

# **MASS Educational Program**

*Theories, Concepts, and Key Vocabulary*



**Week 4: Kwame Nkrumah's Speech at University of Georgia, 1979**

**02/15/25**

*MASS screened Kwame Ture's speech at the University of Georgia, along with the Q&A he hosted after the talk. These notes are summarized from the following discussion.*

## **“Care For Yourself Before You Care For Others”**

- Ture criticized this ^ phrase as one that excuses inaction.
- Burnout is real and it's important to identify one's capacity to maintain one's own work and participate in organizing, but if capacity is always used as a boundary one can't be truly committed to the people
- Comrades need to push each other to do more
  - Include revolutionary action in everyday life, so it isn't something separate from 'one's own work', but incorporated

## **Serving Two Masters?**

- Ture claims that one cannot serve capitalism/chase money while serving the people, as the two are diametrically opposed
- Disagreement that this cannot apply to the tension between self-care and collective care, as caring for oneself and caring for a community are **not** diametrically opposed

## **Knowing History and Culture**

- The stripping of history is intentional, done to prevent people from seeing past liberation struggles and keep us from realizing we are capable of liberating ourselves.
- Reconnecting with one's revolutionary ancestry through education, visiting your homeland, and resistance to the education they erase
- The first thing that the oppressors try to take out is the history of how the people fought back.
- As young organizers, we can get overzealous and think we're discovering new things but if we look at our history, people have known.

### **Culture vs. Nationalism:**

Many immigrants and marginalized groups in the U.S. are nationalistic for their home country because there is not culture here for them to grab or understand. Flags and parades create a sense of being engaged in one's culture, while actual cultural engagement is learning about the history, who came before you, and how they organized.

It's either individualism or lack of responsibility or avoided accountability that makes it hard to engage with non 'conscious' people, in the sense of telling them "You have to do this". In a larger context, a lot of Americans do not have to organize within their immediate situations right now. Kwame specifically called out Black Americans for not being educated enough to help their culture back in Africa. It is the crucial responsibility of the most marginalized to educate yourself on who you are and what you're capable of.

### **Manifestations of Socialism:**

Socialism is often framed as a European ideology, making it feel hard to apply to, for example, a small island in the Caribbean. Understanding that it can take on cultural forms makes it more tangible.

## **Theory and Accessibility**

- During the Q&A portion, a student told Ture he grew up on a farm and didn't understand some of the words he was using. Ture told him to go and learn the words, as 'anything I can do you can do'
- The struggle between making education digestible for the general public, but also empowering people to learn the same things we did
- Theory can be daunting, locked behind paywalls, or in an inaccessible academic language
- We all have a personal responsibility to learn more in the fight for liberation
  - There is also importance in working in one's own racial/class group (white people organizing white people), doing a class analysis on yourself, who you work, organize, or live with

As organizers, a lot of us think that just because we're pro-socialism, we have the right answers and that we're doing the right work in the right way. But that's not true, and we need to constantly be doing self-criticisms. There's so much conditioning – from capitalism, school, corporations, the entire world around us – that we still have to unlearn. Even when we're organizing in leftist ways, we still end up carrying capitalist mindsets or colonizing ways of working without realizing it. This ties into how socialism manifests differently in different countries. American Socialism right now lacks cultural integrity – If you're not also fighting for black and Indigenous liberation (an issue in many leftist spaces) there's still a lot to do.

## **Organizing in India vs. U.S.**

*Our comrade has experience organizing in both India and the U.S. and she noticed massive differences in the way we plan and organize.*

- Different organizing structure: U.S. organizers, knowingly or not, frame education as a top-down approach, while in India they focus more on mediating the conversation instead of directing it
  - “Educate the masses” vs “moderate the masses”
- Any so-called “leaders” should be there to facilitate conversation, arrange speeches, and ensure collaboration
  - Just because someone has read theory doesn't mean they automatically understand the tactics and practicalities of organizing
- Recognizing that knowledge comes from everyone allows for organizing to move faster, more efficiently, and more successfully – instead of slowing down while we wait for things to fall into place

## **Capitalism's Impact on Organizing**

- Capitalism conditions people to prioritize results over critical thinking/processing/forming actual opinions
  - Teaching to the test
  - Quantity over quality (pushing out work)

- Essay structure is more important than essay content (sandwiching paragraphs)
- We are conditioned with these values and apply them to our work lives, organizing, and everything else.
  - We have to be conscious of not finding the quickest, fastest solutions, but maintaining our values and principles
  - Resist learned habits, value the process
- Getting American people to think is a very difficult task, we are not taught 'how to think'
- We are incredibly programmed into the logic of capitalism, conditioned to not think outside of their guardrails about how things relate to each other or moves –we *are not actually thinking*
- Capitalism as a political ideology and economic ideology is NEW, a culture can exist outside of it and has many times before.
  - The existence of something outside of capitalism can be empowering, which is why I encourage people to look into their cultures no matter where they are
    - Opens up your imagination to think of other realities
  - Puerto Rico existed outside of capitalism for the longest time, and they were a culture that thrived.
  - Ture explains Africans have existed without capitalism before, so getting back that sovereignty and the power of being African outside of these imperial systems is of the utmost importance.
- Capitalism teaches us that the human condition is inherently greedy and selfish, which automatically strikes down hopes of existing in a socialist society (without profit incentive)

## **Theory Isn't Radicalizing**

Over-intellectualization of theory is an issue because people do use big words and it's competition in academia. Theory is often behind a paywall if you want to access it, and even then it is still dense and difficult and it's hard to permeate.

My professor works in Kenya, proofreading theory in public spaces and doing community meetings. He believes theory should be read for the

public, with the public, in a public engagement. The majority of theory is historically mediated by the West, so he's trying to decenter the West in the reading of theory. He aims to make it regionally specific because there are universal truths in it, regardless of the fact that Marx/ Engels /others have an imperial center.

You have to learn your history, and that's a responsibility, at the same time what's happening in the present is also going to be future theory.

Theory can be the framework, and it should be the framework, especially when it comes to something like socialism, (which is just pointing out the hypocrisies of capitalism). When it comes to actually radicalizing people, I don't think theory does that, I think the present does that.

*“White folks will create more revolutionary blacks than I ever could,” - H. Rap Brown*

## **Social Media - *summarized conversation***

For its drawbacks, social media does allow for an unprecedented level of access to literary documents and information to anyone with an internet connection. Now anyone can read theory, watch a YouTube video, or listen to a podcast, there is a large amount of digestible information. Many people learned about the genocide in Palestine from the content that was coming directly from accounts of Palestinians, or the horrors happening in Congo and how our own government and consumerism are responsible for it, or the genocide in Sudan and how policies affect the real people in countries that our administration wants us to hate.

Television was the previous control apparatus, where everyone sat in front of it and watched the same program. A handful of producers/showrunners had control of the narrative, whereas today social media has completely diffused the media field. It has created the illusion of a democratic society and cultural production, when it's actually just everyone

surveilling and failing to relate to each other properly. We have been conditioned (and rewarded) to think of ourselves as individuals first, and then in community with each other second. Social media is one tool of capitalism that allows us to ‘feel’ as if we are truly free because of how much we are totally captured inside of it. We can be as revolutionary or radical as we want, but at the end of the day, we’re still posting it on Instagram. Without recognition and adjustment, we are limited by our environmental conditioning to follow media guidelines and feed content to the algorithm.

Social media is totalizing – everything is immediately consummated and done and static and there is no room for movement. (Many social media platforms favor argument and discourage intellect, for example, Twitter word counts and algorithms dissuade constructive conversation and fact-checkers are removed from most popular sites). People will shallowly identify with their national flag without knowing the first thing about their own culture or the struggle of other people from the same place. Social media is disguised as a tool for connection, while all it does is sow and encourage disconnection and individualism. It allows people to think less critically, ask fewer questions, and overall weakens their ability to think and draw their own conclusions about the world around them.

Social media also mimics learning – when you’re scrolling through social media you’re using a different part of your brain than you are when you’re reading. I feel like reading and learning is a different skill than scrolling, and I feel like people confuse the two a lot. Both the over-intellectualization of theory and the use of social media to prop up activism as something pure are the same problem – you’re not interacting with people, and you’re not actually educating yourself or educating anyone. You’re kind of just mimicking it. You’re doing it for the sake of appearance. That’s what social media is – an appearance, a facade. In context with watching the genocide in Gaza on social media, we’re just that – an observer. Social media doesn’t create community, it creates a bunch of observers looking at something. You may be interacting with people, but when we’re watching a livestreamed genocide, you’re still an observer of genocide. When you go into your real life, what are you actually doing to

physically help the victims of the genocide, or even learn about it or know more about it?

People have a tendency to think social media is reality when it actually is sort of a spectacle, a simulation of reality, It eats reality and then spits back up a mangled version of it. So yes it's immensely useful in understanding things going around the world, but you have to approach it with this notion that it's still it's heavily filtered and moderated. Many organizations (Samidoun, Within Our Lifetime) have had accounts deleted, censored, and restricted for posting pro-Palestinian content.

“It's not a representation of true reality; it's a funhouse mirror.”

Social media is a tool of capitalism and maybe one of the strongest tools of capitalism and social media would not exist without capitalism. If we look at the social media that we use every single day, everything is about increasing engagement, views, likes, and profit. And that's what capitalism is. It's saying everything else doesn't matter. You can't organize on social media. It's not made for true organization, it's a dick-measuring contest between Instagram activists, and purity content between the rest of us. We couldn't be having *\*this\** conversation over Instagram Live. At MASS, we can go out and give food to and interact with people, face to face, that we never met before. Especially because the older generation isn't on social media – we wouldn't be able to make this change if we were just on Instagram.

Social media gives people a false sense of being a part of something, being a part of reality. Humans are supposed to interact with each other physically and face to face. It's supposed to be difficult, it's not supposed to be an experience specifically catered to your likes and the things you input into the algorithm. It's supposed to be like, for example, that little short old lady walking around distro the whole time, doesn't speak to nobody – you're supposed to be able to work and break that frown into a smile, you know?



## Parallel Struggle

We are not in our millions and we're not Palestinians. The best form of solidarity you can have with the Palestinian people or any people is to locate your own struggle within American imperialism and organize against it. MASS is a great example of that, locating the struggle here in Kensington and addressing it locally with our own resources. I also wanted to mention student movements and the importance of being connected to the masses. For example, what happened in Bangladesh with the student movement over the summer shows how they weren't connected with the masses, like the garment workers and the tea workers. This disconnect made it easy for imperialists to co-opt the movement.

The term "student intifada" could be seen as disrespectful because the student movement, while having some members who have taken more escalatory actions, doesn't put in the same level of resistance as the actual Palestinian intifada. This ties into how theory doesn't tie to class, and the importance of local education. As revolutionaries or organizers, especially in the U.S., we need to reflect on what we're doing to mobilize ourselves and move forward in a physical, tangible way.

The question is: what are we doing as individuals, community members, or organizations to physically mobilize ourselves? There's a lot to be done, and we have to consider practical, underground work, which is not being prioritized right now. Some people might say the answer is boxing lessons or violence, but while I agree with some of that, Larry Holmes, the first secretary of the Workers World Party, told me that the fight against fascism is not defensive but offensive against capitalism. There's another speech he gave where he discusses how focusing solely on destruction, burning things, and breaking things misses the point of revolution. Real revolutionaries build and create, and the state will stop it by any means necessary, so we need to be prepared to defend our projects.

The underground and above-ground efforts need to work in parallel. The underground is more militant and disruptive to the systems already in place, while the above-ground should focus on building solutions. If you destroy a system, there has to be something in place to replace it. Without the above ground's work, the underground's efforts won't be successful,

and without the underground's disruption, the above-ground efforts will be fruitless. They must work together. Break these systems and rebuild them in a new, correct way.

*"To create the new world, we have to scatter the old world." Mao Tse-Tung*

## **Meeting Logistics**

The important thing is having regular, consistent gatherings, like how we meet daily as a group in MASS, which strengthens our community. For us, having four people living together is a big advantage. We can meet daily and brainstorm ideas all day, every day. That's how we're able to move forward quickly.

After this program today we have hella food in the kitchen. Y'all are welcome to post up and chill and smoke with us and we can chop it up in small groups. We also have some resources on the table behind this couch over here. There are a couple of books that were gifted from the Workers World, and we have their magazines. We also have our MASS Newsletter. Check it out, take whatever you want.

*At the risk of seeming ridiculous, let me say that the true revolutionary is guided by a great feeling of love. It is impossible to think of a genuine revolutionary lacking this quality. Perhaps it is one of the great dramas of the leader that he or she must combine a passionate spirit with a cold intelligence and make painful decisions without flinching. Our vanguard revolutionaries must idealize this love of the people, of the most sacred causes, and make it one and indivisible. They cannot descend, with small doses of daily affection, to the level where ordinary people put their love into practice. – **Che Guevara***