

Rough Outline for a Document on the Politics of Black America

(NOTE: A new controversy over how to refer to Blacks has recently erupted, spearheaded by Jesse Jackson and several of the more mainstream national Black organizations. The politics of the Black community has historically resulted in a preference for one terminology over the other as the most correct or most dignified. In this instance, the term African-American is being promoted as a more fitting designation. This document will use the term Black, which gained prominence (again) and replaced Negro in the latter part of the civil rights movement when the Black Power tendency emerged. It is still the preferred term.)

(NOTE 2: This is an outline, despite the fact that some sections are complete sentences. It will not include bolstering statistics or thorough-going argumentation that may appear in the actual document.)

I. Introduction - Why a separate document/discussion on the Black struggle.

1) This is not a document about "racism" per se, its causes and material/ideological functions in U.S. capitalism. Though all people of color in the U.S. suffer from the racism inherent in this society, they do so in varying ways and under differing historical formative conditions, among others their location on the immigration timetable, the causes and social composition of the immigration, and the very cultural and social distinctiveness that define these communities as separate ethnic or national entities.

It should go without saying that socialists oppose and actively struggle against all the manifestations of racism against all people of color. The disunity of the laboring population is a chief means by which capital foresees a common identity that is a preconditional component of achieving veritable class consciousness. But the category "people of color" does little else than define the victims of capitalist racism. It does not designate, as yet, a self-defined overarching community of non-white peoples in the boundaries of the U.S. in political, social or cultural terms. (The closest approximation to this would be South Africa, where the struggle against apartheid, led by Blacks, has forged political unity among people of color in that country.)

In other words, to say that all people of color are victims of racism is important because it points to the pervasive and unabating character of racism in the U.S. However, such a statement is not a substitute for a thorough analysis of the actual social and political conditions faced by the component communities taken in by this description.

Such analysis is well beyond the scope of this document, and is not really its point. At this stage, we are aiming for an initial document and discussion of the Chicano/Mexicano movement at our convention, done by comrades from Los Angeles.

2) This is a document about the politics of Black America. It centers on the evolution of the Black struggle, its forms and stages and the strategic importance of this struggle. Though this will be addressed, the document is not about the broader theoretical question of "nationhood." A definitive answer to this theoretical question is not a precondition for a strategic appreciation of the Black struggle to the U.S. revolution, or even the struggle for democratic and popular reform of U.S. capitalism.

The document does not reclaim the heritage of some in SOLIDARITY on the question of the application of the theory of permanent revolution to the U.S. Beginning from the idea that full democratic rights for Blacks could not be achieved under capitalism, it was said that the "coming American revolution" would therefore combine democratic and revolutionary tasks. This is a truism, not an application of the theory of the permanent revolution. Please make a note of it.

Points to be made:

-- the role of Blacks in the capitalist economy, beginning with capital formation and slavery to the permanent reserve army of labor, now dramatically visible in the current crisis of capital and the debate about the "underclass" into which we have entered through ATC.

-- the uniqueness of the Black experience, beginning with slavery, and the longevity of the institutionalized racist oppression has forged a self-identified community that has cyclically played a crucial, vanguard role through its struggle against its oppression that has helped to shift the relations of class forces. Black self-identity as a militant form of consciousness that in general terms is in advance of the consciousness of other workers in an historically permanent way.

-- the relationship of Blacks to the institutions of the working class, the trade unions, and the challenge this has posed as a central factor in the formation and evolution of the U.S. Working class movement. The failed challenge which greatly contributed to the weakness of the labor movement-- though this will not be a detailed history.

-- a caution against strict economism, or mechanically assigning the "blame" for racial oppression solely to its ultimate source -- the racist mechanics of the capitalist labor market, carefully crafted by a conspiratorial bourgeoisie. Generations of systematic racist discrimination do reproduce within the population at large attitudes, ideologies and assumptions that operate as a semi-autonomous social factor. Thus, like the liberation of women, the Black "question" would not be solved by the elimination of the capitalist labor market and a planned economy, a revolutionary transformation that presupposes the development of an adequate consciousness on the part of whites sufficient to bring about the necessary working class unity. Analogous to the struggle for women's liberation, such

a transformation would merely lay the basis for a serious assault on racism. The Black struggle would inevitably continue, given the "autonomy" of the ideology and social patterns.

-- Assigning this crucial strategic role to the Black struggle implies that in substantial measure the political and social fortunes of other peoples of color -- indeed, the entire laboring population -- ultimately rests on the degree to which Blacks succeed in winning reforms and forging allies. Healing this crucial division and false consciousness among whites is critical to social transformation, or even any significant reform, including the reform of the currently existing institutions of the working class, the trade unions.

II. Starting from the Present -- the Jackson Phenomenon

This would be a succinct rehash of what we've been saying about the duality of the Jackson phenomenon. We have both polemicized against the strategy of reforming the Democratic Party and emphasized the profound importance of this Black-led, albeit electoral, rebellion.

Points to be made:

-- support for Jackson among Blacks shows the continued militant self-identified sector of the population capable of taking political action to fight back, though expressed at the ballot box.

-- support for Jackson and the Rainbow vision among whites and a small section of the labor movement is a step toward multiracial unity for a common political purpose that is a positive contribution. The same is true for the ability to forge a coalition electoral effort with other peoples of color.

-- the Jackson rebellion objectively placed Blacks once again in the vanguard, despite the reformist electoral program that framed the effort. It was the Black masses who were rallied to "save the New Deal Democratic Party." Contrast this to the origins of the New Deal, when the labor movement, however wrongly strategically, played a central leadership role in crafting the "Working man's (sic)" dimension to the Democratic Party. At this juncture, labor was incapable of mounting a fight against the DP's drift to the right. Contrast this as well to the period of Black entry into the DP in the Johnson era, which was a conscious cooptation of the Black movement into the bourgeois electoral framework organized by the DP leadership and fed by adoption of a "guns and butter" programmatic stance to provide the attracting power and create a social layer through which to mediate this cooptation.

The New Deal image of the Democratic Party saw the unification, for the first time, of working class voters

into one bourgeois party. Beginning in 1934-36, the Black vote moved into the DP out of the Republican Party, coinciding with (not entirely led by) the CIO's move. The result was a field day for capitulation, social democratic reformism, etc. etc. However, the fact remains that identification with a single party was a deformed thread of cohesion to a working class historically divided along nativist-immigrant, regional, religious and ethnic lines. This has now been broken, with the white working class vote (those who bother to vote) increasingly dividing between Republican and Democrat.

This development is worthy of notice in an overall assessment of the current state of affairs. It is an important byproduct of the narrowing margins of bourgeois politics in face of the crisis of U.S. capital, and of the state of the organized trade union movement. The Jackson attempt to re-solidify this voting bloc around the strength of the Black "swing vote" was resoundingly defeated by the racist appeal in the 1988 elections and the total inability of today's labor movement to perceive even its own narrow, reformist interests in such an effort. The "labor voting bloc" that was traditional for decades is now in shambles. The Black voting bloc remains and is looking for trade-offs in a narrow and relatively lonely marketplace. This is part of the political atomization of the working class, along with the high abstention rate among working class voters and the general alienation and sense of political powerlessness.

-- Jackson is already preparing to run in 1992. His objective of becoming a DP powerbroker is ever more apparent. The Black elected officials (BEOs) who backbone the conservative notion of the Rainbow have for now won a decisive victory over the relatively powerless, predominantly white left which sought to make the Rainbow a permanent, progressive "movement." Jackson's power lunch with Bush and his recent statements that Blacks are not leftists, but conservative, Christian folk were recent media hypervents. Nonetheless, Jackson continues to be present at all the right demonstrations and to generate a maverick, grassroots appeal. And 1992 is a long way away....

While individual Blacks such as Ron Daniels, former executive director of the Rainbow, and the New York newspaper the City Sun may be posing questions about the overall strategy, there is no current indication that any substantial sector of Black activists are capable of generating genuine debate about this strategy. The necessary receptivity and political terrain is not yet present. To the degree possible, SOLIDARITY should engage in discussion with those individual Blacks who are prepared to take a critical look at the Jackson strategy.

Parenthetically, the polls indicate that some 45% of Blacks felt Jackson should have run as an independent once he lost the nomination, down from the over 50% who said that in 1984. This is probably attributable to the weakening of the '84 Jackson appeal to Black pride in favor of the "economic common ground" themes of 1988.

III. The State of Black Leadership...Comments on the Dominance of Black Electoral Reformism

This is a section that will trace in very sketchy form the history of the modern Black struggle, from the civil rights movement to the present, in order to get a historical handle on why the Democratic Party electoral strategy is near hegemonic today and to what degree we can anticipate it's being challenged.

Some of the points to be made:

-- In the context of Black dependency on the DP, Jackson's candidacies and his Rainbow veneer were radical in relation to the mainstream of Black elected officialdom. Despite all the backsliding and compromising, this was still a challenge to "business as usual" in the terms the BEO's have served it up for the past two decades. Because of its national character and because Jackson is not an elected official, his "renegade," crusader behavior to a certain degree poses a new model of Black leadership that recalls the struggle days of the civil rights movement, especially to a generation that did not live it.

-- Three modern periods of the Black struggle. 1) From the massive migration and proletarianization (North and South) in WWII to the rise of the civil rights movement. The destruction of the Blacks as a southern, agrarian population. The civil rights movement as the product of the new confidence born of this proletarianization and educational expansion, as a product of things getting better but not good enough. Other contributive factors: the fight against fascism and the democratic image of the U.S. and the contribution of Blacks; the rise of the Third World liberation struggles in postwar era; the expanding U.S. economy and the American dream; the rise of the CIO; the retardation of an immediate post-war explosion by the Cold War witchhunt in the U.S.

Failure of the labor movement to ally itself with the civil rights movement or prioritize the organization and full incorporation of the Black Worker, beginning with the failed Operation Dixie of the CIO in favor of full entry into the Democratic Party electoral partnership and ending with the failure to link up with MLK and the beginning efforts at organizing the Black workers in Memphis, where he was killed. An historic failure for labor. The witchhunt as contributive in pushing out the militant unionists who could have led in an anti-racist direction. Post-war prosperity, Cold War business unionism precluded the development of the trade-union movement as a social movement. Resistance of the unions to affirmative-action legislation.

Attitude of sectors of the ruling class was not impassable hostility, but a measure of acceptance of the inevitability of moves to end Jim Crow, restore social peace and integrate the South into the national industrial economy. The Southern ruling class was in part pushed by the imposition of national labor

standards -- the minimum wage and later employment practices in defense contracting and the "selling" of the South to Northern industry. Culminating in the Johnson administration's cooptive effort, backed by sectors of big business who in the flush of war-prime prosperity aimed at "absorbing" a layer of the Black working class into the high-wage "American dream" industrial sector.

These types of absorption and cooptation designs from ruling circles combine with the racism of the labor movement and the absence of a third political party to perpetuate Booker T. Washington-type schemes. Black must negotiate separately with the powers that be who are willing to concede reforms.

Stress the massive character of the civil rights movement. Civil rights demands were democratic. When formal legality was won, the momentum and lessons of the struggle could not stop at legal equality and the end of Jim Crow, particularly in face of de facto segregation and discrimination in the North, impact of the Vietnam War and the general student radicalization generated by the civil rights movement.

2) The rise of a Black militant, anti-capitalist leadership from 1966 (the famous call for "Black Power" within SNCC) and 1972 (the Gary Indiana Black Politics Convention as a watershed)

Here will be a brief description of the rise of this wing and its various components -- Panthers, puri-nationalists, the DRUM, FRUM etc. League of Revolutionary Black Workers developments, etc.

What ultimately eclipsed this wing was not programmatic confusion or impurity, ultraleft adventurism or even COINTELPRO, which was certainly highly contributive to the dispersion and demoralization of this layer. It did not yield nearly the proportion of "political survivors" as the white left. In addition, avenues for cooptation were more available to the talented young Black leadership of the movement -- Andrew Young, John Lewis, etc. As well, those who developed a Marxist outlook were victims of the immaturity of the "vanguard" left, in particular the strong influence of Maoism among groups that had a revolutionary appeal to the left of the CP and the social democracy.

The defeat of this militancy is attributable to two basic factors: a) the militancy of the Black community was not matched by the rise of anything like an allied movement among the mass of whites. The primarily student radicalization, despite its Vietnam successes, was insufficient to generate an atmosphere conducive to a deepening of Black militancy. There is an objective limit to the risk-taking of the Black movement, which ultimately must see some sign that the social atmosphere is shifting along with it before it will be able to reshape a sharper mass social critique and generate more militancy.

The vanguard role of Blacks, the forms and objectives undertaken, is still fundamentally limited by the social divisions and the necessity for the minority to have a

certain level of social assistance, if not conscious alliance, from within the majority. This is part of the peculiarity of the Black national minority, in that it is not confined to a special territory, speaking a separate language. Rather, it is a geographically dispersed national entity which enjoys varying degrees of economic and political "integration," depending on the circumstances and the degree of mass mobilization mustered. It has no history of struggle to regain or create a state power, or a territorial national-cultural autonomy.

Yet Blacks are not simply just another ethnicity whose assimilation has been delayed by racism. Capitalism and racism have for centuries structured a systemic block to "ethnic assimilation" for Blacks. This block is the source of the particular and unique political, social and cultural self-identity among Blacks. Though much is made of the supposed "Black bourgeoisie," in fact this layer is minuscule in real terms, and still confined to businesses aimed strictly at the Black community, with its shrinking standard of living. This to further highlight the peculiarity of the Black national entity, for which any national aspirations are not driven by a classical bourgeois layer of any substance.

The duality of the Black American that DuBois and others spoke of -- the desire to be equal and full citizens -- combines with an historically peculiar feeling of separateness, off nationhood. The history of more "classic" suppressed nationalities -- from the Basques to the Irish to the Poles -- would show a different charting of forms of struggle that were much more independent of allies among the oppressor majority.

2) Legacy of the Second Reconstruction. The rapid growth of a Black middle class and the introduction of significant social divisions within the Black population. The state of the economy, the social and educational programs, expansion of federal employment, affirmative action, etc. enabled the rise of a "new" middle class of Blacks whose political objectives were conservatized by this privileged position. The process was capped by the dramatic electoral successes of the mobilized Black vote and the creation of the Black machines in the major urban centers, whose patronage was a helpful anchor for the middle class. Also, the entry of substantial numbers of Blacks into high paid industrial jobs during the 1960s and the general expansion of possibilities for Blacks had its effect.

These machines captured "dying" cities; their electoral successes were made possible by the "Blackening" of the urban centers as a result of post-war white suburban flight, which was a veritable wagon train in the early 1960s. This has now been compounded by the flight of the Black middle class out of the central cities, further accentuating the social divisions in the Black community.

Though the election of Black mayors who administer austerity in partnership with the local ruling elite does little to qualitatively redress the economic plight of Blacks, the attitude became "it's better than nothing." This was fed by the resistance of the white

electorate and the white party machine, which still delivers 23% tops to any Black candidate. (The recent election of Mike Espy in Mississippi with 40% of the white vote is an outstanding exception. It points out the fact that, given where we are geographically based, SOLIDARITY has a lot to learn about the politics of the South and the situation of Southern Blacks.)

A word on the evolution of MLK and Malcolm toward the end of their lives, and how the death of these two important leaders interrupted an important political evolution and contributed to the failure of a radical wing for the movement.

The watershed of the 1972 National Black Political Convention Gary, Indiana, attended by 3,000 delegates from every political outlook extant in the Black movement, from the Congressional Black Caucus to the Republic of New Africa. The attempt to forge an independent Black political presence was unsuccessful, largely because the reformist strategy had already succeeded in becoming dominant. Feeling their strength, the reformists felt no pressure to undertake any kind of permanent all-Black coalition or conduct a one-on-one political battle with more radical strategies. The political climate around the deep recession of the mid-1970s sealed this evolution. The reformist electoral strategy, fueled by the Black middle class and capped by the Jackson "rebellion" remains hegemonic.

Despite our opposition to this reformist strategy, we should also recognize that the electoral successes of Blacks are a democratic advance against exclusion from the political process. And this strategy is not new. The theory of the "swing vote" was codified in 1948 by Ronald Moon when Blacks delivered several crucial states to Truman. Even before that leaders from Frederick Douglass to DuBois (Wilson) sought to berter the Black voting bloc for reforms. This is, again, the product of the absence of a strong ally or a third political party that could represent the interests of Blacks within a broader social program. The rate at which Blacks are being elected has slowed dramatically in the mid-late 1980s. This is largely due to a certain saturation of majority Black districts that enable electoral success.

An influx of Blacks into county and statewide political office will be dependent on the creation of a political climate that can win white votes. Mainstream Black organizations are now anticipating a fight around the 1991 reapportionment of districts following the 1990 census, assuming that Black districts will be gerrymandered to prevent further electoral successes. And we support the fight to stop any such gerrymander.

Though Jesse Jackson now claims that 600,000 votes -- presumably Black votes -- could have changed the outcome of the '88 election, his appeal is something of a departure from the traditional Black swing vote strategy in that it seeks to use the Black vote as the starting base for a broader "left coalition" within the DP.

-- Is the reformist strategy fraying at the edges? Yes and no. Objective economic and social conditions are vastly different from the heady days of

the Hatcher-Stokes 1967 victories. Conditions in the urban ghettos. Cutbacks in social programs and shrinking local revenues place the Black middle class in a precarious position, and the pinch will be felt. There is already resistance among the (diminishing) Black college student population. The squabbles in Chicago over the pretender to the "Washington legacy" and the confusion in New York, the city with the largest Black population in the world, over the upcoming mayoral race and the "maybe" candidacy of Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins indicate that years of failure to develop a mobilized movement-type base for the Black machine may be catching up with this strategy.

Here should be inserted some sort of overview of the state of Black America, the increasing gap in living standards and poverty levels between Blacks and whites. Also something on 1) the "underclass" debate; and more importantly 2) Black women and the effects of the "new workforce" and the "new welfare state of austerity" -- childcare, welfare reform.

However, for the present, the reformist electoral strategy may simply be increasingly ignored rather than replaced. Voter turnout among Blacks in the last national election was lower than anticipated. Dialogue over more militant forms remains confined to a small sector of Black radicals. The deep-going immiseration of a permanently unemployed or underemployed layer of Blacks reproduced over generations in the urban centers combined with a shrinkage of the Black industrial proletariat that grew in the 60s and the bankruptcy of the Black reformist leadership creates an unknown political and social quantity. Spontaneous explosion as in '65-68 can neither be predicted nor ruled out. The conditions are, however, different in every way -- from the absence of a civil rights movement and a political climate of struggle to the relative gains that Blacks were making economically in the previous period of rebellion, the drastic decline in public education and the epidemic substance dependency.

IV. A Common Terminology for SOLIDARITY

Though it would be valuable, it is hopeless to attempt a full-blown review of the theoretical heritage of revolutionaries on the "national question." A supplementary document on this may be written by Marian from New York. As well, it is not necessary to a common appreciation of the strategic importance of the Black struggle.

Points to be made:

-- Are Black Americans "a nation." This question plagued the "vanguard" left of the 70s, both Black and white, leaving all manner of theoretical pronouncements and "correct revolutionary programs" in the closets of archivists now in their 40s. This document will echo what Leon Trotsky, a well-known revolutionary who spent a brief time in the U.S. on the Lower East Side, said in

the late 30s: they are if they think they are.

The "nationhood" of Blacks in the classic sense is a purely subjective quantity; it cannot be determined by measuring Black Americans against a series of "objective criteria" and then decreeing them to be or not to be a nation in the name of scientific socialism. This was the mistake of the "Black Belt" theory of the Stalinized Comintern, which made this judgement on the objective basis of the bulk of the Black population being agrarians concentrated in the South. It was also the mistake of those who categorically reject the idea that Blacks could be a nation because of their proletarianization and geographic dispersion and semi-integration. (The Black Belt theory has yet to disappear. After the March 8 Super Tuesday primary, Amiri Baraka, now departed from the League for Revolutionary Struggle, saw the results among Black voters as another indication of the Black nation that resides only in the South.)

Because of the particular history of the Black population, it cannot be ruled out that this subjective identification as a nation could be politically derived at any given point. This is not to say that Blacks are necessarily a nation in formation. The contradictory pull and tug, the desire to fight for integration yet the continued separation of the majority of Blacks and the intensity of racism against them preclude that judgement. This is also not to say that nationalist aspirations among Blacks will only occur under conditions of increased racism, hard times, etc., etc. It is equally possible that, given the deep cultural, social and even linguistic heritage of Black America, such aspirations could be fueled by a upsurge of generalized class struggle in the U.S., under conditions where Blacks feel more confident, strong and capable of achieving their liberation. It is not up to us to second-guess what the interaction of Black political and cultural identity with U.S. politics has in store.

-- Self-determination. SOLIDARITY stands on the general tradition of self-determination for oppressed nations. This would hold true for Black "classical" national aspirations (i.e., separation), were they to develop. One discussion that flared briefly in SOLIDARITY was posed in terms of the counterposition of "revolutionary integrationism" to support to "nationalism." It is here that we should seek to adopt a common language on these terms, so that we can make ourselves crystal clear to Black activists.

In the course of the radicalism of the late 60s, the term "nationalism" became defined in several different ways in the Black movement. In the majority, those who called themselves "nationalists" were not advocates of a separate state, demanding territory in the South, etc. etc. The cry of "It's Nation Time" was not synonymous with "It's Separation Time." The term nationalist came to mean something else: 1) race pride, militant fight back for one's race and placing its interests above all else in racist white America; 2) the inviolate right of the oppressed Blacks to have their own organs of struggle, determine their own future, strategy, tactics and alliances and make their own political decisions

because of the racism that permeated even the best of the multiracial organizing efforts. This formula for struggle was used by revolutionary Marxist Blacks, who had a class appreciation of the nature of U.S. society and who saw the need for a class-wide rebellion to subvert capital. It was a way of exorcising the special interests of Blacks in a society permeated by racism. And, as mentioned earlier, such "nationalism" is inevitable in the post-revolutionary process.

The term "self-determination" also lost its "classical" meaning of separation. It came to also have the broader meaning of the right of Blacks to determine their politics and their future and lead their own movements.

Most socialist organizations supported this broad definition of nationalism (with the dishonorable exception of the American Communist Party for quite a time.) We should continue to use this interpretation of the term, as it still holds currency among the small layer of Black militants with which we are likely to come in contact and is likely to be re-adopted in any future resurgence of Black radicalism.

This broad definition is bolstered by the Farrakhan phenomenon. Farrakhan draws large crowds on campuses like Howard, and gets an emotional response to his appeal for race pride a la the Nation of Islam. Yet this response is not an indication that the narrow nationalist solutions he poses are accepted by those who flock to hear these speeches. These students are not about to quit law school and set up cosmetic franchises funded by the Libyan government. This is a manifestation of the contradictory rage against racism that is deep-going in all segments of the Black community, including its "new" middle class.

In the past, some of us distinguished this term by referring to "narrow" or "pure" nationalism to describe the tiny segment of the movement that was advocating a separate state, or short of that the preparatory development of a separate Black economy in the ghettos and the development of Black capitalism as a precursor to separation. (Even in this latter case, the lines weren't always that clear-cut, since many of these small groups tended to participate in coalitional activities which had different objectives. Many were early participants in the "classical integrationist reformism" of the Black electoral machine, and still are.)

Some in SOLIDARITY use the term "nationalism" in the way that most would use the phrase "narrow nationalism." This should be adjusted. It is hard to believe that anyone in SOLIDARITY is opposed to the broad definition put forward above. It shouldn't be difficult to make this adjustment in terminology.

Does this mean that SOLIDARITY is somehow rejecting revolutionary integrationism? Not at all. No more than Lenin, whose contribution to the revolutionary arsenal on the right of nations to self-determination were made in the context of revolutionary integrationism. In the best of all possible worlds as envisioned by Marxists, it is preferable, and we strive for, the emergence of a revolutionary consciousness and political program and

practice among the working class and the oppressed that is sufficient to overcome national divisions, that enables the commonality of class interests to supersede that of race or national identity. That is what we strive for as the outcome of the development of struggle, the unification of the class as against its separation into integral nations, because this places the workers and their allies in the strongest and most advanced possible position. In recognizing this as the preferable outcome, we are revolutionary integrationists.

However, back here in the real world, like Lenin, we also recognize that actual developments may dictate that the process of social transformation cannot be advanced by imposing this unification when it has not come about organically in the course of the struggle. The unequivocal right of self-determination was recognized, not advocated, by the Bolsheviks, as a necessary means of achieving ultimate revolutionary integration. This should be the heritage we rest on, though it isn't exactly being posed on our immediate agenda. (A note on the Nicaraguan experience on the Atlantic Coast.)

V. TASKS OF SOLIDARITY

The student/youth fraction is preparing a supplement to this discussion which outlines the experiences of our comrades with the recent struggles against racism on campus and, to a more limited degree, in the community. This contribution will cull some of the experiences and discuss the tactical questions in building multiracial alliances. This is one of the few actual areas of work with Black militants or work around the issues of racism that Solidarity, or pretty much anybody, has been presented with. The earlier promise of some kind of ongoing anti-racist work, either regionally or even nationally, coming after the responses to Forsythe County and Howard Beach did not materialize. This is largely a product of the state of the leadership in the Black community and the isolation of the tiny number of trade unions (largely New York based) that have shown a willingness to act on this question. Notice the response to the call for a 25th anniversary March on Washington, which showcased Michael Dukakis.

-- The placing of this question on the convention agenda. However incomplete (or abstract) our initial discuss is an attempt to move the question of the Black struggle more to the center of our organization to the degree possible.

-- SOLIDARITY must more aggressively seek dialogue and discussion with Black militants who are reviewing questions of strategy, etc. We stumbled into this and made a few friends of Solidarity of Black militants who met us through our Jackson campaign. These friendships should be deepened and expanded to include those who are somewhat less friendly to SOLIDARITY per se, but are open to dialogue. We should continue our keen and non-sectarian interest in developments within the Rainbow.

-- Recognizing the reality of the movement and of our organization, SOLIDARITY branches and twigs should stay alert for any activities that can be conducted on the anti-racist, Black liberation front -- from forums to actual sporadic struggles. Work of this type is already on-going in Madison and Philadelphia, sporadic in New York, and, through the teacher's fraction and the issue of education, being launched in Los Angeles. Branches facing Black mayoral candidates -- Chicago and New York -- should seek debate, write articles for ATC and the SOLIDARITY publications. (A special eye should be kept on the issue of education, the crisis of which may well spark some resistance and community activism. At the very least, forums can probably be held.)

-- Stepped-up coverage on Black struggles and culture in ATC is a must, including dialogue and articles from those with a "left wing" Rainbow perspective. The recent issue of Left Turn is exemplary in its dossier on the anti-racist struggle among students.

-- Recruitment of Blacks to SOLIDARITY will qualitatively advance our organization. The difficulty of this cannot be underestimated, given the smallness of our organization, its lack of insertion or credibility among Black activists, and the Rainbow tide we swim against. The ability of the student/youth fraction to become part of anti-racist struggles where they develop is also crucial. Stepped up activity as above begins to create an atmosphere more conducive to recruitment to the organization.

Not addressed:

-- the notion of a "new racism" - it's as old as the hills.