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Dans un environnement marqué par la croissance, sans cesse, des productions scientifiques, la diffusion et la promotion des acquis de la recherche deviennent un impératif pour les acteurs du monde scientifique. Perçues comme un patrimoine, un héritage à léguer aux générations futures, les productions scientifiques doivent briser les barrières et les frontières afin d'être facilement accessibles à tous.

Ainsi, s'inscrivant dans la dynamique du temps et de l'espace, la revue « **AKIRI** » se présente comme un outil de promotion et de diffusion des résultats des recherches des enseignants-chercheurs et chercheurs des universités et de centres de recherches de Côte d'Ivoire et d'ailleurs. Ce faisant, elle permettra aux enseignants-chercheurs et chercheurs de s'ouvrir davantage sur le monde extérieur à travers la diffusion de leurs productions intellectuelles et scientifiques.

AKIRI est une revue à parution trimestrielle de l'Unité de Formation et de Recherches (UFR) : Communication, Milieu et Société (CMS) de l'Université Alassane Ouattara. Elle publie les articles dans le domaine des Sciences humaines et sociales, Lettres, Langues et Civilisations. Sans toutefois être fermée, cette revue privilégie les contributions originales et pertinentes. Les textes doivent tenir compte de l'évolution des disciplines couvertes et respecter la ligne éditoriale de la revue. Ils doivent en outre être originaux et n'avoir pas fait l'objet d'une acceptation pour publication dans une autre revue à comité de lecture.

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La revue **AKIRI** n'accepte que des articles inédits et originaux dans diverses langues notamment en allemand, en anglais, en espagnol et en Français. Le manuscrit est remis à deux instructeurs, choisis en fonction de leurs compétences dans la discipline. Le secrétariat de la rédaction communique aux auteurs les observations formulées par le comité de lecture ainsi qu'une copie du rapport, si cela est nécessaire. Dans le cas où la publication de l'article est acceptée avec révisions, l'auteur dispose alors d'un délai raisonnable pour remettre la version définitive de son texte au secrétariat de la revue

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Black Renaissance and Baraka's Legacy

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Abstract

The recent sociopolitical upheavals, in USA and West-Africa, have brought into the agenda the controversial topic of the black world renaissance and the role of the black intellectuals. Though, prominent critical figures like Amiri Baraka have cleared their minds, they are still misunderstood, because of their complexity, ambivalence and spreading political visions. This study, in light of Dr. Joy DeGruy's post-slavery traumatic theory, explores Baraka's legacy. It highlights how his perception of black intellectual, together with his committed political activism have served in his time as a strategic weapon in the revolutionary process. This study stresses on Baraka's legacy pertinence as a dynamic motion toward a radical revolution.

Keywords: Black Renaissance, Black Consciousness, Revolution, Freedom, Legacy

La Renaissance noire et l'héritage de Baraka

Résumé

Les récents mouvements socio-politiques, aux États-Unis et en Afrique de l'ouest, ont posé de nouveau la question de la renaissance du monde noir et le rôle des intellectuels. Bien que des critiques célèbres comme Amiri Baraka, ont exprimé leurs positions, elles restent incomprises, à cause de leur complexité, ambivalence et visions politiques grandissantes. Cette étude, à la lumière de la théorie de traumatisme de post-esclavage du Dr. Joy DeGruy, explore l'héritage de Baraka. Elle met en lumière la manière dont sa vision de l'intellectuel noir, et sa détermination politique ont servi à son temps comme un outil stratégique dans le processus révolutionnaire. Cette étude souligne la pertinence de l'héritage de Baraka comme un mouvement dynamique vers une révolution radicale.

Mots-clés : renaissance noire, conscience noire, révolution, liberté, héritage

Introduction

The recent socio-political upheavals in several western African countries resulted in the birth of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) under the Charter of *Liptako-Gourma* in 2023, to dissolve the French colonial domination. Additionally, the gigantic Black Lives Matter movement, after the death of George Floyd gained another momentum in the fight against racism and social injustices. As a result, the topic of the Black World renaissance and the role of black intellectuals like Amiri Baraka/ LeRoi Jones resurfaced obstinately. He is commonly

known as an outstanding restless fighter for black liberation since the eve of the second half of the twentieth century, whose complexity, ambivalence, nonconformity, radical political activism, and committed cultural nationalism transpire through his life and works. B. Sørensen (2016: 77) emphasizes: “He was, to the last, an unincorporated, angry voice on the poetical and political scene in the U.S. From his earliest days as a poet under the name of Leroi Jones, (...) always courted controversy by occupying dissident positions vis-à-vis the establishment as well as other liberal-humanist activists of the day”. Sørensen believes Baraka’s radical dissenting posture burgeoned from his initiatory trip to Cuba, under the initiative of the Cuban government. There, he has been taught the “idea of a revolution” (A. Baraka, 1964: 61) that marked a turning point in his career. His new individualistic understanding and engagement in an avant-gardist and a sovereigntist perspective of black liberation and black intellectual responsibility has separated him from his peers who instead have different views.

Furthermore, the emergence of new waves of intellectuals including self-seeking intellectuals who have only superficial ideas of the concept of “a revolution” has profoundly weakened the fight. They could not share a common ground and put together their energies for achieving the same goal. M. Kilson (1967: 06) documented the dynamic black elite landscape that: “The ranks of the Negro intelligentsia have been extended, almost willy nilly, to include a new set of persons, men and women who hitherto would hardly have been called “intellectuals.” They may be described (...) as “paraintellectuals”. In this light, H. Cruse compares this crisis to a house divided within itself into several social classes, “while the Negro intellectual is not fully integrated into the intellectual class stratum, he is, in the main, socially detached from his own Negro ethnic world.” (1967: 9). Black renaissance becomes a mass polycentric battle as the rate of black graduate students from different social back grounds (such as Black Muslim Party, Black Panther Party, professionally educated black politicians, black lower-class intellectuals, to name but a few) increases constantly. In this myriad of thoughts, it is quite easy to misunderstand Baraka’s position or ignore it thoroughly. J. G. Watts (2001: xii) explains that: “Baraka’s example is instructive because so many of the dilemmas confronting his generation of black intellectuals can be understood and charted by using as the focal points his life and the accompanying idea of his life.” Baraka’s life and ideas exemplify not only the perplexity of black intellectuals, but also epitomize his iconoclastic notion of “a revolution”. He defines it as a radical estrangement from the white supremacy and cultural mainstream to be deeply rooted into black cultural values. His revolutionary stance includes artistic, cultural,

political and economic separations. A revolution is a process toward sovereignty and self-reconstruction. It rejects any politics of integration and assimilative negotiation into white mainstream. It instead champions nationalist and pan-Africanist ideologies. However, several studies of Baraka's works, in a limited American setting, have only focused either on his tumultuous past life, or on his creative works separately, though his legacy overflies American borders. In order to shed lights on his thoughts, one has to go through a labyrinthic path of thoughts, ideologies and philosophies that shaped his past life and literary works, because his works and active living are intrinsically interconnected.

The objective of this study is to explore Baraka's legacy. It unveils his peculiar ideas of a revolution as crafted in his creative works, and transpired through his active living, to highlight their impacts on the process of the black world renaissance in general. The data collection method includes his fiction, nonfiction, interviews, speeches and critical studies to explore the interconnection between his political actions and imaginary. In light of post-slavery theory, this study investigates the different reactions to slavery traumas through Baraka's works. It claims that racism is a continuum of slavery which is a social praxis of owning and subduing a person to forced labors, depriving him of his unalienable rights. The two situations (slavery and racism) bring into play a "human/subhuman" conflicting relationship that echoes Frantz Fanon's colonial master-colonial slave (1963). In this antagonistic conflict the White (master) is considered the "human" and the Black (slave), the "subhuman", and featured by the overrating of the former's human being status, and the latter's dehumanization through physical, psychological, spiritual and soulful everlasting persecutions. J. DeGruy underlines: "The slave experience was one of continual, violent attacks on the slave's body, mind and spirit. Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome is a condition that exists when a population has experienced multigenerational trauma resulting from centuries of slavery and continues to experience oppression and institutionalized racism today." (2005: 29-162). By extending post-slavery traumas to racial atrocities, this theory explores not only the wounds, but also the healing process from Baraka's perspective based on self-consciousness and collective consciousness.

1. Self-Consciousness

Unlike W.E.B Dubois's double-consciousness, a complex discourse on black identity ambivalence (2005:7), Baraka advocates an inwardness process to perspicacious self-realization as a unique and an independent human being, endowed with unalienable rights. He distances himself from the belief that from double life, every American Negro must live as a

Negro and as an American, it must arise a painful self-consciousness, an almost morbid sense of personality, and a moral hesitancy which is fatal to self-confidence, and from such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals. (W.E.B Dubois, 2005: 195). His notion of black consciousness is not a double-minded narrative, but a journey to self-identification as a whole human being free from any dependency. Baraka's sense of a revolution stemmed from slavery traumatic stories of his ancestors. It predetermines the bodily separation from the oppressor. The nexus of the dialectical social relationship originated from degrading corporal manipulation in chattel slavery, the thralldom of the marginalized body, which goes on in different forms. Thus, its healing to renaissance requires a radical split from captivity. Through the lens of Post Traumatic Slave Theory, that is "meant to explain how and why we move the way we do in the world." (J. Degruy, 2005: 81), Baraka's attitude can be understood as a result of slavery traumas, the shackles, with which he struggles to freedom. Being conscious of physical and mental trammels is a revolutionary impetus. In *The System of Dante's Hell* (1963), an unusually fragmented novel, he assesses black cultural identity ambiguity in America. Baraka considers Dante's hell a metaphoric description of America as a hellish system for Blacks. It strips them from their humanness defining them as imbalanced people, and inferior to Whites. The disintegrated form of this novel depicts a confused and an uprooted character who is desperately in quest for psychological equilibrium. He explains: "I consciously wrote as deeply into my psyche as I could go. I did not even want the words to "make sense". I had the theme in my mind. My early life, in Newark, at Howard, in the Air Force, (...) Going so deep into myself was like descending into Hell. I called it *The System of Dante's Hell*." (A. Baraka, 1984: 166). The hell alludes to his pre-Cuba Libre chaotic life featured by grievances, doubleness and the inability to own himself. Therefore, he stresses: "I'd found that when you imitate people's form you take on their content as well. So, I scrambled, and roamed, sometimes, blindly in my consciousness, to come up with something more essential, more rooted in my deepest experience." (1984: 166). Indeed, his concept of black consciousness is the quest for black uniqueness from the bottom of oneself. It rids from any divided lifestyle into two, connecting to one's genuineness, fixing the fences to keep things in and out. Thus, it is a process of self-reconstruction from inward. Moreover, the search for oneself enriches the character craft in *Dutchman* and *The Slave* (1964), where respectively the character of Clay and Slave highlight differently the importance of self-awareness. The mixed marriages, between Clay, the black intellectual, and Lula, the white lady, in *Dutchman*; on the one hand, and, on the other hand, Walker and Grace in *The Slave*, unveils the carelessness of some black

Americans who believe they are full American citizens equally to Whites. The protagonists' death rings as a bell to awake their consciousness and to draw their attention to the shackles that are still in their mind. Their domesticity uncovers white hypocrisy, because they do not regard Blacks as their fellow human beings, whereas Blacks are too naive to consider themselves so. Walker is aware of his inner chaos: "Whatever the core of our lives. Whatever the deceit. We live where we are, and seek nothing but ourselves." (Ibid. 43). In his autobiography, Baraka explains how the plays connect to his real life: "The play *The Slave*, which shows a black would-be revolutionary who splits from his white wife on the eve of a race war, was what Nellie called "Roi's nightmare." It was so close to our real lives, so full of that living image." (1984:196). Baraka hints to his short relationship (about seven years) with his first wife, Nellie, the Jewish. His acknowledgement sheds light on the connection between his fiction and real life stressing on how his life experiences from childhood have greatly influenced his literary works. The "Roi's nightmare" denotes the troubled and haunting mixed-marital experience with Nellie. That nightmarish connection has awakened his consciousness on the racial scope in America. He becomes aware of himself as a black man, a different individual, whose dream in that country is a failure: "I'm black, Nellie. I'm black...and you're ...White...I almost covered my face so I did not have to look at her face." (ibid.) At this juncture it appears that black history traumas shape Baraka's concept of self-consciousness that crosses Frantz Fanon's: "(...) black consciousness is immanent in its own eyes. I am not a potentiality of something, I am wholly what I am. I do not have to look for the universal No probability has any place inside me. My Negro consciousness does not hold itself out as a lack. It is. It is its own follower" (1986:135). Self-consciousness becomes the ability to identify oneself as a distinct human being who possesses unalienable rights. H. Dereck explains: "One way of understanding how Fanon means 'lived experience' here is through the idea of a political consciousness, that is, an acute awareness both of how one is crucially a part of the world and its conditions and of how one can and should attempt to change that world on the basis of a carefully considered political project." (2007: 92). He espouses S. Biko's approach that: "One must immediately dispel the thought that Black Consciousness is merely a methodology or a means towards an end. What Black Consciousness seeks to do is to produce at the output end of the process, black people who do not regard themselves as appendages to white society." (2002: 51). This introspection process to self-awareness aims at decolonizing the mind of inferiority and depersonalization, to separate itself from any forms of oppression and to emerge in full sovereignty. Baraka's divorce with Nellie as a real-life situation echoes as a corrective re-narration of his play,

Dutchman, where Clay's mixed-marriage with Lula resulted in a tragic death. The divorce is instead a liberating undertaking to put an end to a so long subordination relationship. Therefore, Baraka's self-consciousness permeates his fiction as well as his real life. It is the ability of disconnecting oneself from any oppressive environment. Besides, in order to achieve high awareness Baraka stresses that people must be taught to trust true scientists, knowers, diggers, and oddballs (baseball eccentric rules) and that the holiness of life is the constant possibility of widening the consciousness. And they must be incited to strike back against any agency that attempts to prevent this widening. (1966: 211). Individual awareness marks the genesis of black renaissance which cannot be inclusively achieved without collective consciousness.

2. Black Collective Consciousness

Even though Baraka espouses the idea that self-consciousness constitutes the breeding ground for black collective consciousness, his thought departs from any utopian metanational perspectives differently promoted black intellectuals: (S. Biko (1972); F. Fanon (1963); E. Glissant (1997); and W.E.B Dubois (2005)) among others. In order to suggest critical approaches to this recurring question with which his precursors have been confronted, he advocates a pragmatic collective collaboration and unity of black people. He recommends a dynamic progress from individual, to national, to Pan-African awareness on the basis of the triptych, culture/politics/economy in light of black historical trauma discourse.

A nation, J. Stalin defines as "a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture" (1979: 211). A nation becomes a whole body of cultural, political and economic values shared among a given people. Being persuaded that the paramount objective for black liberation is black nation construction, Baraka considers the Black Belt South the borders of Afro-American geographical territory, historically constituted since slavery era in the United-States. It is a place of common ethnic patterns including history, culture, language, religion, and beliefs among black people.

However, it is worth noting, this land embodies a larger territory and ideology. It symbolically refers to a Pan-African nation including African continent and diaspora as a whole. In other words, that Black Belt South the borders stand for a liberal Pan-African perception of territory, culture, identity, economy and politics. Watts comments on Baraka's Pan-African inclination:

Pan-Africanism allows a “black person” to define himself or herself as a member of a larger “we” group...Whereas Baraka’s mature Pan-Africanism combined its cultural and political tendencies, his initial Pan-Africanist posture was liberal. As a black cultural nationalist, Baraka explicitly valorized the cultural motifs and practices of indigenous African cultures...He engaged in a crude romanticization of African tradition societies, believing that there was something radical about appearing to live like a traditional African... (2001: 378).

Baraka’s notion of black nation transcends the metaphorical Black Belt South territory. It encompasses the Black World in general. It is not only a mere limited geographical space, but mainly an ideology black collective historical, political and cultural memories, an inexhaustible source of power. Therefore, by radically delineating black collective territory, he has put an end to the complex metanational ideology and hybrid identity theory preached by integrationist and assimilationist intellectuals. It committed them for collective revolutionary using theater, music, poetry, painting as a pedagogical device for effective collective political, economic and cultural changes.

2.1. Black Culture

“As you will see, all manner of opinions, beliefs, half-truths and outright lies have been presented over the years to ‘prove’ blacks are inferior to whites. Many of these were presented in the name of science, and many of these were printed in textbooks, scientific journals and media of the era.” (J. DeGruy, 2005: 81). This excerpt shows the key role white cultures play in black intergenerational traumas. Thus, black cultural emancipation, according to Baraka, precedes politics. Early in his career he joined Greenwich Village, the center of nonconformist cultural and artistic lifestyle, where he has been acquainted with influential poets like A. Ginsberg, J. Micheline, H. Hart, L. Hughes, to name but a few. He explains: “I had come into poetry from a wide-open perspective—anti-academic because of my experience, my social history and predilections. Obviously as an African American I had a cultural history that should give me certain aesthetic proclivities.” (ibid. 156). His early initiation to poetry provided him with the prerequisite skills to connect himself to African cultural history and forged him with revolutionary mindsets that filter through his foundations for culture and art like: Black Arts Repertory Theater/School (BART/S) that faded away within a year, and later, the Spirit House Players, and Black Arts Movement (BAM) right after the assassination of Malcolm X. In addition to his stay in Greenwich village, he confesses in his autobiography, how he, as a middle-class native intellectual, has been influenced by A. Césaire’s *Return to My Native Land*, Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* and A. Cabral’s *Return to the Source* that “having dug, finally, how white he has become, now, classically, comes back to his

countryman charged up with the desire to be black, uphold black... (A. Baraka, 1984: 202). These influencing books from Africa and diaspora show how culture has enlightened him on how far he has been brainwashed by western thoughts, and how they constitute a turning point in his career. Hence, when he founded BART/S, he aims “to re-educate the nearly half a million Harlem Negroes to find a new pride in their color.” It was, a handbill read, “dedicated to the education and cultural awakening of the Black People in America.” (A. Baraka, 1973: 21). He is profoundly preoccupied with mass education based on African cultural aesthetics. Likewise, when BART/S collapsed within a year, he co-founded BAM to keep promoting national consciousness through black arts festivals. L. Neal explains: “The Black Arts Movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artist that alienates him from his community. This movement is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept. As such it envisions an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of black America.” (2015: 35). The objective is to culturally separate from western mainstream arts through mass education. E. Shockley (2015: 183) elaborates that: “BAM poets thus frequently repudiated standard modes of capitalization, spelling, punctuation and syntax in favor of typography and orthography meant to represent a written vernacular speech and other sonic forms of black culture.” Black aesthetic is primarily a nonconformist style. It gets rid of oppressive mainstream culture to create new cultural fashions grounded in black revolutionary thoughts. T. R. Hudson notes: “LeRoi Jones is particularly severe on Afro-American writers who do not write from an orientation of black culture.” (1973: 44). For him, BAM writers must mandatorily adopt an iconoclastic style so that their art “disengage itself from the weak; heinous elements of the culture that spawned it and use its very existence as evidence of a more profound America.” (A. Baraka, 1966: 115). He addresses black intellectuals as follow:

Black intellectuals drawn to a common spot out of the larger commonality of their national experience. A rise in black national consciousness among the people themselves is what set both periods in motion, and whenever there is a high level of black national consciousness, a militant affirmation of the African American national identity, the whole of the American society takes off...We brought drama out in the street as well. We set up our improvised stages with a little fanfare we quickly got a crowd...We brought street-corner poetry readings, moving the poets by truck from site to site. (1984: 204-208).

Black intellectuals are privileged actors. They constitute the spearhead of black cultural revolution. They are the principal stakeholders and keepers of African American culture, a catalyst pedagogical material to force mass consciousness through writings and art festivals. His landmark article, “The Revolutionary Theater” is known as one of his manifestos to BAM. M. Kaufman comments: “The rhetoric of this theatre is consciously intended to excite

an audience to act decisively and to transform their lives and the society that oppresses them. In one important sense the *raison d'être* of this theatre is to dramatize black point-of-view” (1987:196) of black people’s plight in America. *Four Black Revolutionary Plays* (1969) a collection of four plays preaches the same revolutionary spirit starting from moral debasement owing to white social order. In his journal article, “Baraka's *Experimental Death Unit #1*: Plan for (R)Evolution”, O. E. Brady believes that Baraka’s vision is his consciousness of moral decadence and his belief in the evolution of man toward a new moral establishment, by erasing whiteness as a moral order and establishing blackness as the foundation of the new world. (1975:59). The two white characters, Loco and Duff in this play, represent white cultural decadence. And the fact that the character of Woman, a black whore joined them for sexual festival depicts Baraka’s hatred of white world. Besides, it addresses black intellectuals who lost their moral and spiritual landmarks. Their decapitation symbolizes the end of that immoral world, giving room to black spirituality and emancipation. There is a close connection between the play and Baraka’s cultural center “Spirit House Movers” founded to trigger black consciousness spiritually. Moreover, this revolutionary narrative is more silent in his popular poetry, *Black Art*, another manifesto to BAM, where, as Watts put it, “Baraka hints at the death and destruction of all white people...In “Attention Attention”, Baraka intensifies his appeal for black engagement. But instead of poems that kill, baraka pleads for blacks who are willing to kill whites. Worse, he advocates genocide against whites.” (2001:229). Poetry is constantly use in several BAM festivals as a powerful medium to achieve black cultural consciousness. Furthermore, black music is another key path to collective cultural consciousness. It is the wellspring of black cultural, historical, identity, and economic values. It carries on black life experience and heritage. More importantly, it constitutes a weapon for black liberation through mass education. Baraka, in *Black Music* (2010: 183) elaborates on the importance of black music:

[...] the New Black Music is expression, and expression of reflection as well. What is presented is a consciously proposed learning experience...It is no wonder that many of the new Black musicians are or say they want to be “Spiritual Men” ... or else they are interested in the Wisdom Religion itself, the rise to spirit. It is expanding the consciousness of the given that they are interested in, not merely expressing what is already there, ... the self-consciousness; Art Musicians cultivate consciousness that wants more feeling; to rise...

Music is a conscious-raise-apparatus. Through emotion, the musicians as well as the audience revisit their life history, and their human condition. It allows them to be deeply self-conscious as a culturally distinct people in the United States. Black collective consciousness is primarily

cultural-based. It is meant to awake people's consciousness through radical and provocative discourses.

2.2. Black Politics

Collective political consciousness comes as the materialization of effective cultural emancipation. Culture precedes politics in a nation construction process. It is meant to build a mindset rooted in ideologies such as: solidarity, unity, self-determination and self-independence, the cornerstones of a strong nation. Baraka has adopted several political ideologies as a revolutionary weapon: Black Cultural Nationalism, Pan-Africanism, Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, and expresses his militancy in myriad of political organizations, conventions and conferences like: the Modern Black Convention Movement (MBCM), the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), the National Black Assembly (NBA), the Black Women's United Front (BWUF), the Newark Black Political Convention (NBPC), and the Congress of African People (CAP), whose main idea was "ultimately all valid concepts of Pan-African Nationalism will one day come together as a practical, achievable body of effective human accomplishment throughout the Black World. That is one day, we will have unity, or will cease to exist." (M. Simanga, 2015: 173). CAP calls for unity through concepts of self-determination, self-sufficiency, self-respect and self-Defense cherished by Black Power. It reads: "we recognize these four points as major priorities for Africans all over the world. By direct extension of this reasoning, we move to the position that finally all Black people are Africans, and that as Africans, we are bound together Racially, Historically, Culturally, Politically, and Emotionally". (ibid. 174). The call for black unity becomes a catchy slogan made popular through conferences. Among the radicals, Baraka expresses his position in his fiction. In *Boodrites* (1971), a ritual play, Baraka exposes his radical engagement for Pan-Africanism:

Loudspeaker: "Black Art must be Collective, Committed and Functional"
They move, couples in meeting, and embrace.
They talk, they move in slow blood ways, and point as they move, they
laugh, and hold each other. They might walk through the audience holding
each other close, in a way of close high love, holding each other close, and
walking. "We all need each other. We all need each other. If we are to
survive. We all need to love each other. How does that sound? It sounds (sic)
good. We all need to sound good; forever...
UMOJA KUJICHAGULIA UJIMA UJAMAA NJA Unity Self-
determination Collective Cooperative Purpose KUUMBA IMANI Creativity
Faith (28-29)

This extract highlights the use of Kiswahili, an African language widely spoken in East Africa, expresses the connection to African root and the open-mindedness to collective, unity,

solidarity, and self-love. *Four Black Revolutionary Plays* (1969) is another tangible illustration of Baraka's politics of separation. It portrays hatred of white supremacy, and promotes black unity. In the introduction to this collection, he lays emphasis on violent change that "unless you killing white people, killing the shit they've built, don't read this shit, you won't (sic) like it..." (vii). This politics transpires throughout, *A Black Mass*, the second play in the collection. It dramatizes Yakub's mythology of the Nation of Islam. A. Nelson comments that: "Baraka's play tapped into a deep vein of community memory and collective consciousness with regard to African American experiences" (2023: 148). In the same vein, *The Toilet* (1963) is an allegory about a fragile gang of violent black schoolboys ruled by Foots who has been sexually corrupted by Karolis, a homosexual. The collective castigation inflicted upon Foots symbolizes the collaborative endeavor to build an uncorrupted nation. Foots and Karolis, represent the brainwashed intellectuals by white mainstream culture, whereas the rest of the group symbolizes unity, self-determination and self-respect. They are loyal and faithful to their cultural values obviously distinct from white immorality. Through these characters, Baraka reveals his black nation project that must demarcate from any western philosophy. The spontaneous collective reaction of the schoolboys exemplifies a share of collective consciousness and the political willpower to build a virtuous community. It is worth noting that Baraka's black nationality dream is a heritage from his predecessors (F. Douglas, N. Turner, M. Garvey, W.E.B Dubois), since the dawn of the fight for black liberation during slavery era. K. Woodard highlights: "The emergence of black politics in America was accompanied by "group trauma", the kind of "collective suffering" that stimulated the development of a collective nationality consciousness...Consequently, emergent groups advocate violent and /or radical solutions to their problems.'" (1999: 7-8). The extreme violence in Baraka's revolutionary plays can be understood in light of J. DeGruy's Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome theory:

As a result of centuries of slavery and oppression, most white Americans in their thoughts as well as actions believe themselves superior to blacks. Of greater import, too many African Americans unconsciously share this belief. This is not surprising, for centuries of repetition and justification have gone into establishing such understanding. It is from the impacts of past assaults that we must heal, and it is from the threats of continuing assaults that we must learn to defend ourselves, our families and our communities. (2005: 155)

Baraka ranks among the most radical nationalists who strongly believe in the birth of a black nation as *a sine qua non* condition to their liberation. His commitment throughout his career is to awake the consciousness of the masses of black people on their miserableness but also their

potentiality. Violence is his privileged strategic weapon to separate from western wickedness and to build a pure and virtuous black nation. Because black people have been assaulted many centuries in slavery and racism, their response to violence must also be equally violent. Thus, the Black Belt South is a mere representation of Baraka's most heartfelt Pan-African dream to build a black nation rooted in black culture, black politics and black economy.

2.3. Black Economics

Black renaissance, Baraka believes, cannot be fully achieved without black economic consciousness. Over the past decades, celebrated socio-economists such as: T. Sowell, W. Williams among many others, have provided an extensive documentation on controversial theories. However, at the eve of the struggle for black liberation, prominent black intellectuals and theoreticians cleared their strategies. In his manifesto: "The Atlanta Compromise", B. T. Washington, came up with a pragmatic idea of manual work and entrepreneurship that "No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem... I would repeat what I say to my own race, "cast down your bucket where you are." (1967: 135). His short-term project on vocational skills acquisition aimed at responding to the urgent needs of black people, starving in a wretched economic condition during the reconstruction era. Besides, W.E.B. Dubois, though he did not frown at his predecessor's theory, prioritizes intellectualism as idealized in "The Tenth Talented". His idea is carried on by National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) he has founded to support black economy in various initiative ways to promoting inclusive economy. Baraka outlines his strategies based on three cornerstones: fighting capitalism, claiming reparations, and building collective economy to heal over slavery traumas. Firstly, capitalism is targeted as the principal entanglement for black economic advancement. When in the beginning of 1970s, Baraka resolved to adhere to a Marxist-Leninist philosophy, his project was to fight capitalism, the enemy of the working people everywhere, and its present monopoly stage, called imperialism. It is a menace to the majority of peoples on the planet. (1979: 212). Indeed, capitalism and imperialism are two ideologies intrinsically connected, as defined by Vladimir Lenin that: "Imperialism emerged as the development and direct continuation of the fundamental characteristics of capitalism in general." (1963: 66). Because of its several characteristics namely private property rights, or ownership rights, capital monopoly, competition, surplus value system, workers over exploitation, and capital law, eradicating capitalist system and its ramifications in the United States is a stillborn project. Thus, Baraka's intention is not to venture in any utopian dream, but to stand against bohemianism

among Blacks. He stands against black intellectuals and black middleclass bourgeoisie who enjoying flirting with western culture in order to awake their consciousness on the drawbacks of this system. For, they are “Middle-class people who think they can somehow preserve standards in the holocaust of monopoly capitalism.” (1984: 141). The growth of black bohemians constitutes, not only an easy prey for capitalism, but also, a menace for black unity and development. He warned that: “The middle-class Negroes and white liberals, who have access to courtrooms and picket lines, have already sold their souls.” (1966:153). In his anti-capitalist play, *General Hag’s Skeezag* (1992), Charles Blank embodies the abuses in American society: greediness, love for money, drug addiction, armed-robbery and violence, over exploitation, corruption.

CHARLES: Yes, I want money, I won’t lie. I need money, it’s really a very practical endeavor. (He smiling a cracked little smile, holding his head to one side as if studying the two other men). We all, I suppose, need money, but I need a great deal of money. Yes, a great deal...and that’s not all I need, but money will start it...

BURGESS: Then why on earth try to rob a book and religious-object store? There’s no money in this. Even if I sold everything in this store at once, I’d still be broke. To rob me is not very practical.

CHARLES: I want money. I’m not addicted to heroin. I’m addicted to money. I want money. (186-199)

This extract above depicts the economic challenges in a capitalist world. Charles and Burgess are neighboring businessmen in need of money. Whereas Burgess, the white book dealer is over exploiting Joe, a black worker, Charles believes in armed robbery to boost his business. Obviously, both are from a lower social class, meanwhile they struggle dishonestly with the oppressive economic system to emerge. Baraka highlights the dehumanizing roles of the two black characters (Joe, the wretched worker, and Charles, the armed robber). He criticizes their degrading position as the drawbacks of capitalism on black community, maintained too long at the bottom of the social ladder. Moreover, the fact that the white man’s book and religious objects store cannot provide them with their needs means that black people cannot emerge in a western economic system. Their connection is unproductive; therefore, they must distance themselves and create their own economic system grounded in black collectivity. Baraka argues that:

We must also be very clear by now that skin color is no indicator of one’s political line, and that black liberation, the self-determination of the Afro-American nation and the liberation of the black oppressed nationality will only come through armed violent socialist revolution, a revolution made in concert with entire multinational working class. But in order for such a revolution to become a reality, the masses of working people must be led by a Marxist-Leninist Communist Party, (...) because without such a party we

are at the mercy of monopoly capitalism and its bloody bourgeois rulers.
(1979: 217)

Black economic consciousness consists of collective awareness of the chaotic capitalist system. It is a failure that black community must eschew and through self-determination create their own. Watts explains that at the sixth Pan-African Congress, held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, between June 19 and 27, 1974, the delegates intended to redefine the struggle of black people against class oppression and international capitalism. Traditional “race-based” Pan-Africanism appears to have exhausted its analytical utility ...The Marxist-influenced analyses were crudely economistic and could not therefore approach race as anything other than the ideological superstructure of a capitalist economy. In their mind race consciousness was false consciousness. (J. G. Watts: 397-398). Thus, economic consciousness triggers a shift from racial politics to economic development. It is a turning point in the struggle for black liberation.

Conclusion

The objective of this study has been to explore Baraka’s legacy through his ideas and actions. It has specifically examined the connection between his political life and his fiction in the process of black renaissance construction. In light of post-slavery traumatic theory that explores the aftermaths of racism, a continuum of slavery atrocities, it results that black people’s long enslavement constitutes the rationale behind black renaissance project, a liberating response to mentally and physically free black people. In order to achieve his project, Baraka stresses on the importance of self-consciousness, an impetus for collective consciousness built upon cultural, political, and economic pillars. Baraka’s legacy penetrates his actions too, because for him, an effective black renaissance is a long self-determined process toward total sovereignty by matching ideas with actions. Finally, his vision is a dynamic motion that still speaks to the black world which continues to yearn for cultural, economic and political freedom.

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