

# Sojourner Truth Organization

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. . . not to serve the working class at each of its stages, but to represent the interests of the movement as a whole, to point out to this movement its ultimate aim and its political tasks, and to safeguard its political and ideological independence.

V.I. Lenin, *The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement*

# Editorial

## NYACK AND THE GRAND JURY INVESTIGATION

Eight people — Gerri Gaines, Yaasmyn Fula, Asha Sundiata, Eve Rosahn, Bernardine Dohrn, Alan Berkman, Shaheem Jabaar, and John Crenshaw — are currently imprisoned for refusing to collaborate with a RICO (Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) grand jury in New York City.

We believe that the cases of those imprisoned deserve both more attention and more support than they have thus far received. In the hope of encouraging that support, we would like to examine why the government has chosen the particular people who have been subpoenaed and subsequently imprisoned and why it has chosen to characterize its investigation as one into a conspiracy.

The second question has an easier answer than the first. The "conspiracy" angle gives the government both legal and political advantages. In the first case, if the government does proceed with indictments and trials, the conspiracy charge (especially as it is interpreted in the RICO statute) is a somewhat easier one to fabricate a case around. But the political advantages are substantial as well. The charge of conspiracy conjures up images of shadowy figures hatching terrorist intrigues — images that fit in rather well with the notion of a world-wide terror network.

One of the primary reasons for the government's attack is to justify its repressive policies — whether to criminalize CIA revelations, to restrict the Freedom of Information Act, to break down doors and terrorize people in the Black community, or to secure convictions in the cases of those already indicted. But, given the still considerable support for civil liberties on the one hand and the remarkable resilience of white-supremacist hegemony on the other, the targets of the grand jury have to be chosen quite carefully.

The eight people in jail have either been activists in the Black liberation movements or white people who are supporters of those movements. What they have in common is not membership in an organization or even necessarily agreement on all political questions, but instead a conviction that the struggles by Black people are central for the future of the society we live in and a refusal to cooperate with a government that has shown time and again the lengths to which it was prepared to go to defeat those struggles.

We need to remember that repression, like so many other aspects of state policy, is applied unequally and selectively. Only some people are subject to state terror and/or political imprisonment. The left, as a whole, is undoubtedly infiltrated, informed on, and provoked. But it is not treated in the same way as members of the Black Panther Party or the Republic of New Afrika were or as the members of Black August are being treated today. For that matter, white activists have seldom been subject to the kind of repressive tactics that have been used against the broad movements of Black and other people of color. This differential repression is not based on the existence of an immediate, serious threat to the state's overall power — but rather on a perception by the state of the potential threat embodied in the movements of oppressed peoples.

The ability of the struggles waged by peoples of color within and without the borders of the United States to challenge people's loyalty to the system of social, economic and political power has, most dramatically in the cases of Viet Nam and of the Black movement throughout the '50s and '60s, contributed to a definite weakening of the imperial center. The state has been determined to eliminate that set of possibilities and used COINTELPRO internally and CIA operations externally to attack those movements. The direct attacks, whether they employed bullets or courts, represented only one part of the government's strategy. A well-orchestrated campaign has been conducted to portray the partisans of national liberation as terrorists and their politics as illegitimate.

With COINTELPRO exposed and the Black movement weakened (although in some ways resurgent), the government has developed a strategy of preventive detention for some political activists. Grand jury subpoenas issued to people whom the government knows will not collaborate is a U.S. version of political internment. The irony is that those who are subpoenaed, as well as those who have been indicted on federal charges, represent a politics that has, at the moment, little of an organized movement corresponding to it. What is being imprisoned is not an actual conspiracy, but instead a particular approach to politics.

The principal reason why there is so little spontaneous support for those who have been imprisoned is that the white left, by and large, has accepted the government's definition of legitimate politics and has kept its distance from the politics of autonomy for oppressed groups, of community self-defense and of armed struggle. This is not to argue that the white left has always made these choices self-consciously. They have far more often been made in the language of practicality and effectiveness — as those were defined by the prevailing attitudes in white communities.

In this light, it is interesting to contrast the characteristic responses of the white left and the Black movement in the aftermath of the attempted robbery of the Brinks truck last October. The typical published comment from the white left excoriated those presumably responsible and those whose politics were seen as sympathetic as being motivated by illusion or delusion. We can take it for granted that the initial private responses of most of those in the white left were not so different. On the other hand, the Black movement (especially in New York) rallied quickly to issue public statements denouncing the government's attacks on Black people and to defend the political and civil liberties of Fulani Sunni Ali when she was kidnapped from Mississippi.

We are not suggesting that the Black movement in New York was therefore giving its political approval to the attempted robbery. So far as we know, the Black movement has not, as a whole, taken any public position on that particular event. What positions, if any, organizations in the Black movement take will, of course, be decided by those organizations themselves. What we are trying to emphasize, though, is how different the approach taken by the Black movement was from that of the white left.

The predominant politics of the white left has been characterized for more than a decade by a withdrawal from the politics of support for the Black movement and by a playing down of the significance of racism. That withdrawal has not only damaged the potential for organizing among white people to support the struggles of people of color; it has also created a political vacuum, especially among young people, that has been filled by a resurgent right wing and a revival of fascistic racism. If that fascism is ever triumphant, it is doubtful that it would be as careful in its choices of candidates for terror and imprisonment as the government is now. We can see a rather dramatic illustration of this possibility in the Klan murder of the five members of the Communist Workers' Party.

The white left will not be persuaded to support those in jail by a version of the "You're going to be next" argument that seems almost automatic in these situations. The government has made it quite clear

that those parts of the white left that keep their distance from the politics of Black liberation have little to fear from the government's repressive agencies.

Instead, we would argue that those in jail should be supported because they represent, however partially and imperfectly, a political challenge to racist, bourgeois hegemony and rule. We must insist on the political character of the links between those imprisoned — as opposed to the attempts on the left and the right to characterize those links as criminal, conspiratorial or bizarre.

The wisdom of the old proverb that "An injury to one is an injury to all" has to be understood as meaning that it does not matter how close anyone else is to being subpoenaed or imprisoned. The imprisonment of eight is an attack on the movement and should be resisted as such.

It is often difficult to agree on estimates of priorities for political work. Few would suggest that the grand jury attacks are the burning issue of the day. Nevertheless, our movement is weakened and impoverished so long as the government remains able to continue the imprisonment of those subpoenaed thus far and to persuade so much of that movement that it should not be concerned. We believe that the effort to defeat this grand jury demands widespread support.

And what of those individuals arrested and charged in connection with the attempted robbery itself? Our starting point is the essential righteousness of any effort by the oppressed to gain their freedom. It is inevitable that Black revolutionaries will attempt to create a liberation army, which is, after all, an instrument of organized violence, and to finance its operations through expropriations that themselves entail violence — and it is inevitable that some-people-with white skin will help them. One does not have to hail the attempted robbery as the highest form of struggle yet reached in this country, as some have done, or agree on the wisdom of the particular line of defense chosen by the majority of those on trial, in order to recognize the political character of the action and respect the decision of those who have chosen to take a prisoner of war stance as well as those who have chosen to present a more conventional defense. Given present realities, it may be beside the point to call for the release of the Nyack defendants; yet there still remains for revolutionaries the more important task of understanding and explaining the character of the attempted robbery as a political, not a criminal, act, and insisting that those on trial be judged by political, not criminal, standards.





# Review

## A HOUSE DIVIDED: LABOR AND WHITE SUPREMACY

By Roxanne Mitchell and Frank Weiss. Comment by Harry Haywood. New York: United Labor Press, 1981, xiii, 171pp., \$3.95.

*Sojourner Truth Organization owes a political debt to Ted Allen. A large part of our understanding of U.S. history and the central importance of white supremacy are based on his insights, which were especially manifest in Noel Ignatin's White Blindspot, first published in 1967, and his Learn the Lessons of U.S. History, first published in 1968. For that reason, we are publishing the following piece, which was submitted to us with the title, "A Partial Review," in spite of the fact that we like neither the tone nor content of it. Our main political objection to Perry's article is the absence in it of any treatment of the subject of autonomy, either of the workers' movement in general or of the black movement in particular. Without an appreciation of how the conditions of life under capitalism give rise to certain forms of activity which represent a break with bourgeois patterns of behavior and constitute a challenge to bourgeois hegemony, it is impossible to develop a strategy for overcoming bourgeois white-supremacist domination, which, as Allen writes (Perry cites him in the review), is "the principal aspect of U.S. capitalist society. . . ." Thus, Perry's praiseworthy effort to refute the argument of the Mitchell-Weiss book and defend our common thesis is compromised from the start. For an example of how STO treats this debate, readers are referred to Ignatin's Black Worker, White Worker, published in the collection Workplace Papers.*

*The editors*

## IN DEFENSE OF TED ALLEN

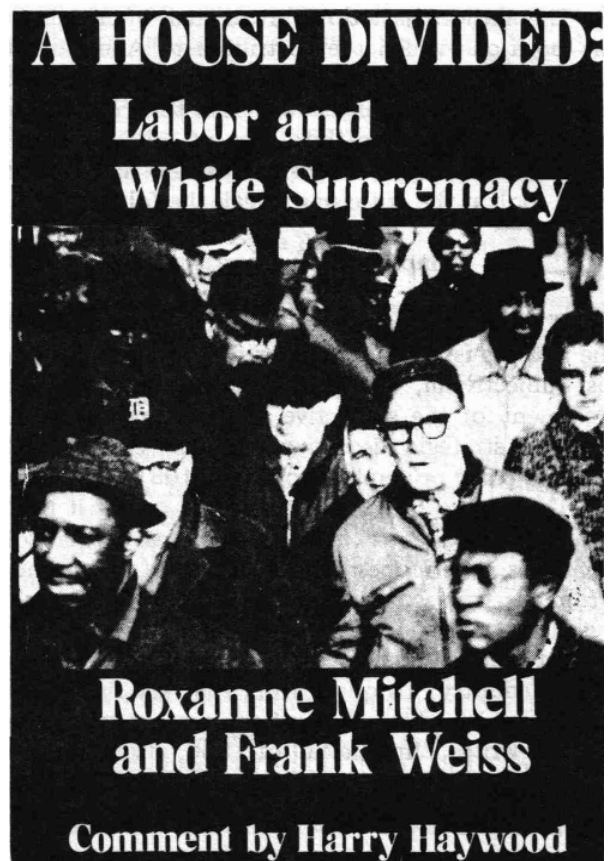
by Jeff Perry

A particularly foul aspect of *A House Divided: Labor and White Supremacy* is that the book utilizes the essential arguments of another author in an attempt to lay claim to theoretical advances and then turns around and distorts and misrepresents the views of the very author from whom so much is borrowed. This partial review will seek to suggest how and why this was done and in the process to provide the reader with certain key excerpts from the writings of the maligned author, Ted Allen. These excerpts, in turn, suggest some of the signal contributions made by Allen to the tasks of understanding and overcoming the "white" problem and to developing a revolutionary strategy and movement in this country.

*A House Divided* is a 1981 publication of the "Proletarian Unity League [PUL] and other friends" that "was written over five years ago." [pp. xii-xiii, v] Its authorship is attributed to the names Roxanne Mitchell and Frank Weiss. It includes a Preface, seven chapters, an Appendix on superseniority, A Comment by Harry Haywood, Selected Bibliography, and Study Questions. The authors state that their "book attributes the central causal role for a peculiar labor movement to that 'peculiar institution,' U.S. White supremacist national oppression. More than that we never meant to claim." [p. 144]

Chapter one addresses the longstanding question "Why no socialism in the U.S.?" and argues that "opportunism towards the institutions of white supremacist national oppression is not simply one among a number of shortcomings: it constitutes the key politi-

cal and ideological weakness of the workers' movement in this country." [p. 10] Chapters two through five deal with other competing theories and explanations which the authors describe as the Labor. Aristocracy Thesis, the Super-Profits Thesis and a corol-



lary Southern Branch Super-Profits Thesis, the Bribery Theory, and four variations of "left" economist views.

At their best, these five chapters paraphrase and re-state arguments far better elucidated by Ted Allen, particularly in his published works "Can White Radicals Be Radicalized?" (in the original pamphlet by Noel Ignatin and Ted Allen entitled *White Blindspot and Can White Radicals Be Radicalized?*, 1969) and *White Supremacy in U.S. History* (1973), and in his paper, "The Most Vulnerable Point" (1972).

That these authors seek to attack white supremacy and that they seek to do so by utilizing the previous research and writings of Ted Allen are commendable facts. Similar efforts by others should be encouraged. What is of most interest in the book, however, is the fact that after so utilizing Allen's previous work, they seek, in Chapter Six, to disassociate from what they call Allen's and Ignatin's "deviations" [p. 115], after noting, of course, that "none of the criticisms we have of Ted Allen's theoretical or political positions negate the general importance of his historical research" [p. 108]. Chapter Six in particular is very disjointed and runs far and wide with its criticisms and accusations. These criticisms and accusations are at times inaccurate, at times outright falsehoods, and at times strawmen (created by the authors), but most malodorous of all are the instances when the authors use arguments which Allen has developed to counter arguments which they falsely attribute to Allen.

The authors have three broad areas of criticism of the positions which they attribute to Allen and Ignatin. The first two areas of criticism are labeled by the authors "spontaneist subjectivism" and "ultra-left utopianism"; the third area of criticism I treat under the heading of criticisms of slogan and strategy. A look at the criticisms reveals the following:

### Spontaneist Subjectivism

The first critique of Allen and Ignatin offered by the authors is described under the heading "spontaneist subjectivism," where they allege that Allen in his treatment of the subjective factor "nowhere relates it to the strategic discussion," to the "conscious element or party principle." [pp. 115,108]

The charge that Allen "nowhere relates it to the strategic discussion" appears to reveal either total blindness or dishonesty on the part of the authors. From his first writings on the subject, Allen has focused above all on the strategic centrality of the fight against white supremacy to the making of revolution in this country. To quote from the very first page of the pamphlet which the authors purport to critique: Ignatin writes, "In the fall of 1966, after some conversations with Ted Allen and Esther Kusick (who has just died and whose loss is felt deeply by those who

knew her) I became convinced of the correctness of their position—that the white-skin privilege has been the achilles' heel of the labor movement in the U.S., and that the fight against white supremacy (beginning, among white workers, with the repudiation of the white-skin privilege) is the key to strategy for revolution in this country." [*White Blindspot*, inside front cover] Allen writes, in the same pamphlet, that he and Esther Kusick "have, until now, been alone in this view ["the attack against white supremacy as the key to strategy"] (at least as far as we know)" and that "nobody else has even posed the problem of strategy." [*ibid.*, p. 9]

In the 1971 "Introduction to *White Blindspot* (1967) and *Can White Radicals Be Radicalized?* (1969)" Allen and Ignatin most cogently addressed the relation of strategy to party in a passage which deserves to be quoted at length:

The first condition for building a Marxist-Leninist Party in this country is the recognition of the following facts about the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, which constitutes the principal contradiction of United States capitalist society:

(1) The principal aspect of U.S. capitalist society is not merely bourgeois domination, but bourgeois white supremacist domination; and therefore, the proletarian revolutionary strategy for the overthrow of bourgeois rule in the United States requires that the main blow be directed at white supremacy.

(2) The principal aspect of the U.S. working class movement today is not merely opportunism, but white racist opportunism; and therefore, the central and decisive task in the struggle against all forms and aspects of opportunism is the struggle against white chauvinism in the ranks of the proletariat.

(3) The principal aspect of opportunism is not merely white supremacism, but the white racist privileges conferred by the bourgeoisie on the white workers; and therefore, the indispensable condition for the participation of the white workers in revolutionary struggle is the repudiation of their white-skin privileges, privileges which are ruinous to the short-range and the long-range interests of the entire proletariat, of whites no less than Blacks.

The second condition for building a Marxist-Leninist Party is bringing together the critical mass of cadre, sufficient in number and sufficiently national in scope, who understand the centrality of the struggle against white supremacy in *the terms stated above*; and who understand it not as a liability, but as the expression of the redoubled revolutionary power resulting from the conjunction of national liberation and proletarian revolution.

The third condition for the building of a Marxist-Leninist Party is that, as *a result of practice in applying this strategic line in tactical political, economic, and ideological struggles* over a sufficient period of time, the cadre has built a mass base of support among its fellow proletarians, let us say twenty to fifty times as numerous as the cadre it-

self, which understand and consistently supports the cadre, fair weather or foul. [ "Introduction to *White Blindspot*," pp. 1-2. Note: this work is" cited by the authors of *A House Divided* on p. 113 but not included in their Bibliography.]

The first criticism/accusation of the authors is patently false.

## the authors' charges are a bit demagogic

The next criticism offered by the authors is that Allen's and Ignatin's "subjectivism manifests itself in an attitude verging on indifference in regard to tactics and program." [p. 108] The authors then go on to cite as an example the following quote from Allen, a quote which Allen describes not as a strategy but "as two general rules of attack" [*White Blind-spot*, p. 18].

First, face the problem of the necessity to repudiate the white-skin privilege. Second, act: repudiate the privilege by violating the white "gentleman's agreement" as completely as you can at every opportunity. Once radicals adopt such an approach to radicalizing the white masses, the implications for particular areas of activity will not be hard to find. If in doubt at first, just make a list of the privileges and start violating them. [Allen, "Can White Radicals Be Radicalized?," cited by the authors on p. 108]

It should first be noted that the authors' charges are a bit demagogic, since nowhere in *A House Divided* do they themselves elaborate on "tactics and program." Rather, they offer such statements as, "At what point and in what circumstances the challenge [against the system of favoritism for whites] becomes decisive will depend on a variety of conjunctural factors concerning the development of the revolutionary movement about which it would be useless to speculate now." [p. 113]

Further, regarding tactics, Allen certainly did indicate some areas for work in the original *White Blindspot* — areas such as seniority, layoffs, urban removal, racist craft unions, prisons, higher education, civil service ratings, and apprenticeship programs. [*White Blindspot*, pp. 17-18] Since that article Allen has again taken up the subject, most notably in a 29-page letter to Ignatin at a time that Allen perceived a significant change in strategy in Ignatin's organization; at that time Allen added to his previous areas for work such things as South Africa and southern Africa, affirmative action, police brutality, frame-up and harassment, housing, and the white-supremacist aspects of the "tax revolt." [Allen to Ignatin, 7/11/78, p. 17, reprinted in Sojourner Truth Organization, *Internal Bulletin* Number 4]

More importantly, however, this criticism by the

authors of *A House Divided* is but the tip of an iceberg. The very quote which they attack Allen for is almost rephrased by these authors 13 pages later when they write:

facing up to the material base of white chauvinism in national oppression and the corresponding system of privileges for whites simply establishes a starting

point from which Marxists and other revolutionary-minded people should proceed. . . . Every shop floor, community, prison or high school leader, every class-conscious worker, every activist has to search out in concrete circumstances the actual forms taken by white-supremacist national oppression. . . . Through investigation of white supremacist national oppression and the spontaneous struggle against it, Marxists and other class-conscious workers can develop the propaganda, agitation, and programs of struggle which will convince the working class. . . . that its actual immediate and long-term interests lie in making the fight against favoritism for whites "part and parcel" of every struggle, [p. 122]

The essential difference between this passage and Allen's is that where Allen sees the need for "whites" to act to repudiate white-skin privileges, the authors of *A House Divided* do not put forth such a call for action. Instead, they argue that "the slogan 'fight white-skin privileges' or its corollary, 'repudiate white-skin privileges,' has never been more than a propaganda slogan aimed at winning people to a Marxist approach." [p. 115] [italics mine — JP] Perhaps the slogan was such for them, but thereby hangs a tale.

For Allen the crucial test is the actual leading of a mass base in practice in the fight against white supremacy and white-skin privileges. In the absence of this, there is no talk from Allen about being in the lead in the formation of a Marxist vanguard party. For the PUL, however, the situation is quite different. For some time now they have sought a liaison with the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters (split-off from the Revolutionary Communist Party, formerly Revolutionary Union) and the Communist Party (M-L) (formerly October League, now recently splintered) in attempts at what PUL originally saw as "the construction of a revolutionary proletarian party, guided by Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought" which PUL declared to be "the primary objective of all revolutionaries in this period." [See *On the October League's Call For a New Communist Party: A Response*, by the PUL, p. 13.] (The Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse Tung Thought has now been downplayed in line with recent developments in the

People's Republic of China.) Related to this they claim that "the main form of activity in the present period is propaganda" [see *Two, Three, Many Parties of A New Type?: Against the Ultra-Left Line, by the PUL, 1977, p. 29*] and that "the forces representing the long-term interests of the communist movement must aim the main blow at 'left' sectarianism." [*ibid.*, p. 30] In accordance with this, they became self-critical of themselves and their earlier formulation (*circa* the time the chapters in *A House Divided* were first written) that ". . . white opportunism in political line constitutes the fundamental threat to the construction of a revolutionary party." [*ibid.*, p. 59]

Thus the difference is clear — for Allen the main task is to actively aim the strategic main blow at white supremacy and the white-skin privileges in practice and, based on this, to seek to aggroup those that actually lead in this effort. The PUL people, on the other hand, are in the *party-building business* and seek to aim the main blow at "left" sectarianism.. Accordingly, the PUL readily seeks to build a Party with the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters-Revolutionary Union types (types long criticized on the left for white supremacy) on a basis not of their leadership in the fight against white supremacy but rather on their self-proclaimed "communist movement" standing and on a basis of fighting "left" errors.

The question then arises, why, if this is the PUL's strategy, do they come out in 1981 with a book on white supremacy in the workers' movement, based on writings which are over five years old? The question also might be asked, why did the authors make no attempt, according to Allen, to discuss their critique of his material with Allen himself? The answer, it seems, is that they clearly are in the party-building business — for a while they were even in negotiations with those who had the China "franchise" (Communist Party [M-L]). When groups like the RCP and the CP(M-L) were at their respective "peaks," they would have nothing to do with PUL's talk of "white-skin privileges," so PUL put talk of the fight against white supremacy on the back burner and focused instead on "left" sectarianism. Now, however, with both of the former groups in total disarray, and with many of their former cherished positions in tatters, the oppor-

immediate gain and then bringing it out when it has a possible market value is an old business trick — and one that might be expected from those in the party-building business. But Harry Haywood has been around a long time, and he wasn't fooled a lick by it. Haywood, whose works have long been circulated by the October League/Communist Party (M-L) comments that there "is a distinct tendency for the authors to see things from the vision of the 60's radical. Thus some of the main theoretical underpinnings of the 'Blindspot' line are not fully broken with." [p. 142] Clearly, the authors can't have it both ways — the Blindspot line and the OL/CP(M-L) line don't mix. Pulling aspects of the Blindspot line out after five years' running with a different line just doesn't cut it.

### Ultra-Left Utopianism

The authors' second category of criticism of Allen and Ignatin is for what they call "ultra-left utopianism," which they describe as "a demand for the abolition of white supremacy not founded in an analysis of the historical limits of U.S. bourgeois rule." [p. 115]

They quote Allen from "The Most Vulnerable Point" that "the indispensable condition of the participation of the white workers in revolutionary struggle is the repudiation of the white-skin privileges, privileges which are ruinous to the short-range and long-range interests of the entire proletariat, of whites no less than Blacks and other proletarian victims of national oppression. (Page 2)." [p. 113]

The authors, however, then go on to create a strawman argument, speaking of "the connotation of the term 'repudiation' as a complete act" [p. 113] and then argue against this strawman — "we disagree with any formulation that implies that 'repudiation' is a single act which, once completed, ushers in a period of struggle." [p. 114] They then argue, "far from being a prelude to revolutionary struggle around other issues, as Ted Allen's statement might suggest, fighting white favoritism has to become a *central, and often the central revolutionary feature* of those struggles." [*ibid.*, italics mine — JP]

## shelving a product and then bringing it out when it has a possible market value

tunity seems to have arisen in which a sound theory on white supremacy (such as that based on Ted Allen's writings) becomes a valuable thing, and the proponents of such a sound theory can become much more marketable individuals amongst those in such a business. Shelving a product when it provides no apparent

Incredible, truly incredible. The authors create a phony strawman argument — repudiation as a single complete act — which they then attribute to Allen. To counter it they use one of Allen's own arguments, which finally they alter so as to liquidate the centrality of the fight against white supremacy. Such argumentation is pure demagoguery.



Specifically, in thousands of pages of writing, Allen has never once argued that repudiation is a single complete act. Never! In a letter to [a member] of the Sojourner Truth Organization, dated March 1979, Allen comes out four-square for participation "in the actual struggles which continually occur against white racial oppression." [p. 10] More to the point, in the very work which the authors purport to critique (*White Blindspot*), Allen argues against "those 'vanguard' elements [like the PUL — JP] who worry about the self difficulty of 'selling' the rank and file on the idea of repudiation of the white-skin privileges" and says they "should begin their charity at home: they should first 'search their hearts' and ask if they, themselves, are sold on the idea of repudiating the white-skin privileges, and if they maintain a 24-hour-a-day vigilance in that effort." [*White Blindspot*, p. 10] Hardly the words of one who sees repudiation of a white-skin privilege (singular) as a once and forever act.

Further, it is Allen who argues that, "The principal aspect of U.S. capitalist society is not merely bourgeois domination, but bourgeois white-supremacist domination." ["Introduction to *White Blindspot*, p. 1] In a society whose principal aspect is bourgeois white-supremacist domination, there is no issue in which the fight against white supremacy will not be central. As opposed to those "Marxists" who offer a purified class-against-class analysis of U.S. society, Allen is emphatic in his position that there is no issue, be it male supremacy, housing, unemployment, education, etc., in this society which is not shaped in a white-supremacist fashion and which does not therefore require anti-white-supremacist proletarian struggle.

Allen is explicit in *White Blindspot* when he states that "the fight against white supremacy and the white-skin privileges is the key." [p. 10] It is a paraphrase of Allen's own writing which the authors of *A House Divided* have attempted to use to beat down the argument they falsely attribute to Allen. But

building efforts have not found the struggle against white supremacy to be the central task. Rather, the struggle against "'left' sectarianism" in the search for "proletarian unity" in the "Communist movement" is their priority.

### The Question of the White Race

In some ways even more startling is the authors' charge that Allen's and Ignatin's emphasis on the "demand for the abolition of white supremacy is not founded in an analysis of the historical limits of U.S. bourgeois rule." [p. 115]

For fifteen years, Allen has been writing constantly on just this question. There is hardly an argument against the historical role of white supremacy in the U.S. which the authors use which wasn't said earlier and better by Allen. The authors themselves pay homage to Allen's historical efforts — speaking of "the general importance of his historical research." [p. 108]

Allen's historical research covers virtually the entire span of U.S. history. His current writings are on the origin of racial slavery and the invention of the "white" race as a bourgeois-social-control formation based on a system of white-skin privileges in the seventeenth century. His earlier works treat the historic reconstituting of these privileges, which were so threatened and undermined in the Civil War-Reconstruction period, and puts particular emphasis on the ways in which the bourgeoisie accomplished this in the principal areas of industrial employment, land, and immigration. His writings then go on to discuss how the existence of the white-skin privilege system enabled the bourgeoisie to turn to white supremacy to beat back attacks when threatened during Reconstruction, Populism, and the Depression 1930s. Based on this historical analysis and an appraisal of current situations, Allen then puts forth the strategy of the fight against white supremacy and the white-skin privilege system as the key to proletarian revolu-

## in their party building efforts they have not found the struggle against white supremacy to be the central task

that is not all. They have changed Allen's argument in such a way as to alter its entire meaning. What is for Allen "the key" becomes for the authors "a central, and often the central revolutionary feature of those struggles."

The real telltale for the authors is the facility with which they find situations in which the struggle against white supremacy is *not* "the central revolutionary feature of those struggles."

Most specifically, the PUL people in their party-

tion in the U.S.

The authors of *A House Divided*, however, seem to have grasped little from all this, other than what they could use in their party-building polemics. An important example is when they describe Allen's *Class Struggle and the Origin of Racial Slavery: The Invention of the White Race* pamphlet (1975) [HEP, P. O. Box M-71, Hoboken, NJ 07030] (Note: the authors significantly omit the second half of the title.) as an analysis of "the origin of African slavery