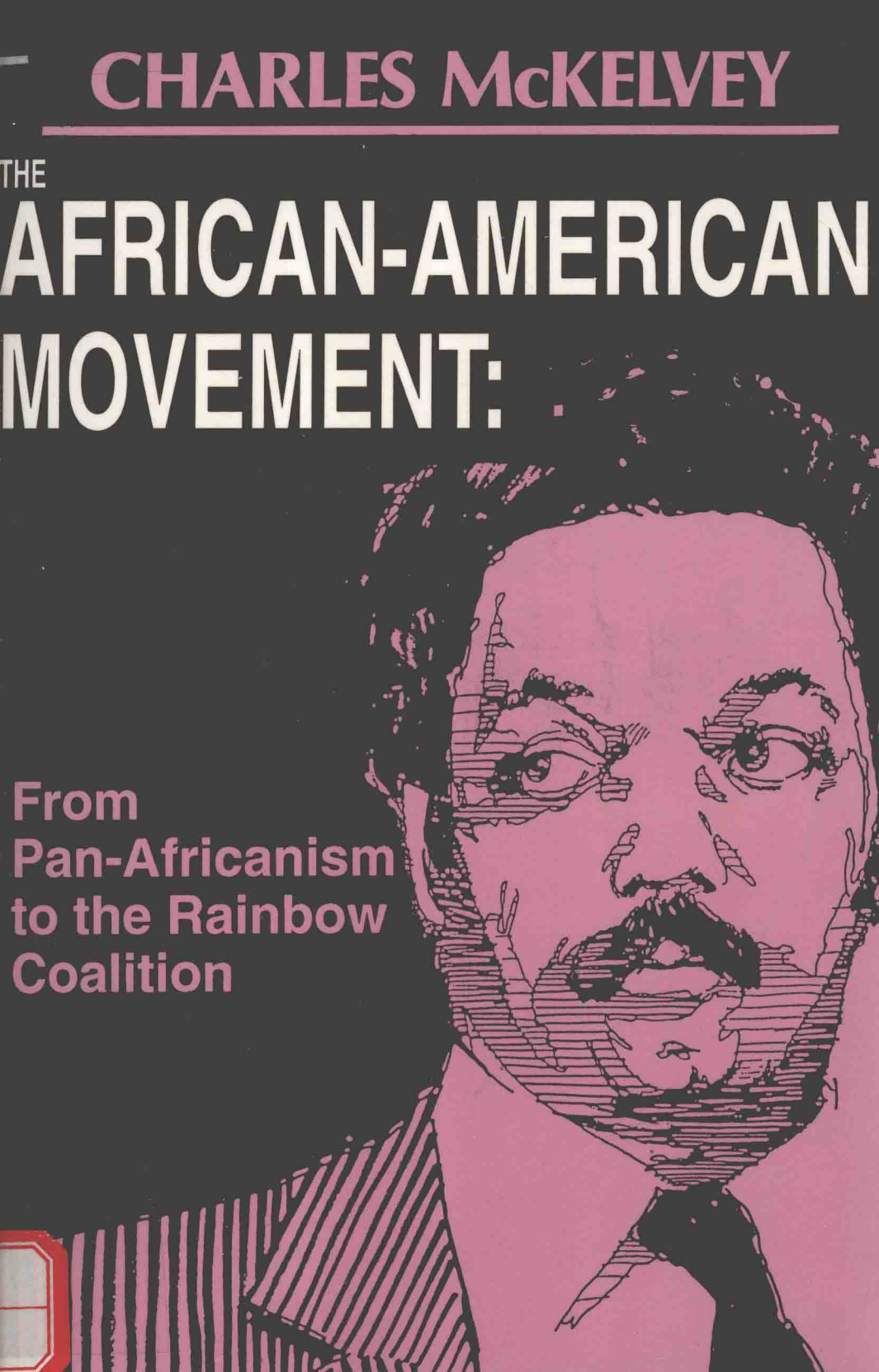
CHARLES McKELVEY

THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN MOVEMENT:

From Pan-Africanism to the Rainbow Coalition



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The book is dedicated to the men and women of the African-American movement, with the hope that it gives adequate testimony to their courage, determination, and wisdom; and that American society will one day understand the true meaning of their contribution.

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At the same time, I hope that social scientists and historians, college and university professors, and graduate students will find the book intellectually challenging and stimulating. The book takes some perspectives that are different from the existing literature. For example, in treats the whole African-American movement, from the post-World War I National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Garveyism to the Jackson campaigns, as a single social and intellectual development. In addition, I have applied a world-systems perspective in discussing slavery, tenant farming, and the African-American movement. Moreover, I have provided a thorough explanation of the black nationalist philosophy that emerged in the late 1960s. Thus I have not hesitated to address issues that are of importance to scholars, but again, I have tried to write about them in ways that are not mystifying to a lay audience.

I would like to thank those who have made suggestions for improving the manuscript: Jack Bloom, John Leggett, Donald Cunnigen, Cleveland Sellers, Brian Sherman, Ronald Burnside, David Needham, and Janis McKelvey. I also would like to thank my teachers at the Center for Inner City Studies, especially Jacob Carruthers, Anderson Thompson, Elkin Sithole, and Gerald McIntosh. And I would like to thank my teachers at Fordham University, particularly Father Joseph Fitzpatrick and James R. Kelly, who have supported me and encouraged me to explore. I also am indebted to Paula Warren and Casey McKelvey, for their assistance with the task of arranging quotations for copyright permission; and to Teresa Inman, for her prompt handling of my many requests for library assistance. In addition, my wife, Janis McKelvey, and our children, Edie, Casey, and Gina, have been more than understanding of my need and desire to spend many hours devoted to this task. None of these many individuals, however, should be held responsible for either the perspectives taken or the book's limitations.

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

I was a Jesse Jackson delegate at the Democratic National Convention in 1988. During that experience, I realized for the first time that the Jackson movement defined itself as a continuation of the civil rights movement. It was built on the achievements of the civil rights era, constantly invoking the heroes and martyrs of the movement. And it sought to reform the Democratic party and the nation so that the civil rights movement's vision of a fully democratic society could be attained. I thus came to the understanding that the Jackson campaign was more than a political campaign, it was a social movement; more precisely, it was a continuation of the African-American movement. I also realized that Jesse Jackson's worldview was grounded in the philosophy of black nationalism and the black consciousness that emerged during the 1960s. This was evident in his understanding of foreign affairs, in which he called for a new direction in U.S. policy. Drawing on the black nationalist view that colonialism and underdevelopment are fundamental to the modern world, Jackson proposed a policy of North-South cooperation, a policy of facilitating the self-determination and economic development of the Third World. And the legacy of black consciousness was evident in his frequently cited image of the quilt made by his grandmother when he was a child. The nation, he proclaimed, needs to make such a quilt, through the formation of a Rainbow Coalition of the rejected. Here the wisdom and determination of a black lower-class women is upheld as a model for the nation. I saw in this imagery a subtle yet deeply rooted respect for, and pride in, the culture of the black lower class.

As I observed these things, I felt that the American people ought to have a greater understanding and appreciation of Jackson's presidential candidacy; that to understand the Jackson phenomenon, it is necessary to understand the social and historical context that shaped and defined it. This book, then, attempts to place the Jackson campaign and the Rainbow Coalition in the context of the civil rights movement and the black nationalism out of which it emerged.

A number of excellent books have been written on the civil rights movement. Two of them are very useful for identifying the social factors that made possible the achievements of the movement: Jack Bloom's *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement* shows the importance of industrialization in the South; and Doug McAdam's *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–70* documents the importance of the urbanization of blacks in the North

and South. Taking a somewhat different approach, Aldon Morris, in *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, demonstrates the importance of the organizational strength of black communities in forging the achievements of the civil rights era. Other books offer detailed and sometimes lively descriptions of the activities of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. These include David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*; David J. Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting Rights Act of 1965*; Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.*; and Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954–63*. In addition, Clayborne Carson's *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960's* describes the evolution of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) from the 1960 sit-ins to its black nationalist orientation in the late 1960s. All these books have their strengths and insights, and I have tried to incorporate them in this book.

There has been a tendency in literature on the African-American movement to focus on the years from 1953 to 1965. This of course was a time of intense activity and great achievement, culminating in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. But a focus on these years can lead to mistaken impressions. First, it implies that there was little movement activity and few movement achievements before 1953. In fact, dating back to 1918, African-Americans had sustained a mass movement characterized by demonstrations, nonviolent civil disobedience, and legal challenges to the denial of African-American democratic rights. Important organizations during the early years included the NAACP, Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington Movement. The African-American movement of this time was successful in forcing concessions from both the executive and judicial branches of the federal government. The important 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in schools was not a decision made in a void. The Court ruling was a consequence of movement activities and the movement's legal challenge to segregation. We need to keep in mind that the civil rights movement of 1953–1965 was a continuation of, and the culmination of, a social movement begun in 1918.

A second problem with literature that focuses on 1953–1965 is that it implies or sometimes explicitly states a division within the African-American movement between the integrationism of 1953–1965 and the Black Power movement of 1965–1970. According to this division, the civil rights movement of 1953–1965 was characterized by a desire for integration into American society through the attainment of political and civil rights by nonviolent means. In contrast, the Black Power movement of 1965–1970 advocated racial separation and violence. Typically, black organizations and leaders are placed on opposite sides of this division, with the NAACP, King, and the Southern Christian Leadership

Conference (SCLC) generally viewed as integrationist, and Garvey, the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, and SNCC generally viewed as nationalist. Of course, there have been diverse views within the black movement, and it does make some sense to speak of nationalist versus integrationist strains. But in seeking to understand the events of the 1960s, this division can be problematic in that King, SNCC, and many African-American leaders experienced an evolution from integrationism to nationalism during that decade. And the categorization can be problematic for understanding the early 1920s, when both the NAACP and Garvey had a Pan-African orientation. Rather than divide the black movement into integrationist and nationalist strains, it is more useful to see Pan-Africanism and black nationalism as pervasive and widely accepted throughout the history of the African-American movement, themes that have been expressed alongside and part of a vision of political, civil, social, and economic rights for African-Americans. Sometimes Pan-African and black nationalist themes assert themselves more clearly and forcefully in response to events that are shaping the movement. In accordance with this view, the whole period from 1953 to 1970 is best seen as the same movement developing in response to different events.

Sometimes, the division of the movement into nationalist and integrationist strains is accompanied by class designations, according to which integrationism (represented by NAACP, King, and SCLC) is a black middle-class movement, and nationalism (represented by Garveyism, Malcolm X, and SNCC) is a black lower-class phenomenon. In fact, UNIA and SNCC had many middle-class members and supporters, just as the NAACP and SCLC enjoyed mass support from the black lower class. One need only recall the mass participation in boycotts and demonstrations in Montgomery and Birmingham to have serious reservations about the idea that King and SCLC were part of a middle-class movement articulating the interests of the black middle class.

A third difficulty with focusing on 1953–1965 is that it implies that the movement came to an end at that time. In fact, in the aftermath of the repression of the movement in the late 1960s, the movement proceeded in a less activist, more subtle, and more moderate form in the 1970s, as is illustrated by the activities of Jesse Jackson and People United to Save Humanity (PUSH) during that decade. Moreover, the movement reasserted itself in the 1980s with voter registration drives, the Harold Washington campaign for mayor of Chicago, and the presidential campaigns of Jesse Jackson. Thus, focusing on only a brief period not only mistakenly implies that nothing much occurred before then but also mistakenly implies that not much has happened since. These mistaken impressions minimize the significance of the movement and undermine its continuing challenge to American society.

Another tendency in literature on the African-American movement is to discuss it not in an international context, but solely in a national context. This limits our understanding. In an international context, we are able to see the

economic functions in a developing world economy of such social systems as slavery and low-wage tenant farming, social systems that have been central in shaping the African-American social condition. Moreover, when placed in an international context, the African-American movement can be seen as part of an worldwide movement of people of color in opposition to colonial domination. This helps us understand why the African-American movement emerged, why it was able to achieve what it did, and why, so far, it has not been able to attain all its goals.

In this book, I portray the historical development of the African-American movement from 1918 to the present. In doing so, I show that African-Americans have sustained a courageous and determined struggle for a democratic society in which all people are entitled to full citizenship, including political, civil, social, and economic rights. I also show that Pan-African themes have been central to the movement, as the African-American movement has been part of an international democratic movement of people of color for full citizenship rights in the world community. The Jackson campaign and the Rainbow Coalition can thus be understood as but the latest expression of a long-standing African-American quest for democracy, in the United States and the world as a whole.

Moreover, I stress the common understandings and goals of the African-American movement. Movement leaders certainly differed in understanding and approaches, but there is much about which they agreed. The consensus among leaders becomes especially apparent when their understandings are contrasted with commonly accepted views in white society. In this book, I stress ideas and goals which have been reasserted repeatedly by movement leaders. I believe that American society as a whole ought to focus on the basic ideas of the movement that are in important respects different from widely accepted beliefs. These ideas constitute a social critique and a continuing challenge to American society to live up to its democratic creed.

In addition, I discuss the African-American situation and the African-American movement in international context. Accordingly, I use a world-systems perspective to discuss the use of African-American coerced and low-wage labor in the development of the world economy, and I present the African-American movement as a part of Third World national liberation movements in the twentieth century.

The book begins with a discussion of the emergence of African-American slavery in the development of the world economy. I interpret the conflict of interest between the northern industrial elite and the southern planter class as a consequence of their different economic functions in an expanding world economy. I view the abolition of slavery as primarily a consequence of this conflict of interests, with the abolitionist movement playing a secondary role. I subsequently trace the economic powerlessness of blacks in the postbellum system of tenant farming and the development of a social system of segregation

and a virtually total disenfranchisement of blacks. I note the alliances of blacks and lower-class whites that challenged the emerging system during Reconstruction and in the early 1890s. I maintain, however, that in spite of such efforts, before World War I, blacks were unable to forge an effective social movement capable of wrestling concessions from political authorities. The major step forward for blacks, emancipation, was primarily a consequence of a conflict between competing white elites. African-Americans before World War I were not yet able to influence the political process.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the black urban migration that began during World War I and established the social base for a sustained and effective African-American movement. I trace the developing movement as it was influenced by changing national and international political and economic contexts. I describe the Pan-African orientation in the years after World War I, reflecting the international orientation of political affairs in the Western world at that time. Pan-Africanism is evident in the orientation of the NAACP and in the widespread popularity of Garveyism. With the despair of the Great Depression, the movement moved in two different directions. On the one hand, there was the emergence of somewhat escapist but socially functional nationalist groups, such as the Nation of Islam. On the other hand, there was a focus on purely national issues and on the attainment of citizenship rights. The NAACP reflected this latter direction, as it began in the 1930s to use mass action in an attempt to attain the political, civil, and economic rights of blacks. Both tendencies developed and advanced over two decades. The Nation of Islam grew in numbers, prestige, and influence; mass action for citizenship rights propelled African-Americans into positions of influence in the political process of the United States. Especially important in this regard was the March on Washington Movement under the leadership of A. Philip Randolph, which was able to obtain an Executive Order banning discrimination in defense industries and government employment. Also important was the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, which mounted a legal challenge to state-sponsored segregation, culminating in the 1954 Supreme Court decision banning segregation in public schools. But in spite of these significant steps, the political, civil, economic, and social rights of African-Americans continued for the most part to be denied in the mid 1950s. Moreover, in reaction to modest gains, organized resistance to black democratic rights emerged among whites.

The years from 1953 to 1965 saw great achievements by the African-American movement. In Chapter 4, I describe the social factors that established the context that made those achievements possible. First was the industrialization of the South, which accelerated as a result of New Deal policies and World War II. Industrialization led to the urbanization of blacks in the South. Black urbanization meant an increase in black economic resources and a decrease in the effectiveness of white mechanisms of social control, both of which made

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possible the development of black protest organizations. Industrialization also led to the development of a white urban commercial class, a class that had no economic interest in the preservation of state-sponsored segregation. The civil rights movement was able to drive a wedge between this newly emerging class and the landlord-merchant class, which was the traditional southern ruling class in the economic system of tenant farming. The urban commercial class had an interest in industrial expansion, and the national and international attention provoked by black protest compelled this class to support, at least partially, the goals of the civil rights movement.

A second important factor that made possible the achievements of the civil rights movement was the emergence of national liberation movements in the Third World, anticolonial struggles that, beginning in the late 1940s, were to compel Western powers to concede political independence to their colonies. National liberation movements by the early 1950s were establishing a new international order, one in which people of color would have some political voice. These liberation movements were making clear to the United States that the continued denial of the basic political and civil rights of African-Americans was unacceptable. The U.S. government recognized that it risked economic, political, and moral isolation if it continued to deny black rights. Therefore, in the early 1950s it began to support goals of the African-American movement that were in the economic and political interests of the United States in the new international order. Accordingly, the civil rights movement in the United States is best understood as part of an international movement of people of color in opposition to Western colonial domination and the denial of the democratic rights.

In Chapter 5, I turn to a discussion of the civil rights movement that began with the boycotts in the early 1950s in Baton Rouge, Montgomery, and Tallahassee. Here we see the organizational strength of the black community, particularly the black church, as the boycotts were black-created, black-funded, and black-controlled protests supported by all classes in black society. We see the emergence of local movement centers, which were to be important in the development of the movement after 1955. We see the emergence of nonviolence as a central strategy in the movement. And we see the role of white businessmen and the federal government, pushing for concessions to the civil rights movement.

Chapter 6 discusses the struggle for civil rights from 1956 to 1963. I describe the emergence of local movement centers throughout the South in the late 1950s, the sit-in movement of 1960 and the origin of SNCC, the Freedom Rides of 1961, the Albany campaign of 1962, the Birmingham campaign of 1963, and the March on Washington of August 28, 1963. Again, we see the federal government and southern business interests compelled by the movement to make concessions to black demands for civil rights, culminating in the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Chapter 7 outlines the struggle to obtain the right to vote. I discuss SNCC voter registration activities in Mississippi from 1961 to 1964, culminating in Freedom Summer and the emergence of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party. I describe the SCLC Selma campaign of 1965, culminating in the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Here we see that by the mid 1960s much public support had developed in white society for the protection of the right to vote. I discuss the role of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, noting that both attempted to balance the need, given international developments, to make concessions to the civil rights movement with a desire not to alienate southern white voters from the Democratic party. Both administrations were forced by the actions of the civil rights movement to take a more forceful stand in support of black rights than they would have liked. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the civil rights movement from 1953 to 1965, noting that the movement was successful in obtaining significant political and civil rights, but not economic and social rights.

In Chapter 8, I discuss the developments that led to the emergence of Black Power from 1964 to 1967. I trace the increase in violence against civil rights workers in the South and the unwillingness of the federal government to intervene to protect them. I discuss the refusal of the Johnson administration to support the claims for seating at the Democratic National Convention by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party, a political party organized by the movement as a alternative to the regular Mississippi Democratic party, which excluded blacks. I discuss the difficulties with white volunteers in the movement, such as the paternalism of the volunteers. All these developments contributed toward the emergence of black nationalist and black consciousness themes in the movement, including identification with the Third World and a corresponding effort to form alliances with Third World movements, as well as the idea of black control of black institutions. The chapter discusses new forms of protest that reflect these themes, such as the program of armed self-defense of the Black Panther party and urban rebellions. And it discusses the repression of the African-American movement by all levels of government in response to the emergence of black nationalist themes and militant protest.

In Chapter 9, I discuss black nationalism, which became the dominant orientation of the African-American movement in the 1960s. I describe the basic philosophy of black nationalism: Colonialism is the fundamental fact of the modern world; African-Americans are colonized and are subjected to colonial domination; colonialism is a multidimensional phenomenon, having economic, cultural, and psychological dimensions; as a consequence of the colonial situation of African-Americans, group-self hatred, rage, and advocacy of violence emerge; the African-American movement is part of an international struggle of people of color against colonial rule; community control is the goal of the African-American movement. The chapter also discusses black nationalism's rejection of Marxism as another form of European ethnocentrism.

And it deals with the impact of black nationalism on the development of sociology, particularly the concept of institutional discrimination and the emergence of the world systems perspective.

In Chapter 10, I discuss the radicalization of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Like many African-American leaders in the 1960s, King was deeply affected by the equivocation of white society in regard to the protection of political and civil rights and by the refusal of white society to undertake reforms that would protect the social and economic rights of blacks. This reaction led King to a more radical understanding of American society and to more radical proposals in regard to the protection of the democratic rights of blacks. The chapter traces King's increasing attention to economic issues and his call for an aggressive, nonviolent campaign forged by an alliance of blacks, minorities, and poor whites and focusing on economic issues. The chapter describes the considerable extent to which King was influenced by black nationalism in his later years. He came to believe that the African-American condition was one of colonial domination; that the civil rights movement in the United States was part of an international struggle of people of color against colonial rule; that the Vietnamese nationalist movement under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh was a democratic movement, and therefore the United States was on the wrong side in the Vietnam war; that the United States typically repressed democratic movements of people of color throughout the world; that the United States needed a new foreign policy that supported democratic revolutions throughout the world; that Black Power was a legitimate concept in the context of colonial domination; and that black pride was necessary as a consequence of the psychological dimensions of colonial domination. In addition, the chapter notes that King inclined toward democratic socialism, although this influenced his thinking less than the philosophy of black nationalism, which by the late 1960s was the dominant philosophy in the movement.

In Chapter 11, I discuss the 1970s and early 1980s, years of decreased movement activity and a time described as "the winter of the civil rights movement." The chapter describes the constraints on the African-American movement and the African-American political leadership, as well as the decline in the 1970s of the standard of living of most blacks. The chapter describes the worsening of the situation in the early 1980s, with the onslaught of Reaganism. During this time, Jesse Jackson emerged as an African-American leader. As head of a civil rights organization, he was not bound by some of the constraints placed on the black political leadership. At the same time, as an advocate of nonviolence and a proponent of alliances with whites, he was more acceptable to white society than leaders in SNCC and the Black Panther party, and he therefore was able to function without repression. He thus kept alive the SCLC protest tradition during a difficult period through moderate social activism. The chapter traces Jackson's social activism during the 1970s, including economic boycotts, hunger protests,

and political organizing in support of independent candidates in Chicago; and his nationwide motivational program for excellence in education.

Chapter 12 turns to the revitalization of the African-American movement. In opposition to Reaganism, the African-American movement launched voter registration drives across the country. With the registration campaign, the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was born again. Reflecting this revitalization, the movement supported Harold Washington in his successful bid to become Chicago's first black mayor. His election, along with the lack of support for black interests by the Democratic party leadership, gave rise to the idea of a black presidential candidate. Jesse Jackson did not have the support of many prominent black politicians, however, because they were compelled by political realities to support Walter Mondale. Jackson's major achievement in 1984 was to win the overwhelming majority of black votes. Jackson's campaign had limited support from whites, was unable to obtain significant concessions from the Democratic party leadership, and was marred by a black-Jewish confrontation. Nevertheless, in establishing his support in an African-American base, Jackson laid the foundation for the 1988 campaign.

In Chapter 13, I discuss Jesse Jackson's 1988 campaign. Jackson was able to expand beyond his black base, more than doubling his white vote of 1984 and making significant inroads into the white vote in some states. This success gave him greater delegate strength than in 1984, enabling him to win concessions from the Democratic party leadership. These included incorporation of Jackson proposals into the platform, a commitment of the party to support upcoming legislation, reform of the makeup of the Democratic National Committee, and reform of the rules for selection of delegates in 1992.

Chapter 14 describes Jesse Jackson's vision for America, a vision grounded in the African-American experience and reflecting an African-American perspective, yet a vision for all Americans. First, Jackson is an economic populist who proposed during his campaigns a variety of programs in response to "economic violence," including rebuilding the infrastructure of the United States, stimulating corporate investment through tax and trading policies, raising taxes on the wealthy and corporations, expanding federal funding in education and housing, and developing a national health insurance plan. Second, Jackson articulated a vision of the empowerment of the masses through the formation of a coalition of the rejected, which would include workers, farmers, the poor, women, blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, gays, the disabled, environmentalists, and small businesspersons. Third, Jackson proposed a new direction in foreign policy, abandoning East-West confrontation and pursuing a policy of North-South cooperation. In such a policy, the United States would support human rights and self-determination in the Third World and would seek to promote its economic development. Such economic development would be in the interests of the United States because it would increase the capacity of the

Third World to buy American-made products and would reduce the incentive for American corporations to relocate to the Third World. Moreover, North-South cooperation would increase our national security by strengthening our economy. Thus, the Jackson doctrine on foreign affairs involved a redefinition of the meaning of national security. Fourth, Jackson is a social conservative who believes in God and patriotism and in the traditional family. He laments sex without commitment, drug use, and the decline of ethics and respect for authority in our culture. He believes in the importance of an ethic of discipline and hard work in order for individuals to take advantage of opportunities.

The book concludes with a chapter on the need for American society to overcome the legacies of ideology, racism, and ethnocentrism in order to respond constructively to our social, economic, and moral problems.

Chapter 2 SLAVERY AND POWERLESSNESS, 1619-1915

Slavery and the World Economy[1]

From 1300 to 1450, European feudalism experienced a decline in commerce, production, and population. A major factor in the decline was the Great Plague, which decimated the population of Europe. The population decline lasted more than a century and contributed to a shortage of labor and a decline in production and commerce.[2]

In response to the crisis of feudalism, Western Europe began to abandon its traditional ways. First, it sought to develop more efficient uses of labor. Accordingly, it consolidated agricultural lands into larger economic units, and it developed rational and purely economic relations between landowners and laborers, thereby converting peasants and serfs into wage workers. At the same time, Western Europe began to obtain control over the labor and land of people outside its boundaries. Accordingly, Western European nations began to take control of other regions of the world, principally Eastern Europe and South and Central America. These steps made possible a period of economic expansion and marked the beginning of what sociologists today call the modern world economy, an economic system that crosses national, cultural, and political boundaries. The modern world economy came into being during the sixteenth century; for the next four centuries, it was to develop and expand. Throughout its development, it would be shaped by a decisive characteristic: The economic development of Western Europe would be tied to the control of other regions, rendering these regions underdeveloped, powerless, and impoverished.

As the modern world economy emerged in the sixteenth century, it became characterized by a geographical division of labor. In Eastern Europe, the landowning class used economic force to coerce the serfs to produce wheat and other grains, which were exported to Western Europe. In Spanish America, the Spanish used Native American slave labor to obtain gold and silver for export to Europe. Sociologists refer to these export-oriented and coerced labor regions as the *periphery*. In contrast, Western Europe, particularly England, the Netherlands, and northern France, produced agricultural and manufactured goods. Labor in Western Europe was formally free from feudal relations and obligations and assumed a rational and purely economic form. Hence, Western Europe, which sociologists have called the *core*, was characterized by diversity of production and free labor. The division of labor between core and periphery was

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