



We are an African People: Re-centering Africa in Twentieth Century Black Liberation

Research Seminar Series

THURSDAYS @ 12:30 IN HISTORY

Visiting Speaker



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The decade of the 1960s has gone down in history as revolutionary for both Africa and her diaspora offspring. For Africa, it ushered decolonization. For the diaspora, it unleashed protests for civil and political rights resulting in significant reforms. These achievements notwithstanding, the struggles were far from over. Over the horizons in both Africa and the diaspora loomed dark clouds of disillusionment and apprehension. There were forces determined to derail and push back progress. Racism and bigotry waxed strong in the diaspora. Neocolonialism was on the offensive in Africa. However, these moments of shared pessimism and apprehension only enhanced the appeal of Africa. Several diaspora activists determined that the continent held the key that would unlock the pathway to progress. It became imperative therefore that the struggles be both consolidated and globalized with Africa solidly as the foundation. Leading

20th century diaspora activists (Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael and Walter Rodney) responded by theorizing Africa as the agency whose heritage and post-colonial political power, and economic resources, afforded diaspora blacks and oppressed colored populations worldwide the wherewithal for survival and empowerment. Paradoxically, even as these activists were drawn to Africa by a macro-vision of a Pan-African solidarity, the competing demand of, and loyalty to, ethno-cultural identity (micro-nationalism) complicated and problematized Africa's capacity to function as envisioned. In essence, their attempts to construct a unified foundation for a broad colored cosmopolitan struggle morphed into a conflict between the call for a unified Pan-African struggle vested on Africa on the one hand, and micro-nationalistic allegiance to, and concerns for, the problems of a diasporic nationality on the other.

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Lawson Hall 2270C