

Painted Red: Black Americans and the Bolshevik Revolution

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“Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here in the Twentieth Century. This meaning is not without interest to you, Gentle Reader; for the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line.”¹ These are the opening lines of Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folks*, penned in 1903. Dr. Du Bois' words proved to be prophetic. World War I began in 1914. Popular movements against European colonial rule erupted, and violently, in Africa, Asia, Europe, India and the Americas at the end of World War I.² When Dr. Du Bois wrote *The Souls of Black Folks*, racial segregation was the law of the land in the United States. Booker T. Washington, founder of the Tuskegee Institute, delivered a famous speech at the Atlanta Exposition in 1895. Washington's speech framed American domestic race policy for more than seventy years. “In all things purely social we [black and white] can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.”³ In 1896 the Supreme Court of the United States established the concept of legal segregation by race in the case *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Racial segregation became the law of the land in America.⁴

Between 1914 and 1918 European colonial empires fought the bloodiest war to date. The newly industrialized United States of America emerged on the world stage as a preeminent power. The earth itself shook at the ferocity with which the Bolsheviks seized political power in Russia in 1917. The Bolsheviks' success in 1917 had direct and indirect consequences for

1 . W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 1.

2 . Mark Twain, *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (New York: Seven Seas Books, 1961). Widely considered the bloodiest and most amoral of all colonial administrations was the Belgian Congo ruled by King Leopold of Belgium. It is estimated that over ten million natives lost their lives during his rule. Many lived mutilated, the right hands of men, women and children cut off as proof of their death. Approached in 1904 by the Congo Reform Association, Mark Twain would write *King Leopold's Soliloquy and* publish it in 1905. Discovery of a vast wealth of copper in the Katanga region of the Congo prompted J.P. Morgan, John. D. Rockefeller and other industrialists to remove the Congo from the direct control of Leopold and place it under the jurisdiction of Belgium, gaining access to the wealth of the Congo which once belonged to Leopold.

3 . Du Bois, xvii.

4 . *Ibid.*, xix. In the 1954 *Brown vs The Topeka Board of Education* case segregation would be outlawed. It would not be until the passage of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* that equality of condition and access would become the legal standard. It would take federal troops to integrate much of the United States by 1972.

America's Black population. Many Black Americans were inspired by the Bolsheviks' victory. Some Blacks espoused communism directly, joined the Communist Party and distributed propaganda. Others joined the cause of organized labor. Others loudly protested against the crimes of lynching, colonialism and the institution of segregation. Some wrote; some sang. Some would advocate differing forms of Negro nationhood. What remains of these bold activists is largely an ignored legacy which was forged in struggle, paid for in blood and fought for against overwhelming odds.

Many of these artists, labor activists, socialists, humanists and communists would visit Europe and the USSR. In truth many Black Americans received better treatment in the USSR than they endured in the United States. The boldness, activism and legacy of men like Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson, Claude McKay, Benjamin Davis Jr. and A. Philip Randolph inspired others to move toward the equality implicit in the United States Constitution; perhaps these others moved with much more caution, but move they would. Dr. Du Bois and Paul Robeson received international recognition and welcome abroad, along with Stalin Peace Prizes. Their ability to earn a living was impaired: the United States Department of State seized their passports in 1950. Others, such as young Angelo Herndon, faced “show trials” which were covered throughout the world, and were essentially forgotten in American history. Because of the tireless efforts and actions of these Black American artists and activists, this veritable “talented tenth,” the world would learn of the plight of Black America. Black America had begun to see red and would no longer accept segregation and Jim Crow treatment. They would march, write, act and sing. They would fight back, many inspired by the success of the Bolshevik Revolution. They started national organizations, magazines and newspapers which were closely monitored by the United States' intelligence agencies.

The Messenger magazine was founded by Chandler Owen and A. Phillip Randolph in

1917. Originally socialists from the deep south, Owen and Randolph publicly supported the Bolshevik rise to power as early as 1918. This magazine was inspirational to a generation of artists and writers in New York City's Harlem neighborhood. Works from Langston Hughes, Claude McKay and other writers of the Harlem Renaissance were published in *The Messenger*.⁵ *The Messenger* made clear its militant intent in the first issue's November 1917 editorial statement:

The Messenger shall be forward, aggressive, militant, revolutionary.

It shall ever fight the hydra-headed monster-- race prejudice.

It shall ever champion the cause of free speech, free press and free assemblage.⁶

This mission statement was severely tested within a year of the first issue. *The Messenger* was born in the same month as the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and this had "...a powerful impact on the magazine's tone."⁷

By 1917, any American citizen or resident who espoused a political difference of opinion not stated within the Democratic or Republican party platforms and ideologies, would likely be labeled a "Red" or a "Bolshevist," especially so if the written or spoken position advocated racial equality rather than segregation as a social or political model.⁸ This was the double-edged sword: Future political activists would be "painted red" if they recommended any advancement toward racial equality, regardless of their specific political leanings. The architects of this policy were United States Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer and his assistant, one J. Edgar Hoover.⁹

Many Americans were inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution. The concept of equality of

5 . Theodore Kornweibel Jr., *"Seeing Red" Federal Campaigns Against Black Militancy 1919-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 76-78.

6 . Philip S. Foner, *American Socialism and Black Americans from the Age of Jackson to World War II* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977), 271-272.

7 . *Ibid.*, 273.

8 . *Kornweibel Jr.*, 20.

9 . *Ibid.*, xiv. Here is where Attorney General Palmer makes the statement "...The Negro is seeing Red." The reality is quite the opposite. Because of the racial attitudes of Palmer and Hoover, who firmly believed in racial segregation and white supremacy, Negro activists for reform and equality would be seen as "Reds" for the next sixty years.

race and economic class had a great appeal to the downtrodden and oppressed the world over. That concepts of equality of race, class and condition gained victory in revolution, even nominally, such as happened in Russia, was noticed world wide. The United States' government was aware of the potential threat to order within its national boundaries as a result of the Bolshevik coup. To discourage rebellion within and to support the American war efforts abroad, the Alien and Sedition Acts were passed in 1917.¹⁰ These acts were designed to monitor “radical” activity and provided the Federal government the right to deport any non-citizen convicted, and to jail any citizen convicted under the Acts. Protesting American involvement in World War I was punishable by prison time.¹¹

Many rural blacks were migrating to jobs in the industrial north. They were met with resistance and violence, as in the East St. Louis race riot of 1917.¹² In Houston the Black Twenty-Fourth Infantry was involved in deadly race conflict in which the Black soldiers were disarmed but seized arms to defend themselves from brutal police and angry whites. Seventeen whites were killed. Thirteen Black soldiers were sentenced to death by hanging and another forty one received life in prison. Black Americans were wroth: the Black soldiers had been legally “lynched.”¹³ Unlike the Socialists who would denounce the war as an imperialist exercise, many Black Americans enlisted in the armed forces, including many from East St. Louis and Houston. Some 400,000 Black Americans would wear the uniform by 1919. Even the outspoken Dr. Du Bois urged Black Americans to fight for their country and earn an end to discrimination.

The Socialist Party and *The Messenger* held to their principals by denouncing the war. As a result the first organization targeted by the Federal Government under the Alien and Sedition

10 . Kornweibel, 4.

11 . Foner, 273.

12 . *Ibid.*, 274-76. At least 39 blacks died here, with more than 100 injured. They were attacked by white workers who viewed them as an economic threat to white employment.

13 . *Ibid.*, 274.

Acts was the International Workers of the World union, the only trade union in the United States to advocate equal rights for Black Americans and proclaim socialist values. Some two thousand “Wobblies” as they were called, were arrested on one day. Shortly thereafter, the entire national executive committee of the Socialist Party was indicted. Among the notable arrested were Rose Pastor Stokes, Scott Nearing and the later founders of the Communist Party USA, Charles Ruthenberg and Alfred Wagenknecht. Ethically conflicted by seeing so many of his comrades and fellow organizers in prison, Eugene Debs came out of retirement and toured the country, protesting against the War.¹⁴

The Messenger was born in this climate of racism and red-baiting. It initially supported the Socialist Party. The January, 1918 issue decried the war, supported the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia and suggested that the “Prussianism” of the state of Georgia was worse for Black Americans than being fired upon in Belgium.¹⁵ Indicted under the Espionage Act, Owen and Randolph plead not guilty to the charges. In a poignant display of arrogance and ignorance, the trial judge would “...send the boys home to their parents” because he did not believe two young Black Americans in their twenties were able to write the content of the magazine. The pair left the Cleveland courtroom, headed directly to Chicago and continued to speak. *The Messenger* would be silenced for a while in 1919: A previous trial judge suggested the pair be reported to the draft board. Owen was inducted into military service.¹⁶

Black American soldiers returning from Europe, and specifically from France, in late

14 . Richard O. Boyer and Herbert M. Morais, *Labor's Untold Story* (Pittsburgh: United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, 1953), 198-200. The average sentence given to the arrested Socialists was ten years in prison. Many received twenty year prison sentences. Note: Scott Nearing's son changed his name to John Scott and traveled to the USSR. He wrote an account of his life there entitled *Behind the Urals*. Debs was in failing health, but claimed his decision to speak restored him to a new life. He later conducted his presidential campaign in Atlanta, Georgia from behind prison walls, adored by many but targeted by the American Legion as a criminal.

15 . Kornweibel Jr., 77-78.

16 . *Ibid.* 78-79. Randolph was exempt from military service because he was married. He and his wife ran for political office in New York in 1918 after Owen was inducted into the armed forces. Husband and wife ran for office as Socialists.

1918 and 1919 raised questions about the state of affairs in their home country, much as Russian soldiers did at the end of the Napoleonic War. The Russian Decembrists of 1825 asked for a constitution and lamented the fact that Poland was granted one.¹⁷ Black American soldiers who experienced racial equality in France became the “New Negro” in 1919. *The Messenger* in September, 1919 printed this editorial written by the Socialist radical W.A. Domingo:

No longer are Negroes willing to be shot down or hunted from place to place like wild beasts; No longer will they flee from their homes and leave their property to the tender mercies of the howling and cowardly mob... The New Negro has arrived with stiffened backbone, dauntless manhood, defiant eye, steady eye and a will of iron.¹⁸

This “New Negro” was not welcomed home in 1919 as a hero, but returned to a land burning with race riots. There were more than forty race related riots in the United States in 1919, and unlike before, the “New Negro” fought back with determination.¹⁹ This was a new twist. The changes in Black American were becoming so “radical,” the Justice Department and Representative James F. Byrnes of South Carolina insisted the new behavior was explainable only by “Bolshevik” influence.²⁰

The Palmer report, submitted to the Senate Judiciary Committee in November of 1919 included a section penned by J. Edgar Hoover entitled “Radicalism and Sedition among the Negroes as Reflected in Their Publications.” Hoover used half of the report to cover *The Messenger*. Attorney General Palmer was convinced it was the most dangerous of the Black publications.²¹ The July 1919 issue was singled out as very dangerous. It crossed the border by encouraging Blacks to become active in socialism because some who were the worst oppressors

17 . Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia and the Russians, a History* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001), 260-264.

18 . George Robertson, “*Speak Out Now when Others Grow Silent*”: *The Messenger, the IWW and Debates over New Negro Radicalism*, 4. ([www.depts.washington.edu/pcls/documents/research/Robertson-Speaks Out](http://www.depts.washington.edu/pcls/documents/research/Robertson-Speaks%20Out)) Last accessed May 20, 2011.

19 . Kornweibel Jr., 20-22.

20 . Foner, 292. Representative Byrnes became Secretary of State during the Truman administration.

21 . *Ibid.*, 293-94.

of Blacks, such as Senator Lee Overman of South Carolina, were so against socialism that it had to be better for Black Americans.²²

By far the most dangerous issue of *The Messenger* was the September, 1919 issue. Not only did it include Domingo's editorial comment quoted earlier, it contained cartoons lampooning other black leaders, including Dr. DuBois and James Weldon Johnson, as being submissive in the face of the race riots. It also included this masterpiece, written by Claude McKay, entitled

“*If We Must Die.*”

If we must die—let it not be like dogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs
Making their mock at our accursed lot.

If we must die-- oh let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!

Oh kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;
Though far outnumbered, let us show brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
What though before us lies the open grave?

Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back.²³

In the same report, *The Crisis*, magazine of the National Association of Colored People, edited by Dr. Du Bois, came under harsh criticism. Representative Byrnes was offended at *The Crisis*. It relayed the stories of returning Black soldiers and their contacts with white women in France. Byrnes expressed his opinion concerning race relations quite clearly in a speech before Congress on August 25 the same year. Believing the radical “Negro” press was giving Black

22 . *Ibid.*, 293.

23 . Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 71. This poem was first printed by American Socialist Max Eastmann, (who was featured in the 1981 movie *Reds*) in his magazine, *The Liberator*. It was next printed in *The Messenger*.

Americans a false hope of racial equality he stated “...this is a white man's country, and will always remain a white man's country. So much for political equality...As to social equality, God Almighty never intended [it].”²⁴ Byrnes was convinced Dr. Du Bois had turned from the conservative tradition of Booker T. Washington was now a “radical,” daring to publish in *The Crisis* stories of Black soldiers returning from France which hinted at racial equality and possibilities of racial inter-marriage.²⁵

Not only were United States Senators and Representatives concerned about a “New Negro” who would fight back, they were terrified of the power of the pen and the press wielded by this “New Negro.” J. Edgar Hoover continued to demand reports from field agents assigned to monitor the Black press, even when the periodicals were no longer under investigation.²⁶ While Hoover was monitoring, Harlem was reading and writing. The world was listening.

The Crisis and *The Messenger* were more than political forums. Langston Hughes and Claude McKay were published in these periodicals, as were other writers. A new magazine by the National Urban League was started in 1923. The magazine *Opportunity*, whose motto was “Not Alms but Opportunity,” sponsored a literary contest which encouraged Black Americans to participate in the Arts.²⁷ Similar to the effect Belinsky's *Letter to Gogol* had a generation of Russian writers, so too did Harlem's “Call to Art” move the Black American world. Harlem became the epicenter of African and Black American culture until that blossoming was slowed down by the Great Depression. Jazz music from the Deep South flourished and gained popularity the world over. Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Paul Robeson and others would be invited to the USSR. The list of Black Americans performing in Europe in the 1920's is too long

24 . Foner, 296. Byrnes, Truman's Secretary of State, later served as Justice on the Supreme Court.

25 . *Ibid.*, 295. Many Black American soldiers married French women, thus the histrionics.

26 . Kornweibel Jr., 7. Agents were to continue to issue reports in areas Hoover indicated an interest in, regardless of the status of pending investigation. One more reason Hoover was able to remain in power for so long.

27 . Huggins, 29.

to list.

The most popular movement among Black Americans at this time also published an important newspaper. The *Negro World* was published by The Universal Negro Improvement Association, (UNIA) founded by Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican immigrant.²⁸ The *Negro World* had as its core the concept of Black Nationalism, not in the Southern “Black Belt,” that region of the South which contained a Black majority of population, stretching from the Carolinas through East Texas, but an African Nation, to be populated by Blacks re-patriated from the Americas. Garvey raised funds, created a shipping company, The Black Star Lines, and taught African pride and Black African nationalism.²⁹

The concept of African Nationalism, the mention of a Black State in Africa, and pride for culture made Garvey widely popular. Claiming as many as two million followers and supporters, Garvey's movement was the largest of its kind in American history by 1919.³⁰ Garvey's message was heard on the streets of New York, in Africa, in Latin America and inevitably in London. In fact opposition to Garvey came initially from the British. Officials in British Honduras (Belize) and Demerara, (British Guyana) complained bitterly that African workers were affected with race consciousness because of the content of *Negro World*. Later, the American owned United Fruit Company made the same complaint and pressured the postal service to stop distribution of the *Negro World*.³¹

Black activism was growing in this time of the “New Negro” and despite the major political differences among the political philosophies of *The Messenger*, *Negro World* and *The*

28 . Kornweibel Jr., 100-101.

29 . Foner, 324-336.

30 . *Ibid.*, Foner, 326. The number of followers is disputed, but the size of the movement dwarfs all other Black American movements of the time.

31 . Kornweibel Jr., 105-6. British authorities were convinced the paper was backed by German socialists selling “Bolshevist” ideas. The United Fruit Company was a powerful American conglomeration exercising a huge influence on Latin America through the 1970. See also Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia and the Cold War*; 1945-2006 (Boston: McGraw Hill and Co., 2006), 165-166.

Crisis the unifying factor for those who opposed these periodicals was fear. Promoting racial equality and equal treatment under the law directly attacked established colonial practices of the British Empire in Africa, Asia and the Americas, as well as the institution of segregation in the United States. The British were well aware the dangers of a colonial system in revolt. 1919 brought religious and racial war to Northern Ireland. Ireland was the initial colony of Great Britain. More racial violence awaited the British colonialists in Africa. 1919 was a bloodshed year.³²

Organized workers were a threat to existing capital enterprises. No group inspired more fear to the industrialists of the world in 1919 than the Bolsheviks who seized power in Russia in 1917. And no group was more feared in the United States than the IWW, with its theme of “One Big Union.”³³ To American industrialists the Black Bolshevik, united with the IWW, was the stuff of nightmares. Of all the Black organizations monitored by J. Edgar Hoover and the Justice Department only one constituted a legitimate, revolutionary, “Bolshevik” threat. That organization was the African Blood Brotherhood.

Organized in 1918 the ABB was founded by Cyril Biggs. The ABB published a radical magazine, *The Crusader*, which opposed the War, opposed the positions of both major political parties and openly supported the Socialist candidates A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen. Moreover, the ABB called for volunteers to train and organize along military lines for self-defense. And, as was the case with *Negro World*, a British intelligence service reported the ABB as a threat to the American Military Intelligence Division.³⁴

The ABB, *The Crusader* and the *Messenger* combined forced the Bureau of Intelligence

32 . Ni'all O. Murchu, *Split Labor Markets and Ethnic Violence after World War I: A Comparison of Belfast, Chicago and Johannesburg*. (New York: *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 39, No. 4, July 2007) 379-400. The British were fighting diligently to preserve their colonies throughout the world.

33 . Kornweibel Jr., 155-57.

34 . *Ibid.*, 132-33.

to do the unthinkable. By 1920 the agency had to hire Black agents to infiltrate the Garvey and Briggs organizations. Agent Bailey, hired by the agency and employed selling copies of *The Crusader*, reported that most Black's respected the outspoken publications but did not trust them as much as they trusted the NAACP or church affiliated organizations.³⁵

On May 31, 1921 a race riot broke out in Tulsa, Oklahoma, started by rumors that a young Black man had assaulted a white female elevator operator. A crowd gathered around the jail. The ABB, armed, reported to the sheriff and offered to post a guard to protect the accused prisoner. A fight broke out which lasted three days. More than 1,000 Black homes and businesses were burned to the ground and many of both races died. The ABB was accused of inciting the riot. Briggs issued a statement after the riots when the ABB chose not to seek restitution in the court system:

Haven't the Negroes the right to defend their lives and property when these are menaced, or is this an exclusive prerogative of the white man? And were not the Negroes who gathered to defend the Tulsa jail against attack by a white mob, and to defend a prisoner confined in that jail against the murderous of white hoodlums out for a lynching bee— were not these Negroes acting in behalf of “law and order” and in the defense of the prisoner's Constitutional right to a legal trial by his peers and with due process of law.³⁶

Briggs' approach was outspoken and direct. He exaggerated the size of the ABB, claiming more than 150 chapters with more than 50,000 members. Kornweibel Jr. in *Seeing Red* points out no arms cache was ever uncovered belonging to the ABB or any of the groups under surveillance during period of 1919-1925. No real threat to the United States was posed by Garvey, *The*

35 . *Ibid.*, 136-7. How prophetic. It would be the church, the students and the NAACP who would spearhead the Civil Rights movements in the 1960's and gain success by non-violence and universal inclusion, and Hoover would monitor nearly all involved in the peace process.

36 . *Ibid.*, 142.

Messenger or the ABB.³⁷

Combined, the strength of the “New Negro” press, the new Soviet Union, the activity of the IWW, the perseverance of the NAACP and the raw power and depth of the Harlem Renaissance gained attention the world over while resistance to change was building and organizing at home. Race relationships in the United States were noticed and exposed world wide. America could no longer hide the past of the “*Peculiar Institution*” of African-American slavery behind the veneer of fighting for “Democracy” and spreading civilization and equality under the law.³⁸

In 1928, and again in 1930, the Communist International focused its attention toward the colonial world in general and specifically on the “Black Belt” in the United States.³⁹ Party policies and procedures were created to address the needs of Black American residing in the Black Belt. Marcus Garvey's organization, UNIA, was anathematized by the Comintern because it was ridden with *bourgeois* tendencies. The NAACP was declared a “misleader” to be opposed when possible.⁴⁰ Despite these these pronouncements by the Communist International, important steps were taken by the Communists in the United States; timely issues were raised; many vital organizations were founded.

A critical first step was recognizing the concepts of class and race were not mutually exclusive, but in fact working to end race discrimination was a critical step needed to unite all races in the universal class struggle. The change had staggering implications: the colonial world could be included in the struggle through national self-determination. The 1928 Comintern

37 . *Ibid.*, 182. Kornweibel Jr. makes clear the FBI policy would remain the same until the death of J. Edgar Hoover in 1972.

38 . Slavery in America was frequently referred to as its “*Peculiar Institution*”, also the title of a famous book written by the American historian Kenneth Stampp.

39 . Foner & Shapiro Eds., xiii-xiv. The Comintern addressed these specific problems in 1928 and 1930 as they pertained to the colonial world in general and to United States in particular.

40 . *Ibid.*, xv-xvi.

insisted that equal rights for Negroes in America be consistent with Communist demands for the working class in general, beginning with: "...freedom from both economic and political oppression."⁴¹

The issue of racism within the party itself was examined. Efforts to recruit Black American Party members were increased. In 1929 there were fewer than 200 Black Communist Party members in the United States. A year later there were some 1,300 black members.⁴² Unique at the time was the CI's demand the Party police itself of racism. And, in 1931, a white Finnish worker, August Yokinen, was tried by the party for "white chauvinism." He was found guilty and expelled from the party. A pamphlet was circulated making clear to all that the CP was serious about racial injustice.⁴³

More directly important to Black Americans were the organizations founded and supported by the Communist Party. There was the *Negro Worker* magazine, published in Germany and distributed throughout the world. The International Labor Defense (ILD), founded in 1925, came directly to the aid of the "Scottsboro Boys." Angelo Herndon's arrest came because of his connection to the National Unemployed Council, founded by the Communist Party. The Unemployed Council campaigned throughout the United States fearlessly and tirelessly, helping people of all races during the 1930's.⁴⁴ The Communist Party sent organizers to the deep South to organize sharecroppers, the poorest of the people in all the land.⁴⁵

In the fearless confrontation of injustice the Communists made their greatest contributions. And it is precisely because they were so effective at drawing the attention of the

41 . Foner and Shapiro Eds., xiii.

42 . *Ibid.*, xv.

43 . *Ibid.*, xxvii-xxix.

44 . Boyer and Morais, 262-65. The Communist Party and the Trade Union Unity League called for massive protests on March 6, 1930. Over one million unemployed workers participated in protests throughout the United States.

45 . Foner and Shapiro, Eds., xxv. Mac Coats and Al Murphy were the organizers, both steelworkers by trade.

world to racism in American that they were so actively opposed in the United States. Three events in the early 1930's, the Scottsboro trials in Alabama, the formation the Sharecroppers Union and the Angelo Herndon trial in Georgia illustrate this conundrum quite lucidly.

In March of 1931, nine young Black men were arrested in Scottsboro Alabama on minor charges. They had been “riding the rails” looking for work, a practice common throughout the United States during the Great Depression. On the train were two young white women, Ruby Bates and Victoria Price, who told police they had been gang-raped by the young men, aged thirteen to twenty-one. In a short trial, eight were sentenced to death, the youngest sentenced to life in prison.⁴⁶ The ILD heard of the case and provided legal counsel for the young men. Joseph Brodsky, a Communist from New York. Brodsky was able to arrange a stay of execution. There would be more trials for the “Scottsboro Boys” and these trials carried deep political overtones.⁴⁷

For the next two years the world press would be inundated with news of the “Scottsboro” case. Maxim Gorky wrote about the story. Titled “*Civilization' in the United States*” the work was published in *The Liberator* on September 26 of 1931.⁴⁸ The NAACP initially refused the Scottsboro defendants plea for help, citing a lack of evidence. Later the NAACP reversed its position and retained the services of Clarence Darrow to defend the young men.⁴⁹ The ILD had beaten everyone to the punch. The ILD had the exclusive right to defend they young men: Their mothers trusted Brodsky with saving their sons and all nine agreed with their mothers.⁵⁰

The Scottsboro case was the most internationally recognized American legal case since the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1926.⁵¹ Protests around the world were held on behalf of the

46 . Foner and Shapiro Eds., xviii.

47 . *Ibid.*, xix, xx.

48 . *Ibid.*, 271-271. The entire article is printed here.

49 . *Ibid.*, xix.

50 . *Ibid.*, xx.

51 . Boyer and Morais, 235 ff. The list of names condemning the outcome of the Sacco and Vanzetti case includes Albert Einstein, George Bernard Shaw, Anatole France and others.

accused. Yelena Khanga, in her book *Soul to Soul*, recalls an account of her grandfather, Oliver Golden, who lived in the USSR at the time of the Scottsboro trials. Mr. Golden an American Communist and an agricultural specialist who attended the Tuskegee Institute, moved to the USSR in 1931. Golden was asked to teach the people of Uzbekistan about the realities of racism in America and of the Scottsboro case in particular.⁵² Cruel racism in America became part of Stalinist dogma. In the USSR of 1931 racism was considered as a tool of oppression and had to be opposed.

Because of the heated war of words many contend the CP and ILD created more problems by the systematic elimination of potential allies for the Scottsboro Boys. In *Harper's Magazine* of December 1931, Walter White of the NAACP makes a convincing argument regarding the Communist Party's agenda. He states "These efforts at organization were based upon the theory that the Negroes are the most oppressed group in America and, therefore, should be the most fertile field for revolutionary propaganda. The Scottsboro case offered the most dramatic opportunity yet afforded for this campaign."⁵³ White is essentially correct in his assertion. For the CP to say the NAACP was "...in league with the butcher-bosses of the South" is categorically absurd unless one is a faithful emulator of Lenin.⁵⁴ Statements like Lenin's, "Such a course of events compels the revolution 'to concentrate all its forces on destruction' against the state power, and to set itself the aim, not to perfect the state machine but to *smash and destroy it*" flow naturally from the wellspring of Marxist-Leninist rhetoric. The excessive rhetoric of the Party faithful antagonized many potential sympathizers.⁵⁵

The Scottsboro Case was appealed and re-tried. Appealed and re-tried. All the while, it

52 . Yelena Khanga, *Soul to Soul, the Story of a Black Russian American Family 1865-1992* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992.), 91-92.

53 . Foner and Shapiro, Eds., 280. The White article is printed in its entirety herein.

54 . *Ibid.*, 281.

55 . V.I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992.), 29.

was the subject of daily press reports around the world.⁵⁶ The “New Negro” was propagandized on all sides. Painted as a “Red” for standing up for equal rights and demanding an end to segregation and lynching in the United States, the same “New Negro” was often called a reactionary by the Communist Party for standing solidly within the movement of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Despite reforms instituted in Bureau of Investigation in 1924, J. Edgar Hoover continued to monitor, illegally, this same “New Negro” as a “Red” and potential revolutionary.⁵⁷ Walter White stated, in the same *Harper's* article: “Seldom in the history of modern times has a field so fruitful been ready and waiting. That the opportunity to take advantage of this was lost is almost entirely due to the shortsightedness of the leaders of the Communist Party in the United States.”⁵⁸ Clearly the American public was as uncomfortable with the CP rhetoric as it was with the troublesome nature of the Scottsboro case itself and segregation in general.

The Communist Party sent organizers to assist sharecroppers in Alabama. This was no easy assignment. In the riot driven year of 1919 a group of black sharecroppers in Arkansas formed The Progressive Farmers and Household Union of America and demanded an accounting from their landlords. As a result of the union activity, riots broke out in Phillips County, Arkansas which resulted in the death of five whites. White mobs rampaged for three days, killing hundreds of blacks.⁵⁹

The new Sharecroppers Union of 1931 had a list of simple demands. The croppers wanted food advances to continue until settlement time, settlement to be made in full by cash, the right to sell their crops as they saw fit, the right to have a personal garden for their home use and a three

56 . Foner and Shapiro, Eds., xx. The US Embassy in Latvia reported the Scottsboro case as the most widely printed story about the USA in 1931 and 1932.

57 . Kornweibel Jr., 176-178. The Bureau made a clear movement away from monitoring individual belief and from oppressive tendencies after its former Director, Harry Daugherty, was indicted in the Teapot Dome Scandal.

58 . Foner and Shapiro, Eds. 285. White's article from *Harper's* conveys the essence of the pain of the conflict.

59 . Foner, 290-91.

hour mid-day rest.⁶⁰ Ralph Gray, a Union organizer was killed when police invaded a Sharecroppers Union meeting. The CP called for organized protests. The *Pittsburgh Courier* of August 1, 1931 stated: “Reports indicate that the arms of the law charged that the meeting was a Communistic gathering for the purpose of agitating Negroes...”⁶¹ Despite the propaganda surrounding the organization on all sides, the union grew and many of the croppers demands were met. Union membership numbered in the thousands. The Southern Tenant Farmer's Union's H.L. Mitchell, an avid anti-communist stated “...landlords hearing of meetings here there and everywhere believe all Negroes belonged to that damn union.”⁶²

As the Scottsboro trial continued, meetings and protests concerning the trial would be considered “Communistic” because of the vitriolic press releases issued by the CP. Clarence Darrow, widely considered the greatest trial lawyer in American history, although not retained on the Scottsboro case, made a comment concerning the Soviet Gorky committee. The Gorky committee painted the boys to be “revolutionary agitators” who were framed for their activism. When asked if the Scottsboro boys were “Reds” Darrow stated quite clearly “These Negro boys knew nothing about communism whatever. They were just a lot of young fellows hopping freight trains and doing such things as that.”⁶³ The Scottsboro boys, defended by the Communist Party's ILLD, were not “Reds” but were depicted as such.

Contrarily, Angelo Herndon, a young black orphan, was a self proclaimed Marxist. Herndon led a protest of poor Blacks and whites in Atlanta, Georgia in the Summer of 1932. Herndon's protest was associated with the Unemployed Council. Public assistance for the poor

60 . Foner and Shapiro, Eds. The list is re-printed from the *Daily Worker*, July 20, 1931. The demand for a personal garden brings to light the struggles of Soviet Collective farms, where workers would make the same demands. In both cases to avoid starvation; not to create wealth.

61 . *Ibid.*, 216-17. The *Courier* editorial also states “... if the Communists succeed in organizing Negroes into a disorderly mob, our good friends will more responsible than the Negroes...” Such wisdom is seldom heeded.

62 . *Ibid.*, xxviii. Though organized with the help of the CP, the Sharecroppers Union was not a communist organization.

63 . *Ibid.*, 270-271. As printed in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, July 25, 1931.

had been terminated. Blacks and whites together sought relief from poverty and needed food. Children of both races, near starvation were carried by their unemployed parents. Herndon organized a march to city hall for unemployed workers in need of assistance. He was arrested and charged with leading “incitement to insurrection” as defined by the 1861 “anti-slave insurrection” laws of Georgia.⁶⁴ His attorney, Benjamin Davis Jr., graduate of Harvard law school, was a well known Communist activist. Davis was a close personal friend of Paul Robeson, and it was Davis, who Robeson said “...influenced my ideological development.”⁶⁵

Herndon's beliefs were well matched to Davis'. Davis, who came from an affluent Black Republican family, joined the CP in 1928, after graduating from Harvard Law School.⁶⁶ Davis and his client knew they were appealing to a larger audience than just the judge and jury and both embraced their respective roles. Davis minced no words in a courtroom where the judge frequently turned his back on him as the defense council. Herndon spoke his concerns clearly to the press as well. In the *Daily Worker*, October 5th of 1932 Herndon said, “Only mass pressure will free the Scottsboro Boys, Tom Mooney, me and the other class war prisoners.” Unlike the Scottsboro Boys who Darrow correctly stated “...knew nothing of Communism.” Herndon believed “The future belongs to us, the toiling masses.”⁶⁷

Benjamin Davis Jr. played his part boldly. In an argument before the jury Davis stated:

In the first place Reverend Hudson (the prosecuting attorney, also a Methodist Minister) doesn't know any more about Communism than a pig knows about a full dress suit. In the next place he brazenly and dishonestly omitted all those passages which told of the lynchings of countless Negro workers—all those passages which told of the ruthless manner in which you, many of whom are white workers, are played against Negro

64 . Foner and Shapiro Eds., xxiii.

65 . Jeffery C. Stewart, E., *Paul Robeson, Artist and Citizen* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998),198.

66 . *Ibid.*, 198.

67 . Foner and Shapiro Eds., 321. Taken from the Oct. 5th issue of *The Daily Worker*.

workers. Gentlemen of the jury, the history of the South should be written in the blood of thousands of Negro lynch victims and in the sweat and suffering of the poor exploited whites.⁶⁸

Herndon, in his testimony, told the jury “...If the state wants to break up this organization (the Unemployed Council), it cannot do it by arresting people and placing them on trial for insurrection, insurrection laws will not fill empty stomachs.”⁶⁹ The jury found Herndon guilty and recommended “mercy.” The judge, “...who listened to Davis with his back turned.” showed “mercy.” Eighteen to twenty years on a chain gang was the sentence for Angelo Herndon. Merciful indeed, Herndon's “crime” of incitement carried with it the possibility of the death sentence under the 1861 slave insurrection legislation.⁷⁰

In “*Civilization' in America*” Maxim Gorky wrote: “For the first time since the Civil War in the United States, the ruthless exploitation of the Negro masses by the ruling class of America has been shown up and condemned on an international scale.”⁷¹ Gorky identified the underbelly of the beast and hewed at with mighty pen-strokes, further irritating a society in denial of racism's paralyzing grip on the peoples of the United States.

Lynchings, segregation and oppression were a daily reality for millions of Black Americans, American immigrants and citizens of other minorities. The Communist Party openly advocated racial equality and painted each confrontation and each conflict in bold, “Red,” Bolshevik terms, often alienating potential support from The NAACP and other less vocal

68 . *Ibid.*, 322. The selection taken from the closing argument is a good representation of Davis' approach to the case, which had Angelo Herndon's complete support.

69 . *Ibid.*, 327. Herndon's address to the jury is cited in its entirety. It is taken from Herndon's book, *Let Me Live* (New York: Arno Press reprint, 1969).

70 . *Ibid.*, xxiv.

71 . *Ibid.*, 272. Although clothed in communist rhetoric, the point is essentially beyond refutation. Americas thirty million Black citizens were perhaps the largest oppressed minority in the world in 1931.

organizations.⁷² Lynching, the public murder and torture carried out by mobs acting beyond the rule of law, was a reality faced by every Black man, woman and child in the United States in the 1930's. Lynch victims were frequently photographed; the photos were converted to post cards and traded among Americans in the first third of the 20th Century just as children today collect baseball cards and action figures.⁷³

In addition to segregation, Jim Crow legislation and the threat of the lynch gang's noose, American Blacks faced another somber enemy, the Ku Klux Klan. By the mid 1920's, the KKK had a membership of over four million, making it one of the largest organizations of any kind in America. Calling itself "100 percent American" and violently against trade unionism as a manifestation of communism, the Klan dominated the governments in many states. Concerning the Klan, Frederick Lewis Allen said "Here was a chance to dress up the village bigot and let him be a Knight of the Invisible Empire."⁷⁴ The forces allied against equality for America's thirty million Black citizens were formidable indeed. Any possibility of relief from the socially sanctioned despotism that was American segregation by race warranted serious consideration among Black Americans.

The new USSR of the early 1930's was clearly different for Black Americans. Of Uzbekistan in 1932, Yelena Khanga writes "For Black Americans, the contrast with the American South was as striking as in London, Leningrad and Moscow, even more striking, perhaps, because Uzbekistan had a large colored population."⁷⁵ Here she relays Langston Hughes' impression of his journey to Tashkent.

72 . One can only speculate how the Scottsboro lads would have fared had Clarence Darrow orchestrated their defense.

73 . James Allen, *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (www.musarium.com), last accessed May 20, 2011. The pictures and short movie at this website say it all.

74 . Boyer and Morais, 220-221. The Klan was most active in Oregon, California, Indiana, Ohio, Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. Klan membership declined in the 1930's and was revived in the 1960's.

75 . Khanga, 81.

In Tashkent whenever I got on a streetcar and saw the old partitions [European or non-European] I could not help remember Atlanta, Birmingham and Houston in my own country where, when I got on a tram or a bus or a train, I had to sit in the COLORED section. The natives of Tashkent, about my own shade of brown, once had to sit in a COLORED section too. But not any more. So I was happy for them.⁷⁶

Hughes visited the USSR during the times of the “show trials” of the 1930's. Hughes was pleased with some of the changes he witnessed, however he remained very skeptical of communism.⁷⁷

Paul Robeson's initial visit to the USSR had a lasting impact on his life and career. When en-route to Moscow, a one day stay in Berlin in 1934 made a deep impression on him. He considered himself fortunate to have escaped alive after a confrontation with storm-troopers in Nazi uniforms while waiting for the train to Moscow. Robeson told Marie Seton, traveling with the Robeson's on the trip to the USSR, that “This is like Mississippi, it's how a lynching begins. If either of us moves or shows fear, they'll go further. We must keep our heads.”⁷⁸ He remained a life long anti-fascist after seeing how Hitler had changed Germany through the promulgation of the “Aryan” myth of racial superiority.

Arriving at the *Negoroel* customs house, the Robeson party was detained because the passports they carried did not meet the requirements of the customs agency. He had some of his records and a gramophone with him and played one. Later he sang in the customs house. Then he spoke in Russian. That was was all it took to convince the customs agents. They did not know his face, but they knew the voice. Robeson's songs were well known in the Soviet Union

76 . *Ibid.*, Hughes' statement is taken from Langston Hughes, *I Wonder as I Wander* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1956), 172.

77 . *Ibid.*, Khanga, 82. Hughes was close to Arthur Koestler. She believes Koestler was gathering his material for his work *Darkness at Noon* during this time frame.

78 . Ron Ramdin, *Paul Robeson, the Man and His Mission* (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 1987), 83.

long before his first visit.⁷⁹

Paul Robeson's two weeks in the USSR in 1934 changed his life. He sang from Mussorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov* after a Kamerany theater production of Eugene O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. Later, at a meeting of film industry members, he sang in Russian from *Boris Godunov* and was hugged and kissed and called *Pavelushka* by the audience who embraced him wholeheartedly.⁸⁰

This contrast, from a near death experience in Nazi Germany, to heartfelt equality in Moscow, helps explain Robeson's eternal affection for the Russian people and his absolute refusal to speak against the USSR, Stalin or the Russian people before the House UN-American Activities Committee. He did not see the racism he saw in Berlin or that he experienced his entire life while in the United States when he was in the Soviet Union. Instead of colored races considered “one thousand” years behind the standards of British “civilization” Robeson saw in Uzbekistan natives learning science, technology and building a new society in less than twenty years. The USSR's experiment in Socialism showed Paul Robeson hope for all of Africa; Africans could build a great civilization, despite British colonialist opinions. Because of the equality he experienced and the hope he had for all colored people of the world, Robeson never recanted his decisions concerning the USSR.⁸¹

Paul Robeson Jr., who was educated in Moscow, tells of the Robeson family returning to the United States in 1939 aboard the U.S.S. Washington after nearly 10 years in Europe.

The first time we went to eat in the dining room, we were politely requested by the head waiter to eat in our quarters—the ship policy was not to serve “colored” in the dining room. Without hesitation Paul calmly marched his family into the middle of the dining room area where we sat at an empty table. After a minor furor, studiously ignored by the

79 . *Ibid.*, 85-86.

80 . *Ibid.*, 85.

81 . Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 36.

other passengers who were all white, we were assigned a reserved table in the far corner of the dining room.⁸²

Robeson received a similar welcome in New York City. Invited to tea in one of the city's hotels, Robeson walked to the main elevator and was told he had to use the freight elevator. He replied that he was not freight. He was the guest of honor at the reception and the hosts would be shocked if he arrived with the freight.⁸³ The segregation in America stands in sharp contrast to the freedom from segregation experienced by Black Americans in the USSR and in parts of Europe.

Many other Black Americans would hear the siren's song of equality in the USSR and lost their lives as a result. Leaving the fire of American segregation, lynching and the Klan, they would dive into the new Soviet Republic and its pressure cooker of Party paranoia and politics. Yelena Khanga maintains her grandparents would have returned to the United States in 1937 except for one, tiny detail: they had a daughter of mixed race. Both were active “believers” in the Party and both decided to stay in the USSR because they did not want to raise a child of mixed race in 1937 America. Khanga reports most of the men her grandfather Oliver Golden recruited from The Tuskegee Institute returned to the United states in 1937.⁸⁴

The short wartime alliance between the United States and the USSR festered into a world wide, highly idealized and politicized conflict called the Cold War. The Red Scare tactics employed by law enforcement and business in the early portion of the century became official

82 . Paul Robeson Jr., *The Undiscovered Paul Robeson, An Artist's Journey 1898-1939* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2001), 331-32. Robeson Jr. later mentions a young white steward apologized on behalf of the crew members and welcomed him on the ship. Paul Robeson was later asked to sing at the ships evening concert and he refused. He sang to the crew in the crew quarters instead.

83 . Edwin P. Hoyt, *Paul Robeson: The American Othello* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1967), 97-8.

84 . Khanga, 86-87. Most States forbade mixed marriages in 1937. Racial inter-marriage was forbidden in almost every State of the Union until passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. See also Tim Tzouliadis, *The Forsaken, An American Tragedy in Stalin's Russia* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2008) for information concerning Americans who died in the Stalin Purges.

American policy. One of the ugliest eras in America, this period of history is known as the “McCarthy Era.” The illegal monitoring of the American public in general, and Black American activists in particular was led by J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Theodore Kornweibel Jr.'s book “*Seeing Red' Federal Campaigns against Black Militancy, 1919-1925*,” concludes as follows:

The Federal intelligence partners, led by the Justice Department's Bureau of Investigation, knew that even strident racial advocacy and self-defense were lawful. But their distaste for Black militancy was so profound that they persisted in harassing individuals engaged in legal, if unpopular activities. The even-handed administration of justice was sacrificed. Federal injustice prevailed. And it established a pattern of hostility to racial and civil rights progress that persisted for the next fifty years, until after the death of J. Edgar Hoover in 1972.⁸⁵

The “New Negro” who proudly served in World War I would be replaced by a Negro seeking the same justice and equality after proudly serving in World War II and in the Korean War. Hoover's policy, forged in response to the Bolshevik Revolution, became American domestic policy throughout the Cold War. That selfsame Black American seeking equality and end to segregation would be denied equal rights. In the quest for those Constitutional rights Black Americans marching peacefully to secure those rights would again, be painted blood, bloody, Red.

85 . Kornweibel Jr., 182.

Afterword:

Dr. W.E.B. DuBois did join the Communist Party in 1961. Denied his passport by the U.S. Department of State, Dr. DuBois was granted citizenship in Ghana, and traveled to the USSR . In the USSR he suggested that Khrushchev create an African Institute. DuBois died in Ghana, one day before Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his soul-stirring “I Have a Dream” speech. He is buried with highest honor in the city of Accra, Ghana, Africa's first post colonial free state. Both DuBois, in 1959, and Ghana's founder, Kwame Nkrumah, in 1962, were awarded Stalin Peace Prizes.⁸⁶

Paul Robeson died on January 23, 1976. Stripped of his US Passport in 1950, he was awarded a Stalin Peace Prize in 1952. He refused to denounce his lifelong friend, Benjamin Davis Jr. who was imprisoned as a communist. Robeson was elected into the College Football Hall of Fame only nineteen years after his death. Most of his accomplishments were

⁸⁶ . Khanga, 111. Khanga's mother was employed at the Soviet African Institute. See also, DuBois, Introduction.

smeared in the Cold War, and the man whose voice was associated with Freedom throughout the world, was silenced at home. John Hope Franklin says this of Robeson:

But it was his world view that placed him ahead of his time and, perhaps, made him more tolerant of other systems of government than he was of his own. And, as if to mitigate the extreme positions held by Cold War critics, most of those who sought to make Robeson a pariah are today trading and/or social partners with the Russians and Chinese.⁸⁷

What can be said without refutation is this: Paul Robeson was the most visible Black American casualty of the Cold War.

In 2005, the Senate of the United States of America issued a formal apology for its role in blocking more than 200 pieces of legislation which would have criminalized the American tradition of Lynching. Anti-lynching legislation was repeatedly “filibustered” to death on the floor of the Senate. On June 13, 2005 the apology for failing to act against lynching passed the Senate in a voice vote: 80 for, zero against. The missing twenty votes are buried somewhere in the bloody history of racism in America.

On June 18, 2009, the United States Senate issued a formal apology for the institution of Slavery and the period of Jim Crow segregation which followed it. The vote was unanimous and all Senate votes were cast this time, three hundred and ninety years after the first Blacks were sold into slavery in Jamestown, Virginia, in the year 1619... a year before the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth rock.

87 . Stewart, 7, 300.

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Notes on Source Materials

Much of this research appears to be biased toward a select few sources which weigh heavily in the narrative. There are very specific reasons for this.

Theodore Kornweibel Jr.'s work, *“Seeing Red” Federal Campaigns against Black Militancy, 1919-1925.*, is a work taken primarily from Federal Microfilm collections, which recorded the actual reports issued to J. Edgar Hoover and his department, (originally called the Bureau of Intelligence, later to be re-named The Federal Bureau of Investigation). This work cites in great detail the investigating agent's specific reports issued to the various agencies and departments within the United States' Government. This is critical to the narrative itself: These reports show how activism among Black Americans, as divergent as Marcus Garvey and Claude McKay, would be grouped under the label of “Red” and remain monitored, even after official investigations were closed.

Labor's Untold Story, by Richard O. Boyer and Herbert M. Morais is a fountain of footnotes with an extensive bibliography. Herein is the story of the I.W.W., the only union to advocate equal rights for black Americans until after the “Red Scare” of 1919-1925 had cooled off. The I.W.W. was more than a generation ahead of other Unions in the cause of equality.

Philip S. Foner's, *American Socialism and Black Americans, from the Age of Jackson to World War II*, is a collection which contains excerpts from some texts no longer extant. A good example: the first Black American Socialist magazine was printed in Butte, Montana in 1915. There are no extant copies of the work, just summaries contained in other sources.

Along a similar vein, Foner and Shapiro's *American Communism and Black Americans, A Documentary History, 1930-1934*, contains articles published in the Black Press during this time frame. Information concerning the Sharecroppers Union, The Scottsboro Case and the Angelo Herndon Trial is relayed in primary source material, saving anyone searching many years of research. Articles from *The Daily Worker*, *The Crisis*, *The Pittsburgh Courier* and other sources save research time and allow the reader to see the “headlines” of these events in “real time”. Some of the trial coverage is displayed chronologically, as though one were reading the paper daily. This work, more than any other, shows the boldness and fearlessness of the Communist Party when confronting racism in the South. Conversely, it also shows the party's negative affect on the whole of the African-American Community.

In weaving this narrative, I chose to rely on direct quotation when possible. No more so than in the cases of Yelena Khanga and the stories she heard from her grandmother and mother while raised as a Black Russian in the USSR. Khanga's grandfather moved to the USSR along with twenty-five Black American agriculture experts, hand selected by the brilliant George Washington Carver. Few of these men were socialists or Marxists. They answered Carver's call to Black Americans to make “their race” represented in the New Soviet Union, just as more than fifty major corporations were doing. Yelena's grandfather stayed in the USSR after the others left in 1937. And for a very good reason.

Paul Robeson remains a giant misunderstood in life and vilified in death. His words, taken from *Here I Stand* and published abroad I used whenever possible. Dr. W.E.B. DuBois said this of Robeson: “He is without doubt today, as a person, the best known American on earth, to the largest number of human beings.”

One **can not** [emphasis my own] understand Paul Robeson without understanding the American practice of “lynching” and the institutionalized racism known as segregation. More Black Americans were lynched between 1880 and 1950 than died in the Allied Invasion known as D-Day. Americans traded “lynching cards” throughout the first half of the twentieth century in the same fashion children of the same generation collected and traded baseball cards. Robeson fought tirelessly for equality and was outspoken concerning the heinous practice of lynching aimed primarily against Blacks and minorities in America.

M.L Kent 5/27/2011