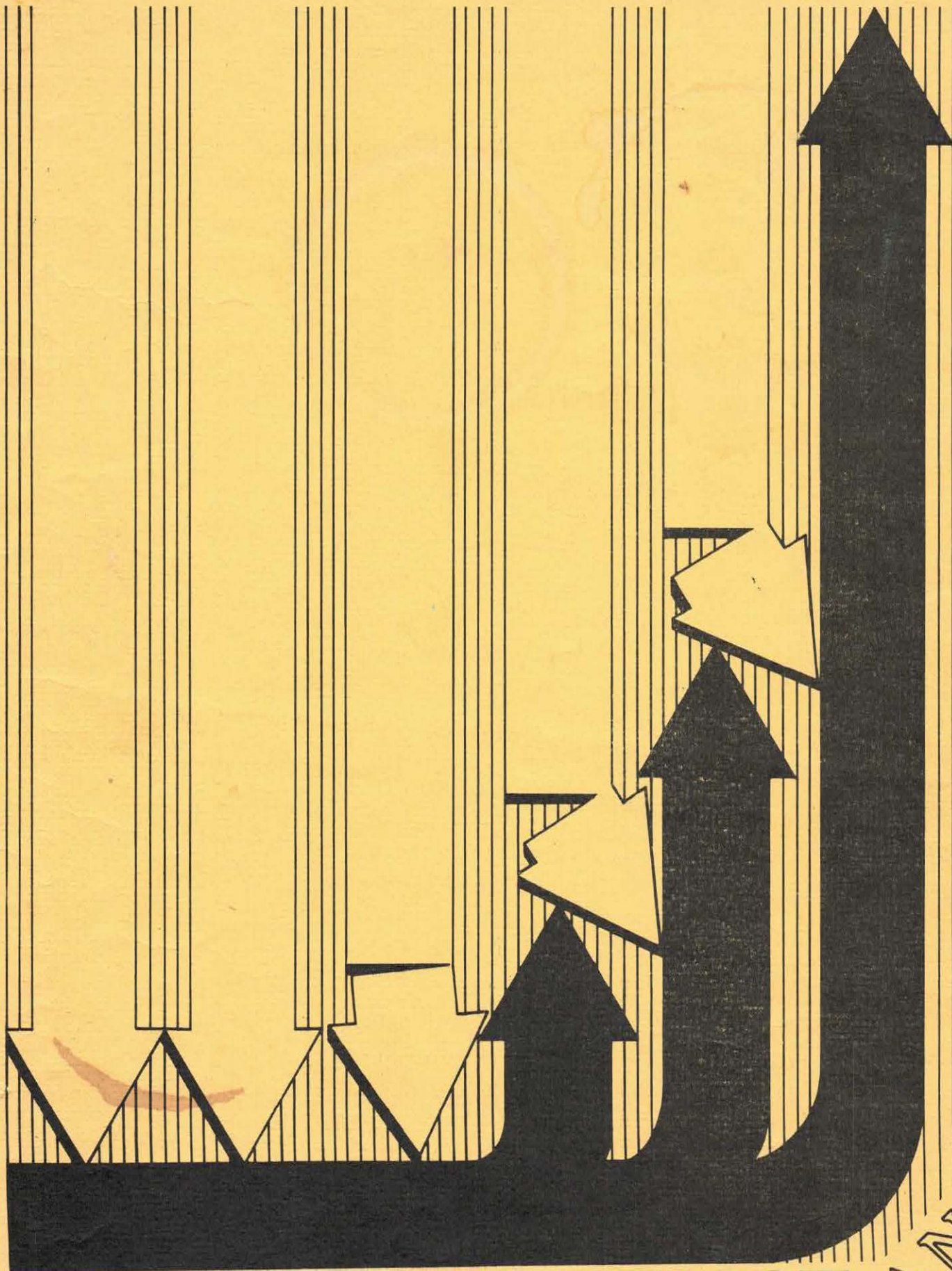




CONTROL CONFLICT

AND CHANGE

BY JAMES FORMAN

CONTROL, CONFLICT AND CHANGE

by James Forman

Why do we keep going along with this system that exploits and oppresses us, rips off the many for the benefit of the few, and prevents the people of the world from uniting to seize control of their own destiny?

Why don't we get together and put an end to this oppressive system and build a new one that will liberate us from all oppression?

It's not that we're stupid, or that there's no better way of doing things---the people of China and Viet Nam, to name just two examples, have proved that there are better ways to organize society.

The truth is that we are UNDER CONTROL. The rulers of this country, the monopoly capitalists, have power over all its institutions, and they use their power to keep us under control. We will not be able to fight this control unless we know exactly how it operates on us.

In 1969, James Forman, a worker in the Black Liberation Movement, listed the major control mechanisms that he saw operating on black people at that time. They are re-printed here as a starting point for each of us to look at the control factors that keep us in line.

Some of the control factors that operate on black people are the same as the ones used on white people, such as the love of life and the fear of death. Others are different or opposite, such as the privileges given to white workers as opposed to black workers that keep white people feeling like black people are a threat to their privileged status---and keep their attention off their real exploiters.

There are similar control factors used on men as against women, that keep them feeling superior and prevent unity among workers and other exploited people against their oppressors...all ways of keeping the oppressors in power.

All of these control factors must be studied so we know how to combat and overcome them.

Here is what Forman writes:

Operating upon all of us are a whole set of control factors, many of which we are not aware. These control factors, however, have been drummed in our heads for centuries, and we accept them as realities, hence the major reason we are not all totally dedicated to liberation.

It is not enough just to say that the system is tyrannical; that it's racist; that it's capitalistic; that it's imperialistic. Although that is a correct analysis, what are some of the manifestations of racism, capitalism, and imperialism that make us submit to tyranny inside this country? This can be determined by a thorough discussion of the control factors operating on our lives.

Any kind of liberation struggle--anywhere in the world--seeking revolution, intending to overthrow oppression, trying to deal with the tyranny that oppresses that particular group of people must, in fact, make this concrete analysis of all of the control factors operating upon that oppressed group of individuals.

Inside the United States there are approximately thirty major control factors operating upon us. In every city, in every town, in every county and in every state there will be additional variations; but what we are talking about are the major control factors which make us submit to the tyranny of this country. These kinds of control factors are responsible for our brothers fighting in Vietnam; they are not mercenaries. We have been so indoctrinated, so controlled by certain factors as we grow up that we begin to fight in Vietnam for the United States government, even though there are those of us who are opposed to fighting in Vietnam.

What are some of these control factors?

① The concept of citizenship. This is a major control factor. The entire fabric of this particular system of government is designed to instill in us the concept that we are citizens of this country. Every particular act of the various institutions inside the United States tries to drum this into our minds every day.

We know this concept of citizenship is a lot of bull.

We know that.

We're hipped to that.

We were not citizens in 1789 when they said we were three-fifths of men as written in the Constitution of the United States.

We're hipped to the fact that we are not citizens today. Nevertheless, it is imperative that this government try to consciously promote the feeling that we are citizens of this country. It is only by promoting the concept that we are citizens of this country that it is able to control us and make us submit to its tyranny. Therefore, one of the first jobs that we have to do is to work to consciously destroy the myth that we are citizens of the United States.

② The educational process. The educational process of the United States is geared not only to make us feel that we are citizens, but also to make us conform. It is geared to make us super patriots, geared to make us obey the police, obey the courts and all other institutions of this false democracy. Therefore any liberation struggle has to deal with the educational process inside a colonized territory, inside any situation where people are oppressed. We know this. All we have to do is to open our eyes and look at the educational system inside the United States. That educational system does not teach us to rebel against the United States, but in fact teaches us how to conform. A classic example is how we all learn to place our hands on our hearts and recite: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." For eight years in elementary school we say it. This is a conscious inculcation, a conscious brainwashing by the educational system.

Check the textbooks; check the history books.

When we get into high school, we notice brothers in the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) saluting and reciting once again: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America..." By the time a brother is eighteen, the educational system has consistently programmed him to where he wants to become a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force or in the United States Army. That is why ROTC exists in colleges--to reinforce the primary and secondary educational system which makes us submit to this kind of government.

3. The mass media and the communication system. This is fundamentally a technique of the U.S. and all Western powers with their highly industrialized communication systems. It is no accident that many of

the so-called "Negro" newspapers in this country are in fact owned by white capitalists. What goes into those newspapers affects our images---not to mention the New York Daily News and all the garbage which is spread throughout the United States.

The psychological control effect of the television networks in this country has never really been estimated. We know it's there, notwithstanding "Julia". It's no accident that the "Black Heritage" program was shown at 9 o'clock in the morning. This was a deliberate programming, in order not to get the ideas contained in "Black Heritage" over to the masses of black people. At 9 o'clock in the morning we are out hustling jobs, and we don't have time to turn on the television.

Four: The dogma and practice of the white Cristian churches. As far as I'm concerned, this has been one of the most consistent and effective control mechanisms operating on us. I happen to be old enough to remember my mother telling me: "Well, don't worry about the white man, son; he'll get his in hell. We will have everlasting life so don't worry about him; these 60 or 70 years of hard times which we face will be nothing compared to our eternity of peace and his eternity of damnation." As long as this kind of psychology and ideology is spread by the Christian churches, people will not go on to struggle for their liberation.

During the period of slavery and even today in most instances the practices and dogma of the Cristian churches are in fact made to order for an enslaved group of people. Let us examine it: Here we are slaves inside the U.S., and so the man comes with the Bible and says "Blessed are the poor, for they shall inherit the earth, or they shall see God. Blessed are the meek for they shall see the kingdom of God." Here we are poor---toiling in the fields, chopping the cotton and the man says to us, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than it is for a rich man to go to heaven."

So all of these things were comforting in many ways to our ancestors and even to some of us. Now I don't take the position---and this is something that we have to argue about---that the Christian church was in fact a survival element for black people. That's just a hypothetical argument. We have no way of knowing; but I do know that the ideology, practices and involvement with the Christian church helped to control us and made us submit more and more to the tyranny of this country.

Now the same thing is true today because many people believe the racist Christian ideology, believe that there is an eternity, believe that there is life after death, that God is all-powerful and the sufferings on this particular earth will be rewarded by eternity.

Five: The profit motive system and upward mobility. The system strives to make us competitive. If we are not competitive, we cannot become good capitalists. We cannot become good people inside this system of government, and we are programmed consciously to try to make money, to make profits, to be upwardly mobile, to try to get more and more cars, a better home; and that's all on an individualistic basis too.

SIX: The love of life and the fear of death. This is very real, you see, because this society makes us want to love life consciously. We are supposed to love life and fear death and that becomes a very significant control mechanism. It is better to die at 19, struggling to be a human being, struggling to be a woman, struggling to be a man, that to die of old age enduring all sorts of oppression through out our lives.

The love of life becomes real because many people are not willing to take chances, are not willing to risk, are not willing to make sacrifices, are not willing to do day-to-day work because they love life, and they fear death. They don't want to be killed; they want to live. And therefore, they will submit to all forms of tyranny and oppression because they want to live; and there is only one absolute certainty in life, and that's death. Once you're dead, you're dead; there's no reprieve, no redress, no heaven, no hell. You are dead, and if you lie out on the streets, you'll rot away. And you will see what there is afterwards. It doesn't matter how much embalming fluid, or what type of caskets we get, death is death! If we, in fact, fear death and we are not willing to take certain risks, then we will stay oppressed.

This is a problem that the Vietnamese also face. To love life is a part of Western mythology. One is supposed to love life despite all of the bad things inherent in Western civilization which go on. And I maintain that the love of life and fear of death is a key control factor. We should not allow the fear of death to operate as a control mechanism even though we do.

Seven: The fear of ideologies which call for revolution in the United States. This is another mechanism which the man uses to control us. There is no mystery why the Panthers are being attacked. There is no mystery why people who espouse liberation or revolution are in jail all over this country. The man, the government, wants to make us fear these kinds of ideologies. There is no mystery, even as far as the BEDC is concerned, why there is a federal grand jury subpoenaing people in Detroit, and the BEDC is only two months old. [The BEDC was an organization that Forman was working with in 1969.] But the federal government has seen fit to call the grand jury hearing to subpoena people. Now ask yourself, why? Obviously, if it were no threat, there would be no federal grand jury. Check it out. Look around, there are a whole lot of people who are walking around doing one thing and saying another. But they are not being persecuted by the government. In many ways, they don't pose as great a threat as do other forces and other individuals. You can judge the effectiveness of some things by the amount of persecution which the government puts down. If you are not a threat, they will not bother you, they'll just let you run around. That's a fact.

Eight: The police and other military forces. Ordinarily, when we think of control, this is what we think of as the major force. But it's not. All these other factors we have talked about are important because the police can't be everywhere. The police can't be all over Africa. The military alone did not control Africa. It took the missionary, money, indirect rule and other aspects of colonialism. The police and the military are one of the last control mechanisms any government uses. Sometimes we make the mistake and just think the police are the only control mechanism operating on us, and if we did away with the police that would end our problems. This is just not true.

Nine: The administration of justice, the courts, bail, the judicial system. It's no wonder that the people who were arrested in the so-called Panther plot have a \$100,000 bail on them, or that there were various legal entanglements in the so-called July 21, 1967, "frame-up". All of the administration of justice becomes a control mechanism because, if you impose high bail, then people can't get out on the streets. If the juries are stacked, there is no chance for justice.

Ten: The use of police informers, spies, rumors and slander

campaigns. In certain black communities it is said the spie network is greater than the CIA overseas. That's possible and real. Look at the history of frame-ups here in Harlem. Look at the so-called Statue of Liberty case, where Woods, a police informer, began to set up the whole plot, went out and got the dynamite and planted the microphone in the brother's car; and Woods is still running around. He might be informing on this meeting, I don't know.

Many of the people who are fighting for liberation in Rhodesia say that there are so many police informers spying for the Ian Smith government that any time they try to mount an attack in any particular city or countryside that they fail. Police informers have framed most of the militants who have been unjustly accused of certain so-called crimes. The case of Brother Ferguson is only one recent example. Ironically, the government is using black people to inform on one another, and some of us fall for this treachery for a few pieces of silver.

I assure you there is only one way to deal with police informers and you know what I mean. I want to make this very, very clear; we've said this all over the country and I'm saying it right here. Now you can call that a lot of hot air if you want to, or a lot of wolfing, but you take your chances, because there is only one way in the world we are going to stop these informers from standing up.

Eleven: The assassination of black leaders. The killing of people who take frontal positions against the injustices of this society, who fight racism, capitalism and imperialism and who refuse to submit to the tyranny of this country is a mechanism that the government uses to control the rebelling black population. In Cleveland today Brother Ahmed Evans is facing electrocution. The government is finding a scape-goat for the July 23, 1968 self-defense in Cleveland. Brother Ahmed Evans is absolutely innocent, and I am told by Sister Mae Mallory that the record indicates he was in the house of a police officer for six hours during the whole time of rebellion. However, since there was a strong military apparatus developing among the black people in Cleveland, the state of Ohio and the U.S. government are deliberately assassinating this brother to help control the population. All of us must join in the fight to save his life and unite with the July 23 Defense Committee which is fighting for his survival.

But the most effective method of curbing some of the assassinations of black leaders is to organize for retribution. That retribution has to be deliberately planned, well organized and quite selective. No one can protect his life ultimately. There is a picture to our left of Brother Malcolm who paid the supreme price, but it is no accident that he was killed in public. His killing was designed by the CIA to frighten the population as it did in many instances. All those lynchings from the period of Reconstruction through today were inflicted on black men and women to frighten the population, to make all of us afraid to challenge the system of government that oppresses us. The will of a people is weakened to the degree that it is frightened by the assassination of its leaders.

When we were working to save the life of Brother Huey, we raised the cry that the sky is the limit if he were sent to the electric chair. Some of us were prepared to go down if he had been killed by the state, for only organized, deliberate and selective retribution will minimize the killing of black people by the corrupt military machinery of this government. Political leadership must establish its price well in advance of its assassination. It must call for the destruction of power stations, gas outlets, police stations, water pumps and buildings, and the selective killing of imperialists who are

choking the life of humankind around the world. As the struggle escalates, the price must go higher and higher; and organization for retribution and revolution must become more deliberate, more scientific, carefully planned and intensely selective.

Efforts must be made to organize all segments of the population. Forms of organization and stages of struggle cannot be skipped, for the final clash may be years away, but we must work as if every day is the final day---taking the long-range viewpoint so as not to become frustrated and demoralized when quick victories are not around the corner.

Twelve: The lack of job security, inadequate wages, and consumer credit. The ability to deny one security for one's family and one's self through the withholding of wages and the dismissal from jobs becomes one of the most effective control mechanisms that this society imposes on us. Wage payments and consumer credit are designed to effectively control the population and make us all toe the line of the capitalist road to destruction. Many people do not struggle for fear of losing their jobs and the meager security they have for their family. Consumer credit and the installment plan of buying has been the graveyard of many militants and potential revolutionaries, for we are programmed to want goods and services more than justice and liberation.

Thirteen: The practices of the white-dominated trade unions. Trade unions in this country are not only racist in their treatment of blackworkers, union practices and officer structure, but also in terms of their practices and attitudes toward the third world, the people of Africa, Asia and Latin America, and sexist in their treatment of women workers.

General Motors, Ford, Chrysler and all the other automotive industries are locating in South Africa, for instance; but at the same time the racist United Auto Workers Union does not call a strike against these plants for their treatment of black workers in South Africa, or the miserable wages or policies of Apartheid.

Black workers in many parts of this country form 65 to 80% of the work force at the point of production, but they do not control their unions; and the racist leadership has no interest in ending their exploitation or that of black people around the world.

Fourteen: The denial of adequate health care and medical facilities. The infant mortality rate is so high for black infants that genocide is committed at birth. If black children can't grow up to be men and women, their potential for revolutionary work is killed by the state. There is no medical school in Harlem or many other black communities by deliberate calculations of the racist government of the United States.

While it is true that thirty to fifty million of us survived the atrocities of the slave trade, how many of us died and do die through the lack of adequate medical facilities? Clearly inadequate medical facilities is a form of genocide.

Fifteen: The welfare system and its administration. This is self-explanatory.

Sixteen: Dope in our communities. When young black men and women 13 or 14 years old are addicted to heroin and never live to see 16, how can they fight for liberation? It is impossible. In fact, they become agents against liberation when they become 22 or 23 because they are forced to rob the population in order to get dope. The Mafia is a third government inside the U.S. While the black dope pusher is part of this control mechanism, still he is not the major source.

He is a minor agent, for the real responsibility lies with the system of government that allows it to come across the borders, profits in it and allows it to flourish in black communities.

Seventeen: The downgrading of our African heritage and culture. This is a factor we are all aware of. But to the extent we accept and uplift Western history, values, culture, technology and religion, the process of control becomes more effective.

Eighteen: The lack of concrete ties with the African continent. The importance of this as a control mechanism can be more readily understood by comparing the situation of the Jews in this country to Israel as a state. The United Jewish Appeal and other forms of Jewish philanthropy inside the U.S. had much to do with the financing of militant Jewish groups and the formation of Israel.

Our own consciousness about helping African liberation movements is not very developed, and there are few ways in which we lend our technical skill to develop the African continent. This in turn forces African countries to turn to their former colonial masters and even to Israel for help. I am not suggesting the fault is entirely ours, but we must accept our share of the responsibility. The fault is fundamentally with imperialism, but we must try through our own efforts to break it.

In Tanzania, for instance, Israel built a hotel which will be completely owned by the Tanzanian government in a few years. Yet, once the hotel was built, it was necessary for the Tanzanian government to send some of its citizens to Israel to study bed making, waiting tables, cashiering and other trades associated with the running of a hotel. Tanzania exercised its options, but these are skills which we employ and teach every day.

SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) once tried to have a program called the Afro-American Skills Bank through which we would send people from the United States to Africa for two to three years, and we got very high confirmation from African governments. The Central Intelligence Agency and the entire fabric of the U.S. government moved to stop this program through various means. It would have been too much of a threat to this government for black people to go abroad, not under the sponsorship of the government, but actively carrying a line that is opposed to this form of government.

The lack of concrete ties with the African continent makes it possible for our continent to be exploited by others; and it strengthens the possibilities for lies by the U.S. government and dissension between Africans on the continent and those of us overseas, including our brothers and sisters in the West Indies. For instance, the U.S. Information Agency prints a magazine called Topic which is distributed only in Africa. In the first issue it showed Bob Moses and Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer winning two seats at the Democratic convention of 1964. This is a flagrant lie, but it was told by a government that is engaged in coups and killings to get its will, and the telling of a lie in Africa is not beyond its capacity. The U.S. government had to explain what happened at the Democratic convention, and it chose to lie about the results, for the truth would have been damaging to its propaganda. Other issues of this magazine have showed the Bronx High School of Science with a high percentage of blacks. They are trying to promote the concept that integration is an American dream which becomes a reality in that high school. One issue said that the average income of all blacks in the United States is \$7,000 a year.

Through the lack of concrete ties, the U.S. government is able to program us and Africans into believing there is no solidarity between us, to intensify the propaganda that upward mobility is a virtue which all blacks in the U.S. seek as well as the material possessions of this country. Inside Africa, the Cultural Affairs officers of the U.S. embassies have the greatest contact with the African masses; and most, if not all, of these are "Negroes" who help to spread rumors and false information about our condition in the U.S.

Nineteen: The domination of the African continent by the Western Powers. As long as the African continent is dominated by Western economic interests, then we can expect little help from it in our fight for liberation. Nobody will stand up inside the United Nations and champion the cause of black people inside the U.S. if there is great fear of economic retaliation by the U.S. and other Western interests. It is no accident that it is difficult to find countries in Africa that will assist U.S. black people seeking political asylum. There are some, but their numbers are limited; and this relates to the precarious economic position in which the African countries find themselves, although we must learn to live underground inside the U.S. We ourselves must realize that we are much to blame for these conditions for we have not heightened our own sense of consciousness and concrete work to help eliminate these conditions. At the same time black CIA agents, cultural affairs officers, other representatives of the U.S. government do much ---deliberately---to antagonize the African population with respect to us living in the U.S.

Twenty: The lack of capital for the cooperative development of black communities in this country and Africa. This is an extremely vicious obstacle and control mechanism. For while Africa is the richest continent on the earth, yet it is very poor. In order to develop industrially, capital is needed. Colonial powers granted political independence but maintained control of most economies. There is no mystery why Brother Nkrumah didn't survive, for he was on the verge of breaking the stranglehold on the Ghanaian economy imposed by the Western powers. The lack of funds for cooperative development of the black community results from the intense profit motive system under which we live and the desire to maintain that system.

Twenty-one: The lack of organizations which seek to develop political, economic and military forms for survival and revolution. Many organizations relate to only one side of the triangle--the political, military, economic triangle--but all organizations should seek to develop the three simultaneously. During the period of Reconstruction, there were many forms of political activity by black people, but the inability to defend black political institutions caused their loss as well as the loss of the lives of many people. (The political ideology must seek revolution with a cooperative economic content.)

Twenty-two: The absence of a centralized intelligence agency for the use of black people against their white oppressors, house niggers included. This is vitally necessary to minimize informers, to post and spread information about good, bad and indifferent programs in the community. This requires a high degree of skill in running a security apparatus, but these skills can be acquired.

Twenty-three: The lack of trained cadres capable of organizing people to struggle for their liberation. Explaining and promoting struggle against the control factors operating on us can only come through disciplined cadres agitating for their change. In Vietnam

this is called armed propaganda units, but the form remains the same. There must be conscious, deliberate, dedicated groups of people willing to make every sacrifice to promote conflict in order to produce change.

Twenty-four: The promotion among black people that nonviolence is the method to change our conditions inside the U.S. At this stage of our struggle we can see how the government is intensely trying to cling to this concept while it plunders and kills in Vietnam.

Twenty-five: The inability to understand that the total population, men, women, and children must be seen as revolutionary. This is quite often difficult for some brothers who are not in the habit of realizing the revolutionary nature of women; but, if the Algerians had adopted this attitude, then their revolution would not have succeeded to the point it did; for the liberation front mobilized the total energies of the population, women included. Vietnamese women have been among the bravest front-line fighters, and the same goes for women in the African liberation movements, such as in Guinea-Bissau. In the U.S., women were some of the key organizers in groups like SNCC, and have consistently been among the most effective workers in the Black Liberation Movement.

Native Americans

As women play a larger and stronger role in the work force in this country, the leadership which they now provide will grow to meet the new demands placed on them in the struggle for liberation.

Children must not be overlooked either, there are many things they can do now, and they are the revolutionaries of the future and must be trained to know this.

Twenty-six: The Poverty Program: It was designed to control the rising militancy of the black population. There are some brothers and sisters within it trying to use it against the government, but for the most part revolutionary militancy has been curbed by the introduction of the poverty program.

The poverty program and other federally funded projects are not designed to instill the habit of cooperative ownership, but to pay off and buy more stooges. One must wonder with all the money that the poverty program spends why there is not one major industrial printing plant where black people can learn the skills of industrial printing.

Twenty-seven: Psychological warfare perpetrated by the U.S. government inside black communities. The extent of this is not known, but we would be most unwise not to realize that a government that has trained personnel in psychological warfare operating around the world would not apply some of those same techniques inside any area that it considered dangerous.

We mentioned rumors. There are those which get passed by the population in general, and there are those which get deliberately promoted by agencies of the government, especially by the CIA and the FBI. Unfortunately, many people feel they can talk to the FBI without realizing that the FBI and the CIA play on percentage points. They will spread rumors in order to frighten the population.

Then there is the type of psychological warfare which tries to make us believe all the problems reside within us and that there are no external forces causing our oppression. Quite often this line is internalized by many of us. Therefore, we sometimes hear that there must be absolute unity before we can do anything, or that there are no class factors within the black community. The government achieves its desired results if any segment of the population ignores the objective

realities of the control forces operating on it and rather believes that the fault is solely within it.

Twenty-eight: Compacted living conditions and inadequate housing. Genocide.

Twenty-nine: The lack of land and the thievery of land. Historically we have been cheated of land in this country. We worked the land; we made others rich. Not only was there no land redistribution after the Civil War, but there has been a systematic attempt to deprive black people of the little land they have owned through the years. But there is no reason for us to assume that any land anywhere in the U.S. does not belong to us. There are some of us who assert that the total land mass and resources of this country must be administered under revolutionary black leadership in order to prevent the recurrence of racism and exploitation.

In conclusion, while we do not envision a quick victory but years of sustained struggle, we are confident that conflict must be created around control mechanisms. This is not passive action. There must be a deliberate call to action, definite acts of defiance, concrete organizational forms, a positive assertion of the human will to struggle for revolution, "a will to decolonize", by whatever means available.

*respect private property
respect of authority*