

# One Hundred Flowers: Criticism on New Afrikan Black Panther Party

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STRUGGLESSESSIONS



Criticism on New Afrikan Black Panther Party

Note: As discussed in our [One Hundred Flowers statement](#) we are accepting guest submissions, rebuttals, and criticisms for publishing that may not align with the official positions of the editors here at Struggle Sessions. We see this as part of a humble endeavor to acknowledge that wrong views from progressive people (whether that be those who have submitted pieces that have been published here in the past, or from guests who submit them) should be engaged with deeply and not simply suppressed. In this specific piece we are reposting, a frequent reader forwarded a criticism of sections in [“The Abolition Myth: Prison and People’s War”](#) related to political prisoner Rashid Johnson, a member of the New Afrikan Black Panther Party–Prison Chapter. Specifically it is on the question of his position of the “lumpen line.”

## **A Criticism of Struggle Sessions on the New Afrikan Black Panther Party**

Authored by a reader

The following critique will be aimed at this statement from the article “The Abolition Myth”:

“Rashid and his Party capitulate to revisionism in their merging of Huey P. Newton’s revisionist “revolutionary intercommunalism” with their interpretation of Maoism. They refer to this synthesis as “Pantherism.” Pantherism, like the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, makes the grave error of elevating the lumpenproletariat to the heights of the revolutionary subject, knocking off the proletariat from its rightful and historical position as the most revolutionary and last class. They, too, are self-denying Third-Worldists:

“Pantherism” is illuminated by Marxism–Leninism–Maoism and the theoretical and practical contributions of the original Black Panther Party and its allied formations. Central to Huey’s “Theory of Revolutionary Intercommunalism” is the understanding that the U.S. is no longer a nation but the headquarters of a globe-reaching, capitalist empire, Hell-bent on

consolidating its global hegemony, and because of this, no nations can exist anywhere. The world, as it now exists, consists of a network of interconnected communities, each of which is composed of sub-communities down to the level of neighborhoods.

Furthermore, this world is rapidly urbanizing and “ghettoizing” as the percentage of people the monopoly capitalist ruling class can profitably exploit as workers is rapidly shrinking and the fastest-growing section of the masses are the “lumpenized” urban poor, forced to survive by “any means necessary,” including hustling, dealing and stealing. Comrade Huey summed up that because of automation, the capitalist-imperialists would increasingly be unable to profitably exploit a growing percentage of the proletariat as wage workers, and this growing mass of “unemployables” would eventually become the majority of the population. He further theorized that the lumpen (broken) proletariat would provide the basis for a new revolutionary vanguard that would act as a catalyst upon the whole proletariat and masses of people to inspire them to rise up against and overturn the capitalist-imperialist system.”

(From <https://struggle-sessions.com/2018/07/26/the-abolition-myth-prisons-and-peoples-war/>)

This criticism of Rashid is based on tangential reading and of course it can only produce tangential criticism. The acolyte of “lumpen vanguardism” can not be attributed to Rashid, because he is very, very clear of the necessity of liquidating the lumpen as lumpen and [of the need to—editors correction] proletarianize it so as they can become a revolutionary subject. In fact it is made very clear in their line. Let me give direct quotes too:

“Many people when presented with the Marxist–Leninist–Maoist idea that only the proletariat can lead in making all–the–way revolutionary class struggle question why this is, and why some other class, (without changing its class perspective), cannot lead such a struggle. One reason is because the proletariat is the only class that has no real stake in preserving the class relations of the capitalist system, but has everything to gain in taking control over the social wealth it has itself created by its labor and the tools it uses to create it. Another reason is that the proletariat, (in contrast to the lumpen), has the conditioning in patient work, social unity and cooperation necessary to wage the protracted class struggle required to abolish all exploitation and oppression. Basically, it is our social practice that determines how we think and not how we think that determines our social practice.”

“The proletariat has a strong sense of family commitment and unity and a sense of respect for and commitment to the community. These values grow out of the routine of going to work each day in the social environment of the workplace to provide for the needs of one’s family, and not only maintaining employment but also engaging in domestic labor in the home, rearing children, and taking part in the social life of the community. This requires and instills stability, discipline and responsibility as well as cooperation with one’s peers.”

“The lumpen mentality mirrors – on a smaller scale and with less sophistication – that of the big gangsters (the monopoly capitalists), and amounts to a ruthless drive for immediate self–gratification, power, control and “respect,” (even though their lifestyle is anything but respectable), through deception, corruption, violence and intimidation of others. These tendencies are what lie behind certain lumpen aspiring to be perceived as “crazy” and unpredictably violent.”

“Translated into the revolutionary movement, the lumpen tendency has some thinking that militant swaggering, posturing, and “talking shit,” is acceptable behavior for revolutionaries, which is very wrong and demonstrates political immaturity and lack of a true proletarian outlook. Such posturing leads to actions of a reactionary, adventurist and provocateur nature, that invites enemy attack that the movement is unprepared to deal with and alienates the masses. Comrade Sundiata Acoli, (a member of the old BPP and BLA), observed that just such lumpen tendencies contributed to the downfall of the old BPP and the general Black Liberation Movement in Amerika”

“Also, because they are conditioned to seek immediate and short-term benefits in their daily practice, the lumpen generally lack the resolve to pursue and stick with tasks that require hard work and patience. We in the NABPP-PC feel that a major factor that led to the old BPP’s destruction was the failure to raise many of the Party’s members’ world view to that of the revolutionary proletariat and allowing the Party and its leadership to become saturated in lumpen ideology, values and practice.”

(from: <http://rashidmod.com/?p=286>)

In this, they connect with the same criticism of the BPP made by the blog. In fact, if the blog even bothered to read the article they quote until the end, they would see this criticism made of BPP’s line (Struggle Sessions, in bad faith or not, simply quoted a general outlook of Huey’s theories that Rashid put right in the beginning of article, while his criticisms of said theory come at the end).

“Huey saw the lumpen as displacing the proletariat as the new and final vanguard revolutionary class in the struggle against imperialism, because of its desperation and growing to outnumber the working proletariat, which is why he denounced Historical Materialism (HM). But, HM applies DM to the evolution of social productive systems from the most primitive to the most advanced, and places the proletariat as the class destined to overthrow imperialism and abolish all forms of exploitation, oppression and class divisions. Huey’s line of replacing the proletariat with the lumpen in this role was clearly in error, for various reasons”

(<http://rashidmod.com/?p=1282>)

More ahead, in the same article, they talk about “Raising the Lumpen Outlook to a Revolutionary Proletarian Outlook”. Look at the words of someone who is accused of Lumpen vanguardism:

“These elements disdain to apply the Mass Line, ignore the Democratic Centralism of the Party, fear Criticism and Self-Criticism and lean towards individualism and “commandism,” indulging in personal attacks and attempts at intimidation and coercion of other Party members and the masses through threats and force. Their unremolded lumpen ideology is a corrosive to building Party unity and maintaining discipline, and it makes them easy prey for recruitment by the enemy. The lumpen are capable of “the most heroic deeds and the most exalted sacrifices, or of the basest banditry and dirtiest corruption.”

If their unremolded lumpen ideology is corrosive, then what to do? They sought to solve this problem not only by “remolding” their culture, but, as they understand the material conditions that lead to a lumpen outlook, they

argue for changing the material conditions; unionizing the prisoner workers as a means to develop basic proletarian outlook. In the article “Promoting Proletarian Consciousness as Prisoner Rehabilitation” they argue:

“The lumpen are distinguished from unemployed workers because they do not look for work and avoid it—it is in this sense that they are “broken.” If given a choice, they prefer to steal, deal, hustle or pimp, living as parasites and preying on others—even killing their fellow humyns.”

Proletarianizing the lumpen is the highest and only legitimate form of “rehabilitation.” Prisoners have a right to be rehabilitated as opposed to the humyn rights violation of being merely warehoused (unless the “criminal justice” system admits its real design and intentions to be that of creating and unleashing predators to prey upon the general society), and this means freedom to sell their labor power and to collectively bargain over the terms of sale.”

(<http://rashidmod.com/?p=374>)

While I fully disagree with his line in liquidating the national question, among other things too, he and his party seem fully aware of many problems regarding the failure of the BPP and one of them was the “lumpen vanguardism” of the former, which they aim to combat. This criticism you gave is based on poor or misguided investigation.



Now, my individual position: I've read pretty much everything Rashid ever published online and from everything I know from external sources, the NABPP-PC are a group of earnest, committed revolutionaries in situation of danger and should be approached as this, with unity of action and struggle of lines. There's no reason to isolate them further, specially when Rashid in particular is receiving torture and solitary confinement. I imagine that the maoist movement in the US should be aware of this and acting accordingly.

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