



The False Dichotomy between Black Nationalism and Structural Integration: A Position Statement



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Abstract

This brief paper argues that there is a false dichotomy between Black nationalism and structural integration. It also argues that a both/and approach is a viable option when it comes to Black nationalism and structural integration. This paper presents a case study of Jacob Carruthers as an example of a Black scholar who engaged in Black nationalism and structural integration.

Keywords: Black nationalism; Structural integration; Case study; Institutional affiliation; Jegna

Abbreviations: USA (United States of America); ASCAC (Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations)

Introduction

In the struggle for social equality among Black people in the United States of America (USA), Black nationalism and structural integration have been social forces serving as ideal social conditions. On the one hand, Black nationalism has been a process and method by which Black people have sought to wage struggle for their interests related to economic matters, cultural matters, and political matters. On the other hand, structural integration has been an outcome sought in the interests of equal educational opportunities, equal job opportunities, and equal contract opportunities. As ideal social conditions, Black nationalism and structural integration have been seen by some Black people as opposing social forces. Other Black people have seen Black nationalism and structural integration as complementary rather than in opposition [1,2].

As used in this paper, the term Black nationalism refers to a social condition wherein there is racial solidarity and collective behavior around political, economic, and/or cultural matters. For example, one can be a proponent or advocate of racial solidarity and collective action around economic matters, but not political and/or cultural matters as was Booker T. Washington. One can be an advocate of racial solidarity and collective action around economic, political, and cultural matters as was W.E.B. Du Bois. Similarly, ethnic nationalism refers to a social condition wherein an ethnic group engages in ethnic solidarity and collective action

around economic, political, and/or cultural matters. For example, one can be a proponent or advocate of ethnic solidarity and collective action around economic matters, but not political and/or cultural matters; one can be an advocate of ethnic solidarity and collective action around economic, political, and cultural matters [1,2,5].

Related concepts to racial nationalism include economic nationalism, cultural nationalism, and economic nationalism. Economic nationalism involves a social condition wherein there is racial or ethnic solidarity and collective action around economic matters. Examples of economic nationalism include the Asian Business League of San Francisco; Hebrew Free Loan Association of San Francisco; and the Black Chamber of Commerce in Oakland. Cultural nationalism involves a social condition wherein there is racial or ethnic solidarity and collective action around political matters. Examples of cultural nationalism include the Columbus Day Celebration, Inc. based in San Francisco; Pacific Islanders' Cultural Association based in San Francisco; National Japanese American Historical Society based in San Francisco; and the San Francisco African American Historical and Cultural Society. Political nationalism involves a social condition wherein there is racial or ethnic solidarity and collective action around political matters. Examples of political nationalism are the Armenian American Political Action Committee; Cuban American National

Foundation; American Israel Public Affairs Committee; Mexican American Political Association; and Black American Political Association of California [1,2,6,7].

Structural integration, as used in this paper, refers to a social condition wherein Black people are free and able to enjoy all employment, education, and contract opportunities that they are interested in and qualified for. For example, structural integration involves a situation wherein qualified Black people will be able to experience equal opportunity and get a job with a public agency like the California Department of Finance or a private entity like Hewlett Packard. Structural integration also involves a situation wherein qualified Black people will be able to experience equal opportunity and get educational slots at a public institution like the University of California, Berkeley or a private institution like Temple University. In addition, structural integration involves a situation wherein qualified Black people will be able to experience equal opportunity and get a contract with the State of California or Bank of America [1,2,7,8].

This brief paper will argue that there is a false dichotomy between Black nationalism and structural integration. It will also argue that a both/and approach is a viable option when it comes to Black nationalism and structural integration. This paper will present a case study of Jacob Carruthers as an example of a Black scholar who engaged in Black nationalism and structural integration. In terms of the methodology, it will utilize the case study method approach and content analysis of primary and secondary source documents.

The Case of Jacob Carruthers

Analysis of documents pertaining to his life and times indicates that Jacob Carruthers engaged in Black nationalism as well as structural integration. In 1950, Carruthers willingly engaged in structural integration and became one of the first six Black students to attend the University of Texas at Austin. Carruthers worked together with Heman Sweatt, Elwin Jarmon, Virgil Lott, Dudley Redd, and George Washington, Jr. to integrate the University of Texas Law School. Towards that end, they engaged in Black unity and solidarity as they helped one another to deal with the White racism they faced. Some 16 years later, in 1966, Carruthers became the first Black person to earn a Ph.D. in political science at the University of Colorado, Boulder after he engaged in structural integration at that institution. In 1968, Carruthers willingly engaged in structural integration when he took a faculty position at Northeastern Illinois University. Carruthers worked there for over 30 years following a brief stint at Kansas State University. While employed at Northeastern Illinois University, Carruthers also engaged in institutional transformation by promoting Black unity and solidarity, pride in cultural heritage and Black consciousness, and autonomy. For instance, Carruthers

helped to create institutions within and outside of Northeastern Illinois University [1,2,9].

On the inside of Northeastern Illinois University, Carruthers played a major role in the development of the Center for Inner City Studies, a major site for Africana studies offering undergraduate and graduate degrees. Thus, the actions of Carruthers, related to institutional transformation, made a profound impact on others and himself at Northeastern Illinois University as well as the University of Texas Law School and the University of Colorado, Boulder. According to Conrad Worrill, one of his colleagues at Northeastern Illinois University, Carruthers cherished a framed photograph of his first day in 1950 at the University of Texas at Austin Law School. On the outside of Northeastern Illinois University, Carruthers played a major role in the development of the Chicago School of African-Centered Thought; Communiversity; Association for the Study of Classical African Civilizations (ASCAC); Kemetic Institute; and the Temple of the African Community of Chicago. At the latter institution, Carruthers became an elder who was also known by the spiritual name Jedi Shemsu Jehewty. In addition to those activities, Carruthers published important articles and books, including *Science and Oppression* in 1972; *Essays in Ancient Egyptian Studies* in 1984; *The Irritated Genie: An Essay on the Haitian Revolution* in 1985; *Kemet and the African Worldview: Research, Rescue and Restoration* in 1986, which was co-edited with Maulana Ron Karenga; *Mdr Ntr: Divine Speech* in 1995; and *Intellectual Warfare* in 1999. Carruthers demonstrated that his tenure at Northeastern Illinois University did not stop him from engaging in institutional transformation outside of it. By engaging in institutional transformation both on and off the campus, Carruthers epitomized what Asa Hilliard and Wade W. Nobles have referred to as a Jegna because he was a deep thinker and a committed scholar-activist [1,2,9,10,11].

Conclusion

In sum, the case of Jacob Carruthers provides strong and compelling evidence that there are more options than an either/or approach when it comes to Black nationalism and structural integration. His case shows that a both/and approach is a viable option when it comes to Black nationalism and structural integration. The life and times of Carruthers reflect the reality that he engaged in both with effective institutional transformation. The view of the present writer is that Carruthers is a model and Jegna who should be emulated inside and outside of academia. Many Black scholars who take the view that there is a dichotomy between Black nationalism and structural integration have been employed at, or attended, predominately White colleges or universities. They seem to take a "do as I say, not as I do" position. In other words, they have engaged in structural integration as an elite group but argue that the Black masses should not.

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