

CARTON 8:33

MANUSCRIPT, GALLEY (2 OF 2)
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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

LOOKING BACK, FACING FORWARD

My grandfather always told me that God helps those who help themselves. That told me something—that you had to help yourself, that you didn't have to look up, since there wasn't no god up there; god was down here within you. You got to move the situation, struggle to change things, and have faith in the people.

Sometimes people at the grass roots get to fighting each other. The problem is shaky leadership, even in the labor movement. They collaborate with the bosses. They mislead the workers. That has got to change. We need to have a new labor movement, a new struggle.

When I look back, I see that the trade union movement gave me inspiration and knowledge and the experience of fighting for freedom. I learned that the workers wasn't getting complete freedom and justice. We had to combat racism and fight for better working conditions, jobs, upgrading, health needs, and housing.

I learned that to build any organization you have to fight for issues. If you want a strong organization, you pick out issues to organize around. We fought Jim Crow as one issue to build the union. The union did an extraordinary job in the South on this and other issues. We dealt with social issues like voter registration, as well as job issues. In 1948 we was fighting like hell to get people registered in the campaign for Henry Wallace.

Racism is still a problem, and it's a problem in the unions. I remember when they was talking about merging the hotel and restaurant workers unions

in San Francisco back in the 1970s; Charlie Gricus came to my house one day. He was telling me that we would have a better chance of fighting Jim Crow. He wanted me to work with him in bringing together the unions so we could merge. I thought it was good. But after they merged into Local 2 they still had problems with racism, not getting more black people into hotel work and into the union. They also didn't have many black people working on the staff of Local 2, only one brother on the staff. I talked to the president about that but they didn't follow through. So racism is still a problem in the labor movement. It was better when we had Charles Lamb and Sherri Chiesa as the union leaders. We had more blacks in the union then. Now it seems like the leadership of the union is working with the company to keep blacks out. So you got to fight the union and the company both.

I also think that the CIO merging with the AFL in 1955 was a deadly mistake. We had bad leadership. We could have had strong unions throughout America. But the bosses wanted to block the organizing of a lot of businesses. There are a lot of places that are not organized. When the CIO was around, it organized the textile, automobile, fur and leather workers, dockworkers, packinghouse workers, and many other workers. But when it merged with the AFL, the organizing drive stopped. I blame the party for that. The party should have built a left-wing movement in the trade unions to keep the unions from going to the right. We needed a left-center movement to hold the unions and fight around issues like racism, health needs, and housing. That could have moved the masses of the people. So that was a mistake.

I know some people look to [AFL-CIO president] John Sweeney to make things different, but I say the power comes from the rank-and-file. The people themselves got to speak out. I don't give a damn how good your leader is if you ain't got a strong rank-and-file to fight around issues and build the organization.

We got to build a new, strong labor movement around issues. We need to be very militant and fight for issues. Blacks should study the history of progressive movements. We need to study how to mobilize the people. Reparations is one issue that we can use to mobilize black people of different classes. We need to talk about redistributing the wealth. We can get brown people and some white people to unite with black people around that kind of issue.

We need an international labor movement. They need to make international contacts in other countries like South Africa, where there is a strong union movement. We need to start here first, but we also need to make contacts and have dialog with workers about issues we can use to build the labor movement. You got to have a new labor movement. That means talking with progressive-minded workers, black, white, brown, all kinds of workers, to support a new labor movement. Women need to be involved, like in the room cleaners' struggle. It's like taking a ball and rolling it. You got to start it off. People need to know the truth. As long as you got the capitalist system you ain't go-

ing to make it here, not the poor. They may get a few crumbs, the middle class may, but not the poor. We need a big movement here around issues. We need to get out there and hit the streets. When you start an organization, you need organizers and you need to be able to protect them when they get thrown in jail, like we did in the South. If you get arrested, you have somebody to get the people out before things get vicious in the jails.

In New Orleans I worked with the NAACP and civil rights. I met Martin Luther King when he came to New Orleans. I was introduced to him by Rev. L. Davis. I talked with him a little bit around issues. He was down-to-earth. When I told him I was for peace, freedom, and socialism, he didn't flinch. You know he went to a socialist school, quiet as it's kept, the Highlander School. I think Dr. King was correct in fighting for civil rights, and I think we made a lot of progress, but I think we should have been working to educate the working white about racism and how he is hurting himself by trying to maintain white supremacy.

I think Julian Bond and Kwesi Mfume are good top leaders of the NAACP, but you still got to wake up the membership. They need to mobilize the young people to build the NAACP. They can't let it just get conservative, middle-class, petty bourgeois. They'll be satisfied as long as they get a dollar but that won't solve any problems. You need the masses, poor people, in the membership. That's where the power is. As I told them in the labor movement, the source of power is the rank-and-file membership. Listen to them and you can't go wrong. I have faith in the masses.

I believe the Muslims helped to enlighten people too, especially the brothers, to get them to come out and stand up like a man. They taught them how to treat one another right, to get off dope and alcohol, to respect women, and to treat everybody right. They said the Muslims was antiwhite, but I never read anything by Elijah Muhammad where he said to hate anyone.

I worked with the NAACP and the Muslims because they can bring out issues and help the people, and you need to reach all people to educate and motivate them.

Issues and conditions will move the people, but they need somebody to carry the ball. You got issues here—you got people hungry, people sleeping in the streets. You need somebody to get out there and mobilize them, wake them up, shake the bushes. Conditions will move anybody, but you got to have some leadership.

You need good leaders—people who are militant, have some experience, and are willing to fight back. You don't want leaders who gonna go along with the bosses and collaborate like some of these preachers. At the same time you have to be careful when you make criticisms because you can divide the people. You have to lead by bringing out issues. That was how I tried to lead, throwing out issues and getting people to support the issues.

In the Communist Party I learned to be more militant. The party gave me a militant consciousness. I learned the issues we need to fight for and how we need to organize to fight for jobs, housing, and health needs, and to fight against discrimination, particularly white chauvinism. But I also came to see there was racism within the party, like in the trade union movement, and I read books—Wilson Record's book and Bill Gould's book, *Black Workers in White Unions*—that opened my eyes.

I felt the leadership of the party in the South was more militant, more struggling. We had some militant white leaders here in San Francisco, like Archie Brown, Billy Allan, and Mickey Lima. But in the South we had to stick together, and some went to jail like the sixty-four. We never did have that kind of problem with white chauvinism.

The party gave me experience and knowledge, but we had some bad apples, some bad leadership. I studied Marx and Lenin, historical materialism, dialectical materialism, and bringing the workers together. I read books by William Z. Foster, Herbert Aptheker, and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn. I learned to see errors in how we was fighting and how to fight to move stones out of the way in our everyday struggles. We studied and had classes on the labor movement and all kinds of issues. I also used to meet with the black party members from other unions to talk about job issues, racism on the job, and other issues. If you know and know that you know about issues, and if you observe and learn from the struggle, from books, and from people, then you can help find a solution to the people's problems. I learned a helluva lot about the capitalist system from studying in the party.

When they called me before the Un-American Activity [*sic*] Committee, I think they was trying to use me against the ILWU. Maybe they figured I was a weak man who didn't know nothing. They didn't know I was studying at night, my head in the books, reading Karl Marx and V. I. Lenin.

So they put me in prison. But that was like throwing the rabbit into the briar patch. I was at home. You'd be surprised at the people you meet in prison from the left. We were discussing Marxism and socialism. Hell, I think I read more about communism in prison than I did outside.

I supported the program of the Communist Party, but over time I thought the national leadership became weak. You could have built a left center in the labor movement. You could have built a strong trade union movement. When they passed that damn Taft-Hartley law, that should have been stopped by the labor left-center movement. The Communists could have played a very important role. Then when the AFL and CIO merged, that should have been stopped. That's why they stopped organizing the rank-and-file. The leadership sold out to big business.

In February 1992 the Northern California party members split off from the party. I wasn't at the national party convention a few months before the split, but I understand the national party leaders wouldn't let Angela Davis,

Charlene Mitchell, Carl Bloice, or Herbert Aptheker and other people, speak and raise issues about democracy in the party and the fight against racism. I supported Angela Davis and the others, but Gus Hall, the national party chairman, kicked them all out of the convention. That's when I stopped paying dues and quit the party.

I also thought that Gus Hall was against the senior movement. That's another reason I didn't care too much for him. Henry Winston, an Afro-American who was national chairman of the party before he died in 1986, was a strong supporter of the senior movement. We used to talk about issues whenever him and his wife came to California. When Henry Winston died and Gus Hall, who used to be general secretary, took over the chairmanship, that ended black-white collective leadership at the top level of the party. A lot of the black party members didn't like that.

Kendra Alexander and the Northern California party members formed a new organization called the Committees of Correspondence. But the Committees of Correspondence had their own problems. They set up a steering committee to put together the program. But a few individuals came up with the program without discussing it with the whole steering committee. We didn't know a damn thing about it. We should have had a chance to discuss it before it was brought to the general membership. That's democracy! I talked to Kendra about that and she agreed with me that it was wrong. After that I still supported the Committees of Correspondence, but I wasn't so actively involved anymore.

If we don't get ourselves together, we gonna move back. I remember one time I made a speech and I said we gonna have creeping fascism in this country. One guy got up and said, "No, you ain't got creeping fascism, you got running fascism in this country." That's what we gonna get if people don't wake up.

I still believe that socialism is the only solution to the problems of working people. They say that socialism failed in Russia, but the people in Russia still want socialism. That's a lot of propaganda coming out there. The people ain't finished yet. They're gonna rebuild the party. The party fell apart but the people still want socialism.

Same thing here. The people need to get some knowledge about issues and we need good leadership. That's what it's gonna take to build the movement for socialism. You got to get some people who will stand up and build an organization around issues. You got to bring in people from the Democratic Party, the Republican Party, anywhere you can find people willing to stand up and mobilize. I know some middle-class people may think everything is all right, but you got to fight that. Raise issues! Education, health care, housing.

Some young people today only think about making money. I say to young people, try to get an education. Not just to get a good job, but you need to also

know how to help your people. You can work for business or the government, but you should put something in the community too—a community health center or community schools to teach our history and teach the history of the struggle. Build something for the people.

Today big business controls everything. Big business controls the educational institutions, controls the churches, controls the penitentiaries, controls the government, and controls the laws. There's got to be a change. It's gonna be hard, but the workers got to do it. No child should go to bed hungry at night. That's wrong. People are not gonna stand around and starve. People need to wake up and fight to survive. They have to fight for bread-and-butter issues, and when they see they can't get that under capitalism then they gonna move toward socialism. You just got to educate 'em, motivate 'em, and agitate 'em.

That's my opinion, brother. You can tell 'em Lee Brown said it.

AFTERWORD

ROBERT L. ALLEN

In recounting his life and struggles as a militant trade unionist, Lee Brown contends that issues and leadership are keys to building any organization. Although issues arise as a consequence of the circumstances in which people find themselves, how does leadership emerge? In the following pages I want to examine this question by looking at the formation of Lee Brown's character in relation to his self-described emergence as a leader in the trade union movement. I would suggest that the interplay between Lee Brown's personal qualities and his development as a grassroots leader was characterized by (1) an openness to learning from role models, mentors, colleagues, and his own experiences, (2) a willingness to act on the basis of this new knowledge, and (3) a bedrock belief, growing out of his experiences, in the capacity of ordinary people to change their circumstances through struggle.

Early Years

Several factors appear to have been formative in Brown's development as a leader. One of these was the example of his grandfather. Brown makes it clear in his remarks that his grandfather had a great impact on the formation of his character. His experience with his grandfather gave him the beginnings of a social consciousness and a set of values and principles that would stay with him for life.

The elder Brown, for whom young Lee was named, is remembered as a kindhearted, generous, gentle man who tried to help poor people. His home was a gathering place for local people who came to talk and get advice on issues of farming, church business, money matters, and health. The elder Brown also taught young Lee to share his toys with other children and to be concerned for others generally. "He taught me how to get along with people," Brown remembers.

Grandfather Brown was an industrious man who owned a small farm and had a small drayage business. His hauling service brought him into contact with whites. Brown always maintained his dignity and bowed to no man. To young Lee, Grandfather Brown was a role model and teacher whose influence was made all the greater by the evident love that young Lee felt for and from the older man. The two were constant companions for the few years that young Lee lived with him.

While life on his grandfather's farm may have been pleasant, young Lee was soon introduced to the realities of racial segregation in the South. He realized that his grandfather might have died because in segregated Louisiana a hospital that would treat black people was many miles away. He also saw that many black families, unlike his grandfather who owned a plot of land, were poor, struggling sharecroppers, subject to exploitation and mistreatment. When he started school after his grandfather's death, he discovered that black children were not allowed to ride on the school buses but had to walk six miles to school. Although black farm children attended school only three months out of the year, Brown gained an early love of reading that would continue through his life.

Living with his Uncle Tot and Aunt T-Babe, he learned of another racial reality of southern life: the sexual harassment of black women by white men and the precarious situation of black men. When Uncle Tot's sister, Bernice, was harassed by a white man in a bar, Tot was forced to flee after someone shot the white man. Later Brown would reunite with Tot in Galveston and be introduced to the labor movement.

With his grandfather dead, his mother and uncle Tot out of the picture, Brown remained with his Aunt T-Babe. At age fifteen he decided to strike out on his own, evidencing an independent streak and a desire for new experience that would keep him periodically moving for the next eight years. Like many young men during the Great Depression, Brown hopped a freight train and rode the rails in search of a better life.

Working as a live-in servant for a white family in a small town in Louisiana, Brown saw that white racial attitudes were not monolithic but might vary even in a single family. When the mother in the family forced Lee to take his meals outside in the backyard, the daughter objected that this was wrong and got permission for him to eat at a table in the kitchen.

His housing was a small shack out back. He was allowed to plant a small garden and sell anything he grew to supplement his small salary. He shared

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part of his harvest with the family and industriously sold the rest from a red wagon he pulled through the streets, an enterprising spirit that, no doubt, would have made his grandfather proud.

After two years Brown decided to move on to Galveston, Texas, where Uncle Tot and Aunt T-Babe had settled. While looking for work in Galveston, Brown visited the local courthouse to listen to trials. He noticed that more black people than white seemed to be brought to trial and sent to jail. He concluded that equal justice was not being dispensed.

Uncle Tot worked at Todd Dry Dock, and after a while Brown managed to get a job there doing common labor. There was a union of the black common laborers at the dry dock. A strike was called in 1938 that lasted three months. Uncle Tot was a strong union man, and he and young Lee both walked the picket lines. White workers honored the picket lines. The strike lasted three months and resulted in a wage increase of thirty-five to fifty cents per hour. Brown was elated and inspired by this union experience. For the first time he saw the possibility of change through organizing. "The union made me feel that I could do something for poor people like myself and my cousins. The union gave me a way to go forward, to help change things."

Work was slack in Galveston and Brown could find only a poorly paid job at a brickyard in Green Bayou. Here he encountered Old Man Henderson, who introduced him to the NAACP and the idea of an organization fighting for freedom. It had immediate appeal to Brown. "We was searching for freedom," he said of himself and a friend, "young men who wanted to be free. I know I wanted to be free and wanted to join something to get freedom." The youthful search for freedom emerges here as an early theme in his life. The meaning of freedom—and unfreedom—would become more clear with time and experience.

As a railroad worker in Arizona, Brown faced his first challenge as an organizer. When a foreman tried to fire a worker named San Antonio over a minor incident, Brown intervened. He called a meeting of the workers and organized a strike. "At the meeting I said that we shouldn't go back to work until the foreman put San Antonio back to work. All of them agreed." The next morning the workers refused to get to work and Brown, acting as spokesman, told the foreman the men would not go back until San Antonio was put back to work. The foreman said he couldn't do it. Brown threatened to go to the road master in Yuma. The foreman caved in and agreed to San Antonio's return.

Reflecting on the experience, Brown said, "After this experience was over, I realized that unity with other employees was what made the foreman act. If all employees united together on jobs, there would be less trouble and less firings would come from the employer." There is more evident in this incident in that it anticipates and is characteristic of his emerging leadership style. Drawing on his experience in the Galveston strike and improvising

when needed, in this confrontation Brown used four tactics: (1) mobilize and unify the workers, (2) seize the initiative from the boss, (3) refuse to accede to the boss's definition of the situation, and (4) if necessary, raise the stakes. These organizing tactics would serve him well as an organizer and union shop steward in years to come.

Brown was also able to listen and respond positively to criticism that challenged him when he failed to manifest his values and principles. His would-be acting career provides a ready example. He enjoyed taking bit parts in movies and being a player, acting as though he were a rising star. The parts he took, however, were the same demeaning roles to which most other black actors were confined. Brown did not hesitate to berate these roles and the actors who took them as Uncle Toms. When he took his girlfriend Mildred to see a film in which he had a bit part—in a cotton picking scene—she was appalled. She let him know in forceful terms: "You should be ashamed to play in scenes that are so degrading to black people because you fight in the NAACP for better parts for black actors." Surprised at having this contradiction revealed, Brown felt ashamed. A person with less integrity might have dissimulated or attacked the bearer of the message. But Brown took Mildred's criticism to heart and he refused any more parts in movies.

In other ways Brown's relationships with women partly reflected and partly shaped his political maturation. His youthful relationships with girlfriends were casual and opportunistic. As he grew older, his relationships matured into thoughtful and productive partnering with women who were fellow trade union activists. A deep commitment to mutual encouragement and support in the struggle was most evident during his marriage to Grace Oliver.

Adulthood

Brown's life in New Orleans from 1944 to 1958 witnessed the maturation of his character, the growth of his leadership skills, and the enrichment of his social consciousness and political vision. His work with Local 207, his involvement with the Communist Party, and his relationship with Andrew Steve Nelson, who bridged the two organizations, would dramatically change his life.

In Andrew Nelson he met a black man, a Communist, and a militant labor organizer who would become his closest friend and mentor. Brown started attending executive board meetings and speaking up about conditions on the waterfront, especially the issue of upgrading black workers who mainly worked as common laborers, whereas whites had access to more desirable, better-paying jobs. Soon he was elected shop steward. Nelson, older by several years, began grooming Brown for a leadership position. Their Friday lunch meetings and Sunday dinners became occasions for political discussions, informal instruction, and union strategizing as well as enjoyment of delightful New Orleans

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cuisine, which Brown clearly relished. Nelson was like an older brother, a man whom Brown admired much as he had admired his grandfather. In time Brown would become vice president of Local 207 and coleader with Nelson.

His work with Local 207 gave him rich experience with a militant union dedicated to improving the lives of working people, especially black workers. Along with Nelson's mentorship, it gave him the opportunity to learn new skills and rise to a leadership position based on his skills, militancy, and courage. As an interracial union with black leadership, Local 207, struggling in the midst of a society based on white supremacy and black subjugation, also gave Brown an inkling of a different kind of society that might be created through struggle.

Nelson also introduced Brown to the Communist Party. Brown had been favorably impressed by a Communist organizer he met in Los Angeles, but he had not attended a party meeting until invited by Nelson. Nelson said the party could train him to work with and organize people.

What impressed Brown about the Communist Party in New Orleans was its commitment to building a militant trade union movement, its advocacy and practice of racial equality (including black leadership), and its anticapitalist stance.

Brown was not particularly interested in the intricacies of party politics or doctrinaire debates over party line. What drew him was the party's active involvement in working to improve the lives of working people, especially black people. But the party offered more than the union because it also gave him a vision of a new society based on socialism and racial equality. Brown already understood, based on his own experience, that the interests of the bosses and workers were antithetical. The party gave him an analysis of capitalism that deepened his innate understanding of boss-worker conflict. The analysis further gave him an appreciation of racial segregation (Jim Crow) as a deliberate ruling-class strategy to divide and weaken the working class by fostering racial hatred. For Brown the party gave him another militant, fighting organization with a program (as Brown saw it, fighting Jim Crow, building strong trade unions, supporting voting rights and progressive candidates) and a vision (racial equality, socialism) that coincided with his developing social consciousness and working-class values.

As with his experience in Local 207, the party gave him new skills. "I learned how to run meetings, set up committees. Sometimes we had all-day meetings on how to organize people, how to get them to register to vote by educating them, how to work with politicians, and how to fight Jim Crow."

The party also introduced Brown to individuals who strongly influenced his outlook. He found himself in an organization with whites who shared his commitment to racial equality and treated him as an equal. He was impressed by the party's district organizer, Emanuel Levin, and he became friends with C. J. Meske, the international representative who was also a

party member. Brown and Meske enjoyed talking about conditions facing black and white workers in the South, and what could be done. The Communist Party encouraged and gave direction to Brown's intellectual development. He loved to read. The party introduced him to socialist literature and comrades with whom he could discuss and debate political ideas. The values he learned from his grandfather and uncle Tot and from his experiences in workers' struggles were shaped by his reading and discussions into a coherent socialist worldview. His intellectual development was motivated fundamentally by his desire to change the world. A self-educated working-class activist/thinker, Brown is an example of what Antonio Gramsci called an "organic intellectual."

During these years, Brown came to see in the trade union movement and the Communist Party the keys for improving the lives of black people and combating racism. His faith was reinforced by his own experience. The eight months he worked with black and white striking sugar refinery workers in the towns of Reserve and Gramercy was a powerful experience. Drawing on his union and party training, Brown managed to break down racial divisions among the workers and unify them, with the result that the strike was won. Clearly, in his mind, a program of actively fighting Jim Crow could succeed. This was the way to unite the working class and win victories, but it demanded commitment and action.

Brown was impressed by the personal commitment of white party members to practice racial equality in their personal lives. To Brown, personal integrity is a measure and indicator of political integrity. That is why the case of the sixty-four—black and white people, many of them party members, arrested for having an interracial party in New Orleans—was so important to him, especially the fact that the group successfully fought the original convictions and got them overturned. "We helped establish the right to associate and visit each other's homes and attend meetings or demonstrate together regardless of race, color, or creed. To me this was a victory for the working class in the South—not just black workers or white workers. It was the working people as a whole that won. We put a nail in the coffin of Jim Crowism!"

Brown's biggest disappointment came years later, when he was living San Francisco (he had moved there to find work following his release from prison): he felt that the party and the trade unions were capitulating to racism. A significant incident for him was being snubbed on the streets by a white party member and his feeling that the party failed to deal with this instance of "white chauvinism." This may appear to be a minor event, but to Brown it was symptomatic of a deterioration of political consciousness and militancy in the party. That deterioration was reflected, in Brown's view, in the party's failure to stop the AFL-CIO merger and in the failure of newly created Local 2 to stop the growing discrimination against black

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workers in the hotel and restaurant industry in San Francisco. Brown concluded that the party's leadership had retreated from the struggle to build a strong antiracist left center in the labor movement.

His attraction to forms of black nationalism reflected both his continuing interest in the problem of black unity and freedom and his sometimes doubt about the Communist Party. He made it clear that his attraction to the Black Muslims owed less to their religious doctrine and more to the fact that the Muslims taught that African Americans had a unifying history linked to past civilizations and cultures, a history not limited to slavery and savagery. His involvement with the African Descendant Nationalist Independence Partition Party came during a period when he was disillusioned with the Communist Party and had been fired from his job at the Jack Tar. The ADNIP Party, through the Black Security Guards, provided him with work and a sense of organizational activism on behalf of the black community.

Lee Brown saw no fundamental contradiction between being involved in black nationalist groups, trade unions, the Communist Party, and the NAACP. He asserted that he was always interested in anything that would help working-class black people and, in his mind, all of these organizations offered possibilities for improving the lives of black people. For example, his involvement with the NAACP—an affiliation that continued throughout his life—grew from a powerfully felt commitment to being part of a struggle specifically aimed at gaining civil rights in the present society. At the same time he brought to the NAACP a militancy and concern for working-class issues that had informed his trade union and party activism. These interventions were not always welcome, leading to a sometimes fractious relationship with the more bourgeois NAACP leadership. Nevertheless, he never abandoned his commitment to the NAACP and his hope that it might emerge as a militant, progressive organization.

Finally, it is worth noting that Brown's affirmation of his support of the Communist Party program, despite what he sees as the failures of its leadership, reveals his fundamental faith. It suggests a basis for his continuing optimism and activism in the face of setbacks. The failures of leadership may be all too common, but this does not negate his commitment to the struggle for racial equality and socialism.

For Lee Brown it is his sense of "the people" that grounds his commitment. "I have dedicated my life in the service of poor people," says Lee Brown. "I got faith in the masses."

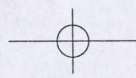
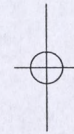
Whatever one makes of Lee Brown's character and the qualities of his leadership, he stands squarely within a long and rich tradition of black radicalism, a tradition that insists that issues of race and class must be simultaneously confronted if there is to be any hope of fundamental change in American society.

This radicalism is premised on the deep interweaving of racial inequality and class exploitation in the history of this country, from the establishment of slavery in the colonial period to the dismantling of affirmative action in the present. The construction of race has been fundamental to the structuring of class divisions, and without class divisions, race would be meaningless. Generations of black radicals have sensed this peculiarly American nexus. They have insisted that without a determined struggle against racism the class struggle will fail, and without a struggle for economic justice the fight for racial equality will be subverted.

I honor Lee Brown for keeping the faith and for his courageous and enduring commitment to the tradition of black radical struggle.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Tribute Meeting, Women's Building, San Francisco, July 17, 1982
Letter of appreciation from Congressman Phillip Burton, July 7, 1982
Certificate of Appreciation, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, San Francisco, June 26, 1985
New Bayview Newspaper Publishers Award, 1985
Commendation, San Francisco Board of Supervisors, July 28, 1990
Certificate of Life Membership, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, September 1992
Certificate of Honor, Senior Action Network, San Francisco, November 19, 1992
Certificates of Appreciation, San Francisco Coalition for Low Income Housing, February 21, 1992, and December 7, 1996
Tribute of a Lifetime—event sponsored by Committees of Correspondence to honor senior activists, June 26, 1994



A NOTE ON SOURCES

The primary sources for this autobiography were a series of interviews that Robert L. Allen conducted with Lee Brown between 1994 and 1999, as well as earlier texts prepared by Grace Oliver Brown and Tom Dunphy. The personal files of Lee Brown contain a wealth of source materials, including letters, articles, leaflets, newspaper clippings, pamphlets, books, copies of speeches, and official documents of various kinds.

The prologue is excerpted from the published transcript of the hearing by the Committee on Un-American Activities of the House of Representatives, February 15, 1957 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1957).

The chapter entitled "Black Workers on the New Orleans Waterfront," is based on material in John W. Blassingame, *Black New Orleans, 1860-1880* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973); Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism, 1892-1923* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988); Bruce Nelson, *Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990); and Philip S. Foner, ed., *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619-1973* (New York: International Publishers, 1974). The history of Local 207 is drawn from a master's thesis by David Lee Wells, "The ILWU in New Orleans: CIO Radicalism in the Crescent City, 1937-1957" (Baylor University, 1979).

Materials on the trial of Andrew Steve Nelson and the transcript of the trial of Lee Brown were obtained from the National Archives, Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas.

Other published sources that were helpful in understanding the background of the story were Ann Fagan Ginger and David Christiano, eds., *The Cold War against Labor*, 2 vols. (Berkeley, Calif.: Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute, 1987); Jean Damu, "Economic Repression: The San Francisco Hotel Workers Strike," *The Black Scholar*, January-February 1981; and various articles in the *New Orleans States*, the *New Orleans Item*, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Sun-Reporter*, the *California Voice*, the *New Bayview News*, the *Peoples World*, the *ILWU Dispatcher*, and newsletters of organizations with which Lee Brown was associated.

Lee Brown's compelling story urges us to imagine a radically different history of the twentieth century United States, a history forged by a persistent and courageous defense of workers' rights and by an indefatigable advocacy of racial equality. In his powerful and unpretentious way, Brown shows us a life whose meaning resides in an unrelenting faith in the ability of working people to fight for a better world. As veteran, witness, and chronicler, he addresses new generations of activists--those who speak out today against global capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and homophobia--and offers them a firm place on his shoulders.

Angela Y. Davis