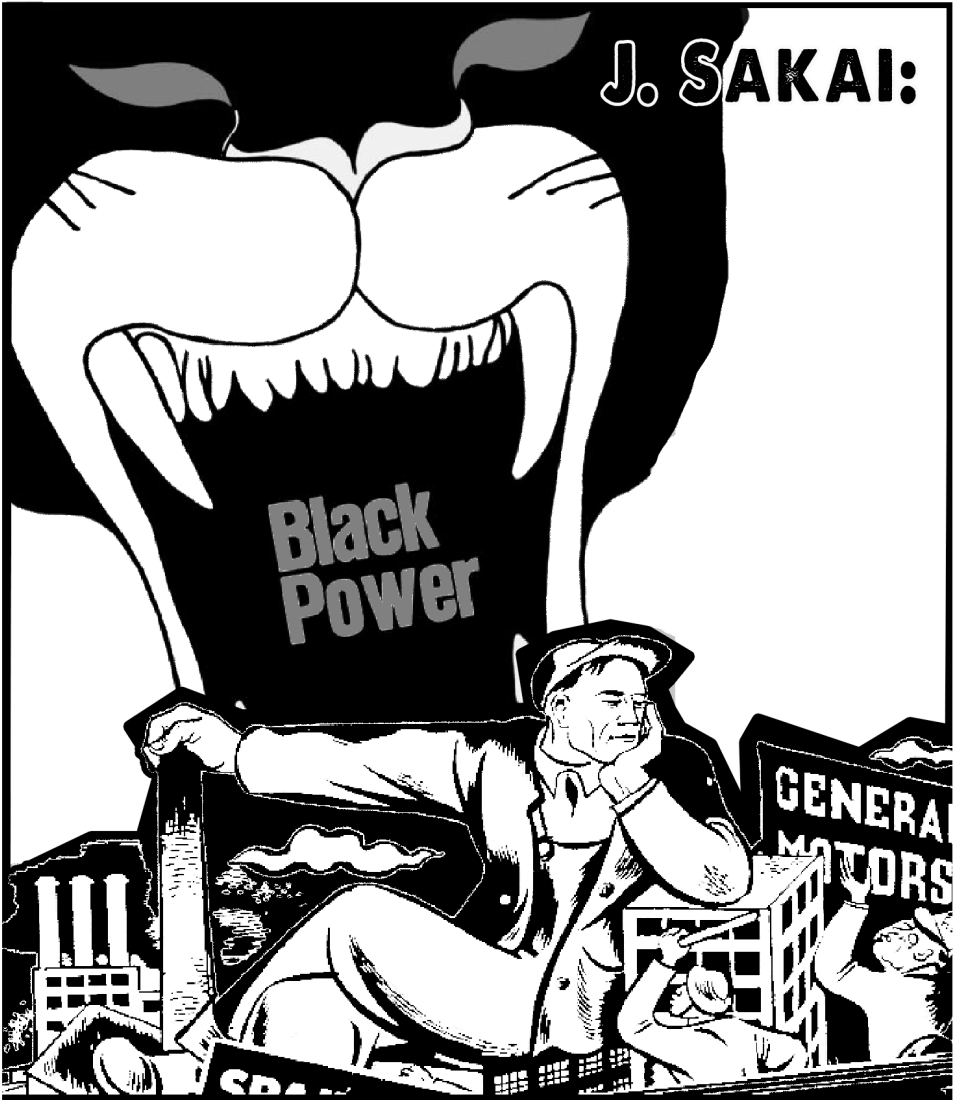


J. SAKAI:



**THE ORIGINAL  
INTRODUCTION TO  
SETTLERS**

[LOOP is pleased to publish online for the first time the original introduction to J. Sakai's important critical labor history *Settlers: The Mythology of the White Proletariat*. The text here is transcribed from the first edition of *Settlers*, published under the title *The Mythology of the White Proletariat: A Short Course in Understanding Babylon* in 1983 by the Chicago-based Morningstar Press. The difference between the two introductions is substantial: the introduction included in subsequent editions, including the recent Kersplebedeb republication, cuts over 2500 words.

What is significant in the differences? Among a number of expanded discussions, Sakai's original introduction situates the text in a concrete political context – as an anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninist contribution to the Asian movement aimed at fostering and defending a revolutionary class analysis of the United States. The text is polemical at points, which in part frames *Settlers* as a critique of attempts within both the Asian movement and wider socialist movement to undermine the Black liberation struggle. Recognition of the US as a “prisonhouse of nations” as a dividing line between revisionism and anti-revisionism, and the consequent primacy of anti-colonial struggle to communist politics, is underlined in these discussions. “Settlerism” – a category still yet needing further elaboration, especially in relationship with the work of Native theorists on settler colonial ideologies – is clearly defined.]

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## **J. Sakai: The Original Introduction to Settlers**

When the Asian Movement made the great leap to Marxism-Leninism in the 1970s much was gained, but much was also lost. Many feel that the militant “heart” of the movement has chilled. Taking up Marxism-Leninism paradoxically reconciled angry young militants to living in White Amerika; that is, in the effort to break through to clearer, scientific socialist concepts of how to make the revolution, comrades have become more confused and less revolutionary-minded.

This is because the particular “Marxism-Leninism” that has been taken up is the “classic” Euro-American revisionist analysis – which falsely pictures the 1980s U.S. Empire as though it had the same class structure and political dynamic as 1848 Germany or 1871 France. Of course, in the “classic” class analysis of 19th Century Europe the Europeans of all classes are there – but we are not. No wonder comrades have gotten misled and miseducated by this misapplied European analysis of a century ago. The misapplication is no accident, but is another tactic in the Euro-American ideological domination of the oppressed.

Other Third-World movements have met similar problems (although our experiences have not been identical). In fact, the 1960s breakthrough of “ethnic studies programs” at universities has been dialectically turned around and used against us. We are getting imperialist-sponsored and imperialist-financed “Asian studies,” “Black studies,” “Puerto Rican studies,” etc. etc. pushed back down our throats. Some of the most prominent Third World intellectuals in the U.S. Empire are getting paid good salaries by the imperialists to teach us our histories. Why?

U.S. imperialism would rather that all Third-World people in their Empire remain totally blank and ignorant about themselves, their nations, their cultures, their pasts, about each other, about everything except going to work in the morning. But that day is over. So instead they oppose enlightenment by giving in to it in form, but not in essence. Like jiu-jitsu, our original demand that our separate and

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unique histories be uncovered and recognized is now being used to throw us off our ideological balance. The imperialists promoted watered-down and distorted versions of our pasts as oppressed Third-World nations and peoples. The imperialists even concede that their standard “U.S. history” is a white history, and is supposedly incomplete unless the long-suppressed Third-World histories are added to it. Why?

The key to the puzzle is that Theirstory (imperialist Euro-American mis-history) is not incomplete; it isn't true at all. Theirstory also includes the standard class analysis of Amerika that is put forward into our hands by the Euro-American Left. Theirstory keeps saying, over and over, “You folks, just think about your own history; don't bother analyzing white society, just accept what we tell you about it.” In other words, it's as if British socialists told Afrikan colonial revolutionaries to just study their own “traditions” and history – but not to study British imperialism. Or if revolutionaries in Czarist Poland or Finland were told not to examine the oppressor Great Russian nation. Theirstory is not incomplete; it is a series of complete lies, an ideological world-view cleverly designed to further imperialist domination over the oppressed.

Of course we are being tugged, pushed and pulled away from analyzing Euro-American society – why should imperialism want us to understand our enemy? But we should want to. In fact, for us and for revolutionaries of all nations it is a necessity. Even Third-World attempts to recover our varied histories here are thrown off when the central piece in the U.S. Empire – the Euro-American oppressor nation – is removed from view.

This work attempts to throw the light of historical materialism on Babylon itself.\* For so long the oppressed have been the objects of investigation by Euro-imperialist sociology, anthropology, psychology, etc., etc. – all to further pacifying and controlling us (anthropology, for example, had its origins as an intelligence service for European colonialization of the world). Now it is time to scientifically examine the oppressor society, to go beneath the outward surface of the U.S. Empire to discover its fundamental structure, dynamic and contradictions. And as we reexamine and sift

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through the development of the oppressor nation we shall see ourselves there, visible from another angle.

We all know that the “United States” is an oppressor nation; that is, a nation that oppresses other nations. This is a characteristic that the U.S. shares with other imperialist powers. What is specific, is particular about the U.S. oppressor nation is that it is an illegitimate nation.

What pretends to be one continental nation stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific is really a Euro-Amerikan settler empire, built on colonially oppressed nations and peoples whose very independent existence has been forcibly submerged. But the colonial crime, the criminals, the victims, and the stolen lands and labor still exist. The many Indian nations, the Afrikan nation in the South, Puerto Rico, the northern half of Mexico, Asian Hawaii – all are now considered the lands of the Euro-Amerikan settlers. The true citizens of this U.S. Empire are the European invaders and their descendants. So that the “United States” is in reality not one, but many nations (oppressor and oppressed).

We see the recognition of Amerika as a “prisonhouse of nations” as the beginning – no more, no less – of the differences between revisionist and communist politics here. We note the hysterical energy that upfront revisionists pour into denying the existence of various oppressed nations, most notably the Afrikan Nation. It’s interesting that the leadership of the KDP (Union of Democratic Filipinos), for example, has participated in several major theoretical expeditions to prove that the Afrikan Nation never has and never will exist. In the well-known 1975 *Critique of the Black Nation Thesis*, the KDP leaders and other Asian and Afrikan radicals claimed not only that the Afrikan Nation was a crazy idea thought up by racist whites, but that nationalism has never had any support in the Afrikan communities. The document even goes so far as to say that no nationalist movement has ever existed among Afrikans here in the U.S. Empire.

Now united with other revisionists in the “Line of March” organization, these Asian-Amerikan activists are still writing

documents arguing that Afrikans suffer no national oppression within the U.S. Empire (only “racism”). Why is this supposedly non-existent Afrikan Nation so, so important to them? Why spend years writing about something you claim doesn’t exist? Unless you fear that this supposedly non-existent Nation and its very existent revolutionary struggle will upset your applectart of reformist-integrationist schemes and alliances. It’s interesting that during these years the KDP leadership, which has been so concerned about combating Afrikan Revolutionary Nationalism, has yet to concern itself with doing a significant class and national analysis of the Filipino community here in the U.S. We hold that once this outward shell of integration into a single, white-dominated “U.S.A.” is cracked open – to reveal the colonial oppression and anti-colonial struggle within – then the correct path to a communist understanding of the U.S. Empire is begun.

We hold that settlerism is the historic instrument created by the European ruling classes to safeguard their colonial conquests with entire, imported populations of European invaders. In return for special privileges and a small share of the colonial loot these settlers became the loyal, live-in garrison troops of Empire over us. As such they objectively side with our oppressors and become imperialism’s willing servants. Everywhere they are filled with white supremacy, national chauvinism, and a hatred and fear of the oppressed. So that in South Afrika, in Palestine, and right here in the U.S. Empire, the Revolution objectively is locked in battle with the European settler masses. On this matter there is no choice.

Usually it is argued that the majority of Euro-Amerikan settlers are exploited proletarians, and that the class exploitation they suffer is or soon will be opening their eyes to revolutionary unity with us, their fellow proletarians. This is not just a view that is identified solely with those comrades who have diluted themselves away into one of the many white “Left” parties. For example, this line clearly dominated the historic May, 1974 national conference on “Racism and Imperialism” given by the now-defunct Afrikan Liberation Support Committee.

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We mention them especially because of the great significance of the A.L.S.C. at its peak, and also because of the vanguard role of the Black Liberation Movement as a whole played during the 1960s and 1970s in reawakening all resistance to U.S. imperialism on the continent.

Most of the leadership-panelists at the Conference strongly supported one or another variation of this line. (1) Abdul Alkalimat of Peoples College pointed out that “the white working class” were “friends” of Third-World people, and that the problems caused by their white supremacy should be handled by “the methods used to resolve non-antagonistic contradictions among friends...” Kwame Toure (sn Stokely Carmichael) of the AAPRP bluntly told the audience that: “... for real socialist transformation to come to America, the white working class is the crucial element... History has demonstrated to us the willingness of the Black man to work with his ally, the white working class... Although the Black worker must be the vanguard, he must push the white worker out front. The Black worker must not move unless the white worker is moving.” And so on.

The only two revolutionary voices on the panel opposing this view of uniting with the white masses were Amiri Baraka (of CAP) and the three spokesmen for the Afrikan Peoples Party (APP). Baraka commented that: “Racism renders talk about the entire working class, at this time, as idealistic conjecture.” One of the APP representatives stated that: “There is a class struggle, but this class struggle is between white workers and capitalists is dormant, asleep, and we can’t wait until it wakes up before we struggle for our demands.” Another APP spokesman said that the way to awaken the white working class was by liberating the oppressed nations:

*“We are not claiming that there are not class contradictions within the U.S. The less the oppressor nation receives from the Afrikan colonies the harder they will have to come down on the so-called white proletariat...”*

Today, CAP and Amiri Baraka have been convinced that counting on the settler masses is the right road to revolution. CAP has dissolved

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into another “multi-national” organization, and Baraka has repudiated his former views. The APP has now put forward in their recent theoretical journal, *Black Revolution*, that in Amerika: “The problem is institutionalized racism.” Their lead editorial states that because of “racism” the white majority “doesn’t see it in their class interest to unite with New Afrikans and are becoming more openly racist.” But the APP believes that if we can defeat “racist repression,” then white and Third-World workers will see that they are all united parts of “the true majority of the people, the many-sectored working class.” (2)

All this is only the misuse of Marxist phrases (and in some cases the use of liberal ones) to cover up political backwardness. Scientific investigation reveals that: 1) The Euro-Amerikan masses, making up the base of an oppressor society, have throughout their entire history attempted to advance themselves primarily by further oppressing us – not by any class struggle. 2) That during most of U.S. history the U.S. Empire’s proletariat was a colonial proletariat, made up only of oppressed Afrikan, Indian, Latino and Asian workers. 3) While a white proletariat made up of immigrant Europeans did emerge in the early 20th Century, by the end of World War II it was literally dissolved by integration into the petit-bourgeois settler mass. Today there is no genuine white proletariat, but only a scattered minority of variously privileged white workers totally commanded by the petit-bourgeois consciousness of their settler community. 4) That in the U.S. Empire the Revolution is the liberation struggle of the Third-World oppressed nations and national-minorities.

The analysis of the U.S. as a settler nation is not new. In the first place, the rise of national liberation movements after World War II increasingly exposed the phenomenon of imperialistic settlerism. The Afrikan guerrillas in Zimbabwe didn’t seek to bring socialism to “Rhodesia”; they fought to completely destroy the illegitimate nation that its European settler citizens called “Rhodesia.” The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine has expressed its solidarity with the Namibian Revolution, saying that: “the Palestinian people feel a special bond with Namibians. Like them, our country is occupied by a settler-colonial regime.”

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Within the U.S. Empire the Black Liberation Movement and the Native Amerikan Movement have brought up this reality. Within the BLM the revolutionary wing of the Black Panther Party, the Black Liberation Army, and the Afrikan Peoples Party have in the past theoretically raised this understanding and applied it to the historic development of the Euro-Amerikan masses; in particular to the question of the “white proletariat,” to its trade unions and political movements.

To lessen chances for misunderstandings, we would like to clarify how some key concepts are used or not in this work. As we know, a colony is a nation or people governed by another nation. Some people use this word in a deceptive manner, most notably people who use legitimate terms like “internal colony” or “colonized people” – but only to avoid having to admit that an oppressed nation is involved, while still sounding revolutionary. We use these terms in a straightforward sense, in no way implying an evasion on the question of nationality. To take another example, the term “national liberation” has been loosely applied to any Third-World political event or struggle. “National liberation” means exactly that – the liberation of an oppressed nation. No nation, no national liberation.

Similarly, the reality of the proletariat and of classes in general has been mystified and made abstract by U.S. revisionism. Some people think that class is a sociological category; one sets up criteria and every person who meets these criteria you count in your arbitrarily created “class” (such as “Every secretary who isn’t a supervisor is in the working class”). Various groups have arguments over their various criteria and categories. All this is nonsense. Classes are unmistakable as mountains. They are huge groupings of millions of families – men, women and children. Having a similar relationship to the means of production and distribution – the material basis for class existence – classes within a given nation have their own neighborhoods, bars, subcultures, movements and political parties, etc. etc. That is to say, classes as collective groupings exist in the real world as physically, as tangibly as the Rocky Mountains or the Mississippi River. We only have to see them.

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Originally the term “proletariat” (a term which came from the Roman Empire and was certainly not invented by communists) referred to the lowest free class in a European society. Marx and Engels in the early 1800s in Europe used it to refer to the industrial workers – a small class in that period which was far more exploited, far more desperate and disorganized, far more lashed by capitalism than the older, more stable peasant class. Today some socialists use the term “proletariat” primarily to refer to workers in basic industry. That would be true for some nations in some periods. But it isn’t universal dogma or unchanging reality (there are no such things). In China, for example, Mao Zedong correctly saw that the role of the revolutionary proletariat would be taken by the migrant rural laborers (whom he recognized as the main part of the Chinese proletariat). In the Afrikan colony during the period of chattel slavery, the field workers on the plantations were the main element in the proletariat of that nation.

For us the proletariat is the lowest, most oppressed and most exploited working class. It is a revolutionary class, a class in the epoch of imperialism whose interests are tied to socialism. We must recognize that imperialism has created, particularly in the oppressor nations, many wage workers who are in no way proletarian. A Euro-Amerikan “A” inspector at a tractor factory, who does no labor and little work of any kind, who takes home \$20-25,000 per year to his white suburb, has the deeply ingrained consciousness of the middle classes and is in no way proletarian. Marx himself, we should recall, pointed out that a “class” that shows no class consciousness, that doesn’t exert itself for independent power, doesn’t exist as a class – no more than a sea without water can be said to be a sea (though persons may call it such).

There are many, many things that this document doesn’t deal with. Racism, the social superstructure based on the theories of the biological superiority and inferiority of “races” of people, is implied in much of what we cover. We do not deal with it because other works have exposed it much better than we could here in limited space. It is also true that we have bent over backwards to avoid indiscriminate use of the term, since it is often used to disguise colonial oppression. The Pilgrims may have been “racists,” but they

invaded Indian nations to steal the land, to set up their “New England” as an outpost of the British Empire.

Similarly, the important phenomenon of “exceptional whites,” who are allies of Third-World struggles, is not dealt with here at all. That is, no John Brown. This is not a large phenomenon in the oppressor nation, to say the least, while our focus has to be on the Euro-Amerikan masses. This is also so important that it needs very detailed and careful analysis in its own right. It is also obvious that care must be taken in dealing with this question because many Euro-Amerikan liberals and radicals have tried to pose as “exceptional” friends of Third-World peoples, while just trying to use us in their own schemes. Hidden agendas and alliances that are not understood well by those who enter into them are just obstacles, blocking the way to genuine alliances based on proletarian internationalism.

The final point we must make is that this document – while it deals with aspects of our history within the U.S. Empire – is nothing like a history of Asians here. Nor is it a history of Indian nations, the Afrikan Nation, Aztlan, or other Third-World nations or peoples. Aspects of our histories are discussed to illuminate the development of the U.S. Empire and the settler masses. Similarly, while we discuss Third-World struggles and movements, this is not a critical examination of these political developments. This is a reconnaissance into enemy territory.

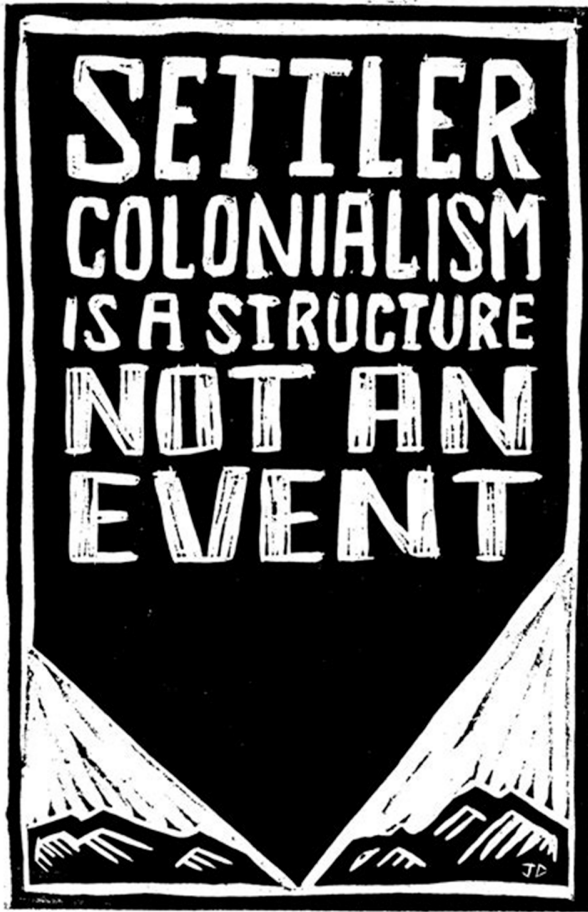
### **Endnotes**

\* “Babylon” is the U.S. Empire, the great enslaver of nations. Babylon was the wealthiest and most powerful city of the ancient Middle East. It was the symbol of decadence and arrogant power. The bible tells how the Jews, forced into exile by Babylonian conquest, became slaves in great Babylon. Eventually they were freed. In the teaching parables of Afrikan slave communities, the biblical story of the “Babylonian captivity” was used to remind the people that the goal of liberation would come to be, that even the powerful “Babylon” (the U.S. Empire) could not enslave forever.

(1) All references to discussions at the conference from: *The African World*, Vol IV, No. 5, July 1974: “Historic ALSC Conference Discussed: WHICH ROAD FOR BLACK PEOPLE?”

(2) *Black Revolution*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Winter 1980: “Editorial: The Party Line.”

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