

Africana Studies Department History: San Francisco State University

by

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Oba T'Shaka is an activist-scholar, public speaker, professor, workshop leader, author, organizer and visionary. For thirty-eight he was a professor of Black/Africana Studies at San Francisco State University (SFSU) and he now serves as Professor Emeritus at SFSU. He is a founder of the National Black United Front (national vice chair 1984-2009), he is the principal architect of the African centered education movement (1984-1997) which incorporated an African centered curriculum in U.S. public school education while he chaired (1984-1996) the SFSU Black Studies Department and thus incorporated natural sciences into the core discipline of Black Studies and led the move to define African philosophy as the foundation of Africana/Black Studies. In addition to teaching, he is also leading Operation We Are Family, a major global organizing drive to unify Black people and revitalize Black families in the U.S., and globally.

The Africana Studies Department at San Francisco State University (formerly San Francisco State College), formerly known as the Black Studies Department, developed out of the history of Blacks in San Francisco, the Bay Area, as well as the Southern Civil Rights Movement, the Black Power and Black Panther Movements, and the African Centered Movement. The history of African Americans in San Francisco and the Bay Area is also an outgrowth of the history of African people in the United States and throughout the world.

During the California Gold Rush, Blacks found themselves in California but outside of the gold rush economy and confined to domestic work, and to jobs as janitors, truck drivers, and bootblacks. By the 1870s, Blacks had secured an economic foothold in the hotel and restaurant industry in San Francisco. In the 1870s white hotel workers in San Francisco threatened to strike unless all Blacks were fired from their jobs in that industry. The hotel owners fired all of their Black employees, and it would not be until 1963 that Blacks would organize a jobs campaign in the hotel and restaurant industry during the San Francisco Civil Rights Movement, to secure jobs for Blacks lost in the 1870s.

Julian Richardson, co-owner of Marcus Bookstore, observed that although Blacks in San Francisco were confined to menial jobs prior to World War II, “Blacks had a flair in whatever jobs we performed downtown.” In the thirties Joe Shrives was a doorman at a downtown hotel. The dignified way Joe carried himself on the job made wealthy whites “fight for his attention.” Walter Sanford, an African American was hired as a janitor in City Hall, however, he never touched a broom. He served as the official greeter for many San Francisco mayors. He also became an investor in Trans Bay Savings and Loan. While the Black population in San Francisco was small prior to World War II, African Americans played a leading role in the City’s development. William Leidersdorff, an African American, captained the first steamship to enter San Francisco Bay. He also built and owned the City’s first hotel, while holding several key civic jobs including Treasurer of San Francisco. Anti-slavery activist, Mary Ellen Pleasant, was regarded as the Mother of Civil Rights; this courageous Black woman provided the financing for John Brown’s armed uprising; she also used part of her wealth to free Blacks from slavery.

Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work, Job Campaign

The Black population in San Francisco remained small until World War II. In 1910, there were 1,642 Blacks living in San Francisco, with the number increasing to 4,000 by 1940. During the war the Black population in San Francisco increased to 40,000. When the Japanese American population in California and San Francisco was placed in concentration camps, Blacks began moving into the Fillmore district and into the Western Addition. In a few cases, Blacks held onto Japanese property during their concentration camp internment, returning the property to Japanese ownership at the end of the war. As newly arrived occupants of the Fillmore, Blacks could not rent store space because whites controlled the property. In 1944, Chinese American merchants set up small businesses in the Fillmore, selling quality food at a cheaper price than the white merchants. This Chinese business strategy drove the white businesses of the Fillmore.

By 1946, Blacks could purchase goods in stores located in the Fillmore, (which also included Singer Sewing Machine Company and other downtown businesses) but they could not work in these stores. These conditions generated a “jobs movement” for Blacks in the Fillmore. In the 1930s, a Black Nationalist, Sufi Muhammad, had launched a “don’t buy where you can’t work” jobs campaign in Chicago’s Black communities.

This campaign spread to Harlem in the 1930s under the leadership of Adam Clayton Powell. In 1946, the “don’t buy where you can’t work” job campaign spread to the Fillmore under the leadership of Charles Augustus. This campaign had the support of some Black churches including Third Baptist Church, and it had the support of Dr. Carlton Goodlett, medical doctor and owner of the Sun Reporter newspaper. This job campaign produced jobs for Blacks at the Fillmore branch of the Bank of America, and in businesses located in the Fillmore. The campaign was a forerunner of the San Francisco Civil Rights Movement.

The San Francisco Civil Rights Movement



With the end of World War II, Blacks in San Francisco lost most of the jobs they held during the War. Shipyard jobs evaporated, and whites returning from the war replaced Blacks in many other jobs, leading to the Black unemployment rate rising to 30%. Once again Blacks were confined to nineteenth-century occupations as domestics, bootblacks, postal workers, longshoremen, and a few streetcar drivers. With the exception of ILWU (International Longshoremen and Warehousemen Union) jobs, union jobs were closed to Blacks, and Blacks and people of color were invisible in the downtown economy. In the area of housing, as many as nine, ten, and fifteen people were crowded into a single room.

The San Francisco Civil Rights Movement, which grew out of these dire economic conditions, was inspired by the Southern Civil Rights Movement, the Cuban Revolution, and the African Independence Movement. In 1960, Bob Slattery and Ella Hill Hutch formed the San Francisco branch of the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE). Ella Hill Hutch became the Mother of the San Francisco Civil Rights Movement and went on to become the first Black woman elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

From 1961 to 1963, Wil Ussery served as Chair of the San Francisco CORE. He later served as National Action Council vice chair and NAC Chair, the highest policy-making position in National CORE. Ussery led campaigns for quality education for Black youth and all youth of color.

The local chapter of the NAACP was led by Dr. Nathaniel Burbridge, one of only four militant NAACP heads in the sixties, Dr. Burbridge held two PhDs, one in pharmacology and the other in medicine. The San Francisco NAACP under Burbridge's leadership would serve as a close ally of San Francisco CORE even though it faced opposition from the national office of the NAACP because it sided with grassroots Blacks in mass struggles for jobs.

In 1963, Bill Bradley (now Oba T'Shaka) was elected Chair of San Francisco CORE. According to an article May 2, 1964, in the Sun Reporter, CORE leadership and membership considered itself "responsible to what we consider the best interests of the Black community. This determination is based upon discussions among Blacks found in barbershops, beauty shops, poolrooms, restaurants, churches, and through organizing on the streets..."

The organization (CORE) has developed courage which has made it immune to biased criticism." San Francisco CORE's central strength was that neither the white power structure, nor the Black elite had any control over the organization. CORE proved to be sell-out proof, and totally dedicated to the liberation of Black people and people of color. They were also smart: in the course of the San Francisco Civil Rights Movement they fought the economic power structure of San Francisco for jobs for Blacks and people of color because in their discussions with the Black grassroots, over and over again, Black folks said they needed jobs.

In 1963, San Francisco CORE reached 260 job agreements with major San Francisco employers. According to the 1964 *Corelator*, the newsletter of San Francisco CORE, the organization reached 375 additional job agreements with major downtown employers on behalf of Blacks and all people of color. These job agreements were reached with industry leaders, hence forcing literally thousands of employers to provide additional jobs. The 1963 Birmingham campaign led by Dr. Martin Luther King's organization SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference), sparked greater momentum at the local level, leading to the formation of the United Freedom Movement, a Black United Front formed in San Francisco.

In 1963, San Francisco CORE, under T'Shaka's leadership, led a Christmas boycott campaign against JC Penny's and Macys. This successful campaign opened up jobs for Blacks and people of color in all of the major downtown department stores. In 1964, San Francisco CORE initiated a jobs campaign against Lucky Supermarket throughout the Bay Area. A large number of jobs were gained through this campaign. In fact, Lucky Supermarkets were compelled by San Francisco CORE to hire only Blacks and people of color for one year and an equitable number of Blacks and people of color thereafter. In 1964, the UFM (United Federation Movement) selected three major employment campaigns. One was the Sheraton Palace Hotel, and the hotel and restaurant industry, under the leadership of an Ad Hoc Committee, led by Tracy Sims, a former SFSU student. The second jobs campaign was against Auto Row, under the leadership of the San Francisco NAACP. The third campaign was launched statewide against the Bank of America, then the largest bank in the world. The Bank of America job campaign was under the leadership of San Francisco CORE and its head, Oba T'Shaka. After a six month campaign (three months of negotiations and three months of demonstrations) CORE succeeded in defeating the Bank of America, and this defeat led the other banks to hire substantial numbers of Blacks and people of color.

These three job campaigns put 10,000 people in the street, making it the largest Northern Civil Rights Movement, and the most effective. Between 1960 and 1965 San Francisco CORE defeated the entire economic power structure, never losing a battle for jobs. The San Francisco Civil Rights Movement was the Mother Movement in the San Francisco Bay Area. Because many of the shock troops that took part in job demonstrations for over a year were University of California/Berkeley students, their radicalization inspired them to launch the Free Speech Movement. The San Francisco Civil Rights Movement gave birth to the Free Speech Movement. SFSU activists, who took part in the San Francisco Civil Rights Movement's Auto Row campaign, planned the San Francisco State Tutorial Program for Black youth in the Fillmore, in a jail cell, where they were arrested in the Auto Row sit-in. Lessons learned by these largely white students inspired them to form the Experimental College where students were able to teach San Francisco State courses designed by students. The San Francisco Civil Rights Movement preceded the Black Panther Party, and provided inspiration to the Negro Student Association, and the Black Students Union, which led to the San Francisco State Strike.

The San Francisco State Strike and the Birth of Black Studies

In 1963 Black Nationalism began to rise up inside San Francisco CORE, and by 1965 San Francisco CORE represented the leading arm for Black Nationalism within National CORE. In 1963, the Negro Student's Association (NSA) was formed at San Francisco State University. Between 1963 and 1968 the NSA had two ideological currents: one favored integration and the other favored Black Nationalism. The Black Nationalists wing of the NSA was influenced by the thoughts of Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, the Afro-American Association and the emerging Black Nationalist thrust of the San Francisco Civil Rights Movement.

The Black Nationalist outlook of the NSA was reflected in that organization's constitution that called for it to:

Engage in projects that the membership considers to be in the interest of the Negro community; to engage in the study of Negro history and life; to foster growth and dissemination of Negro cultural contris butions. (The San Francisco State Strike, pg. 16)

Key NSA Black Nationalist-oriented members, such as Aubrey La Brie, Huey LaBrie, Joe Goncalves (Brother Dingane, a leader in San Francisco CORE), Abdul Karim, and Marc Primus, became leaders of the Black Arts Movement, and with the exception of Marc Primus they founded a leading Black Cultural Arts magazine, *Black Dialogue*. Later, Joe Goncalves founded the *Journal of Black Poetry* another instrumental arm of the Black Arts Movement.

Black Dialogue was important because it combined a Black Nationalist political analysis of fundamental issues arising out of the Civil Rights Movement, with a cultural analysis concerned with the position of Black Art, Black Poetry and Black Performing Arts. In the 1965 issue of *Black Dialogue*, Leroi Jones, wrote on the "Revolutionary Theatre," while Edward Spriggs wrote an article entitled "Negritude Americaine." This article provided a background for the Negritude Movement stressing the need for "(a) Negro culture patterns (to) be first interpreted by Negroes, and (b) that they express the inner life of Black people in its reality." (*Black Dialogue*, pg. 8) An article written by T'Shaka analyzed the San Francisco Civil Rights Movement. The article noted that while the Southern Civil Rights Movement was the inspirational force for the Northern Civil Rights Movement, increasingly the Northern Civil Rights Movement was becoming more nationalistic. Lessons learned in the battle against institutional racism along with lessons learned from the Nation of Islam and Malcolm X was having a profound impact on the Civil Rights Movement in the North.

Similarly, the non-compromising nature of the San Francisco Civil Rights Movement, and its effectiveness in defeating the white economic power structure, made a strong psychological and political impact on the emerging generation of Black youth in the Bay Area, who would make up the leadership core of the San Francisco State Strike.

This emerging leadership group was inspired to see the San Francisco, Rights Movement defend a position in front of the white power structure and not bow down. This articulateness, along with the successful use of boycotts, picketing, etc., techniques also employed in the South, prompted this emerging Black youth leadership to an action orientation.

By 1965, the Civil Rights Movement was transforming into a Black Nationalists Movement, and Black youth leadership found itself increasingly influenced by the spirit and thoughts of Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon. According to Benny Stewart, former Chairman of San Francisco State's Black Student Union, "when we look at King we see that he was a spark. King brought out the contradiction. King came up with a methodology or approach with a minimum of causalities. However, Malcolm was the Spirit. From Malcolm we learned to demand what we wanted, to take no jive, and go get it." (*Journal of Black Studies*, 1982, pg. 16) Malcolm X also provided a theoretical thrust, which called for Black people to unify. His Organization of Afro-American Unity was a forerunner of positive Black organizations.

Between 1963 and 1966 the Negro Students Association recognized that student government was not acting in their interests so they formed an alliance with a conservative slate of candidates; when this failed they formed an alliance with a liberal slate; after this there was a period of work in the Black community. During the latter phase the issue of fighting redevelopment in the Black community was the primary thrust. The next phase was the African arts and culture phase." (ibid. pg. 15)

A never before revealed incident occurred in 1964 while Malcolm X was traveling on the African continent and meeting with African and Arab heads of state. During this trip, Malcolm met Dr. Pauula Kamarakafego and informed him that he and Adam Clayton Powell planned to call a Black Power Conference in the United States. Malcolm was assassinated before this conference could be called. Instead when the major Civil Rights groups continued James Meredith's March Against Fear in Mississippi, Willie Ricks (Mukasa Dada) a participant in Adam Clayton Powell's Black Power Conference, encouraged Stokeley Carmichael (Kwame Ture) to call for Black Power. With the call for Black Power by SNCC's leader, the movement entered the Black Power phase.

Black youth and Black people in general were given a new sense of strength and vigor when the slogan "Black Power" was announced in 1966. All of these struggles (Civil Rights, Black Nationalism, Urban Rebellions, Black Panthers, US organization and Black Power) helped create an atmosphere that encouraged struggle—in the Black community and among Black students on the college campus.



Black Power, and the previous struggles of Black people, helped create an ethic of Blacks being responsible to Blacks. For Black students, this meant that they should be concerned about their identity, and about using their skills for the benefit of the Black community.

This atmosphere made it possible in 1966 for Jimmy Garrett and other nationalists in the Negro Students Association to push to change the name to the Black Students Union. In pushing for the name change, Black students had to choose between the name Black Students Union, or Afro-American Association. The Black Students Union was chosen; it laid stress on Black, and being Black was the big issue. When the name was changed, the integrationists left.

The most important aspect of the entire process leading up to the San Francisco State Strike was that a new type of Black person and Black student was being born. He/she was being born out of his/her community struggles, and they were being born out of their trial and error struggles against institutional racism on a white-dominated San Francisco State University campus.

As Black students on campus increasingly began to confront racism, they gained “a confidence to run things.” (Nathan Hare) According to Dr. Hare, on arriving at San Francisco State, the thing that struck him as being extremely significant was that “Black students had an amazing sense of self-confidence in their ability to run things.” (ibid. pg. 17) In Benny Stewart’s words: “At San Francisco State you had well read, well informed Black students. They were replicas of Malcolm X and Donald Warden [now Khalid Abdullah Tariq al-Mansour]. They could argue their point of view against anybody.” (ibid. pg. 17)

As the Black Student Union began to grow from 12 to 400 members, the Board of Trustees developed new SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) requirements. Students applying for admissions to state colleges had to score in the top third of their graduating class. This worked to reduce the number of Black students admitted to state colleges. By 1965 and 1966 the Black student body was reduced from ten percent to four percent. The admission of more Black students was a necessity.

At the same time, Black students at San Francisco State were a minority on a white racist campus. The opposition between Black students and white racism on campus created an awareness among Black students of the need for Black Studies courses that could serve as a counter to white value and white attitudinal courses. Black Studies courses were needed to create counter images to those white value-oriented courses, while providing a rigorous intellectual curriculum rooted in the Black cultural, political, economic, literary, social, psychological, and historical reality.



Nathan Hare

The Black Students Union (BSU) began a multi-faceted organizing campaign that would provide the foundation for the Black Studies strike. First, Black students introduced Black history courses through the Experimental College, employing Leroi Jones (now Amiri Baraka), Sonia Sanchez, and Mary Lewis as instructors. The BSU proceeded to analyze the power structure and social structure at SFSU. The BSU concluded that the office of college president and vice president were servants of the California State University trustees. Black Students at SFSU were analyzed and found to consist of different social groups. Each grouping was conceived to play a specific role in the strike. The Black Nationalists coming out of the BSU were the leaders among Black students, and they would become the leaders of students-at-large at SFSU.

The Black Nationalists on campus worked with the Black Fraternities and Black Sororities. Given the social role of the fraternities and sororities, they were assigned the task of organizing parties for the BSU. The majority of Black students on campus were regular students who were the main victims of the restrictive admissions programs on campus. They would be the main beneficiaries of open admission for Black students. Regular students represented the backbone of the BSU, and they were the main support group for the strike. The Black athletes were also reached. When the BSU approached the athletes for support they discovered that they were intimidated by their coaches. When the athletes saw Black Students Union members stand up to the coaches, they began to realize that the coaches were not gods. When the strike occurred, the athletes supported the strike by refusing to play. There was no football played during the strike. Sisters in the BSU were placed into paying jobs in each school on campus. Sisters used these positions to keep the BSU informed on the moves that were being made by different departments on campus.

The BSU didn't confine their organizing to Black students. The BSU analyzed the role of the white left on campus and determined that they based the bulk of organizing on Black issues and opposition to the war in Vietnam. The BSU gained control and direction of the white "left" by creating relationships with their leadership and giving them marching orders. The BSU also exploited the attitude of white guilt over white racism that the white left had.

In approaching the Third World groups, the BSU had the advantage of having a higher level of political consciousness. So the BSU provided the lead that Third World students followed. The Third World groups were the only ones to be able to attach their demands for an Ethnic Studies Department, and a College of Ethnic Studies, onto the BSU demands for a Department of Black Studies.

The Black Students Union gained control of the Tutorial program, placing 250 Black students into tutorial positions previously held by white students. As Black students began to see the need for a Black Studies Department, they began to apply pressure to the San Francisco State administration to hire a Black Studies Department head. When Dr. Nathan Hare came to speak at the American Sociological Association in San Francisco, Jimmy Garrett asked him to head the Black Studies Department. After considering the offer, Hare decided to accept the position. Dr. Hare was an excellent choice for Department Head of the first Black Studies Department in a four-year college. Dr. Hare was E. Franklin Frazier's best student, and he came to SFSU well equipped to establish the Black Studies curriculum.

The period from 1967 to 1968 was a period of rising influence of the Black Panther Party in Black communities throughout the United States. The BSU during 1967-68 had the backing and moral support of the Black Panther Party. Also they could only organize it with the backing of the Black community. The Black Panther Party was the most advanced organizational force in the Black community and the Panthers were supportive of the strike. Being supportive of the BSU and the strike didn't mean that the BPP exercised control of the Black Students Union. The BPP understood the students as self-generating.

By 1968 Black students at SFSU were reaching a point where a strike was the only alternative to administrative delays and compromises. With the hiring of Dr. Hare, the BSU was demanding an independent Department of Black Studies. Under such a department, Blacks could determine what courses would be taught and which professors would teach. When it became clear that the administration would only offer 2.5 teaching positions the BSU had no choice. They had to call for a strike.

The Black Students Union put forward ten demands and the Third World Liberation Front added an additional five demands. The ten demands of the BSU were:

1. All Black Studies courses being taught through various other departments be immediately part of the Black Studies Department and that all instructors in this department have full time pay.
2. Dr. Hare, chairman of the Black Studies Department, receive a full professorship and a comparable salary according to his qualifications.

3. There will be a Department of Black Studies which will grant a Bachelor's Degree in Black Studies; that the Black Studies Department chairman, faculty and staff have the sole power to hire and fire without the interference of the racist administration and the chancellor.
4. All unused slots for Black students from fall 1968 under the Special Admissions Program be filled in spring 1969.
5. All Black students who wish to, be admitted in fall 1969.
6. Twenty full-time teaching positions to be allocated to the Department of Black Studies.
7. Dr. Helen Bedesem be replaced in the position of Financial Aid officer and that a Black person be hired to direct it and that Third World people have the power to determine how it will be administered.
8. No disciplinary action will be administered in any way to any students, workers, teachers, or administrators during and after the strike as a consequence of their participation in the strike.
9. The California State College Trustees will not be allowed to dissolve any Black programs on or off the San Francisco State College campus.
10. George Murray maintains his teaching position on the campus for the 1968-69 academic year.

Five Demands of the Third World Liberation Front

1. Schools of ethnic studies for the ethnic groups in the Third World be set up, with students for each particular organization having the authority and the control of the hiring and retention of any faculty member, director, or administrator, as well as the curricula.
2. Fifty faculty positions to be appropriated to the schools of ethnic studies, 20 of which would be for the Black Studies Program.
3. In the spring semester, the college fulfills its commitments to the nonwhite students in admitting those that apply.
4. In the fall 1969 semester, all applications of nonwhite students be accepted.
5. George Murray and any other faculty members chosen by non-white people as their teachers be retained in their positions.

In calling the strike, the BSU, from the beginning, took the position that the 15 demands were non-negotiable. In Benny Stewart's words: "The demands were non-negotiable because that's what we wanted. We wanted twenty teachers and the rest of the fifteen points." (ibid. pg. 21) The strike strategy the BSU adopted was the "War of the Flea." This strategy was taken from a book written by Robert Taber entitled *The War of the Flea*. The strategy of the flea is the hit-and-run strategy of guerilla warfare. The BSU saw the Black students adopting a hit-and-run strategy. They recognized that police tactical squads (Tac) were being used all over the country. A hit-and-run strategy could avoid the brunt of the tactical squad's violence. The goal of the strike was "to stop the running of the college. Telling people that class was over, closed down the college. By the time the Tac squad got there the class was over." (ibid. pg. 21)



During the course of the strike the Black and Third World students were joined by the AFT (American Federation of Teachers). The AFT decided to use the strike to press for the adoption of their labor demands. The AFT purported to support the strike. In fact, they helped to kill it. (ibid. pg. 22)

By now, "hardnosed" S.I. Hayakawa had become president of SFSU. He was quickly becoming the favorite of the right wing, and the Board of Regents. One of Hayakawa's close advisers was W. Clement Stone, a strong right-winger. Stone gave Hayakawa \$100,000 and suggested that Hayakawa offer the strikers 11.3 professors instead of 20. Hayakawa made that offer, and he agreed to establish a Black Studies Department under the leadership of Dr. Hare and Joseph White the Black Dean of undergraduate studies. Hayakawa also agreed to use the 128 unfilled special admission slots; although he didn't say that Third World students would fill these slots. Finally he agreed to appoint a Third World associate director of financial aid "with specific decision-making responsibility in dealing with Third World students." (*Shut It Down: A College in Crisis*, pg. 60)

After discussing Hayakawa's offer, the BSU central committee decided to accept his offer. When the AFT heard about this they accused the BSU of scabbing on their strike. The BSU central committee made the error of giving into the AFT and refusing to accept the administration's offer. Once the AFT demands were met they left the Black and Third World students high and dry. Ultimately, the BSU got the 11.3 positions but they lost Dr. Hare, who was no longer included in Hayakawa's offer.

So what did the BSU and the Third World Liberation Front achieve? They achieved the following:

- A Black Studies Department with jurisdiction over existing Black Studies courses.
- Twelve full-time professors, where earlier there was only one.
- The authority to grant a Bachelor of Arts degree in Black Studies.

- The right to hire and fire professors in the department with the advice and consent of the community review board.
- 128 Black students (already admitted for last spring) without regard to traditional criteria.
- A considerable increase of Black students for the next fall term.
- New administrative positions: Co-director of Financial Aid, to better meet the financial needs of Black students. (A Black man was hired for this position.)
- Total amnesty for more than 90 percent of the students arrested.
- The development of a School of Ethnic Studies. This school is to include Departments of (1) La Raza Studies; (2) Asian American Studies; (3) Native American Studies, and (4) Third World Studies.

While these were significant gains, the BSU and the Black Students lost in some key areas. First, the students and the community lost the right to have Nathan Hare as Chair of Black Studies. The amnesty concession, unfortunately, did not include all Black students. Hayakawa put some of the Black students on an unofficial “black” list.

One of the issues that triggered the Strike was the firing of George Murray. Therefore, a key demand of the strike was that George Murray be retained. This demand was not met.



George Murray, BSU, Black Panther Party member

Overall, the achievement of the SFSU strike was a victory because it succeeded in creating a Department of Black Studies and a College of Ethnic Studies. It enabled Blacks and Third World people to establish a relevant curriculum that spoke and continues to speak to the needs of Black people and people of color. The strike succeeded in increasing the enrollment of Black students and students of color on campus. The number of professors that the Department of Black Studies was free to hire was significant. Most important Black Students, the Black community and their allies demonstrated the strategic power of Africans in the United States. We demonstrated the capacity to create a chain reaction that mobilized other sectors of students and community people around the needs of Black students and students of color.

The African Centered Cultural Renaissance and the African Centered Intellectual and Curriculum Thrust

The Civil Rights and Black Power Movements gave birth to the Black Studies Department and the Black Studies curriculum. This intellectual development grew out of the historical forces operating in the Black community in the sixties. Between 1968 and the current period the intellectual discipline of Black Studies underwent maturation. In the words of Master Muralist Dewey Crumpler, “Black Studies represents the birth of discipline, and the African-centered intellectual thrust represents its maturity.”

The birth and maturity of the Black Studies discipline has always been based upon the connection between the community and the classroom. The Black Consciousness Movement of the sixties, growing out of the Civil Rights, and Black Power Movements gave birth to Black Studies. The African Centered Movement emerging out of the Pan Africanist Movement of the seventies and the African Centered Movement and intellectual thrust of the eighties and nineties gave birth to the African centered discipline of Africana Studies.

As Samuel Huntington, author of the American section of the Trilateral Commission report, *The Crisis of Democracy*, noted, the Black initiated movements of the sixties, including the Civil Rights, and Anti-War movements produced a “crisis of democracy” because the people were encouraged to demand equality and participation in government, when the founding father’s such as Madison intended that the government should be an instrument that controlled the people. According to *The Crisis of Democracy*, the demand for democracy and equality created a crisis of confidence among the people in the government that eroded the people’s confidence in the presidency, leading to the erosion of the two-term presidency; the decline of the two-party system; the critique of and opposition to the military-industrial complex; and the demand that students have greater involvement in the operation of the university.

The impact of the Black Liberation Movements of the sixties on the political economy of the United States produced a counter-attack of massive proportions on Black communities, organizations and leaders throughout the United States. These attacks, combined with the corporate movement of globalization would have a profound effect on the quality of Black life and culture, calling for the maturation of the Black Studies discipline into the African centered intellectual thrust as a means of community revitalization, cultural transformation, and empowerment.

Globalization was not a reaction to the movements of the sixties, but it led to the removal of a large sector of manufacturing jobs outside the United States. Along with the development of a low-paying service sector of the U. S. economy and the emergence of the high-tech economy, globalization, worked to destroy a large number of good paying blue-collar jobs, thereby eroding the African American family. The Black family has eroded more between 1968 and the present time than between 1916 and 1968. Between 1900 and 1968, 75% of Black families were two parent households.

Today, only 34% of Black households have two parents. Between 1976 and 1983 the number of Black families headed by Black women rose by 700,000, and the ranks of Black men out of the labor force or unemployed increased by the same number. The loss of blue-collar jobs where a male with a high school education or less could support a family, has been the primary factor behind the removal of Black fathers from the household.

Drugs were introduced into Black neighborhoods at a time when the good paying jobs were drying up, and Black businesses were being destroyed. Globalization, the drug economy, and urban removal programs, worked to weaken extended family communities and promoted the greatest disparity between the rich and the poor on the planet. Corporate values of materialism and individualism weakened the New African spirit-based respect for elders, and the extended family culture and values, which encouraged creativity and human and technical excellence. The intelligence agencies through the COINTELPRO (Counter Intelligence Program) and Low Intensity Programs systematically attacked Black organizations such as the Black Panther Party, and assassinated Black leadership, thus depriving Blacks of many of their most visionary leaders. While militant Black leadership was being imprisoned, exiled, discredited and destroyed, the white Power elite implemented programs, such as the Ford Foundation strategy developed by McGeorge Bundy, to prop up a moderate Black leadership that would re-instill in Blacks a belief in the system. The Moynihan report, written by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, defined single-parent households led by Black females as the cause of pathology in Black communities; turning the tables on the Black Liberation Movement, and making Blacks the victims of white supremacy.

A Choice Between Two Cultures

These hostile external forces and many, many others had the cumulative effect of creating “a choice between two cultures.” (T’Shaka) The “choice between two cultures” has been and continues to be a choice between Euro-American culture and African American or New African culture. What is important is that these cultural choices and cultural breaks have introduced changes into African American communities that are not direct outgrowths of post-slavery forces, although slavery has sometimes served as a contributing factor to these cultural changes. The hostile, external force of the loss of good paying blue collar jobs, and the introduction of the drug economy into ravaged Black communities had the effect of destroying Black community-hood and of driving a wedge between young and old in the Black community. Elders have been discouraged from assuming their role of raising the community’s children because of the potential for violence whenever elders seek to correct anti-social youth behavior, and because too many parents no longer see their children as children of the village. The removal of Black men from the household has put Black male youth in the position of improvising and creating substitute father figures, including OG’s (original gangsters) who are slightly older youth who take the place of male father figures. The emergence of the prison industrial system as a means of incarcerating Black youth and adults has, along with the record industry and military culture, worked to create a gangster mindset that has largely replaced the revolutionary Black Nationalist mindset of the Sixties.

The corporate economy and corporate-based values began to create corporate scholars, corporate musicians, and corporate political and military leaders, who attacked Afro-Centric education, promoted Black capitalism, served as empty mouthpieces for corporate wars, and put forward the insane idea that Jazz was not an African or African American art form, while they played their technique-laden music to stiff white corporate audiences who paid them well for putting them to un-imaginative sleep. The corporatization of the music industry, including Jazz music schools, and the corporate re-definition of Jazz history (as an American not an African American art form) and the industries designation of Jazz greats in place of the Jazz masters designating their own successors has led to a time where there have been no innovators in Jazz instrumental music since 1968. The corporatization of Jazz is part of a larger phenomenon where the corporate culture is now creating corporate (Black) scholars, who get large honorariums for saying nothing challenging to the status quo, while appearing to side with the oppressed. Corporatized Black leaders who are not directly employed by corporations, are “sold” to Blacks like tooth paste; they get rich promoting American capitalism while conjuring up the spirits of Martin Luther King in revised corporate minds, while King’s anti-capitalist’s message, and solidarity with the poor is lost. The bling-bling corporatized value system is creating a de-ranged mindset, while it turns children into obese diabetic consumers of hamburgers, which symbolizes the corporations’ desire to create a standardized destiny and a non-nutritional diet of imitation, crass consumerism, violence, and depressed spiritual emptiness.

The “choice between two cultures,” is between (1) a New African Spirit-based culture and a Euro-American de-spiritualized culture of nothingness; (2) a New African Extended Family Community culture, forged out of enslavement, where elders raised the children of the community, and a Euro-American, individualistic culture where children are personal possessions not subject to collective care, love and supervision; (3) a New African respect for elders, and a Euro-American disrespect for elders; (4) a New African belief in the importance of teaching race pride, and a Euro-American mind-set that subscribes to race pride without the need to teach it to the next generation; (5) the New African belief system that states individual success should not take precedence over everything else, and the Euro-American belief that individual success should take precedence over everything else; (6) the New African cultural value for humanism that places a high value on human life, and the Euro-American culture of death, where death is more certain for too many Black youth than life; (7) the New African belief that elders are repositories of historical and cultural memory that have to be passed onto the next generation so that it can progress, and the Euro-American belief that elders have nothing of value to pass onto the next generation.

The sum total of these hostile external forces is that the most serious internal issue facing African American communities and African global communities is the Generation Gap. The value divide listed above between extended family community values and individualistic values, and between race pride and individualism are generational divides caused by these powerful external forces.

The generation gap is the most serious internal issue facing Blacks globally because these powerful hostile external forces have placed Black youth in a situational gap where their quality of life promises to be qualitatively worse than that of their parents. Black youth, especially Black male youth, who lack technological skills, have been largely written out of the economy, which means that they have been written out of existence. These changed socio-economic conditions impacting African communities globally, dictated a maturing of the Black Studies discipline to an African centered discipline.

Two related cultural movements arose out of the African American community to respond to these changed conditions: one was the African centered cultural and intellectual renaissance and the other was the Hip-Hop Movement arising out of the Bronx. In the mid-eighties African-centered scholars launched a Black book explosion where computer technology and Black publishers emerged to publish African-centered books focusing on the centrality of ancient Kemet (Egypt) to African civilization. African and African American scholars centered their intellectual enterprise upon ancient Kemet because she was the greatest civilization in antiquity and because ancient Kemet provided an intellectual grounding necessary for an African Cultural Renaissance worldwide. This African centered intellectual and cultural movement was designed to promote the restoration of historical memory, a corrective to historical amnesia caused by enslavement. It was also designed to strengthen African identity as a way to promote group unity to overcome the powerful hostile external forces that worked to break up Black families, communities and nations worldwide and domestically. The African centered renaissance focused on ancient African history and African Philosophy. African Philosophy was and continues to be given central attention because African Philosophy represents the “deep thought” of African history and culture.

The African centered cultural renaissance led to an expansion of Black bookstores, and a Black study group movement, where grass-root Blacks formed study groups to examine African and African American history and culture. Rites of Passage programs were formed as a way to socialize Black boys and Black girls to manhood and womanhood. The Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations was formed in 1984, becoming the premier organization for the study of classical African civilizations. The National Black United Front organized a public school curriculum movement to incorporate the African centered curriculum into the public schools. The Black Studies Department at San Francisco State University provided some of the central leaders to the African centered cultural and intellectual renaissance on both the intellectual and organizational level.

“African-Centered” is a term representing the concept which categorizes a “quality of thought and practice” rooted in the cultural image and interest of people of African ancestry and which represents and reflects the life experiences, history and traditions of people of African ancestry as the center of analysis.

In essence, the concept of African-centeredness represents the fact that as human beings, people of African ancestry have the right and responsibility to center themselves in their own subjective possibilities and potential and through the re-centering process reproduce and refine the best of themselves.

The African centered intellectual thrust is rooted in the central principles of African Philosophy including Maat, the ordering principle of mother earth and the cosmos. The way of Maat is the way of harmony, truth, justice, right order, genuineness, uprightness, reality, and real form. The African centered intellectual enterprise seeks to create human beings who are morally and technically excellent and who speak truth and do truth. African Philosophy is grounded in the Spirit or Vital force, which according to quantum physics, is the invisible life force of all matter. The force of spirit is a oneness that pervades every aspect of mother earth and the cosmos. Hence human beings are an inseparable part of earth and the cosmos. Therefore, as humans we have the responsibility to balance nature and the cosmos, not to control it. The oneness or Unicity of the Cosmos gives rise to two-ness. Masculine and feminine, male and female, spiritual and material, life and death are complementary twin forces. African Philosophy rests upon the notion that “the blues are the spirituals,” gospel is sacred blues, Douglass is Delany, Du Bois is Garvey, and King is Malcolm. African Philosophy is word-based, and the power of the word is the truth that underlies it. African Philosophy views life as following a concentric path that mirrors the elliptical path of the planets that zigzag the way life moves with its ups and downs pro-longed to infinity. African Philosophy defines the path of kindness, gentleness and love, the way of water that nourishes all and overwhelms all. African Philosophy also defines the core of African American or New-African culture, which the African centered discipline of Africana Studies also rests upon.

Both the Black Studies Discipline and the Africana Studies Discipline rests upon the central principles of African American or New-African culture. It is this great, beautiful and mighty culture that is one of only two cultures indigenous to the United States (the other being Native American). New African culture is the popular culture of choice in the United States, and it is the culture that counters the culture of oppression: Euro-American culture, which is a cultural import from Europe. The discipline of Africana Studies also grows out of fundamental principles of New African culture. “African American or New-African culture is our way of life and design for living that inspires us to achieve excellence and mastery, through a transformational, liberatory culture that is spirit-based, word-centered, improvisational, freedom grounded, humanistic, inclusive, democratic, communal, rhythmical, dramatic, hieroglyphic, extended family, race conscious, Pan Africanist, and a twin-oriented culture where the blues are the spirituals.” (T’Shaka)

As a “scientific discipline” rooted in racial redemption, liberatory scholarship and community revitalization, the discipline of Africana Studies is a body of systematized knowledge, theories, methods, and laws, which are congruent with the African centered paradigm and philosophy.

Africana Studies Major At San Francisco State University

The Bachelor of Arts in Africana Studies includes basic core courses (27 units), an area of Emphasis (12 units), and electives on advisement (6 units)

Original BLS Core Curriculum	African Centered Discipline Shift
101 Introduction to Black Studies	101 Introduction to Black Studies
200 Introduction to Black Psychology	200 Introduction to Black Psychology
201 Black Involvement in Scientific Dev.	201 Kemet, Afrocentricity and the Dawn of Science
300 From Africa to America	
302 Black Diaspora	266 Introduction to African Language
340 Economics of the Black Community	300 From Africa to America
516 Research Methods	303 Afro-American History
551 Fieldwork in Black Studies	280 Introduction to African Philosophy
	516 Research Methods
	617 Black Dance Experience

Emphasis (12 Units)

Black Humanities Emphasis

Black Behavioral & Social Sciences

Aesthetics Emphasis

Elective (6 units)

Science/Spiritness Emphasis

Emphasis (12 Units)

History and Philosophy Emphasis

Human Development & Governance Emphasis

Elective (6 units)

Education Emphasis

The African centered discipline shift builds on the Black Studies discipline continuing Introduction to Black Studies, Introduction to Black Psychology, From Africa to America, and Research Methods. The African centered discipline shift centers the discipline upon African Philosophy because African Philosophy contains the foundation principles of African and African American culture. African linguistics (languages) has been added to the Africana Studies core because knowledge of African languages is necessary in shaping creative African-centered scholars. Kemet, Afro- centricity, and the Dawn of Science are included in the core because African people need to master science and technology to become powerful and independent in the world. The revised African centered discipline provides a balance between ancient African history and African American history so the past can be applied to the present. Finally and most importantly, four new emphasis areas have been added. History and Philosophy have been added so that Africana Studies majors who are interested in African and African American History can learn the philosophy (or meaning) of history. The Human Development and Governance emphasis has been added to prepare Africana Studies majors for community organization and leadership. The Aesthetics emphasis has been included to provide a concentration for students interested in literature and arts. The Science/Spiritness emphasis has been provided to introduce students to science and to provide a scientific framework that encourages students to harmonize nature. The Education emphasis provides relevant courses to prepare students to become teachers and professors. The African centered discipline shift builds on the Black Studies discipline continuing Introduction to Black Studies, Introduction to Black Psychology, From Africa to America, and Research Methods. The African centered discipline shift centers the discipline upon African Philosophy because African Philosophy contains the foundation principles of African and African American culture. African linguistics (languages) has been added to the Africana Studies core because knowledge of African languages is necessary in shaping creative African-centered scholars. Kemet, Afro- centricity, and the Dawn of Science are included in the core because African people need to master science and technology to become powerful and independent in the world. The revised African centered discipline provides a balance between ancient African history and African American history so the past can be applied to the present. Finally and most importantly, four new emphasis areas have been added. History and Philosophy have been added so that Africana Studies majors who are interested in African and African American History can learn the philosophy (or meaning) of history. The Human Development and Governance emphasis has been added to prepare Africana Studies majors for community organization and leadership. The Aesthetics emphasis has been included to provide a concentration for students interested in literature and arts. The Science/Spiritness emphasis has been provided to introduce students to science and to provide a scientific framework that encourages students to harmonize nature. The Education emphasis provides relevant courses to prepare students to become teachers and professors.

The Africana paradigm shift is designed to bridge the generation gap, and to prepare Black students to be conscious, proud, technically competent, ethnically grounded activists and scholars who build upon the history of the discipline to rebuild extended family communities, and to promote liberation through achieving the Just Society.

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