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The Black Liberation Movement and Japanese American Activism: The Radical Activism of Richard Aoki and Yuri Kochiyama

This essay explores the impact of the black liberation movement on the radicalization of Japanese American activism in the 1960s. The case examples of Yuri Kochiyama, arguably the most influential Asian American activist to emerge in the 1960s, and Richard Aoki, a former leader of the Black Panther Party, are presented to examine the ways in which the revolutionary black movement affected the development of Japanese American radicalism. Two areas of this issue need further explanation. First, it was the radical black liberation or Black Power movement, rather than the civil rights movement, that exerted a radicalizing force. The black liberation movement developed in response to frustrations with the moderate goals and gains of the civil rights movement. By the early 1960s there were visible shifts toward revolutionary goals and increasingly militant tactics, and by the mid-1960s the radical black movement was flourishing.[1] It was in this

historical context that Kochiyama's and Aoki's politics developed. Had they come to political consciousness in a different period, and had they not lived in working-class black communities, their ideological development and political participation most likely would have taken a different form.[2] Second, while I discuss the radicalization of these 1960s activists, it is more appropriate to frame this event as the *reemergence* of Japanese American radicalism. But the earlier radical organizing, particularly strong in the 1920s and 1930s, did not directly impact the 1960s activists.[3] In fact, most of these activists were not even aware of a preexisting Japanese American Left until after they became politically active and began to seek their roots. Nonetheless, that this history existed and that some of the Issei or older Nisei[4] radicals worked with the 1960s activists are facts that helped shape the latter's political development.[5] Moreover, experiences as Japanese Americans, notably in the World War II concentration camps, shaped their political consciousness, racial awareness, and ethnic identities. But, it was the black liberation movement that triggered the development of a radical consciousness.

Impact of the Concentration Camps

The events of World War II had a dual effect on Japanese American radicalism. First and foremost, the state repression that culminated in the forced incarceration of 120,000 West Coast Japanese Americans along with internal contradictions within the U.S. Left combined to spell the demise of visible radical organizing. Moreover, the arrests and imprisonment of Issei community leaders immediately following Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor created a vacuum of leadership in a period of crisis.[6] Into this void stepped the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), the largest Nisei organization, with its ultra-patriotic, assimilationist, and political accommodationist beliefs. The JACL national leadership not only promoted a policy of cooperation with the U.S. government's evacuation orders, the organization also actively opposed any type of protest within the Japanese American community and pushed for the military enlistment of Japanese Americans. Some JACL leaders went so far as to gather intelligence on the Japanese American community—information that enabled the arrests of the Issei leaders.[7]

Prior to the 1940s, Japanese American leftists were particularly active in the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) and in the militant labor movements.

But by late 1941, internal contradictions within the CPUSA contributed to the disintegration of visible radical organizing. In 1940, in response to the Smith Act, the CPUSA decided to purge its immigrant membership and, following the December 1941 bombing of Pearl Harbor, to suspend all Japanese American members and their non-Japanese spouses. The rationale for suspending Japanese American members, Karl Yoneda contends, is that CPUSA General Secretary Earl Browder believed that "the best place for any Japanese fifth columnist to hide is within the Communist Party ranks and consequently no Japanese American should be kept in the Party while the war against Japan is going on."[8]

But the mistakes of the CPUSA went beyond membership purges. In following the dictates of the Soviet Communist Party and allying itself with President Roosevelt's policies, the CPUSA prioritized its fight against fascism, to the exclusion of any critical analysis of the war or of U.S. or European militarism. When World War II first began in 1939, the National Committee of the Communist Party declared: "The war that has broken out in Europe is a Second Imperialist War. . . . It is a war between rival imperialists for world domination." And the Communist Party sought to keep the United States out of the "Imperialist War."[9] But following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, the CPUSA immediately pledged complete support for the U.S. war effort. Consequently, the CPUSA failed to oppose the unconstitutional incarceration of West Coast Japanese Americans. The CPUSA further urged its members, including the newly suspended Japanese Americans like Karl Yoneda and the Communist sympathizers like James Oda, to fight in the U.S. military, which did help defeat Axis fascism but also strengthened U.S. global dominance. While the CPUSA's goal of fighting fascism was reasonable and just, that they did so after 1941 in the absence of any critical analysis of the inter-imperialist nature of the war was treacherous. In retrospect, the CPUSA leader Dorothy Healey has acknowledged as much: "With the Soviet Union and the United States as allies, we felt no conflict at all between our patriotic sentiments and our political beliefs. So unquestioning was our support for the war that a few months later we raised no objections when Japanese-American citizens . . . were sent to relocation camps. . . . It was yet another example of our inability to find or even conceive of a way to be simultaneously supportive and critical in our judgments, the flaw that was the basis of the 'pendulum' appearance of our policies." The CPUSA's World War II policies and practices resulted in capit-

ulating to U.S. and European imperialist goals and abandoning domestic struggles against racism and capitalism.[10]

The CPUSA and JACL's activities during World War II were, for the most part, indistinguishable. Both organizations supported the U.S. war efforts, though the CPUSA certainly placed a greater emphasis on fighting fascism. Both groups urged Japanese Americans to cooperate with the U.S. government, including the forced removal from the West Coast; pushed for Japanese American enlistment in the U.S. military; volunteered to go to Manzanar early to help prepare the concentration camp for new arrivals; helped the U.S. war efforts from inside the concentration camps; and in general, worked inside the concentration camps to promote pro-American sentiment and to suppress any resistance, including that of the Nisei draft resisters. The political consequence of this dual effort—from the moderate and the so-called radical segments of the Japanese American community— was to strengthen a moderate politic, promote assimilationist aspirations, and further suppress Left organizing.[11] By the mid-1960s, the absence of militant labor struggles and radical activism helped set the conditions for the rise of the model minority image of Japanese America.

But even as resistance was being suppressed, the harsh and unjust conditions inside the concentration camps spurred political protest.[12] Many internees voiced strong objections to their incarceration and what many saw as the capitulation of the JACL and CPUSA to the U.S. government. "It is believed that at least 90 percent of the people in the centers are opposed to the JACL," editorialized the *Rocky Shimpo* journalist James Omura in 1944. And some, particularly within the pro-Japanese Kibei[13] community, went so far as to physically assault several JACL and CPUSA leaders and sympathizers inside the concentration camps. Many who engaged in protest activities did so for the first time inside the camps. By and large, the leaders of the Fair Play Committee inside the Heart Mountain, Wyoming, concentration camp, for example, were not politically active prior to their decision to oppose military conscription of internees. Neither were the 315 Nisei men who risked prison time for refusing induction into the U.S. military. Their rationale centered on the violation of civil liberties—reasoning that they should not have to fight for a government that unconstitutionally incarcerated their families—in the absence of any radical critique of U.S. militarism or imperialism. For these draft resisters—as well as for some who later

developed radical politics—it was the conditions of confinement that triggered their racial and political awakening.[14]

The Black Liberation Movement

It was not until the social movements of the 1960s that Japanese American radicalism reignited. At the time, Japanese American politics were dominated by JACL's focus on legalistic, integrationist challenges within the established system to obtain fair housing and nondiscriminatory employment practices and to promote nonracist images of Japanese Americans. This politic matched that of the NAACP and other moderate civil rights organizations, in contrast to high-risk direct action confrontations, including CORE's freedom rides and SNCC's sit-ins, or more radical efforts to transform oppressive structures.[15] In the absence of any Japanese American militancy, the black liberation movement inspired the radicalization of many Japanese and Asian American activists in the 1960s. So did the predominantly white New Left. But the residential proximity of Japanese and blacks—shaped to a large degree by racially discriminatory housing policies and practices—helps explain why the black movement had such a large influence on Japanese American activism. In fact, it was the Japanese, to a greater extent than the other major Asian American group at the time, who lived in or near black communities. The Chinese, by contrast, tended to be segregated into their own ethnic enclaves, especially before World War II.[16]

Two leading examples of Japanese American radicalism, Yuri Kochiyama and Richard Aoki, emerged in this period. Living in Harlem in the 1960s enabled Kochiyama to meet and work with Malcolm X, her principal political mentor, as well as other influential black revolutionary nationalists. Having grown up in Oakland in the postwar years, Aoki's social networks facilitated his development into an early leader of the Black Panther Party and the most prominent Asian American leader in the struggle for ethnic studies at the University of California at Berkeley. These two activists differ from the majority of Japanese American 1960s activists in that they were significantly older in age and developed their radical consciousness in the early to mid-1960s. By contrast, most 1960s activists gained their political consciousness as youth participating in the Asian American movement that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Still, the black movement ex-

erted a powerful influence on the development of Asian American activism throughout the 1960s and 1970s and arguably to this day. Kochiyama and Aoki are important to study because they were significant political mentors to the younger cohort of 1960s activists and they influenced the developments of the Asian American movement. Moreover, both are credited with being among the chief architects in building African-Asian unity and solidarity grounded in anti-imperialist, revolutionary politics. These case examples are based on my extensive oral history interviews and participant observations as well as on primary source materials.[17]

Richard Aoki: Drawing from Black Cultural Roots

Though Aoki was only three years old when his family entered the Tanforan assembly center in spring 1942, the experience of incarceration had a major impact on his life. Not only did the three-and-a-half year incarceration result in economic decline, as it did for many Japanese Americans, it also lead to the break up of Aoki's nuclear family. Aoki's parents separated in the all-Japanese environment of the Topaz, Utah, concentration camp, in a community where divorce was both rare and taboo. Even more unusual, Aoki and his brother, fifteen months his junior, lived with their father's family both inside the concentration camp and after their return to Oakland.[18]

Aoki recalls the concentration camp experience shaping his racial attitudes, even at a young age: "In kindergarten I was chosen to play George Washington in the school pageant. . . . I got real excited about it and ran home and told my father what the big deal was. Disasterville struck. . . . My father was incensed that I didn't have the good sense to realize that I was not the father of 'our country,' no way, shape or form. . . . There was no way I could forget the message: I should not think in terms of George Washington, this was not my country by a long shot. In fact 'my country' put me in this camp."[19] His father's views were influenced by his own segregated confinement. As Aoki recounted, "My father [then a junior high school teacher] resigned after he got to the section on American democracy because he looked at the kids while speaking about democracy, freedom, and justice; and all the kids had to do was look out the window and see the barbed wire fences, the watch towers with search lights, the half track with 50 caliber machine gun. It didn't compute."[20]

Returning to the black ghetto of West Oakland in 1945, Aoki faced not only being the new kid on the block but also the anti-Japanese sentiment engendered by the war. When his black peers picked fights with him, as they regularly did, his father demanded that he fight back. As Aoki recalled: "My father was starting to become an accomplished barroom brawler. . . . Also my uncle Ruizo had a black belt in jujitsu, so he was very patient and taught me the basics or fundamentals involving jujitsu. . . . In jujitsu, it's not the size of your opponent that is that important." And soon, Aoki became an accomplished street fighter. In time, he was drawn into the petty criminal activities of street life—"five-finger shopping," "second-story work," "midnight auto supply," and gangs. He also adopted black music, dance, food, and culture, as well as a love for reading that was influenced by the substantial libraries of his paternal grandfather, his father, and his uncle Ruizo. After many years of being home schooled by his father, he entered public junior high school and graduated co-valedictorian.[21]

Following his high school graduation in 1957 Aoki joined the army, where he served on active duty for the first six months and reserve duty for the next seven-and-a-half years. In the military he saw contradictions that helped to fuel his very early opposition to the Vietnam War. He also gained weapons training—skills he would further develop in his activist work. After completing his active duty, Aoki began a series of working-class jobs where he gained a proletarian consciousness. At one of these jobs, in a paint factory, Aoki made a grave error in calculating the ingredients to make a huge batch of paint, thereby ruining, in Aoki's estimate, "ten thousand dollars" worth of paint. "The color was off, the viscosity was off, the pH was off," he explained. Because the paint would be "chipping and cracking and peeling in a week," he expected it to be thrown out and anticipated his own reprimand or firing. Instead, he was shocked that the bosses would sell the defective paint: "They made a decision to can the product. . . . put them into one gallon containers, put [on] another label, not the company label." That day, he learned a lesson in the greed of capitalism. His understanding of capitalism was further enhanced when his fellow workers, many of whom were labor organizers, socialists, and communists, introduced him to reading materials, including books by Carey McWilliams and John Steinbeck, the speeches of Eugene Debs, Art Preis's *Labor's Giant Steps,* and Michael Harrington's *The Other America.* Members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) urged him to read the classics, and he delved into Hegel, Marx, Engels, and Lenin. After an

intensive self-study in Marxist-Leninist literature, Aoki joined the swp and its youth group, the Young Socialist Alliance, around 1963. By this time, he publicly identified as a "revolutionary socialist" and cofounded the Socialist Discussion Club in 1964 at Oakland City College (later Merritt College), where he had just begun his full-time studies.[22]

Aoki's study of black nationalism began through regular exchanges between his group and the Soul Students Advisory Council and one of its leaders, Bobby Seale. He was also "reading everything anybody in a Marxist or Leninist, Maoist tradition had written about nationalism." By the time he participated as the only nonblack at a Black Power conference held in San Francisco in September 1966, he was an advocate of revolutionary nationalism. In a report on the conference for the swp, Aoki asserted that "the origin and development of black nationalism is the direct result of the American capitalist system, which has placed black people into a position analogous to the colonial peoples." He also noted that "the Black nationalist movement is in an embryonic stage of development, and is constantly undergoing transformations." He called upon the swp to recognize the need for "Blacks . . . to organize themselves independently," even as "the Black liberation struggle does not exist in isolation from other forces and conflicts at home and abroad." He also admonished that "the swp must begin to lay down the foundations that will lead to a principled alliance between Black people and the White workers so that they can together destroy American capitalism." Though he did not yet have a term for the various forms of nationalism, Aoki had come to the conclusion that there was a distinction between what he soon called cultural nationalism (promoting African culture and racial pride, but lacking a class analysis) and revolutionary nationalism (promoting race and class liberation in its anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and pro-socialist analysis). Aoki's advocacy of revolutionary nationalism contradicted the swp Trotskyist line that all nationalism is reactionary, and by early 1967 he left the swp "without breaking stride."[23]

Contrary to what many would assume, while growing up in Oakland Aoki did not know the Black Panther Party co-founders Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. Aoki, after all, had been home schooled until junior high. But by living in Oakland, he met Huey's older brother, Melvin, and through Melvin, he met Huey. In contrast to Bobby Seale's unwavering descriptions of Huey Newton as the intellectually and politically savvy one of their duo,[24] Aoki remembers Seale as the more intellectually engaging and the better

orator, and Newton as the street-smart one with the quick street-fighting skills. In fact, even with his revolutionary socialist politics and political understanding of exploitation, Aoki, along with Huey, entertained the idea of becoming pimps. They were impressed with the fancy clothes and imposing guns of a big-time pimp they knew. But, after further exploration of the idea, they changed their minds. As Aoki explained: "[We] got to talk to a lot of prostitutes. And he and I could just not become pimps. We talked to the women and they were in bad shape. I mean they were out there because they were mothers and trying to make ends met . . . Huey and I couldn't see profiting over somebody's misery."[25] That Aoki could seriously consider becoming a pimp in the mid-1960s illustrates the inconsistencies of his street upbringing and his developing political ideas.

As Seale remembers it, he met Aoki through Newton: "It was at one of the restaurants across the street from Merritt College . . . in the Spring of 1963. Richard happened to pop in, or [he] was at the table and I came in, one of the two. And Huey says, 'Bobby this is Richard Aoki, he's a friend of mine.' . . . We got to talking about basic politics. Huey was always getting into . . . discussions with Richard about politics, international politics, socialist politics, that kind of stuff." Seale and Aoki were soon having regular interactions through their respective organizations at Merritt College. But, as Seale recounted: "Our friendship with Richard was more than just around the college campus. We would drop over to Richard's house, me and Huey, my god we must've dropped into Richard's apartment several times just to sit and sip on some wine, drink some beer, eat some cheese. We were intellectuals. We had these long broad intellectual discussions with each other . . . ten or twelve times over a two to three year period. [This was] all before the Party started." Seale credits Aoki with teaching him about the distinctions among the different forms of socialism and, in the first couple of years of the BPP, being the party member most well versed in Marxist-Leninist thought. Seale respected Aoki's affiliation with the SWP, particularly its publication of Malcolm X's speeches, and he appreciated the SWP newspaper subscription that Aoki gave him.[26]

When Seale and Newton organized the now renowned Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) in Oakland in October 1966, they sought Aoki's advice on their newly written Ten-Point Platform. Aoki was also among the first to help to duplicate and distribute copies of the document. He further embodied the Panthers' belief in self-defense by supplying them

with their first two guns—a .45 for Seale and a M-1 carbine for Newton. In fact, because of Aoki's consistent presence in Newton's and Seale's political lives and his active support in the early days of the party's formation, it was hard for Aoki to pinpoint the exact moment of his Panther membership. But after joining the party some time within the first month, Aoki became one of the few nonblacks (perhaps the only one) to hold leadership positions within the BPP, in which he served briefly as the first branch captain of the Berkeley chapter, worked as a field marshal who reported directly to Huey, and, informally, acted as the minister of education in the BPP's earliest months.[27]

In 1968, Aoki began working in the Asian American movement at UC Berkeley, to which he had transferred two years earlier to complete his bachelor's degree. As a founding member of the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA), initiated by Yuji Ichioka and Emma Gee, Aoki was among the earliest participants of the nascent Asian American movement in the Bay Area and throughout the nation. He was respected for his dynamic oratory skills, developed in the black culture of West Oakland; his political study of revolutionary nationalism and classic Marxism-Leninism; and his activist experience in the revolutionary nationalist black movement, in the antiwar movement with the radical Vietnam Day Committee, and in Third World solidarity struggles. After becoming AAPA's official spokesperson, he soon found himself embroiled in a historic struggle to establish ethnic studies at UC Berkeley, a movement that followed closely on the heels of the 1968–69 five-month strike at San Francisco State College, which resulted in the nation's first School of Ethnic Studies. As Aoki became intensely involved in Asian American organizing in 1968–69, he began drifting away from the activities of the BPP, which, unlike its active role in the San Francisco State College strike, provided little direction to the strike at UC Berkeley.[28]

In 1968 at UC Berkeley, the black, Chicana and Chican/o, and Asian American students began approaching the administration for ethnic studies curriculum. When the AAPA-initiated pioneering Asian American studies class was offered at UC Berkeley in winter 1969, Aoki, then a graduate student in social welfare at UC Berkeley, served as one of the class's four teaching assistants. And when various student groups decided to begin a strike for ethnic studies and formed the Third World Liberation Front

(TWLF), Aoki became the chair of AAPA for the duration of the strike and the Asian American spokesperson within the TWLF. He was the most visible Asian American leader of the strike and a member of the TWLF decision-making body, the central committee. Consistent with Aoki's ultra-Left approach, he was more interested in the military aspects of the strike than in sitting in lengthy meetings. In this capacity, he tirelessly and meticulously attended to the details of planning various tactics for confronting the police and administration. Though he considered himself more radical than most in AAPA, there is consensus that in his role as spokesperson, he fairly and accurately represented the organization's views.[29]

After establishing the School of Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley, Aoki became one of the first coordinators of the nascent Asian American Studies Program and taught many of its first classes. For Aoki, it was important to teach academically rigorous classes and maintain a community-based focus in that program. But by 1972, with internal struggles in the department, Aoki was ready to move on.[30] He would spend the next twenty-six years working as a counselor, instructor, and administrator with the Peralta Community College district in the East Bay. During this period, a combination of political burnout and personal crises led to his being politically inactive, though he continued to follow political events in the mainstream news and was aware of grassroots struggles. Significantly, it was through the reemergence of Black Panther activities following Huey Newton's death in 1989 that Aoki reconnected with the grassroots social movements. Following his retirement in 1998 his activist life reignited, and currently he is active in the movement to oppose the U.S. war and occupation of Iraq.[31]

In reflecting on his life, Aoki contends that the Black Panther Party remains the single most important political influence on his life. As he adamantly states: "I never left the Party and I was never expelled." Even when politically inactive, he found jobs for party members at the various community colleges where he worked and provided other concrete support to the BPP, particularly through the mid-1970s.[32] To the present day, his loyalties to the party are so strong that it is hard for him to offer criticisms of the organization's controversial history. The legacy of the Panthers in Aoki's life is evident in his revolutionary nationalist ideology; his current activism, often centering on BPP commemorations or antiwar organizing with former Panthers; the personal sacrifices he has made in his life; his oratory

skills; and his black cultural style. Indeed, his reputation among Asian American activists in the 1960s and today stems in large part from his Panther affiliation.

Yuri Kochiyama: Living in Harlem in the "Sizzling Sixties"

Yuri Kochiyama is one of the most prominent Asian American activists to emerge in the 1960s.[33] Yet her early years hold few clues that explain her radical transformation during that period. Born in 1921, Kochiyama grew up in a predominantly white, middle-class neighborhood in South Los Angeles. There were acts that could be interpreted as rebellious in her youth. In particular, she managed to evade doing much housework. This was unusual, when social norms in 1930s America dictated that daughters, especially only daughters as was the case with Yuri, would help lighten their mother's domestic load and, perhaps more importantly, gain training for becoming a "good wife" and "good mother." Still, Yuri's rebelliousness did not stem from any conscious feminist impulse, but rather from a desire to participate actively in extracurricular activities. Her whirlwind of community service activities, including being a fanatical sports journalist, a member of her high school tennis team, the first female student body officer at her high school, a counselor to multiple girls' clubs, and a dedicated Sunday school teacher, was a second area that signaled a potential activist future. But she was drawn to helping others from a humanitarian base, in the absence of any pursuit of social justice. In her youth, her racial outlook could best be described as colorblind and assimilationist. She fit into the predominantly white world surrounding her in San Pedro. She was not only well integrated into school activities—"one of the most popular students," remarked several of her friends—she even dated white boys at a time when Asian-white romantic relationships were legally and culturally prohibited. Kochiyama acknowledges that even as she attended Japanese language school and was raised in a Japanese home culture, she barely identified as being Japanese American.[34]

World War II inaugurated her racial awakening. For the first time, she perceived race discrimination in, for example, organizations asking her to leave and the local police accusing her of spying for Japan. Under conditions of segregated confinement, Kochiyama began listening to the lengthy dis-

cussions of older internees, many with grievances about their unjust rac-
ist treatment. These experiences challenged her colorblind worldview. But
even as she began recognizing instances of race discrimination, she still
clung to her faith in America as a land of equality and democracy. She was
able to reconcile these seemingly contradictory views by adopting a moder-
ate, legalistic, and assimilationist politic—one that matched the politics of
the JACL. Race discrimination was an aberrant event that could be eradicated
through reforms to the system. This is far different from the worldview
Kochiyama would adopt by the mid-1960s—that racism was a deeply em-
bedded and widespread feature of the United States, intricately linked to the
historical development of the country itself. Still, her concentration camp
experiences triggered a racial awakening and her community service ac-
tivities began, for the first time, taking on an explicitly racial focus. From
inside the Santa Anita assembly center and the Jerome, Arkansas, con-
centration camp, Kochiyama organized her Sunday school class to began an
extensive letter-writing campaign to Nisei soldiers, in large part because
they were facing race discrimination at home and abroad on the battlefield.
In the postwar years, after moving to New York City to marry a war veteran,
Bill Kochiyama, she and her husband started an organization to support
Japanese American and later Chinese American soldiers on their way to the
Korean warfront.[35]

In the 1950s, as Kochiyama followed newspaper accounts of the civil
rights movement and invited political speakers to her family's open houses
—where scores of people, strangers and friends alike, gathered every week-
end—she began to gain a political consciousness. But her 1960 move from
midtown Manhattan to Harlem, with its pulsating black social movements,
was key in her radical transformation. In 1963, she began struggling for
quality education for inner-city children and for nondiscriminatory hiring
practices for construction workers—work that matched the goals (integra-
tion) and methods (nonviolent, direct action) of the civil rights movement.
But within two short years she had developed an incipient radical conscious-
ness. That she developed a moderate political consciousness was not sur-
prising. In the context of the civil rights movement surrounding her in
Harlem, her community service activities took on a political cast. But given
her experiences, it would have been hard to predict the development of a
radical politic. What triggered this radicalization?

The historic moment—the "sizzling sixties," as Kochiyama has called it—

and her location in Harlem were key. She became radicalized at precisely the moment when the moderate civil rights movement was shifting into the radical Black Power movement. Moreover, she was located in a black community that was rife with radical and nationalist tendencies and that had a rich history of political and cultural resistance. In this milieu, Kochiyama met Malcolm X, who would become her foremost political mentor. In October 1963, when Kochiyama met Malcolm at a courtroom hearing for her arrest along with others for using their bodies to block construction trucks, her politics reflected that of the predominant civil rights movement. She told Malcolm that she disagreed with his "harsh stance on integration," and she asked, in her first letter to him, "If each of us, white, yellow, and what-have-you, can earn our way into your confidence by actual performance, will you . . . could you . . . believe in 'togetherness' of all people?"[36] In these statements, Kochiyama clearly promotes integrationism as a goal, yet she also acknowledges the need for nonblack people to prove through "actual performance" their genuine commitment to racial equality.

The day after meeting Malcolm, Kochiyama heard him speak for the first time. She soon began to attend his talks at the Audubon Ballroom. In June 1964, Malcolm spoke at a program, held at the Kochiyama home, in honor of Japanese *hibakusha* (atomic-bomb survivors) on a world tour against nuclear proliferation. At that program, Malcolm acknowledged receiving the numerous letters from Kochiyama and promised to write during his lengthy travels abroad in Africa, the Middle East, and England. Yuri and Bill were surprised to receive eleven postcards from Malcolm, in the midst of his meeting with foreign national leaders. But something about Kochiyama touched Malcolm. As Mae Mallory, a respected Harlem activist, recalled: "Mary [as Kochiyama was then known] was the only person in the area that Malcolm wrote to, except for Mr. Micheaux [the black nationalist bookstore owner]." Although her statement is exaggerated, Mallory is expressing a perception that exists to this day—that Kochiyama was special to Malcolm. As he expressed in one of his postcards: "I read all of your wonderful cards and letters of encouragement and I think you are the most beautiful family in Harlem."[37]

By the end of the year, Kochiyama was attending, at Malcolm's invitation, his Organization of Afro-American Unity's Liberation School. From lessons about Fannie Lou Hamer's jailhouse beating to the European colonialists' division of Africa to a political-economic analysis of slavery, Kochiyama

learned lessons about how this country's "congenital deformity" of racism could not be reformed. Contained in these lessons, and in readings by Fanon, Nkrumah, and Aptheker, were anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and even implicitly pro-socialist messages. At Kochiyama's first class, on December 5, 1964, she was impressed with the instructor's ability to connect cross-culturally: "To my surprise, Brother [James] Shabazz started talking about linkages between Africans and Asians. I was the only non-Black there. I don't know if he spoke about this because I was there, to help me connect my heritage to what we were learning, or if he would have lectured on this anyway. Brother Shabazz, who speaks some Japanese, Korean, and Chinese, wrote the *kanji* [Japanese and Chinese characters] for Tao and various martial art forms on the board. He explained the spirituality underlying these martial arts—that they were exercises to help one move towards God similar to how Islam did." The Liberation School not only presented a different view of nationalism, one that contained elements of Third World solidarity and internationalism, it also challenged the reformist, integrationist, and non-violent beliefs contained within Kochiyama's civil rights ideology. As she questioned the possibility of gaining equality and liberation in a system built on racism, she began to fathom that an entirely different system needed to be established.[38]

That Malcolm too was undergoing a political and racial transformation following his 1964 departure from the Nation of Islam had a profound impact on Kochiyama. In May 1964, upon returning from Africa where he met white revolutionary Muslims, particularly the Algerian ambassador to Ghana, Malcolm revealed: "In the past, I have permitted myself to be used to make sweeping indictments of all white people, and these generalizations have caused injuries to some white people who did not deserve them. . . . My pilgrimage to Mecca . . . served to convince me that perhaps American whites can be cured of the rampant racism which is consuming them and about to destroy this country. In the future, I intend to be careful not to sentence anyone who has not been proven guilty. I am not a racist and do not subscribe to any of the tenets of racism."[39] Had Malcolm maintained his previous antiwhite views, Kochiyama, who believed in the possibility of genuine interracial unity based on her own experiences growing up in San Pedro, probably would not have become such a close supporter.

Nationalist politics were growing in other ways in Harlem as well. Following Malcolm's assassination in 1965, LeRoi Jones (later Amiri Baraka)

established the Black Arts Repertory Theater and School, which according to Kochiyama, "became so well known that black literary people and artists from all over the country came to Harlem to check it out." Jones, a prominent poet, dramatist, and writer who initially emerged as a Beat poet, had undergone an ideological transformation from integrationism to black revolutionary nationalism. Jones's first organization in Harlem, the On Guard for Freedom Committee, was interracial—a policy he defended when some of the young nationalists in Harlem objected to the presence of whites at their meetings. But by 1965, Jones argued that the Black Arts School should be, in the words of Harold Cruse, "a black theater about black people, with black people, for black people, and only black people." Kochiyama observed how this policy affected the political community in Harlem: "It was the first kind of institution that upset a lot of people, and certainly it upset whites, because the idea was that it was open only to blacks, or nonwhites. Harlem Freedom School was integrated and most everything else that was political in Harlem was integrated, until this new kind of nationalism emerged. Even a lot of whites who had been in the civil rights movement were upset by it."[40]

The racially exclusionary policy of the Black Arts School and other instances of separatist organizing must have challenged Kochiyama's own evolving views on integrationism and self-determination. Just two years earlier, she had rebuked Malcolm X's separatist ideas. But by listening to Malcolm's speeches and studying at his Liberation School, she was beginning to understand the need for autonomous spaces to solidify unity and realize self-determination. The effects of white supremacy were felt in a variety of ways in the movement, including white people dominating discussions and leadership positions and black people, in subscribing to internalized racism, accepting subordinate roles. As a result, Kochiyama reasoned, autonomous spaces—that is, racially exclusionary ones—served to counter the powerful effects of white supremacy on black activists as well as on well-meaning white activists. So while Kochiyama probably disliked the fact that white activists felt hurt by being excluded on the basis of race, she also believed that the separation of races was necessary for black self-determination, but only as a stepping stone to the eventual "togetherness of all people" in a transformed society. Her own racial identity placed her in an ambiguous position vis-à-vis black nationalism. But in a period of growing Third World solidarity, and given Kochiyama's humble and respectful man-

ner, she was one of the few nonblacks to be included in the Black Arts School and other black nationalist formations in Harlem.

Not only was Kochiyama becoming increasingly nationalist, she also was moving from believing in philosophical nonviolence to accepting the right to self-defense. Certainly the teachings of Malcolm X and his associates at the Liberation School influenced her thinking. In contrast to many civil rights leaders, particularly Martin Luther King Jr. and Bob Moses, both of whom raised nonviolence to a principle to be adhered to in all situations, Malcolm X viewed nonviolence as a tactic to be used depending on the circumstances: "We're nonviolent with people who are nonviolent with us. But we're not nonviolent with people who are not nonviolent with us." He elaborated on this concept in his 1963 "Message to the Grass Roots" speech:

> As long as the white man sent you to Korea, you bled. . . . You bleed for white people, but when it comes to seeing your own churches being bombed and little black girls murdered, you haven't got any blood. . . . How are you going to be nonviolent in Mississippi, as violent as you were in Korea? . . . If violence is wrong in America, violence is wrong abroad. If it is wrong to be violent defending black women and black children and black babies and black men, then it is wrong for America to draft us and make us violent abroad in defense of her. And if it is right for America to draft us, and teach us how to be violent in defense of her, then it is right for you and me to do whatever is necessary to defend our own people right here in this country.

Robert F. Williams, president of the NAACP chapter in Monroe, North Carolina, who gained the respect of black nationalists for daring to promote armed defense against Ku Klux Klan attacks in the 1950s, concurred with the tactical use of self-defense: "Nonviolence is a very potent weapon when the opponent is civilized, but nonviolence is no repellent for a sadist." As he further observed: "When Hitler's tyranny threatened the world, we did not hear much about how immoral it is to meet violence with violence." Likewise, nonviolence would not prove an effective weapon against white supremacists, argued Williams.[41]

In the 1960s, Williams became one of the most prominent leaders within black revolutionary nationalist circles, second only to Malcolm X. The black intellectual Harold Cruse, under whom Kochiyama studied at the Black Arts School, views this as a curious fact; as he asserted, "Robert Williams himself

was never a nationalist, but an avowed integrationist." There is certainly much evidence to support this position. As president of the Monroe NAACP, integration appeared to be Williams's solution to white supremacy, as he worked diligently for the desegregation of swimming pools and other public facilities. Believing that the federal government would defend civil rights activists against the segregationist practices of southern politicians and Ku Klux Klan, he consistently informed the federal officials, including the FBI, about local racial problems. He supported diverse political tendencies, including the interracial Freedom Riders and the predominantly white Trotskyists—all pro-integrationist. Moreover, Williams considered the black nation position unfeasible and was never a nationalist, in his words, "to the point that I would exclude whites or that I would discriminate against whites or that I would be prejudiced against whites." So why, inquires Cruse, were the bulk of Williams's supporters in Harlem in the early 1960s nationalists? And why, I might add, did revolutionary nationalist organizations in the late 1960s invite Williams to be their leader? Cruse offers a succinct response: "The young nationalists celebrated Williams as their leader, since his self-defense stand coincided with their rising interests in the adoption of force and violence tactics in the North." Williams's advocacy of self-defense certainly inspired many revolutionary nationalists, including the Black Panther Party's armed stance against police brutality. This position contrasted sharply with the nonviolent philosophy of prominent civil rights leaders and made Williams an adversary of the NAACP executive director Roy Wilkins and an ally to revolutionary nationalists.[42]

By the late 1960s, Kochiyama was a firm believer in revolutionary nationalism, with its promotion of self-determination and self-defense and its anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and implicitly or explicitly pro-socialist politics. Even here, the influences of Malcolm X and Robert Williams are apparent. Both adhered to what Williams's biographer called "eclectic radicalism." In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Williams believed in nationalist ideas about self-reliance, he relied on the militant tactic of self-defense, and he strove toward racial equality through integration without fundamentally contesting the economic or political structures of the United States. By the late 1960s, Williams, after living in exile in Cuba and China, stated, "I envision a democratic socialist economy wherein the exploitation of man by man will be abolished." Malcolm X's Organization of Afro-American Unity contained cultural nationalist, revolutionary nationalist, and revolutionary

Marxist elements. And it is unclear whether Malcolm, whose politics were evolving rapidly in the last year of his life, remained a nationalist (some associates claim that given his treatment as an ex-officio head of state during his 1964 travels abroad, he acted out the concept of nationalism) or repudiated narrow nationalism (as Malcolm stated in a January 1965 interview with the Socialist Workers Party). But it can be argued that he was becoming increasingly internationalist, anti-capitalist, and pro-socialist toward the end of his life.[43] Moreover, compared to West Coast black radicals who drew sharp divisions between cultural and revolutionary nationalism, on the East Coast, particularly in Harlem, the boundaries between various forms of nationalism appeared more fluid. While the New York Panthers adopted African names and culture, the Oakland Panthers emphasized class over race, harshly condemned "porkchop nationalists," and forbid New York Black Panthers from working closely with cultural nationalists.[44] It was in this more eclectic East Coast nationalist environment that Kochiyama's politics—strongly influenced by revolutionary nationalism but also drawing from cultural nationalism, civil rights discourse, and socialism—flourished.

In the mid-1960s, Kochiyama was a supporter of the Revolutionary Action Movement, a clandestine revolutionary nationalist organization, which, according to William Sales, "was the first of many organizations in the black liberation movement to attempt to construct a revolutionary nationalism on the basis of a synthesis of the thought of Malcolm X, Marx and Lenin, and Mao Tse Tung . . . [giving] its variant of black nationalism a particularly leftist character." The Revolutionary Action Movement was headed by Muhammad Ahmed (Max Stanford), who relied on Kochiyama's wide political networks to help to recruit members in Harlem. As Ahmed recounted: "Yuri opened up her apartment as a meeting place, where we met for lunch two or three times a week. She'd fix sandwiches and we would listen to Malcolm's unedited speeches, which would go for maybe two hours or so. And we would have discussions. . . . She could introduce people to us. She would circulate any information that we had to a whole network of people. . . . Yuri was a constant communicator, constant facilitator, constant networker." Through RAM and others in Harlem, Kochiyama began writing to Robert Williams while he was in exile, distributing his U.S.-government banned publication *The Crusader*. Upon their return from exile in 1969, Robert and Mabel Williams visited the Kochiyama home.[45]

Based on her consistent and fervent support for revolutionary politics

and black self-determination, Kochiyama was among the very few non-blacks invited to join the Republic of New Africa (RNA), which was established in 1968 and known for its ultimate nationalist position advocating a separate black nation in the U.S. South. Kochiyama was so influenced by RNA's "nation-building" classes and the revolutionary nationalist milieu in Harlem that when the RNA had an internal split over the form and location of revolutionary struggle, despite her own location in a northern city she sided with the need to build an independent black nation in the South over the struggle for equality in northern cities, where large numbers of blacks had migrated since World War II. Though Kochiyama took a clear stance by allying with Imari Obadele's faction, given that her pragmatic approach consistently took precedent over a strong ideological position, it is not surprising that she worked simultaneously to promote Obadele's "nation within a nation" position and to work for black liberation in Harlem.[46]

By 1967, the year that the FBI director J. Edgar Hoover officially launched the counterintelligence program, or COINTELPRO, "to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit or otherwise neutralize the activities of black nationalist, hate-type organizations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters, and to counter their propensity for violence and civil disorder," Kochiyama began what would became her most intense area of struggle—supporting political prisoners. Initially drawn in because many of her comrades were being harassed, arrested, and imprisoned by the FBI and local police, her own experiences of incarceration during World War II help explain the intensity of her commitment. Drawing parallels between the two situations, Kochiyama proclaimed: "These things could happen when there is no support; when no one even knows what is happening; and when people are afraid to even know you because they might be found guilty by association. . . . If we don't support one another, and stand by one another, it will be easy for those in power to pick off one group at a time, as they have done so successfully in the past." Kochiyama soon became one of the central figures in the political prisoner movement in Harlem and nationally, supporting political prisoners not only for humanitarian reasons, given their excessively harsh treatment and long prison sentences, but also defending their anti-racist, anti-imperialist politics. She was the first person many turned to when arrested or when released from prison, either by calling her home or dropping by her work. "When we were captured by the

enemy, our first call went to WA6–7412," recounted the political prisoner Mutulu Shakur, rattling off her telephone number from memory thirty years after his first post-prison phone call to Kochiyama. "Everybody just remembered that number," continued Shakur: "Anybody getting arrested, no matter black, Puerto Rican, or whatever, our first call was to her number. Her network was like no other. She would get a lawyer or get information out to our family and the Movement. You knew she wasn't going to stop until somebody heard from you." Kochiyama, dubbed the "Internet in those days," was also a storehouse of political information and updates on political prisoner cases. As her fellow RNA citizen Bolanile Akinwole recalled, "She had little cardboard boxes [of files] stacked up everywhere. One of her back rooms was just filled with these boxes. And there used to be boxes in the hallway and in the kitchen. The kitchen table always had bunches of stuff on it, and underneath it. But everything was very organized and it was amazing how quickly she could put her hands on information." And Ahmed Obafemi adds, "So if you wanted information on a political prisoner, say to organize a conference or a tribunal, all we had to do was go to Yuri." And with the same intensity she had while writing letters to Nisei soldiers during World War II, Kochiyama would stay up until the wee hours of the morning writing letters to political prisoners, composing articles for newsletters or letters to the editor, completing a mass mailing, or organizing an event.[47]

Kochiyama's commitment to political prisoners and to working cross-culturally continues to this day. She has become an ardent supporter of Puerto Rican independence and of those imprisoned for their efforts to decolonize their homelands. As the Puerto Rican leader Richie Perez observed: "Yuri was an activist in a movement to free political prisoners in almost every community—not only for the Panthers but also for the people up in prison fighting for Puerto Rican independence—and [she] worked very closely with some of the cases that were dear to our community. . . . In each of these, [she worked] amazingly with the same kind of enthusiasm as if they were people from her own community." She has traveled internationally to Peru, the Philippines, and Japan to generate international support for the Peruvian political prisoner and Shining Path leader Abimael Guzman. Significantly, Kochiyama almost single-handedly is responsible for generating Asian American support for political prisoners and, in the 1990s, for establishing support groups for the Asian American political

prisoners Yu Kikumura and David Wong. As the former Puerto Rican political prisoner Dylcia Pagan proclaimed, "I have the utmost admiration for Yuri. She is the most incessant activist I've ever met."[48]

The Radicalizing Effect of the Black Liberation Movement

My discussion of Richard Aoki and Yuri Kochiyama attends to the ways in which the black liberation movement exerted a radicalizing force on their ideological development and political activities. Their proximity to the working-class black community was important. For Aoki, his growing up in the black ghetto in West Oakland shaped his ideas about the nature of black oppression, which he saw grounded in not only racism and capitalism but also internal colonialism.[49] Had he been raised in a middle-class, predominantly white suburb, he may well have adopted a civil rights analysis of the racist nature of black oppression or a Left analysis of the capitalist nature of black oppression. For Kochiyama, it was in listening to her black neighbors' daily experiences with racism that she gained an understanding of the systemic nature of racism.

Still, as Kochiyama observed, it was not simply living in a working-class black community, as she had throughout the 1950s in the predominantly black Amsterdam Housing Projects in midtown Manhattan, but being surrounded by the emerging black power movement in Harlem that triggered her radicalization. That her politics developed in the early to mid-1960s, precisely in the period when the civil rights movement was transforming into the more radical black power movement, profoundly shaped her activism. These influences are particularly salient in Kochiyama's ideological development from her civil rights promotion of integrationism and nonviolence to her revolutionary nationalist advocacy of self-determination, self-defense, and armed struggle. For Aoki, his participation in the budding black nationalist movement transformed his politics from the Trotskyism of the swp to the revolutionary nationalism of the bpp. For both of these Japanese American radicals, living in working-class black communities in the midst of the emerging Black Power movement provided them with opportunities to meet numerous black radicals and nationalists. These were invaluable connections and experiences. To this day, Malcolm X is Kochi-

yama's greatest political mentor and the Black Panther Party is the single greatest political influence in Aoki's life.

As much as black radicalism impacted Aoki and Kochiyama's politics, these Japanese American radicals also helped to shape the emerging black power movements locally and nationally. The Black Panther Party cofounder Bobby Seale finds Aoki's contributions significant enough to identify him by name in his 1960s classic book *Seize the Time,* and in his current Black Panther Web site, even though Aoki was in neither the primary nor secondary tier of party leadership.[50] To Seale, Aoki's ideological and material support was critical to the formation of the BPP. He and Huey Newton trusted and respected Aoki's political analysis, so much so that they engaged in lengthy discussions with him and sought his advice on, for example, their party's platform. That a person—and nonblack at that—would be willing to supply them with their first guns for their audacious and controversial police patrols must have affirmed their ideas and signaled Aoki's commitment in action, and not just words, to black liberation.

In the New York black liberation movement, Kochiyama can be characterized as a behind-the-scenes worker—making stylistically designed leaflets, archiving materials, writing and visiting political prisoners, arranging meetings, and writing articles for movement publications. She readily acknowledges her ordinariness: "I was never an officer or leader [in RNA]. . . . I never spoke." In emphasizing her respect for black self-determination, she is adamant "that [it] would be sort of ridiculous for a non-Black to speak for the Black nation." But to see her contributions to black liberation as merely that of a rank-and-file activist is misguided. As Mutulu Shakur, Kochiyama's New York comrade in RNA and the National Committee to Defend Political Prisoners (NCDPP), asserts: "She was more than just a leaflet maker. . . . She was essential to that decision-making process. . . . When there were like only five of us active in the NCDPP, Yuri would be there at every meeting. So how can you minimize her decision-making role in that?" The NCDPP comrade Nyisha Shakur concurred: "Yuri, out of all of us, was in touch with people the most. People would call her relentlessly, just all the time—frequently collect. And she would somehow just never refuse them. So she was always the one who people looked to to find out where [prisoners and activists] moved to. . . . She was the one seemingly writing and visiting most of [the] political prisoners and really staying on top of it. . . . When I was still young,

I said to myself, I never want to be as busy as she was. Yuri literally worked until two or three in the morning every night." Because of the dedication, consistency, and selflessness with which Kochiyama has worked through thick and thin, she has emerged as a leading figure in the New York black liberation movement and in the national political prisoners movement. In the early 1990s, for example, Kochiyama was listed on the Malcolm X Commemoration Committee's letterhead as a founding member of the Organization of Afro American Unity (OAAU), though she was merely a budding activist when Malcolm X established the OAAU in 1964. It seems that Kochiyama is so revered in black revolutionary nationalist circles that she is placed among the closest associates of Malcolm X.[51]

It was from their roots in the Black Power movement that both Kochiyama and Aoki emerged as early leaders of the Asian American Movement. Young Asian American activists respected both leaders for their connections with the militant Black Power movement. Kochiyama helped build bridges between the Asian and black radical movements by, for example, writing or speaking about Malcolm X, Robert Williams, and political prisoners in many Asian American movement publications and events, and writing or speaking about the Japanese American incarceration, the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Vietnam War, and the Japanese American redress movement to Asian and black audiences. As she worked for Japanese American redress in the 1980s, she consistently advocated the need for black reparations. Aoki's leadership in the Asian American Political Alliance and the Third World Liberation Front at UC Berkeley stemmed from, in large part, his connections to the Black Power movement on the West Coast. Not only was he a dynamic orator grounded in black street style and an advanced student of revolutionary black nationalism, he also exuded the macho style of the Black Panthers that drew the admiration of young Asian American men and women looking for alternative role models.

The black liberation movement was a radicalizing force in the lives of Aoki and Kochiyama, both of whom in turn helped shape the emerging radical black movement. Both activists were influential leaders in the nascent Asian American movement and inspired the activism of countless Asian American youth. In helping to forge revolutionary African-Asian unity, Japanese American radicals like Kochiyama and Aoki were instrumental in helping to build the Left wing of the Asian American movement.[52]

Notes

1 See, for example, Clayborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, eds., *The Eyes of the Prize Civil Rights Reader* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 244–47.

2 It is likely that Kochiyama and Aoki would have maintained their original political ideology, that of civil rights and Old Left activism, respectively, if not for the emergence of the black liberation movement and their location in black working-class communities.

3 Though little known, Japanese Americans have a long history of radical resistance. Beginning in the earliest years of the twentieth century, Japanese immigrants formed socialist study groups and the immigrant Sen Katayama, already known in Japan for his instrumental role in the Japanese labor and communist movements, helped found the Communist Party USA (CPUSA). Japanese Americans, leftists and nonleftists alike, engaged in intensive labor struggles, including numerous militant strikes. On the Japanese American Left, see Yuji Ichioka, "A Buried Past: Early Issei Socialists and the Japanese Community," *Amerasia Journal* 1 (1971): 1–25; Hyman Kublin, *Asian Revolutionary: The Life of Sen Katayama* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964); Karl G. Yoneda, "The Heritage of Sen Katayama," *Political Affairs* (1975) (reprinted as pamphlet); Scott Kurashige, *Transforming Los Angeles: Black and Japanese American Struggles for Racial Equality in the 20th Century* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2000); Diane Fujino, "Japanese American Radicalism and Radical Formation," paper presented at the National Association for Asian American Studies conference, San Francisco, May 2003; and Karl Yoneda, *Ganbatte: Sixty-Year Struggle of a Kibei Worker* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 1983). On labor organizing, see Tomas Almaguer, *Racial Faultlines: The History of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 153–204; Edward D. Beechert, *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985); Chris Friday, *Organizing Asian American Labor: The Pacific Coast Canned-Salmon Industry, 1870–1942* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885–1924* (New York: Free Press, 1988); Craig Scharlin and Lilia V. Villanueva, *Philip Vera Cruz: A Personal History of Filipino Immigrants and the Farmworkers Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000 [1992]); Ronald Takaki, *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835–1920* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983).

4 Issei refers to first-generation or immigrant Japanese Americans, most of whom immigrated to the United States between 1885 and 1924. Nisei refers to second-generation Japanese Americans, the children of immigrants, most of whom were born between 1910 and 1940.

5   Paul Kochi, *Imin no Aiwa (An Immigrant's Sorrowful Tale)* (Los Angeles: self-published, 1978); Ryan Yokota, "Activism for Communism and Community: The Life and Times of Paul Shinsei Kochi," unpublished manuscript, 2003; Mo Nishida, interview by Diane Fujino, April 15, 2003.

6   The U.S. government arrested and imprisoned 1,291 Japanese Americans within the first forty-eight hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Those arrested had been placed on the "ABC List" of allegedly "known and potentially dangerous" suspects, when in fact, the U.S. government and military's own investigations, conducted as late as fall 1941, showed that Japanese America posed no threat of espionage, sabotage, or fifth-column activity. See Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* (New York: Morrow Quill, 1976); Roger Daniels, *Prisoners without Trial* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); and Bob Kumamoto, "The Search for Spies: American Counterintelligence and the Japanese American Community, 1931–1942," *Amerasia Journal* 6 (1979): 45–75.

7   Deborah Lim, "The Lim Report," 1990, unpublished report commissioned by the JACL but suppressed because of its findings critical of JACL's role in incarceration—the report was, however, widely distributed via the Internet, see www.resisters.com or www.javoice.com; Paul Spickard, "The Nisei Assume Power: The Japanese American Citizens League, 1941–1942," *Pacific Historical Review* 52 (1983): 147–74; Jere Takahashi, *Nisei Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 48–112; Bill Hosokawa, *JACL: In Quest of Justice* (New York: William Morrow, 1982).

8   The purging of immigrants resulted in the loss of four thousand members, including more than one hundred Japanese Americans. The clause was overturned in 1944. See Yoneda, *Ganbatte*, 105, 115; William Z. Foster, *History of the Communist Party of the United States* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), 392–93.

9   Foster, *History of the CPUSA,* 387–88. Regarding CPUSA interpretations of U.S. motives for entering the war, the CPUSA national chair William Foster wrote: "The main enemy and by far the most powerful fascist power in World War II was Nazi Germany. . . . Actually, however, the United States struck its hardest blows against Japan. . . . due to the fact that American imperialism felt itself much more affected by the far-flung conquests of Japan in the Pacific and Far East, areas which American imperialism had staked out for itself" (402–403).

10   Foster, *History of CPUSA,* 383–407; Dorothy Ray Healey and Maurice Isserman, *California Red: A Life in the American Communist Party* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 86; Yoneda, *Ganbatte,* 111–65; James Oda, *Heroic Struggles of Japanese Americans: Partisan Fighters From America's Concentration Camps* (North Hollywood, Calif.: KNI, 1980).

11   Weglyn, *Years of Infamy,* 121–33; Yoneda, *Ganbatte,* 111–65; Oda, *Heroic Struggles of Japanese Americans*; Hosokawa, *JACL*; Lim, "The Lim Report."

12   Morris and Braine theorize that physical segregation facilitates the develop-

ment of an oppositional political consciousness. This is particularly the case when group members control their segregated spaces, as existed to a fair degree under Japanese American community control of the internal functioning of the concentration camps. See Aldon Morris and Naomi Braine, "Social Movements and Oppositional Consciousness," in *Oppositional Consciousness: The Subjective Roots of Social Protest,* ed. Jane Mansbridge and Aldon Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 20–37.

13 Kibei refers to Japanese born in the United States and educated in Japan, who then return to the United States often as young adults. Those educated in Japan in the 1920s and early 1930s tended to have more progressive views, whereas those educated in militaristic Japan in the mid to late 1930s tended to have pro-Japanese militaristic views.

14 Jimmie Omura, "Freedom of the Press," *Rocky Shimpo,* March 29, 1944, in *Frontiers of Asian American Studies,* edited by Gail Nomura, Russell Endo, Steven Sumida, and Russell Leong (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1989), 79; Weglyn, *Years of Infamy,* 121–33. On draft resistance, see Fair Play Committee, Bulletin no. 3, 1944; Frank Emi, letters to the editor, *Heart Mountain Sentinel,* March 25, 1944; Frank Emi, "Draft Resistance at the Heart Mountain Concentration Camp and the Fair Play Committee," in Nomura et al., *Frontiers of Asian American Studies,* 41–50; William Hohri, ed., *Resistance: Challenging America's Wartime Internment of Japanese-Americans* (Lomita, Calif.: Epistolarian, 2001); and Mike Mackey, *A Matter of Conscience: Essays on the World War II Heart Mountain Draft Resistance Movement* (Power, Wyo.: Western History Publications, 2002).

15 On JACL's postwar activities, see issues of *Pacific Citizen,* the Japanese American Citizens League's organ, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles. On differences among civil rights organizations, see Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–63* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 467–68; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 137, 186–89; James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Seattle, Wash.: Open Hand Publishing, 1985), 147–48; Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 77–102; and Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 116–18, 142–47, 281–86.

16 Diane C. Fujino, "Race, Place, and Political Development: Japanese American Radicalism in the 'Pre-Movement' 1960s," *Social Justice,* forthcoming; Davis McEntire, *Residence and Race* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960), 46–48, 260; Earl Hanson and Paul Beckett, *Los Angeles: Its People and Its Homes* (Los Angeles: Haynes Foundation, 1944), 36–41. On Marxist influences on the Asian American Movement, see Fred Ho, ed., *Legacy to Liberation: Politics and Culture of Revolutionary Asian Pacific America* (San Francisco: AK

Press, 2000); Miriam Ching Louie, " 'Yellow, Brown & Red': Towards an Appraisal of the Marxist Influences on the Asian American Movement," 1991, unpublished manuscript; Roy Nakano, "Marxist-Leninist Organizing in the Asian American Community of Los Angeles, 1969–79," unpublished manuscript, 1984 (available at the UCLA Asian American Studies Reading Room); Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles, 1968–78* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

17 My interviews with Kochiyama culminated in the biography *Heartbeat of Struggle: The Revolutionary Practice of Yuri Kochiyama* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005). My interviews with Aoki will produce a book-length oral history narrative on his life. These interviews, as well as those with other Japanese American radicals, are part of a long-term project on twentieth-century Japanese American radicalism.

18 "[I'm told] I had an unhappy childhood," lamented Richard Aoki, who was born in 1938 in Northern California. "And to a certain extent, that may be correct because [the time before World War II] was probably the happiest period of my childhood and yet I don't remember it" (Richard Aoki, interview by Diane Fujino, May 18–21, 2003).

19 Richard Aoki, interview by Dolly Veale, in Ho, *Legacy to Liberation,* 320; Richard Aoki, interview by Diane Fujino, May 18–21, 2003.

20 Aoki, *Legacy to Liberation,* 320.

21 Richard Aoki, interview by Diane Fujino, June 16–20, 2003.

22 Ibid.; Richard Aoki's military yearbook; Judie Hart, " 'Revolutionary Socialist' Leads New Club," *Tower* (Oakland City College), February 26, 1964.

23 [Richard Aoki], "Nationalism, S.F. Black Power Conference, and the SWP," October 8, 1966; Richard Aoki, interviews by Diane Fujino, July 16–18, 2003, and July 30-August 1, 2003.

24 When discussing how the BPP Ten-Point Platform was created, Seale and Newton independently explain that Newton dictated and Seale recorded the points; see *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1991 [1968]), 59–69; Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 129. Newton also describes his intellectual hunger and passion for study in *Revolutionary Suicide,* 72–78.

25 Aoki, *Legacy to Liberation,* 325.

26 In his autobiography, Huey Newton relays that Seale had collected all of Malcolm's speeches from, among other publications, SWP's newspaper, *The Militant.* According to Seale, his *Militant* subscription came from Aoki. See Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide,* 125; Bobby Seale, interview by Diane Fujino, September 2, 2003; Richard Aoki, interview by Diane Fujino, July 30-August 1, 2003.

27 Two corrections need to be made regarding Richard Aoki's important interview in *Legacy to Liberation.* First, Aoki implies that Newton, Seale, and he wrote the Black Panther Party's Ten-Point Platform (326–27). While Newton

and Seale may well have gained political insights from Aoki, Aoki did not write the platform. A more accurate interpretation is contained in Seale, *Seize the Time*, 59–62, and Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 129, explaining that Newton dictated and Seale recorded the ten points. Aoki remembers helping to re-produce and distribute the platform. I clarified this issue in separate interviews with Richard Aoki, July 30-August 1, 2003, and with Bobby Seale, September 2, 2003. Second, after relaying that he was the "first minister of education" for the Black Panther Party, Aoki allegedly adds, "and there ain't been one since that time" (331). Certainly the latter statement is false, and it was not in the original interview transcript, which Aoki showed to me (Richard Aoki, inter-views by Diane Fujino, July 16–18, and July 30-August 1, 2003). Aoki identifies himself as "Minister of Education" in a speech on January 29, 1968.

28   Harvey Dong, *The Origins and Trajectory of Asian American Political Activism in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1968–78* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Califor-nia, Berkeley, 2002), 28–79; Floyd Huen, "The Advent and Origins of the Asian American Movement in the San Francisco Bay Area: A Personal Per-spective," in Steve Louie and Glenn Omatsu, eds., *Asian Americans: The Move-ment and the Moment* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center, 2001), 276–83; Karen Umemoto, " 'On Strike!' San Francisco State College Strike, 1968–69: The Role of Asian American Students," *Amerasia Journal* 15 (1989): 3–41; Richard Aoki, interview by Diane Fujino, August 21–26, 2003; Harvey Dong, interviews by Diane Fujino, May 11 and 20, 2003; Bryant Fong, interview by Diane Fujino, January 19, 2004; Alan Fong, interview by Diane Fujino, January 20, 2004. In the context of the brutal FBI and police repres-sion against the BPP during those years, resulting in the killings of twenty-eight Panthers in 1969 alone, Aoki often remarks: "Dolly [Veale] says my going into the Asian American Movement saved my life."

29   "UC Berkeley to Continue Asian Studies Experiment," *Hokubei Mainichi*, April 3, 1969; Ray Okamura, "Asian Studies at U.C. Attract 375 Berkeley Students," *Hokubei Mainichi*, April 23, 1969; syllabus, Asian Studies 100x, winter 1969; "Third World Students Want *MS* to Tell Their Story First," *Muhammad Speaks*, February 7, 1969; Dong, *Asian American Political Activism*, 28–79; Richard Aoki, "The Asian American Political Alliance: A Study of Organizational Death," graduate student paper, University of California, Berkeley, June 9, 1970; Miriam Ching Louie, "Yellow, Brown & Red"; Richard Aoki, interviews by Diane Fujino, August 21–26, September 8–10, and December 21–23, 2003; Harvey Dong, interviews by Diane Fujino, May 11 and 20, 2003; Bryant Fong, interview by Diane Fujino, January 19, 2003; Alan Fong, interview by Diane Fujino, January 20, 2003.

30   Richard Aoki, "The Asian American Studies Division: A Study in Administra-tive Behavior," graduate student paper, University of California, Berkeley, June 10, 1970; various Asian American studies curriculum documents, University of California, Berkeley; Richard Aoki, interviews by Diane Fujino, August 21–

26, September 8–10, and December 21–23, 2003; Alan Fong, interview by Diane Fujino, January 20, 2003.

31 Richard Aoki, interviews by Diane Fujino, December 21–23, 2003, January 18–19, 2004, March 14–16, 2004; Richard Aoki, resume.

32 Richard Aoki, interview by Diane Fujino, July 30–August 1, 2003.

33 Unless otherwise noted, the information presented here on Kochiyama is based on the following sources: extensive interviews by Diane Fujino, 1995–1998, along with participant observations, informal interactions, and conversations, 1995-present; Fujino, *Heartbeat of Struggle*; Diane C. Fujino, "To Serve the Movement: The Political Practice of Yuri Kochiyama," in Ho, *Legacy to Liberation,* 257–66; Diane C. Fujino, "Revolution's from the Heart: The Making of an Asian American Women Activist, Yuri Kochiyama," in *Dragon Ladies: Asian American Feminists Breathe Fire*, edited by Sonia Shah (Boston: South End Press, 1997), 169–81; Arthur Tobier, ed., *Fishmerchant's Daughter: Yuri Kochiyama, An Oral History*, vol. 1 (New York: Community Documentation Workshop, 1981); Kochiyama, *Christmas Cheer*, 1951–1968; Kochiyama, *North Star*, 1965–1969.

34 On Kochiyama's popularity, see Yuriko (Endo) Yoshihara, letter to author, February 2000; Norma (Benedetti) Brutti, interview by Diane Fujino, January 16, 2000; and Sumi (Seo) Seki, interview by Diane Fujino, February 13, 2000. Japanese Americans, even those well accepted into white friendship circles, rarely crossed the interracial dating barrier; see Mei Nakano, *Japanese American Women: Three Generations, 1890–1990* (Berkeley: Mina Press, 1990), 111; Takahashi, *Nisei Sansei*, 42–44; Paul Spickard, *Mixed Blood: Intermarriage and Ethnic Identity in Twentieth-Century America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 70, 279–80, 374–75; Yuri Kochiyama, interview by Diane Fujino, June 29–July 6, 1997; Peter Nakahara, interview by Diane Fujino, January 12, 2000; Monica Miya (Miwako Oana), interview by Diane Fujino, January 17, 2000; and Sumi (Seo) Seki, interview by Diane Fujino, February 13, 2000.

35 For a more extensive coverage of the influence of the concentration camps on Kochiyama's political development, see Fujino, *Heartbeat of Struggle*; and Fujino, "Race, Place, and Political Development."

36 "Mrs. Mary Kochiyama & family," letter to Malcolm X, October 17, 1963; Yuri Kochiyama, interview by Diane Fujino, December 8–11, 1995.

37 Malcolm X, eleven postcards to "Mr. & Mrs. Wm Kochiyama & Family," 1964, collection of Yuri Kochiyama; Yuri Kochiyama, interview by Diane Fujino, December 8–11, 1995; Mae Mallory, interview by Diane Fujino, February 23, 2000.

38 Yuri Kochiyama, handwritten class notes from the OAAU Liberation School, December 5, 1964, to April 3, 1965, copy in author's collection; James Campbell, interview by Diane Fujino, January 25, 2000; *Backlash*, September 28, 1964; Yuri Kochiyama, interview by Diane Fujino, December 8–11, 1995. For a detailed analysis of the transformation of Kochiyama's ideology, see Diane

Fujino, *Heartbeat of Struggle*. On the OAAU, see William Sales, *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of Afro-American Unity* (Boston: South End Press, 1994).

39 George Breitman, *The Last Year of Malcolm X* (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), 32, 40–51, 58–59; Sales, *The Organization of Afro-American Unity*, 83–84; Malcolm X, *The Autobiography*, 340. Malcolm's associate Herman Ferguson asserts that although Malcolm no longer made sweeping anti-white indictments, he remained suspicious of the motives of the majority of white Americans raised in a deeply racist society. If American whites could adopt Islam, Malcolm believed they might learn to practice the anti-racist humanity it espoused. But, Ferguson adds, "Malcolm doubted most White Americans would adopt Islam or shed their racism" (Herman Ferguson, letter to author, February 14, 1999).

40 Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: Quill, 1984), 355–64, 535–36; Tobier, *Fishmerchant's Daughter*, 7–8.

41 Malcolm X, "Message to the Grass Roots," in *Malcolm X Speaks* (New York: Grove Press, 1965, 7–8); Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 214. Though I contrast the general ideology of the civil rights movement, symbolized by King, and the black liberation movement, symbolized by Malcolm X, it is recognized that many civil rights activists—rank-and-file members as well as some leaders—protected themselves with guns, even as they advocated nonviolence. Other civil rights activists and organizations, notably the SNCC, moved from a position of philosophical nonviolence to self-defense.

42 Cruse, *Crisis of the Black Intellectual*, 359; Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 82–87, 114–15, 206–7, 244–60, 284–85; Williams, *Negroes with Guns*, 117, 120; Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 124.

43 Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 206–7; Robert Sherrill, "We Also Want Four Hundred Billion Dollars Back Pay," *Esquire*, January 1969, 73, 75; Breitman, *The Last Year of Malcolm X*, 26–39; Sales, *The Organization of Afro-American Unity*, 53–94, 99–109; James Campbell, interview by Diane Fujino, January 25, 2000; Muhammad Ahmad, interview by Diane Fujino, January 30, 2000; A. Peter Bailey, conversation with Diane Fujino, July 24, 2000.

44 Ollie A. Johnson, III, "Explaining the Demise of the Black Panther Party: The Role of Internal Factors," in *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered*, edited by Charles E. Jones (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998), 401; Linda Harrison, "On Cultural Nationalism," *The Black Panther*, February 2, 1969, reprinted in *The Black Panthers Speak*, edited by Philip S. Foner (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970), 151–54.

45 Sales, *The Organization of Afro-American Unity*, 106, 179; Max Stanford, *Revolutionary Action Movement: A Case Study of an Urban Revolutionary Movement in Western Capitalist Society* (M.A. thesis, Atlanta University, 1986), 2, 74–109, 125–26; Muhammad Ahmad (Max Stanford), interview by Diane Fujino,

January 30, 2000; Kochiyama, interview by Diane Fujino, November 3–10, 1997; Kochiyama, "The Power of Positive Thinking," *North Star*, December, 1966, 1, 8.

46 On RNA's split and the logic of nation building, see Imari Obadele, *Foundations of the Black Nation* (Detroit: House of Songhay, 1975); and Imari Obadele, *War in America: The Malcolm X Doctrine* (Chicago: Ujamaa Distributors, 1977). On the logic of struggling in northern cities, see James Boggs, *Racism and the Class Struggle* (New York: Modern Reader, 1970), 39–50; and Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change: An Autobiography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 36–137.

47 Director, FBI, "Counterintelligence Program, Black Nationalist-Hate Groups, Internal Security," August 25, 1967, reprinted in Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *The COINTELPRO Papers* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 92–93; Yuri Kochiyama, "A Generation of Struggle," speech, November 21, 1986, New York City, November 21, 1986; Mutulu Shakur, interview by Diane Fujino, October 19, 1998; Bolanile Akinwole, interview by Diane Fujino, February 21, 2000; Ahmed Obafemi, interview by Diane Fujino, February 7, 2000.

48 Richie Perez, speaking in Rea Tajiri and Patricia Saunders, *Yuri Kochiyama*, video; Yuri Kochiyama, "Eyewitness in Peru: A Learning Experience of People in Struggle," speech, St. Mary's Episcopal Church, New York, April 23, 1993; Yuri Kochiyama, letter to "PP/POWs in the U.S.," May 2, 1993; Yuri Kochiyama, "The IEC's Tour of Philippines and Japan: Why?" speech, New York University Law School, April 13, 1994; International Emergency Committee to Defend the Life of Dr. Abimael Guzman (IEC), "The International Campaign to Defend the Life of Dr. Abimael Guzman," booklet, September, 1993; IEC, "4th IEC Delegation to Peru Completes Successful Mission" and "Findings of the 4th Delegation," *Emergency Bulletin* no. 28, April 9, 1993; Dylcia Pagan, interview by Diane Fujino, October 6, 1998.

49 On theorizing internal colonialism, see Harold Cruse, *Rebellion or Revolution* (New York: William Morrow, 1968), 74–76, 232; Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 3–32; Robert Blauner, *Racial Oppression in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 51–110.

50 In *Seize the Time*, Bobby Seale identifies Aoki by name, misspelled as "Richard Iokey," with reference to giving the Party their first guns and with selling Mao's *Red Book*; Seale, *Seize the Time* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1991 [1968]), 72–73, 79, 81; see also www.bobbyseale.com.

51 Mutulu Shakur, interview by Diane Fujino, October 19, 1998; Nyisha Shakur, interview by Diane Fujino, October 15, 1998; Yuri Kochiyama, letter to Herman and Iyaluua Ferguson, November 8, 1993; Minutes, various MXCC meetings.

52 While this essay focuses on the influences of the black liberation movement on Japanese American radicalism, there are examples throughout of how Asian and Asian American influences also shaped black social movements. For more

on Black-Asian political connections, see Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001); Gary Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 31–63; Marc Gallicchio, *The African American Encounter with Japan and China: Black Internationalism in Asia, 1895–1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and the essays in this volume.

Kalamu ya Salaam

Why Do We Lie about Telling the Truth?

"I put his head sort of on my lap. I just hoped and prayed he was still alive. It was hard to tell. He was having difficulty breathing. And other people came and they tore open the shirt. I could see that he was hit so many times."

This is a description of the death of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, aka Malcolm X. Who said these words?

A Betty Shabazz, Malcom's wife who was present with their children when Malcolm was assassinated.

B Gene Roberts, an undercover police agent who had infiltrated Malcolm's organization and was attempting to save Malcolm with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

C Yuri Kochiyama, a Japanese American member of Malcom's organization who was present in the Audubon Ballroom on February 21, 1965.

If you have seen Spike Lee's movie *Malcolm X* you will be forgiven in believing the answer is A. Betty Shabazz. If you have seen the death scene photo of a man leaning over