ANALYSIS OF THE RHETORIC OF LEROI JONES
(IMAMU AMIRI BARAKA) IN HIS CAMPAIGN
TO PROMOTE CULTURAL BLACK
NATIONALISM

THESIS

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The purpose of this thesis is to discover and assess the rhetorical methods employed by LeRoi Jones in the evolution of cultural black nationalism. First, the thesis concentrates on his ethos and philosophy. Second, it analyzes the cultural black nationalism organization in Newark, New Jersey. Third, it discusses the impact of LeRoi Jones on the black cultural nationalism movement.

The conclusions drawn from this study reveal that LeRoi Jones was able to attract, maintain, and mold his followers, to build a sizable power base, and to adapt to several audiences simultaneously. Implications of the study are that because of his rigid requirements and a gradual change in ideology, LeRoi Jones is now losing ground as a leader.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

LeRoi Jones is widely known as a poet, playwright, and essay writer. What is perhaps less well known is that he is a political organizer and the most prominent leader of the black cultural nationalist movement. Jones is considered the Father of the Black Arts Movement in the United States. The literary works of LeRoi Jones are the main weapons which he uses to spread his belief of black cultural nationalism.

In 1967 when Jones taught briefly at San Francisco State College, he was impressed by a west coast black leader, Maulana Ron Karenga and his program of cultural nationalism, a program called "US." Karenga had read the literary works of LeRoi Jones and owed much to him, but Karenga knew more about the mechanics of organizing a black movement than did Jones. Inspired by Karenga's ideas and methods, after returning to Newark, New Jersey, Jones organized in January, 1968, the Black Community Development and Defense Organization, called BCD or simply, the "organization." It was with the origination of the BCD that LeRoi Jones created a socio-political cult and practiced his new cultural-religious-philosophical theories.

Black cultural nationalism is a philosophy of bringing self-determination, self-respect, and self-reliance to
minority people, particularly black people. LeRoi Jones is the major avant-guard leader of this movement. Nationalists believe that anywhere black people comprise a majority of the space, in any city in the United States, should be considered a nation. "We do not want a Nation, we are a Nation", is a statement that Jones frequently makes and strongly believes in. As a black artist, Jones attempts to change the images black people identify with, by asserting black feeling, black mind, and black judgment. Jones professes that the black man must aspire to blackness and must seek a politics which will be beneficial to his black culture.

Culture is an important element in the black nationalist philosophy. Jones believes that culture is simply that way men live; how they have come to live; and what they are formed by; their total experience. He believes that only a united black consciousness can save black people from annihilation. As leader of the cultural nationalist movement, Jones has been instrumental in bringing black awareness to many people in his native home, Newark, New Jersey, and throughout the United States by way of his poems, plays, essays and speaking engagements in towns and universities across the United States.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to discover, interpret, and assess the rhetorical methods and tactics employed by LeRoi Jones (Imamu Amiri Baraka) in the evolution of cultural
black nationalism. For the sake of clarity, I will use the name of LeRoi Jones throughout this thesis. (Jones changed his name to Imamu Amiri Baraka in 1966.) The potential significance of the study is a better understanding of the nature of social movements in general through analyzing the campaign to promote cultural black nationalism. It may also produce understanding of a "leader-centered" conception of persuasion in social movements, and a better understanding of the nature of the black revolutionary rhetoric of LeRoi Jones through examining some of his literary works.

Procedure

This study is handled in the following sequence:

(1) a biographical sketch of LeRoi Jones concentrating on his ethos and characteristic ways of perceiving and thinking;
(2) analysis of cultural black nationalism by examining its origin, goals, values, norms, and beliefs; (3) discussion of the impact that LeRoi Jones as a leader had on the organization, and the rhetoric used to promote cultural black nationalism; and (4) a summary and conclusion of this study and implications as to the future of LeRoi Jones and black cultural nationalism.

Data for this thesis was collected and examined from three sources: actual works written by LeRoi Jones; material related to cultural black nationalism; and rhetorical theory. The following books and articles serve as both a guiding approach and source of rhetorical evidence for this study:

A considerable amount of information comes from first-hand experiences and revelations of members of the black cultural nationalist movement. During the years of 1969-1972, I lived in Newark, New Jersey. I came in contact with LeRoi Jones' organization through my husband, who was a member of the political arm of the organization known as the United Brothers of Newark. For eighteen months, I observed the organization and followed the activities of my husband, his
sister, and his brother, who were also members. I also worked closely with members during the political campaign for Mayor of Newark in 1970. Unless noted otherwise, all information about LeRoi Jones and the Committee for a Unified Newark is the result of those personal experiences and revelations with former members of the black cultural natural nationalist movement in Newark, New Jersey, from 1969-72.

Through writing this paper, I hope to discover what were the shared beliefs of the black cultural nationalist movement, and whether the leadership of LeRoi Jones attracted, maintained, and molded workers and followers of the organization. Another aspect of this thesis will be to examine what type of activities the black cultural nationalists engaged in; and whether these activities were aimed at reinforcing followers, converting non-members, or pressuring decision-makers. This study concludes with a summary of the leadership style of LeRoi Jones and its effect upon the black cultural nationalist organization and gives some implications as to the future of the organization.
CHAPTER II

LEROI JONES -- FROM BOYHOOD TO MANHOOD

(Everett) LeRoi Jones was born in Newark, New Jersey, on October 7, 1934. He was raised in a black middle-class family with a lineage of teachers and preachers. LeRoi Jones' parents were hard working people who wanted to give their son the best possible education. His father was a postal worker, and his mother was a social worker who had started out working in sweat shops before black women were able to hold professional jobs. During World War II, Mrs. Jones got a job in the government and afterward maintained a position as a social worker. LeRoi Jones has one sister in his immediate family, Sandra Elaine, now known by her "traditional name," Kimako, who is an actress and dancer.

LeRoi Jones' boyhood home life was the normal uneventful life of a working-class Negro family living in the late 1930's. His boyhood interests and activities were not unusual. He liked football, baseball, and other sports. He avidly read comic strips, listened to radio programs such as "The Shadow," and he enjoyed motion pictures. People who influenced him during his early years were people in the community, and people whom he emulated; the athletes and the hero-types for boys. During his childhood years, LeRoi was a typical boy who was a Cub Scout, had a newspaper route, earned money
who earned money by working in a store, and who went to church regularly.

When he was very young, Mr. and Mrs. Jones became aware that their son had a natural gift of memorization. For example, his parents recall that because their son, at pre-school age, was fond of making political speeches; Mr. Jones would lift LeRoi up onto a table, let it serve as a rostrum, and coach his son in the art of speech-making. His parents tell of the time when LeRoi was about eight years old and to everyone's surprise recited the entire Gettysburg Address. No one had taught it to him: he simply had heard it or read it and committed it to memory. Also as a young boy, LeRoi asked his father if Franklin D. Roosevelt was the only President of the United States. His father got out a book, and went over the Presidents, and before long LeRoi could recall each President of the U.S. in succession.

LeRoi Jones was an excellent student who could amaze white teachers at Central Avenue School and Barringer High School with right answers, a budding Horatio Alger: "You are a young man and soon will be off to college." They knew then, and walked around me for it." LeRoi started trying to be literary in grammar school, and started writing short stories in high school, mainly science fiction.

Because he was a bright student, Jones graduated from Barringer High School in Newark two years earlier than other students his age group. He was offered several college
scholarships and chose one in science at Rutgers University. Rutgers was not to his liking. The effort of trying to prove himself in an "essentially mediocre situation" and the experience of always being an outsider in any school social activities made him transfer to Howard University.

Howard University is a predominantly black university located in Washington, D.C. Then still church oriented, Jones first considered majoring in religion, but switched to pre-med, and finally majored in English, with a minor in philosophy. The important thing about Howard University was not the courses that Jones took in its liberal arts college. "The important thing is how his experiences at Howard shaped him." LeRoi Jones believes that "the Howard thing let me understand the Negro sickness. They teach you how to pretend to be white."

Several incidents stand out in Jones' memory of Howard University. One incident in particular is a watermelon episode, an episode that has taken on aspects of a legend. There are several versions to the actual story. One has Jones expelled from Howard for eating watermelon on Georgia Avenue, a block away from the main campus of Howard; another has him purposely embarrassing the administration by eating watermelon outdoors on campus; another has him irritating fellow students about their "whiteness" by eating watermelon. His own version is as follows:
A student friend (now a lawyer in Philadelphia) and I were sitting on the campus studying one day and a watermelon truck passed, and I said, "Let's go buy a watermelon." So we bought this watermelon and went to sit on a bench in front of Douglas Hall. Tom Weaver, the boy I was with, had to go to class, and I was left there alone sawing on the watermelon. The Dean of Men ... came up to me and said, "What are you doing?" And I said "Well, what do you mean? I'm just sitting here." And he said, "Why are you sitting there eating that watermelon?" I said, "Well, I don't know. I didn't know there was a reason for it, I'm just eating it." And he said, "Throw that away, this very instant." And I answered, "Well sir, I can only throw half of it away, because I only own half. The other part of it is Mr. Weaver's and he's in class, so I have to wait until he comes out and gets it." The Dean, now quite agitated, replied with great emotion, "Do you realize you're sitting right in front of the highway where white people can see you? Do you realize that this school is the capstone of Negro higher education?" I was, of course, shocked.

Jones remembers another incident: "James Baldwin's play, The Amen Corner, when it appeared at Howard Players Theatre, 'set the Speech Department back ten years,' an English professor groaned to me. The play depicted the lives of poor Negroes running a storefront church." Howard University shocked LeRoi Jones into realizing how desperately sick the Negro could be, how he (Negro) could be led into self-destruction and how he would not realize that it was the society that had forced him into a great sickness.

After college, Jones entered the Air Force in 1953, or as he terms it, the "error farce." As Howard had taught him the "Negro sickness," the Air Force made him understand the "white sickness." "When I went into the army it shocked me into realizing what was happening to me and
others. By oppressing Negroes, the whites have become oppressors, twisted in that sense of doing bad things to people and justifying them finally, convincing themselves they are right, as people have always convinced themselves."

LeRoi Jones spent two years in the service was a weatherman and gunner on a B-36 stationed in Puerto Rico. Jones achieved the rank of Sergeant and was stationed for most of the time in the Strategic Air Command Post at Ramsey Field. His overseas travel was limited almost entirely to Germany. His military life gave him the opportunity to engage in heavy reading. Jones thought of himself as a painter, but he was, all the while, writing poetry. "I had a stack of writing this high; and suddenly I said, 'Gee, I have all this stuff. Well I guess that makes me a writer'."

Upon his discharge from the service, LeRoi Jones returned to his native home, Newark. As his mother recalls, "LeRoi and other black young men came back from the service looking for jobs, for opportunities, but they found that the white boys with less to offer were getting the breaks, getting the jobs. We had always tried to work within the system. LeRoi found out that this didn't work out. So he left. He went over to New York, to the village."

In the East Village of New York, Jones met his first wife, Hettie Cohen, a white girl of Jewish origin. Hettie Cohen met Jones while she was employed by The Record Changer Magazine, and he came in as a worker. The relationship
deepened while working together and on October 13, 1958, Hettie became Mrs. LeRoi Jones. Together, they published *Yugen*, one of the more respected of the underground poetry publications. In the late 1950's and early 1960's, Jones was also co-editor of the underground literary newsletter *Floating Bear*. With several other poets, he founded the American Theatre for Poets, an avant-garde Village dramatic troupe in 1961. Like the white beat poets, Jones read his work in the coffee houses of the Village and East Village.

While living in the Village, Jones continued his intellectual and creative pursuits. He was a Whitney Fellow in 1960-61 and a Guggenheim Fellow in 1965-66. In 1963 through 1965, he taught courses in post-1945 American poetry and writing at the New School for Social Research, and during the summer of 1964, he taught a course in modern poetry at the University of Buffalo.

In the late 1950's, Jones began writing drama for semi-professional stage presentation and, also, writing drama for a reading public. He continued this writing into the early 1960's. On March 24, 1964, *Dutchman*, a play written by Jones, opened at the Cherry Lane Theatre and continued there until February of 1965. The play was an immediate success. It won the Obie Award as the best Off-Broadway play of the year. Looking back at Jones' plays of this period, one writer about drama notes, "The LeRoi Jones plays from 1962 to 1964 were more than a beginning of Black Theater, It (sic) was."
Jones' first marriage lasted seven years. He and Hettie had two daughters, Lisa and Kellie. "The alliance was to cause wonder and outright negative criticism in the years to follow, mainly because of Jones' anti-Jewish sentiment and strong separatist stance."\(^{18}\) Jones, although not eager to discuss this marriage, gives partial explanation in an essay from his book *Home: Social Essays*:

Mixed marriages, etc., take place usually among the middle class of one kind or another--usually the "liberated" segment of the middle class. (Liberated here meaning that each member had somehow gotten at least superficially free of his history.) For the black man this would mean that he had grown, somehow, less black; for the white woman it means, at one point, that she has more liberal opinions, or at least likes to bask in the gorgeousness of being a hip ok, sophisticated outcast . . . For the black man, acquisition of a white woman always signified some special power the black man had managed to obtain within white society. One very heavy entrance into white America.\(^{19}\)

Jones was a politically uncommitted poet until 1960 when he visited Cuba and found there a popular enthusiasm and optimism that pointed up, by contrast, the ugly void of life in the United States. When he returned to the U.S., he made the statement, "We are old people already . . . the Cubans and the other new people in Asia, Africa, South America, don't need us, and we had better stay out of their way. The American Negro . . . the captive African is the only innocent in the bankruptcy of western culture."\(^{20}\)

In April of 1965, LeRoi Jones left his white wife, his two daughters Kellie and Lisa, his Village phase, and headed north to Harlem where he began an entirely new life. Jones
went to Harlem to conduct the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School (BART/S). He founded this school "to re-educate the nearly half a million Negroes to find a new pride in their color." The BART/S got approval for $40,000 of Federal Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) anti-poverty funds to be used for an eight-week summer session involving 400 students. An Associated Press news release completely shattered the future of the school with a report which read, in part:

Each night in a makeshift Harlem Theatre a group of young Negroes give vent to their hatred of white people. They act out dreams of a day when the Negro will stand apart from the white world, and Harlem will be an independent nation. Their leader is the bitterly anti-white poet-playwright, LeRoi Jones. . . . All the productions seethe with rage against "whitey," an all-inclusive term for whites, who are usually portrayed as homosexuals. . . ."21

Funds for the BART/S project were eventually revoked. Because of pressures from the OEO office and the Harlem community, Jones decided to move back to his home town, Newark, New Jersey. "Across the river, a short commuter ride from New York City, LeRoi Jones took his ideas and lessons and energy to force change."22

In the spring of 1967 Jones taught briefly at San Francisco State College, he was impressed by a West Coast black leader Maulana Ron Karenga and his program for cultural nationalism, a program called "US." "Karenga had read Jones and owed much to him, but Karenga knew more about the mechanics of organizing than did Jones. Inspired by Karenga's ideas and methods, after returning
to Newark, Jones organized in January, 1968, the Black Community Development Organization, called BCD or "the Organization." This was the beginning of LeRoi Jones' philosophy of cultural black nationalism.
NOTES


2Hudson, p. 8.


6Hudson, p. 9.

7Stone, p. 42.


10Hudson, p. 11.


12Hudson, p. 11.

13Hudson, p. 12.


15Hudson, p. 15.


18Hudson, p. 13.


22 Hudson, p. 25.

23 Hudson, p. 32.
CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL BLACK NATIONALISM

Cultural black nationalism is a socio-historical phenomenon. It came about as a result of definite social conditions (rebellions) and a definite historical development. It is the attitude of many young black people as a result of serious civic disorders, citizen uprisings, and riots that occurred in the late 1960's in several urban cities in the United States. It is the reactive and the defensive formulation of oppressed people who turn inward after having been rejected and refused the "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" promised by American society. "Nationalism, as an aspect of revolutionary culture, is necessary so that anti-imperialist struggles are also clearly struggles to end all forms of foreign domination, including social imperialism."¹

To the black nationalist, culture is a reflection of black consciousness. It is a way of feeling, a way of living and being, that is black:

Culture is the form, the over-all structure of organized thought (as well as emotion and spiritual pretension). Speech is the effective form of a culture. Any shape or cluster of human history still apparent in the conscious and unconscious habit of groups of people is what I mean by culture. All culture is necessarily profound. The very fact of its longevity, of its being what it is, culture, the epic memory of practical tradition, means that it is profound.²
Learning about what is inherently part of the African culture is very important to a cultural nationalist. There is a saying which is repeated by all nationalists which states, "to go back to tradition is the first step forward."³

Nationalist philosophy stresses the fact that nationalism is a belief that black people in the U.S. make up a cultural nation. This cultural nation is a people with a common past, a common present, and, hopefully, a common future. "Our society may be American, but our values must be Afro-American."⁴ The nationalist feels that black values can only come through a black culture, and a culture is what legitimizes a peoples' action and in turn, gives self respect. "We stress culture because it gives identity, purpose and direction. It tells you who you are, what you must do, and how you can do it."⁵ The nationalists believe that to have a culture you must be aware of it, accept it and practice it. Culture is the basis of all ideas, images and actions. "To move is to move culturally, i.e., by a set of values given to you by your culture. The seven criteria for culture are: (1) Mythology; (2) History; (3) Social Organization; (4) Political Organization; (5) Economic Organization; (6) Creative Motif; and (7) Ethos. "Our culture must be based on tradition and reason. We must take things which were traditional and apply them to the concrete needs of Black People here in America."⁶

Culture in simple terms is a way of doing and looking at things, and the nationalist believes that culture provides
the basis for revolution and recovery. "We belong first to the Black Community, second to the American society. The community is a group of people who share values; a society takes care of goods and services. Blacks can't be truly creative until they have a cultural context to create out of." Cultural black nationalists believe that the main problem with "Negroes" in America is that they suffer from a lack of culture, and must free themselves culturally before they can succeed politically.

Cultural black nationalists strongly believe that black power is nationalism. They strive to obtain absolute control of resources which will be beneficial to a national group. "We say Blackness is three things--color, culture and consciousness. Consciousness is accepting the fact that you're Black and working from that revelation." The nationalist feels that black power must be spiritually, emotionally, and historically in tune with black people as well as serving their economic and political ends.

Black power movements not grounded in Black culture cannot move beyond the boundaries of western thought. The paramount value of western thought is the security and expansion of western culture. Western culture is and has been destructive to Colored people all over the world. No movement shaped or contained by western culture will ever benefit Black people. Black power must be the actual force and beauty and wisdom of Blackness . . . reordering the world.

The main goal of the cultural black nationalist movement is working for the world liberation of black people to self-determination, self-respect, self-reliance, and unity.
The ideology of the black nationalist movement is based on a black value system known as the doctrine of "Kawaida" which when translated means "that which is customary, or traditionally adhered to by black people." Kawaida is based on a system originated by Maulana Ron Karenga of the US organization and later adopted and expanded upon by LeRoi Jones and the BCD organization. "A nation is only as great as that set of values it actually practices . . . no matter what it says. The value system is how you live, to what end. And Kawaida is, as the doctrine teaches, "a weapon, a shield, and a pillow of peace."\textsuperscript{10}

The "Nguzo Saba" or seven principles of the Kawaida are a guideline for members of the cultural nationalist movement to follow religiously. The seven principles are

1. **UMOJA** (Unity) -- To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race;
2. **KUJICHAGULIA** (Self-Determination) -- To define ourselves, name ourselves, and speak for ourselves, instead of being defined and spoken for by others;
3. **UJIMA** (Collective Work and Responsibility) -- To build and maintain our community together and to make our brothers' problems our problems and to solve them together;
4. **UJAMAA** (Co-Operative Economics) -- To build and maintain our own stores, shops, and other business and to profit together from them;
5. **NIA** (Purpose) -- To make as our collective vocation the building of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness;
(6) KUUMBA (Creative) -- To do always as much as we can, in the way we can in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it;

(7) IMANI (Faith) -- To believe with all our heart in our parents, our teachers, our leaders, our people and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

The seven principles are seven because the number is a meaning-symbol of cultural nationalism. It speaks of spiritual concepts and scientific principles. The seven principles are the spine and total philosophy of black cultural nationalism.

Nationalism must be the basis for our entire lives. It must be the content and initiator of anything we do. Always, as the formulator of any act must be the need to see that act contribute to the building of a nation. Black is our identity. The totality of these as a life focus is simple faith, even before it exists as spirituality. There is nothing anyone can do about the fact of the Nguzo Saba. It does--they do--exist. That is, it moves to the higher levels of human aspiration but describes no ritual dogma. The Nguzo Saba would organize the morality of the would be Nationalist, give him a new and relevant morality, to begin to build blackness anew. The Nguzo Saba is the first, the basic, primary teaching. The rest of the doctrine, covering the completeness of modern experience is a Black ideology in toto. A path itself to Blackness and Nationhood.

Nationalism has become a collective vocation. It is thus a call and commitment to the cultural nationalists to always strive for unity and permanent collective action to achieve self-determination, to defend their communities and to develop potential as free and productive people. The collective vocation of cultural nationalists are divided
into distinct groups. The main groups of cultural nationalist
in the organization created by LeRoi Jones, known as the Black
Community Development Association are the Spirit House Movers,
the African Free School, Women of the BCD, and the military
arm of the BCD known as "Simbas" or lions.

Spirit House Movers is the creative and/or dramatic
branch of the Black Community Development organization.
This group usually consists of ten to fifteen members whose
duties include conducting rallies and staging plays by LeRoi
Jones -- plays for the community and for schools and colleges.
"Spirit House Movers presentations are generally available
free or at nominal cost to the community."12

The African Free School, named after the first public
school in America, is operated by women of Spirit House.
It is a collective and communal operation where the women
take turns caring for all the young children in the organ-
ization. Children from infant age to twelve years are taught
reading, writing, the black value system of Kawaida, and black
history. The school recognizes personality but not individ-
uality of its students. "They are taught who they are and
what they must grow up to."13

Women of the BCD is the female branch of the black
cultural nationalist organization. Women are referred to
as a "house" within the organization. The reason for this
term is that "a house is so important because it is the
smallest example of how the nation works."14 The role of
the woman within the nationalist organization is to "inspire her man, educate their children and participate in social development." Classes are conducted on a regular basis to teach women how to act, dress, and think like a nationalist. Classes are also given in the art of traditional (African) cooking and sewing of traditional clothes. A pamphlet written by Sisters of the BCD states in part:

Our duty is to be a wife/mother. To raise our daughters to be proud, beautiful women; our sons to be men, kings, and kings of warriors. Our homes should be clean, our smiles bright. Our husbands made to feel like men, after being downed for so long. His dinner should be prepared, his tensions relieved, and our understanding at its peak. Having been born in this society is not reason for us to submit to its low morals... African attire is ours. It was brought about by our forefathers. It's colorful, gay, bright, alive. Lopas (long skirts) give an air of gracefulness. They cause us to always act as women. Sisters, we must not be afraid to consult each other about traditional dress. We must look at ourselves and stop walking around wearing skirts and dresses above our knees, with french stockings on that were originally designed for European prostitutes. If we continue to dress like the pale face women, we will soon find ourselves walking around nude. They're already half nude. What we have to do is read and do research on our tradition. The only thing people have is their tradition. We must aspire to not only talk Black but to look Black.

Black nationalist women are taught to be submissive to men. "What makes a woman appealing is femininity and she can't be feminine without being submissive." Women are not allowed in conversation when nationalist men are discussing business. When nationalist men and women are walking out into the street together, the woman is instructed to walk at least three paces behind the man. The reason for this
procedure is that because nationalists live in a state of revolution, walking three paces behind will give the women protection if they were attacked.

The military arm of the BCD is called the "Simbas" which means lions in the African language, Swahili. It is operated very similar to the U.S. Army with officers and enlisted personnel. The training is very strenuous and calls for much discipline. The Simbas are made up of young men from the age of twelve to thirty. Each brother must share in the defense of the organization headquarters known as the "Hekalu" or temple. It is said in the organization that nationalists must first be able to protect their leaders and property at all times for the reason that if you cannot protect your property at all times, you won't be able to protect a nation. LeRoi Jones, considered the spiritual leader of the BCD, is protected by the Simbas constantly on a twenty-four hour basis every day of the week. Bodyguards assist LeRoi Jones wherever he goes. When he is speaking, there are two members of the Simbas organization on the stage or platform with him. Constant protection of leaders is a fundamental principle of the Simbas organization. It is thought by the nationalists that if prominent leaders such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King had been protected constantly, they would be alive today. The Simbas operate from the psychological viewpoint that cultural nationalists are at war with the
Western World both mentally and physically. Therefore, each member trains daily in martial arts, judo, and karate. Because the military strategy of the Simbas is highly confidential, the actual military strength of the group is not known.

One of the first actions performed by a cultural black nationalist is to drop the "slave" name that has been carried from birth, and to be given a traditional name by the organization. The reason for this procedure is to show the organization that you believe in the "Nguzo Saba" and more specifically the second principle which is self-determination and means to define, name, and speak for yourself. Slave names are usually Anglo-Saxon names such as Willie Brown or John Smith. Traditional names are names of African origin, usually from the Swahili dialect which is a mixture of several tribal African languages. All traditional names have a definite meaning. After a member joins the organization, he is immediately indoctrinated in the black nationalist theory. If it is a male, he must participate in the Simbas group; and if it is a female, she must attend the meetings of the Sisters of the BCD and help with the communal cooking and sewing. All meetings are on a daily basis. Nationalists believe that in order to build a black nation each member must devote his life to the organization. After several weeks of indoctrination and service to the organization, if it is felt by the leaders of the group that you are then worthy of a traditional name, you are given a name which describes
the qualities that are useful to the black nation. An example of a name given to one member of the black cultural nationalist organization is Saburi Wepesi. Saburi in Swahili when translated means having patience. Wepesi means being swift and/or fast. Therefore, this member's name literally means "patient and fast" or Saburi Wepesi. The last or family name is never completely dropped because it is felt that because the person has carried the surname for so long, it would be too much trouble legally to change the last name. The receiving of a traditional name is the first major step in becoming a black cultural nationalist.

"Nationalism first of all is a study, and unless you study it you will not know how to defend it." Education in the black nationalistic philosophy is a major activity of the organization. Classes are held on a daily basis to teach members each phase of the Kawaida. The first thing a nationalist must commit to memory is the "Nguzo Saba" or seven principles. After this is thoroughly memorized, the next step is to cover Phase I of cultural black nationalism. Phase I includes the three functions of a value system, three criteria of blackness, three ends of black power, three ends of a culture, and the seven criteria of culture which are as follows:

1. Mythology (Religion) -- An answer to the origin of things and "the chosen people" concept--necessary for a good self-concept--Zulu, Jews, Japanese, Azetcs, etc.
2. History (Reinforces Mythology) -- A record of images, events, and issues.
(3) Social Organization -- A means of socializing through teaching the roles and concomitant responsibilities--family structure and social groups.


(5) Political Organization -- A system of obtaining, maintaining, and using power.

(6) Creative Motif -- A dominant theme or attitude which expresses itself in art, music, literature, technology, etc.

(7) Ethos -- A dominant characteristic of a group based on other areas and their emphasis. Blacks-Soul and education; need education to compete in the western world but we won't sell our soul for money.19

Cultural black nationalism is more than just a philosophy, it is the beginning of a new way of life for black people. Nationalists believe that with a black value system to use as a constant guide, they cannot fail to create a black nation in any area of the United States or any place in the world.

Although nationalists are sincere and dedicated to their cause, they are not naive about their status in the eyes of the older members of the black community, which is very unfavorable, or their rejection in most of the white community. Therefore, they depend heavily on the seventh and last principle, Imani or faith. Faith is the mainstay of nationalist ideology. "Nationalism does not exist except in the abstract. Except as the US Organization, the Committee for a Unified Newark, or smaller."20 This does not mean that cultural nationalists are ready or willing to give up what they are striving for--total black unity,
self-determination, self-reliance and self-respect. As the most vocal leader of the cultural nationalists, LeRoi Jones states his opinion of the progress of the nationalist movement as "It is growing. It is growing all over the country. But it must be hooked up through organization. It will not move through individual effort because individual effort will defeat us."
NOTES


3US Organization, The Quotable Karenga, ed. Clyde Halisi and James Mtume (Los Angeles: this book is considered to be a guide book or "Bible" in the cultural black nationalist organization, 1967), p. 6

4US Organization, p. 6.

5US Organization, p. 7.


7US Organization, p. 7.

8LeRoi Jones, p. 245.


10Imamu Amiri Baraka, A Black Value System, p. 4.


14US Organization, p. 20.


16US Organization, p. 20.

17US Organization, p. 4.
Information obtained from the notebook of a former member of the cultural black nationalist movement.


CHAPTER IV

EVOLUTION THROUGH RHETORIC

A broad definition of a social movement is "... socially shared activities and beliefs directed toward the demand for change in some aspect of the social order." The strength with which the shared beliefs are demonstrated by the leader of the social movement affects the dynamism of that particular movement. One of LeRoi Jones' first acts in Newark, New Jersey, after his return from New York in 1966, was to organize "Spirit House" in the heart of Newark's downtown slums. Spirit House was a self-help operation made up of community people dedicated to improving the conditions in the ghetto area and promoting black pride and a black value system. Spirit House under the direction of LeRoi Jones offered community classes in black history and culture, block meetings for community improvement, music, sports, and black plays written by Jones and performed by young people in the community.

In January, 1968, the Black Community Development and Defense Organization, called BCD or "the organization" was organized by LeRoi Jones. Jones bought a former office building around the corner from Spirit House on High Street and established it as a base of operation. Later, a number of the Spirit House operations were moved to this three story
building. The organization is dedicated to a new value system for black people which is based on self-determination, self-reliance, and self-respect. LeRoi Jones established Spirit House and the BCD to use as examples of this new value system in the community.

The manifestations of the organization include new personal (traditional) names, courtesy, propriety, sharing, and certain abstinences such as refusal to eat pork and refraining from the use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs. "BCD is one of some thirty-eight organizations, including the political United Brothers of Newark, that make up the Committee for a Unified Newark (CUN). BCD shares the building at 502 High Street with CUN. Here the socio-political is wedded to the cultural-religious-philosophical."²

Leaders of social movements must meet a number of rhetorical requirements. They must attract, maintain, and mold workers and/or followers into an efficiently organized unit.³ LeRoi Jones efficiently used these tactics through his use of "Soul Sessions" and the manipulation of would-be members into the organization by "peer-group" pressure tactics. Soul Session was a weekly meeting held on Sunday afternoons which drew large crowds of young people, usually in their late teens and early twenties. Music provided for these meetings was the latest pop or "soul" records which were played on the local black radio station and were familiar to everyone present. The reciting of the "Nguzo Saba" was an important
ritual used by LeRoi Jones to arouse the emotions of his followers. It was mandatory to memorize the Nguzo Saba or seven principles completely and you were expected to recite them at any moment's notice. Joseph R. Gusfield's definition of a social movement indicates that social movements are built upon shared beliefs. LeRoi Jones demanded that his followers take classes in the black cultural nationalist doctrine so that everyone would be exposed to the same beliefs and values. Soul Session was a meeting each week for the specific purpose of displaying these teachings and showing would-be followers the teachings of LeRoi Jones and the value and worth of joining the organization.

Jones would be introduced as the highlight speaker of the evening. He would start his discussion of the evening with a rhetorical question such as: "What time is it?" (This would be asked several times until the followers were very excited and the response was at its highest pitch.) The crowd would shout a response, "It's Nation Time!!" several times. Finally, when everyone had reached the right level of excitement or had the "same vibrations" and be in a very receptive mood, LeRoi Jones would give the discussion of the evening. 4

A popular phrase used by LeRoi Jones to attract and maintain workers was "If you're not part of the solution, you are part of the problem." 5 Jones used this statement in every Soul Session in the closing of his discussion.
It was used to make would-be members feel guilty about not being a part of the group which would help find a solution to the problems of the black people; therefore, he would acquire several new followers at each Soul Session. A poem written by LeRoi Jones, "Nation Time," explains his appeal to would-be followers to emerge and unite. A portion of this poem, which Jones usually recited at the Sunday meetings, follows:

niggers come out, brothers are we
with you and your sons your daughters are ours
and we are the same, all the blackness from one black allah
when the world is clear you'll be with us
come out niggers come out
come out niggers come out
It's nation time eye ime
it's nation ti eye ime
chant with bells and drum
it's nation time

A motivational tactic which LeRoi Jones used to maintain the followers he had acquired and to increase dedication to the organization was to encourage promotional opportunities within the movement. Members would be singled out in mass meetings and praised for their good work within the community. This in turn would stimulate other workers to try harder because it was a way of being praised and respected within the organization.

LeRoi Jones' method of winning new members was through organizing street rallies, rent strikes, and block committees. Street rallies were held in all areas of the city, but mostly in the more deprived vicinities. The purpose of street rallies was to draw crowds of people and to create a feeling
of unity among community people and followers of LeRoi Jones. Street rallies also brought new members to the organization, usually young teenagers without guidance from parents, who were looking for something positive to do. Naive young people usually became the most devout followers of LeRoi Jones and the black cultural nationalist organization, simply because they were looking for something new and different to believe in.

Rent strikes were arranged under the guidance of LeRoi Jones for the purpose of provoking absentee landlords (usually white suburban residents) into improving the living conditions for tenants in the slum areas of Newark. Followers of LeRoi Jones would meet with tenants and draw up a list of grievances. Rental payments were put in escrow through arrangements with a local bank and not released to the owner until improvements were made to the property. Because rent strikes brought fast results to the community instead of months of waiting, people in the ghetto areas depended upon LeRoi Jones and his organization more and more to solve their immediate problems. This dependence increased his popularity among the black people within the community and usually drew members into the organization.

Block committees were formed by LeRoi Jones in order to obtain viable groups of people who would work together for a common cause. The BCD's goal was to form a block committee for each street in the black areas of the city. After these committees were formed, each street would send
representatives to the weekly meetings which were held at the BCD headquarters or a local church. LeRoi Jones achieved the immediate goal he was striving for through these meetings—exposure and rapport with the local people in the black community.

LeRoi Jones maintained and molded his followers through the philosophy that a black power organization must be created through the totality of black culture. He believes that the socio-political must be wedded to the cultural in order for an organization to become an efficiently organized unit. His basic belief is:

The socio-political must be a righteous extension of the cultural, as it is, legitimately, with national groups. The American negro's culture, as it is, is a diphthong with the distortions of the master's hand always in back or front ground, not real but absolutely concrete and there . . . the culture, the deepest black and the theoretical . . . socio-politico (and art & c.) must be wedded. A culturally aware black past, out of the black present, to gather the people to it, and energize itself with their strivings at conscious blackness. The politics and the art and the religion all must be black. Black Power must mean a black people with a past clear back to the beginning of the planet, channeling the roaring energies of black to revive black power.

When speaking of his accomplishments with the BCD organization and his work in Newark, Jones said that "my work after 1966 is self-consciously spiritual," and he went about putting this spirituality into operation. LeRoi Jones changed his name to Imamu (Spiritual Leader) Ameer Baraka (Blessed Prince) and considered himself a minister of the doctrine of Kawaida. Ameer later became Amiri, with the same
meaning. In 1966 he married his second wife, Sylvia, the mother of two girls by a previous marriage. His new family's "traditional" or African names became, respectively Amini, Asia, and Maisha. When Amini (Sylvia) bore Amiri two sons, they were named Obalaji Malik Ali and Ras Jua Al Azia.

In order to bring about changes, the leader of any movement must first build a sizeable power base. LeRoi Jones built a sizeable power base quite by accident and through the help of mass media, radio, TV, and newspaper coverage. His plunge into black power and black consciousness on a city-wide level came after a strange set of events which originated with the riots in Newark during the summer of 1967. When serious civic disorders broke out in Newark, groups and individuals roamed the street smashing windows, looting, setting fires, destroying property, and attacking people. City and state law and military personnel and citizens struggled to contain the violence using tear gas, firearms, physical force, and appeals. Shots were fired--by the police, the military, and the citizens. Scores of people, mostly blacks were injured; some were killed. During the height of the confusion and violence, LeRoi Jones and two friends were stopped and arrested by police in Newark's west side. The charges were unlawfully carrying firearms--two revolvers and a box of ammunition, and resisting arrest. Jones suffered a head injury that required stitches and a loosened tooth. The police attributed Jones' wounds
to his having been hit on the head by a bottle thrown by some unknown person. Jones accused the police of premeditated brutality, and claimed he did not know where the guns came from, but suspected that they had been "planted" by the police. Because of the wide news coverage of the incident and because LeRoi Jones had been injured, black people in the community came out in large numbers to protest police brutality, and to support LeRoi Jones. This incident polarized the black community against the police and validated what Jones had been warning about white treatment of blacks. Jones bail was set at $25,000, an amount Jones described as "ransom, not bail."9

The trial came up before Judge Leon W. Kapp in Essex County Court. The jury was all-white. The verdict was guilty. During the sentencing proceedings, Judge Leon Kapp read a poem written by LeRoi Jones, "Black People," in court to show just how militant Jones was. An account of the proceedings reads in part:

Judge Leon Kapp may not know much about poetry, but he knows what he doesn't like. It fell Kapp's duty last week to pronounce sentence on the bitterly anti-white poet-playwright LeRoi Jones and two Negro pals for riding around Newark with guns at the height of last summer's riot. And what should cross the judges bench while he was pondering the appropriate penalty but a copy of GreenwichVillage literary bi-monthly Evergreen Review featuring Jones' latest prose-poem "... All the sotres will open if you/ will say the magic words. Up against the wall mother/ (blank) this is a stick up! ... Run up and down Broad/Street niggers, take the (blank) you want ... We must make our own/World, man, our own world, and we cannot do this unless the white man/ is dead ... "10
The following dialogue expresses LeRoi Jones' view of justice in the U.S. courts and his attitude toward white authority:

**DEFENDANT JONES:** Are you offering this in evidence?

(***His Poem**

**COURT:** Just a minute.

**DEFENDANT:** It should be read wholly, if you are.

**COURT:** "The Author: Le Roi Jones, Evergreen Publications, December, 1967."

**DEFENDANT:** Let me read it.

**COURT:** Just a minute. This diabolical prescription to commit murder and to steal and plunder and other similar evidences--

**DEFENDANT:** I'm being sentenced for the poem. Is that what you're saying?

**COURT:** . . . Another shocking excerpt from a speech which you delivered on September 15, 1967 at Muhlenberg College has been brought to my attention.

**DEFENDANT:** Did I have the guns then too?

**COURT:** Which reads--

**DEFENDANT:** Is this what I'm being tried for, Muhlenberg College?

**COURT:** "Unless we black people can come into peaceful power and begin the benevolent rule of the just, the next stage of our rebellion will burn Newark to the ground. This time City Hall and the rest of the greco Romans will go down, including the last of these greco Romans themselves."

It is my considered opinion that you are sick and require medical attention.

**DEFENDANT:** Not as sick as you.

**COURT:** It has been suggested by some of your literary friends that you are a gifted writer, which I am willing to concede. It is most unfortunate that your talents have been mis-directed. You have the ability to make a wholesome contribution to ameliorate existing tensions and the resolution of the social and economic problems of our community by the introduction of constructive measures. Instead we find that you are in the vanguard of a group of extreme radicals who advocate the destruction of our democratic way of life by means of criminal anarchy.

**DEFENDANT:** The destruction of the unrighteousness.

**COURT:** . . . If the philosopher can make his own law, so can the fool.
COURT: If the virtuous man can make his own law, so can those who spring from the gutter.

DEFENDANT: Yes, we see that again.

COURT: There can be no substitute for freedom but there can be no freedom where anarchy prevails. There can be no substitute for justice but there can exist no justice where law and order have perished. Your behavior, both past and present, constitutes a threat and a menace to our society.

DEFENDANT: And you all are a threat to the world.

COURT: The sentence of this court, on the basis of your conviction for the unlawful possession of two revolvers--

DEFENDANT: And two poems.

COURT: --in violation of New Jersey Statute 2A: 151-41, a misdemeanor, on Indictment No. 22220-66, is that you be confined to the New Jersey State Prison to serve a term of not less than 2 years and 6 months and not more than 3 years and that you pay a fine of $1000.

DEFENDANT: Sir, black people will judge me brother Kapp. Don't worry about that.

Because of such a severe sentence for a violation of law previously labeled as a misdemeanor, many people were shocked at the action taken by the court. Among those showing concern was the American Civil Liberties Union, which issued a statement which read in part, "this is clearly a violation of Jones' right to free speech . . . Actions of this kind tend only to exerbate an already tense Negro community and do not serve the cause of justice." The action taken by the court served to strengthen Jones' following in the black community and gave him the label of leader and spokesman for the black people of Newark. He appealed and eventually the conviction was reversed in a retrial.

Herbert W. Simons states that the leader of a social movement may need to distort, conceal, exaggerate, etc.
addressing his own supporters. This was exemplified by LeRoi Jones when he organized a "black power conference" in Newark in August of 1967, just two months after the riots. "We citizens have the right to rebel," said LeRoi Jones. White people were barred from all the conference meetings. Reporters were attacked, beaten, and driven from the building. This action of direct attack and verbal assaults, is a tactic used by Jones to threaten, harass, disrupt, provoke, intimidate, and coerce the establishment. It also aids in gaining national attention for black power organizations. During the conference, anti-white speeches drew cheers from the black people. Anyone who used the world "Negro" was voted down. Use of the word "black" was demanded. The prevailing mood of the conference was expressed in these words by LeRoi Jones: "Black people do not wish to be absorbed into the white community. Our interests are in conflict. Our cultural and moral standards are not those of white society."

It is believed that leaders of social movements can expect minimum internal control and maximum external resistance. This is not true in the case of LeRoi Jones and the black cultural nationalist movement for the reason that he has complete control of his organization and the resistance that he received in the early stages of organizing have almost completely subsided because of his respect within the black community. LeRoi Jones was soon attempting to convert into action
his philosophy of seeking self-determination within the community. In a speech given at Towson State College, Towson, Maryland, he advised blacks in the audience:

You have to control everything of power in your community. You say the Urban League is jive. Sure it is. But you had better control it. If you don't, the white boy will. The poverty program—it's jive. We know that. But we better use it or the white boy will. Make up your mind about who is going to control what's going on in your black community... but you've got to organize. You can't "speechify" things into happening. Organize!16

In April 1968, Time reported that Jones was interested in achieving black power politically in his native city, where 52% of the 410,000 residents are black. As head of the Black Community Development Organization, Jones announced to the press, "We are out to bring back self-government to this city by 1970, and the ballot seems to be the most advantageous way. We are educating the Negro masses that this city can be taken without a shot being fired."17

The first tactic Jones used in the 1970 campaign for mayor of Newark was to organize a "People's Convention" in order that the minority candidates selected to run for the position of mayor would truly be selected by the people of the community rather than a candidate that he and his organization selected to run. Delegates to this convention were neighborhood block leaders, clergy, teachers, other professionals, and many interested people of the community. (As an interested member of the community, I attended this convention as an "observer.") The convention lasted two
days and ended when Kenneth Gibson was selected as the "Community's Choice" for mayor along with seven other minority candidates for council seats including two Puerto Ricans. LeRoi Jones and his followers pledged complete support to the "Community's Choice" candidates. The strategy that Jones used by completely supporting the people selected at the convention was that by helping these candidates get elected, the winner, should it be Gibson and the other minority candidates, would be obligated to the black cultural nationalists because of their complete support.

Because moderates are invited to participate in public deliberations (hearings, conferences, etc.), LeRoi Jones and his followers acted under the guise of moderates during certain phases of the political campaign. An example of this is when celebrities, such as Dick Gregory, Bill Cosby, Sammie Davis Jr., and Harry Belafonte, were brought into the city through the invitation of LeRoi Jones and the "People's Choice" candidates for the purpose of raising money for the campaign. Nationalist members served as ushers, guides, body guards, janitors, and any capacity needed, but wore western attire instead of African dress and were instructed by Jones to act like intelligent "Negroes" instead of black nationalists. Because they adapted to the listener's needs, wants, values, and spoke his language, LeRoi Jones' followers were able to win the favorable support of the black community.
An important function in the 1970 election during its early stages was telephone soliciting to encourage citizens to register in order to vote in the upcoming election. As a volunteer for this project, I was able to witness a demonstration of the influence that LeRoi Jones had upon his followers and to see how he was regarded with very high esteem. While I was soliciting votes one fall evening in a tenement building across from Spirit House along with two dozen volunteers (mostly followers of Jones and members of the organization), the door suddenly opened and Jones with two body guards (Simbas) walked into the room. Everyone immediately rose to their feet as if an order had been given. I reluctantly stood for a few minutes, but soon became tired and sat down. The members of the organization stood the full length of time Jones discussed the project with our organizers, which was approximately thirty minutes, only resuming the project of telephone calling after he had left the room. The immediate discussion was how great an honor it had been for Jones to visit the office and see the members at work. I unfortunately received hostile glances for sitting down while he was still in the room.

Another strategy used by LeRoi Jones in the 1970 campaign was to use student volunteers from almost every black power organization in the country. Most students came to work during the spring break from college. These students came to Newark and helped with voter registration, telephone
soliciting, distributing campaign literature, and hanging posters. Most of these students came from so-called "militant" organizations such as S.N.C.C., US, Black Panthers, etc.; LeRoi Jones almost made the mistake of becoming a victim of his own creation and had the problem of containing the energies of these students which could have been a disaster for the organization. Jones used fast judgment and asked the students to leave as soon as possible because they were destroying the disguise of moderates used by the organization.18

LeRoi Jones had much influence over the power-vulnerables, preachers, university leaders, and business people who were dependent upon the black community for trade. Jones used his influence and received the assistance of these people to help with the campaign. He received monetary donations from most churches in the black community and university officials pledged students for volunteer service. Jones even went so far as to let his members distribute literature for white candidates (for a small fee) so that, should the white candidate be re-elected, he would feel accountable to the cultural black nationalists for their assistance in his re-election.

Herbert W. Simons' theory states that leaders must secure adoption of their product by the larger structure, i.e., the established order.19 Although Jones had very little regard for the established order or white power structure,
he tolerated and manipulated the white power structure for the benefit of the campaign. As an influential black leader, he asked for and received large donations of money for the campaign from members of the business community. He also received food for campaign workers who worked at the polls, video and sound equipment for advertising, and gained the confidence of white leaders because he was attempting to work within the "system."²⁰

LeRoi Jones was successful in creating a powerful political machine in 1970. The engine of this machine was his dedicated BCD organization without whose support the campaign would not have functioned so smoothly. Because Jones works to the maximum of his ability at all times, he expected the same of his followers who would sometimes work ten to eighteen hours a day during the campaign. Being too demanding cost Jones and the organization many valuable workers who left the organization at the end of the election because of physical exhaustion, and who were disillusioned with the ever increasing duties of the nationalist movement. Jones demanded that his followers report to the organization headquarters as soon as possible, which usually meant leaving full-time jobs at 5:30 or 6:00 p.m., and working until approximately 1:00 a.m. The routine was repeated six out of seven days a week for ten months.

Of the "Community Choice" candidates, Kenneth Gibson and three minority councilmen were elected. Gibson readily
admits that without the help of LeRoi Jones and the black cultural nationalists, he would probably not have won the election. Mayor Gibson said of Jones:

LeRoi is a very dedicated individual, as you probably know. When he decides to do something, that becomes a cause. And he participates to the fullest. There was never a time in the period of the campaign that he could not be called upon for assistance, seven days a week and, you know, any time of night. So you have to respect a man who dedicates himself to his cause. 21

Jones was not appointed to the cabinet of Mayor Gibson, as it had been rumored by opposing candidates; he was given little in return for his months of dedication in getting the first black mayor elected in the history of the city of Newark. A bitter blow to LeRoi Jones and his followers was when Gibson announced that he was the mayor of "all" people who lived in the city, instead of focusing on black people as Jones had anticipated.

Although Jones was very disappointed because of the lack of cooperation with Gibson, he did not give up his hope of controlling the city. His new tactic was to try and obtain key positions within the city government for members of his organization. The reason for this action was to be able to know exactly what was going on within the city government and to make sure that blacks were getting fair treatment. Shortly before the election results were known, LeRoi Jones wrote an article in the Journal of Black Poetry in which he outlined what he hoped to achieve
through the election, and what he termed "New Nationalism," the next phase of cultural black nationalism:

The struggle for Black political power in Newark is not limited to the ideas white people have about political participation. We are not white people. This is not simple dissociation; people are dying today because they do not understand this. The Black Cultural revolution was created to teach this lesson more forcefully to colored people and negroes—that we are not white people.

Newark is a key because it is a test of the new nationalism. A test of how "fluidized" pure nationalism can be and still prove effective at raising the race. We have no doubts that it will be effective.

But the new nationalist must be the hard nondiminishable core that proves the limit to any collapse of Black national spirit and projection. And this is the place for battle, the actualities of negro political potential as envisioned by negroes. The nationalist must begin with the people (to paraphrase Maulana Karenga's quote of Mao), and transform their desires into fulfillment of their needs.

We are not interested merely in who is the mayor of Newark, but the consciousness that can be given the people as a result of a heightened political involvement.

Newark, New Ark, the nationalist sees as the creation of a base, as example, upon which one aspect of the entire Black nation can be built. We will build schools or transform present curriculum to teach National Liberation. We will create agencies to teach community organizing, national and local politics, and send brothers all over the country to re-create the model. We will nationalize the city's institutions as if it were liberated territory in Zimbabwe or Angola. There are nations of less than 300,000 people.22

Hahn and Ganchar state that a way of transforming a movement is to absorb part of its program.23 The culmination of the election of 1970 completely diminished a major portion of the strategy of LeRoi Jones and his followers—getting blacks elected to political office in the city of Newark. Within a matter of months after the election, Jones added a new aspect to his cultural black nationalistic philosophy. The new phase is called, "Pan-Africanism,"
which is unity between black nationalist in the U.S. and blacks in Africa. Pan-Africanism is a kind of abstract humanistic movement. LeRoi Jones views Pan-Africanism as a means to obtain and maintain the ultimate value system for black people. He emphasized that for Pan-Africanism to be a real asset and of any historical importance, it must be socialistic in content. He believes that only socialism can bring an end to foreign control of economies and politics in Africa and black communities in America and other parts of the world. Jones stated that "... in the United States this is the only way the many nationalist, Pan-Africanist, and other kinds of truly "Black" organizations will be able to contribute on a major scale to world Black Self-Determination, etc."24 In an article in Black Scholar, Jones speaks of the transformation from nationalism to Pan-Africanism:

The frustration of militant calls for activity in the black community, which just do not happen, should make it necessary for serious organizing Pan-Africanists to understand that the era of the "loaded statement" is at an end. A billion rhetorical bullets and bricks have killed too few enemies and built too few actual black institutions ... The tactic was to set up an entity which itself would function in much the same way as a party, a congressional body, but which would be anything until most of the community had evolved to where they could see their interests served by such an entity, which could at that time be called, if that was the consensus, a Black Political Party. The creation of a unified and revolutionary black political culture is the real task at hand. From such a political culture, which can only be drawn from the broadest spectrum of black people, will come a mass supported, powerful black political party in America! (And one day such a party will have Pan-African international presence.)25
Herbert W. Simons states that a leader must adapt to several audiences simultaneously.26 LeRoi Jones exemplified this in a speech presented to the National Council of Churches meeting held in Dallas, Texas in 1972. Jones takes his basic theme of self-determination, nationalism, and change and adapts these beliefs to the church and its responsibility to the community. The speech reads in part:

... I think that if the church is going to be revolutionary then it should be the church that's taking the same risks... Those brothers in the church who actually come out and are revolutionaries, suffer the fate of revolutionaries. Martin Luther King is dead as a tribute to his commitment to revolution... Evolution is caused by revolution, and revolution is caused by evolution. What we mean by that is that a new world will appear shaped by the many explosions and the large explosion would set the majority of the people in the world free.

We believe as African nationalists, as Pan-Africanists that the liberation of Africa will change the balance of the power of the world. We believe that the unification and independence of the continent of Africa will change the balance of the power of the world, because it will unlock new productive forces into the world... Revolution is not created by theories. Revolution is created by conditions. Mr. Nixon will do more to create revolution throughout the world than all the nationalists in the world, because he has created the conditions whereby revolutions will be forced into existence.27

LeRoi Jones and his campaign to promote cultural black nationalism has now evolved completely. He now believes it is time to move to build a revolutionary communist organization within the black nation and among black people, to link up eventually into the multi-national revolutionary party that will lead the entire working class to make socialist revolution. Jones and his followers strongly feel
that converting to socialism is the best way to bring about cultural change. As Simons' theory of leadership states, "The leaders of social movements face discrepancies between role expectations and role definitions. The leader must appear to be what he cannot be. Although a leader is expected to be consistent, he must be prepared to renounce previously championed positions." Since 1972 Jones has steadily moved cultural nationalism out of the sphere of a local, state, or national level to what is now a world-wide effort to promote nationalism wherever "people of color" are oppressed. He appears to be what is almost impossible, an international leader of cultural nationalism. Although he has some contact with newly formed independent nations in Africa, he does not have the power or backing of the U.S. government or even a large majority of the black people in America which would give him the authority to be considered an international leader. Nevertheless, he feels that the new phase of cultural nationalism, Pan-Africanism, is the only means of achieving complete self-determination for black people. Jones has given up the idea that blacks alone can bring about change; he now urges all oppressed groups to organize a "United Front" which would bring about a socialistic revolution aided by peoples of the "Third World" which is a term for the continent of Africa. In an article written recently in Black Scholar, he states his new position and strategy for the nationalist movement:
Here in the United States, the Puerto Rican People, like black people, Chicanos, Asiastic people, Indians and white workers are all part of the multi-national working class. Even though blacks in the Black Belt constitute an oppressed nation. But it is this multi-national working class, unified by material conditions and a new revolutionary communist party, in alliance with the oppressed nationalities and the black liberation movement within this land that will finally bring about a Socialist Revolution. They will also be able to put together the United Front against imperialism, the vanguard party, and guide the people beyond the delusion of bourgeois democracy. . . ." [29]

Jones and his few dedicated followers, a group which has steadily dwindled since 1970, have now changed from the strategy of creating community involvement to going out and working in factories and stores and spreading the new philosophy of socialism to people "on the job." The new philosophy calls for an end to the practice of wearing African or "traditional" dress to a new attire of the working class--work clothes for both men and women. Women are now permitted to wear pants, which was shunned only a few years ago. This new revolutionary strategy is "Marxism-Leninism-Mao-Tse-Tung Thought" which considers capitalism as one of its worst enemies. Although LeRoi Jones has renounced his previous position on cultural black nationalism, he still holds firm to the ideology of self-determination and liberation for black people. He has just expanded his earlier philosophy to a larger sphere of struggle:

We understand the mass motion necessary to bring down this monopoly capitalist ruling class and its lackies and we will not continue to be slowed down by people who still will not decide objectively
whether or not capitalism and racism need to be destroyed. They will be. And even though many of us are still in national formations we will not let that stop us from organizing the entire multi-national proletariat based on the principle focus of organizing our oppressed nation and black oppressed nationality to struggle for the revolutionary unity of the proletarian struggles inside the U.S.A. with the struggle democratic rights and self-determination, and liberation for the Black Nation. 30

Although LeRoi Jones has moved his philosophy to the international level, he is still very much interested in the political arena of the United States. His most recent strategy called "Strategy 76" is to run a Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidate, people's cabinet, and state and local candidates in the 1976 elections against "the Democrat and Republican bourgeois party candidates." 31

A political theorist, James Boggs, believes that the black nationalist movement in this country has not yet reached the stage where black people can begin to visualize Black Power as the power necessary to revolutionize all of America. He further states, "Black Nationalism has created a united black consciousness, but black consciousness which does not develop into a real and realistic attack on the causes of black oppression can only become false consciousness, i.e., a breeding ground for the cultism, adventurism and opportunism now rampant in the movement." 32 LeRoi Jones, through his gradual but steady evolution from black community organizer, to leader of a campaign to elect a black mayor, to advocate of Pan-Africanism, and finally socialist avant-garde, would-be leader of the multi-national working class,
is an example of this "false consciousness." His rhetoric has now changed to a level of total confusion and contradiction which is slowly eroding his leadership ability. He is slowly losing ground as a spokesman for cultural nationalism as well as black people in general. Because of his far left ideology, Jones and his followers were removed by a 2-to-1 margin from all offices previously held in the National Black Political Assembly in January, 1976. The position of "Secretary-General" which Jones held was completely abolished by the assembly which is one of the most influential black political groups in the U.S. LeRoi Jones and cultural black nationalism seem to have reached a point of no return.
NOTES


4Testimony of the author's husband, a former member of the United Brothers of Newark.

5Testimony of the author's husband.


8Hudson, p. 34.

9Hudson, p. 29.


11Hudson, pp. 30-31.


13Simons, p. 5.


15"What 'Black Power' Leaders are Demanding," p. 31.

16From a speech given by LeRoi Jones at Towson State College, Towson, Maryland, on 10 October 1970.

18 Testimony of the author's husband, former member of the United Brothers of Newark, the political branch of the Black Community Development and Defense Organization.

19 Simons, p. 3.

20 Testimony of the author's husband.


22 Imamu Amiri Baraka, Raise, Race, Rays, Raze: Essays Since 1965, p. 163.


26 Simons, p. 7.

27 Speech given by LeRoi Jones at the National Council of Churches, Dallas, Texas, on 17 April 1972.

28 Simons, p. 10.


30 Imamu Amiri Baraka, "Needed: A Revolutionary Strategy," p. 44.

31 Imamu Amiri Baraka, "Needed: A Revolutionary Strategy," p. 44.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This rhetorical analysis of LeRoi Jones and his campaign to promote cultural black nationalism may now be summarized. First, the study of LeRoi Jones' life reveals a gifted young black man who, while living a racially integrated life during the late 1950's and early 1960's, became widely known for his poetry, plays, and essay writing in Greenwich Village. He then turned from his social, intellectual, artistic way of life to become the leading theoretical and practicing black cultural nationalist, a community leader, and a political organizer. Secondly, Jones' characteristic ways of perceiving and thinking reveal that he advocates cultural, social, spiritual, economic, and political black nationalism. Culture is an important part of his nationalist movement and is considered a reflection of black consciousness. Thirdly, his rhetoric reveals that he is keenly aware of the power of words and uses them to his advantage—that is, as a means of molding public attitudes and ultimately as a means of attaining and maintaining power. He was able to attract, maintain, and mold followers; he built a sizeable power base; and he was able to adapt to several audiences simultaneously.
This study also reveals that cultural black nationalism is a socio-historical phenomenon. It rose as a result of definite social conditions (race riots and rebellions). It is both a philosophy and a movement; it is the reactive and defensive formulation of oppressed black people. Cultural nationalist philosophy stresses the fact that nationalism is a belief that black people in the U.S. comprise a cultural nation in areas where they are the majority of the population. The ultimate goal of cultural black nationalism is the world liberation of black people to self-determination, self-respect, self-reliance and unity. The ideology of the black nationalist movement is based on a black value system known as the doctrine of "Kawaida" which when translated means "that which is customary, or traditionally adhered to by black people." Nationalism has taken the form of a social corrective movement in recent years. LeRoi Jones and the cultural black nationalism movement has evolved from the local level in Newark, New Jersey, to the philosophy of Pan-Africanism, and most recently to socialism.

Throughout this study, I have observed three general characteristics of a leader which are applicable to LeRoi Jones. Jones was able to attract, maintain, and mold his workers through community organization, political campaigning, and his artistic ability. Simons states that a leader must be able to build a sizeable power base. LeRoi Jones accomplished this in a relatively short time after he organized
the Black Community Development Organization. In recent years his membership has steadily dwindled because of unreasonable demands upon his followers and a change to an unrealistic philosophy. Jones was able to adapt to several audiences simultaneously, which is an important quality for a leader to possess. Although Jones adapted to different audiences, his basic message remained consistent—need for change, self-determination for black people, a value system and political power.

Some specific conclusions about the leadership style of LeRoi Jones and its effect upon the black cultural nationalism movement are

(1) LeRoi Jones is the most prominent leader of the black cultural nationalism movement in America;

(2) Until recently, Jones had been a very effective leader because of several factors including his charisma, his creative ability, and his political organizational techniques;

(3) LeRoi Jones was the most instrumental factor in the 1970 mayoral campaign in Newark, New Jersey. Without his leadership and the work of his organization, a black mayor could not have been elected;

(4) Although his political and organizational work has remained consistent, his ideology has gradually evolved;

(5) Because of the gradual change of ideology, Jones is now losing ground as a leader;
(6) LeRoi Jones has great drive and dedication, and expects the same of his followers. As a result, he is too demanding for some and they leave the movement;

(7) Although Jones was not interested in acceptance by the larger power structure, he realized that he could not completely ignore it if he was to become a successful leader.

As a result of analyzing the black cultural nationalism movement and LeRoi Jones as the forceful leader of this organization, some generalizations about the future seem warranted. Cultural black nationalism has succeeded in bringing about black awareness to the black community, but it is too unrealistic an ideology to attract a lasting following. The conceptions of black power within the black nationalist framework are too abstract for the black community as a whole to grasp. Black people for the most part have recognized that there is a uniqueness about their history and their present conditions of life inside this country which sets them apart from the rest of the people in the United States. Cultural black nationalism has been and is progressive because it has bound black people together for a common cause, self-determination. But, LeRoi Jones has come to realize that black cultural nationalism in and of itself is not a sufficient answer to the problems of black people.

The most concrete contribution of Jones and the black cultural movement is the origination of a black value system.
The value system known as the seven principles is the most innovative aspect of this revolutionary movement. The seven principles (unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, co-operative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith) have great potential as aids to the improvement of black communities.

Unless LeRoi Jones returns to the original philosophy of unity and self-determination, he will continue to lose the support of members of the black community. Because the black cultural nationalistic ideology is so different from the present ideology in the United States, the future of the organization is dependent upon the children being exposed to the philosophy from birth. It is the descendents of the followers of LeRoi Jones who will determine whether the movement will survive the test of time.
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