy family of four—instead of the \$6,500 recommended by the coalition of national black leaders. When President Gerald R. Ford took office, he immediately arranged a series of meetings with black leaders to improve the White House's communication with the black community. Jackson's Operation PUSH was just one of the civil rights groups encouraged by the optimism of the new president. However, as top man at Operation PUSH, Jackson's defiant public image often hindered his ability to be an effective political insider on a national scale. On one occasion, he stood alone in his charge of "callous neglect" against the administration of President Jimmy Carter in the area of full employment for all blacks. In direct contrast, other black leaders were more optimistic and agreed to be "moderate and reasonable" in their comments.

In 1985, Jackson broadened the scope of Operation PUSH and turned his attention to problems in public education by creating an affiliate group called Push for Excellence (commonly called PUSH-EXCEL). The goal was to upgrade the quality of education on a national scale, with an emphasis on building teenagers' self-esteem. Jackson was very active in visiting schools across the country and speaking to students to promote self-esteem and self-discipline. A campaign of getting signed pledges of parental involvement was one of the strategies employed by Jackson to increase students' commitment to learning. However, in spite of having the support of the media and the federal government, and of having been granted a 3-year funding grant from the National Institute of Education of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, PUSH-EXCEL did not sustain its luster. Racial tension,

neighborhood politics, mismanagement, and federal auditing problems rendered the program ineffective.

When Jackson made a bid for the presidency in 1984 and in 1988, without the endorsement of many black political leaders and without adequate financial resources, the political infrastructure of Operation PUSH became a vital component in his campaign. Voter registration drives gathered a large population of Jackson supporters. However, during the campaign, federal auditing of Operation PUSH and PUSH EXCEL yielded profound inconsistencies in the administrative structure of the organization, and in newspaper interviews, PUSH officials were critical of Jackson. There was some concern that Jackson's political aspirations could cripple the legitimacy of the organization.

In 1985, Jackson announced the formation of the National Rainbow Coalition, and in 1996, 25 years after the beginning of Operation PUSH, he announced

the merger of Operation PUSH and the National Rainbow Coalition into one organization called the Rainbow PUSH Action Network, or the Network. He vowed that the merger would strengthen the ability to effect change in the lives of working and poor people on a local and national level.

— Gloria Grant Roberson

#### FURTHER READING

- Collins, Sheila D. (1986). *From Melting Pot to Rainbow Coalition: The Future of Race in American Politics*. New York: Monthly Review Press. This is a well-balanced assessment of Jackson within the political and social environment of the United States.
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