Back Toward Universalism: Oliver Cox and the Critique of Race Leadership

*I’m beginning truly to understand the greatest joke, the most absurd paradox, in American history: that simply by striving consciously to become Negroes we are becoming and destined to become Americans, and the first truly mature Americans at that.*

Ralph Ellison to Richard Wright, July 22, 1945

*[Martin Luther] King is entirely right when he says that segregation is dead. The real question which faces the Republic is just how long, how violent, and how expensive the funeral is going to be; and this question it is up to the Republic to resolve, it is not really in King’s hands. The sooner the corpse is buried, the sooner we can get around to the far more taxing and rewarding problems of integration, or what King calls community, and what I think of as the achievement of nationhood, or, more simply and cruelly, the growing up of this dangerously adolescent country.*

James Baldwin, “The Dangerous Road Before Martin Luther King” *Harper’s Magazine*, February 1961

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At first blush, it is difficult to situate the sociologist Oliver C. Cox in the history of significant American intellectual life. It is no less difficult to situate him in the history of Black politics and political theory.[[1]](#footnote-1) Unlike WEB Du Bois, for instance, Cox did not propagate any followers, nor do any intellectuals or activists today “claim” him or his intellectual legacy for themselves.[[2]](#footnote-2) Today, with very few exceptions, Cox has apparently left very little legacy at all; neither hagiography nor hamartiology.[[3]](#footnote-3) And yet, Cox’s work stands at the center of many critical intellectual movements and inflection points—from world systems theory to certain new avenues of political economy that attempt to understand the historical and logical conjunction between race prejudice and capitalism. What could help to explain this paradoxical outsider-insider status? This paper offers one way to understand this ambiguity. I will postulate that in the context of the United States, much hinged upon Cox’s critique of “racial leadership” and the forms it took. Namely, any political movement that seemed to him to appear “nationalistic” or “separatist” had to be denounced in the name of political, economic, and racial progress. This stance ultimately led him not only to distance *himself* from many of his contemporaries, but which also led to certain political incongruities among the younger generation of anti-capitalist and anti-racist radicals. This paper will examine especially Cox’s long-standing criticisms of the prominent sociologist E. Franklin Frazier as an illustration.

A few more words of background will help to situate Cox as a thinker and as a critic. Like CLR James, Cox was not an American but Trinidad-born. Unlike James, Cox spent his entire professional career at American institutions and positioned himself primarily as a social critic and economic historian. Cox began his education at the University to Chicago, then got his first job at the Tuskegee Institute. After a few semesters he moved to Lincoln University in Missouri where he spent the rest of his full-time career. In 1970, Cox was invited along with sociologists Michael Parker Banton, Robin L. Williams, and J. Milton Yinger to Wayne State University in Detroit to teach graduate and undergraduate seminars “on race relations and social cultural dynamics.”[[4]](#footnote-4) His personal annotated copy of his major study, *Capitalism as a System* (or alternatively titled *The Capitalist System: Its Structure and Functions*) remains in the Walter Reuther Library archives at Wayne State.

It had been his first book, entitled *Caste, Class and Race*, where Cox first made his name, in the late 1940s, as a major, if controversial, contributor to the discourses and politics of race relations and political economy. Indeed, *Caste, Class and Race* would also become an early document of what would become known as world systems theory.[[5]](#footnote-5) Cox’s subsequent trilogy—*The Foundations of Capitalism,* the aforementioned *Capitalism as a System,* and *Capitalism and American Leadership*—solidified his position as among the, if not *the*, single most important contributor to the study of the historical co-evolution of capitalist society and racist ideology.[[6]](#footnote-6) All this, despite the chill of the Cold War and Jim Crow systems operating at full power at home.

The second reason why Cox is difficult to situate in American intellectual political history is that he has mostly been forgotten, though he was a formidable figure among contemporaries. Indeed, he was remarkably influential despite working and residing in a relatively un-prestigious university (not in any case an “R1” institution). His first book was, for a time, used primarily as a textbook for both undergraduates and graduate students of sociology. But since the book was quickly allowed to run out of print, copies became ever rarer each passing year. This was combined with several other political factors. First, Cox, like many Black intellectuals of his generation, were seldom allowed ample research[[7]](#footnote-7) opportunities, funding, or graduate students who could help spread their perspective across the academic world. Among the most enduring pressures was due, again, to the Cold War context and Cox’s deep sympathy not only for anti-colonial movements across the world (that is, among the “backward people” in the “periphery”), but his abiding sympathy with the Soviet Union well into the era led by Leonid Brezhnev.[[8]](#footnote-8) Matters were not improved when Cox, who arrived in Detroit in the early 1970s, was met with undergraduate and, especially, graduate students who had already been deeply influenced by, if not had personal involvement in, radical Black Power-influenced labor politics of the Dodge Revolutionary Movement (DRUM) or one of its associate organizations in the metro Detroit area. In short, Cox would find few allies in a movement which had assumed for itself the mantle of the “Vanguard of the Black Revolution.”[[9]](#footnote-9) His criticism of Black power modes of political leadership was contrary to the contemporary surrounding left. Cox himself had become alienated from the causes he spent his life working toward: the improvement of race relations, the socialist revolution, and the abolition of racism and racial prejudice.

Finally, even in his most scholarly mode, Cox deployed a severe and thunderous rhetorical method against those whom he suspected of being intellectual and political adversaries, or those whom he believed to have assumed, without due authority, political or racial leadership. For example, In his early work, Cox took to task those (mostly but by no means all) white, liberal social scientists whom he believed to elevate the importance of race as a caste system in the United States. Thus, his trenchant critique of the sociologists Robert Park and Ruth Benedict, as well as what amounted to be a powerful manifesto against Gunnar Myrdal and his *An American Dilemma*, a critique which remains today perhaps the most radical, stirring, and damning criticisms of that influential book on American race relations.[[10]](#footnote-10) Dismissive in tone and quick to generalize divergent movements and figures, by the end of his life, Cox had evidently found no allies among the American left, and few students willing (or able) to carry on his intellectual legacy.[[11]](#footnote-11)

This paper seeks to extend the geometry of Cox’s influence and critique beyond his writings against “white academics” (or perhaps better: “traditional academics” or “liberal social scientists”). I am interested here to examine how Cox positioned himself against two influential Black thinkers, namely W.E.B. Du Bois (likely the most influential of all such thinkers) and E. Franklin Frazier as racial/intellectual leaders. The remarks made against these intellectuals—while themselves not systematic in any sensible way, may have nevertheless been programmatic in the sense that they emerged from the same method of reasoning. That is, they were criticized as representatives of conservative political tendencies at a specific moment within the development of the proletarianization of world labor. Indeed, his criticisms were not, ultimately, against *them* as individuals. Rather, they prefigure and reflect a far wider criticism of 1960s Black civil rights politics and leadership styles, especially as it would lead, in Cox’s view, toward dogmatic racial chauvinism in the 1970s in lieu of a class-based, multiracial, and universal commitment to the economic transition from capitalism to socialism, from imperialist competition to global cooperation.[[12]](#footnote-12) Throughout his oeuvre, I believe Cox thought that *only* such a complete structural change in the political economy of American society could provide the grounds to eliminate racism and racial chauvinism in the globally dominant nation. Cox’s understanding of this historical and political depreciation among left-leaning politics in the 1960s can be understood using two fundamental concepts: alienation and leadership. His critique of Du Bois and Frazier—as well as the trajectory, with few exception, of Black politics from Booker T. Washington on—can be summarized in these terms but cannot be understood in isolation. Cox’s theory of political leadership and alienation also must be seen within a broad and long history of capitalist development, imperialism, colonialism, civil rights and class struggle, and global American leadership. These remarks are only the first steps toward synthesis of these scattered writings.

**Cox and the White Lenin: Intimations of Leadership in *Caste, Class, and Race***

Of all Cox’s bold pronouncements, few have garnered as much controversy as his early (1948) claim that “A great leader of Negroes will almost certainly be a white man.”[[13]](#footnote-13) Of course, we know that within a decade, Martin Luther King, Jr., would help to lead—along with a sophisticated network of political strategists—the Montgomery bus boycotts and become, presumably with little controversy, the most significant “race leaders” in American history. How could Cox have ostensibly gotten it so wrong? How could he have been so blind to the potential for Black political leadership in the middle of the 20th century to change the political culture of the nation? There are many potential answers—many evident blind spots in his 1948 analysis—but what scholars and commentators have themselves failed to see, partly since many of his subsequent writings on the topic were not published widely, was that Cox spent the next decade attempting to understand domestic (race) leadership. Indeed, his study of domestic leadership likely led him to come to a particular understanding of international relations in modern global capitalism, in which the United State assumed the leadership position.[[14]](#footnote-14) In any case, let us focus the logic behind such apparent blind spots.

First, the early work of Cox seemed to build into contemporary politics a progressive teleology inferred from a conception of history as slowly developmental under the logical imperatives of capitalist society. Once capitalism appears on the scene, in other words, Cox tended to believe that by necessity all societies will slowly integrate into the system in more or less developed ways. This was the basis of Cox’s position that capitalism, by its inherent need to expand into new market zones, was colonialist from the start. Such a position presumably is in concert with the view Marx held in the preface to the first edition Capital, namely that “It is a question of these laws [of the capitalist mode of production] themselves, of these tendencies winning their way through and working themselves out with iron necessity. The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future.”[[15]](#footnote-15) Then, from the moment of integration into the logic of the capitalist mode of production, presumably, for Cox, ought to likewise lead to the developmental arch toward socialism given certain objective—but always antagonistic—conditions, especially on the progressive development of the national proletariat. Such conditions may include: their degree of internal solidarity, the sophistication (the breadth and depth) of their organization, their ability to disbelieve in the “meaning” of “natural” racial markers, the clarity of their collective understanding that race antagonism is part and parcel with the global class struggle. Tied inextricably to the class struggle, I mention only in passing, was the *political* struggle over the state, a struggle Cox called the “political-class struggle.” For politicians, Cox believed (not implausibly), themselves could be bought and directed by regional aristocracies (if they were not already *themselves* members of such an aristocracy), “a ruling class,” W.J. Cash once wrote, “coextensive with the planter group…descended from the old gentlefolk who for many centuries had made up the ruling classes of Europe.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

In any case, the white leader (the “white Lenin”) Cox likely had in mind here, then, was presumably Franklin D. Roosevelt, whom Cox believed had brought the United States closer to both democracy and socialism than any place in world history.[[17]](#footnote-17) Cox maintained this position on administrative *political* leadership even after the dreamlike pretensions to both American socialism and democracy had long since faded. In the middle of the 1950s after the *Brown v. Board* decision that made segregation in education unconstitutional, Cox called upon President Dwight Eisenhower—a white leader—to enforce the ruling.[[18]](#footnote-18) Indeed, Cox believed that the President should use a few choice words to indicate to the southern political aristocracy (whom Cox squarely blamed for anti-segregation recalcitrance) that he intended to enforce the ruling. If words failed, force, Cox hoped, would decide. Cox said:

On the other hand, the presidency, by a few sage words on the sanctity of constitutional guarantees, spoken at an opportune time and place, can do more to develop a favorable political social and political climate than either of the other two branches of the government. Manifestly, there has been a pressing need for administrative action in bringing together conciliation groups of both races to work out difficult situations. In truth, the feebleness of presidential effort in our racial crisis constitutes the most baffling bottleneck.[[19]](#footnote-19) In my view, it amounts to nothing less than a grievous national misfortune. The resolution of racial antagonism involves national group interest and emotions similar to those which once led the nation into Civil War. The possibility of again using coercion against the intransigent area should not be completely ruled out. Open conflict resulting from societal changes tend to arrive when there is an effective determination to maintain the status quo in the face of contradictory social trends. The earlier, therefore, it is made clear to those southern leaders who threaten violence rather than yield to interracial adjustment, that they are relying upon treacherous means, the less likely they will ultimately be confronted with the situation which makes a test of strength inevitable.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Thus, it was not the *whiteness* of the leader *per se* that made the decisive difference. It was that he was in the position of actual decision-making; of immediate, executive power. His declarations and threats—even if merely verbal—could make a difference and influence people.[[21]](#footnote-21) Further, he controlled the military enforcement mechanisms and was the officer sworn by Oath to insure domestic tranquility. And, crucially, such a position, in 1957, could *only* be filled by a white man. Indeed, the strategic logic remained constant a decade later, when, even after the major successes of the Civil Rights revolution, King, Randolph, and Rustin were required to strategize *along* white Democratic leadership to secure the passing and enforcement of voting and civil rights legislation.[[22]](#footnote-22)

**Cox’s Critique of the Leadership-Form**

The problem of leadership was a consistent theme in Cox’s work. It appeared in two guises. First, and during and earlier phase of his career (approximately 1940-1955, before the publication of *The Foundations of* Capitalism in 1957) Cox had been primarily politically concerned with what can be called “racial leadership,” namely the type of leadership he saw among Black people in the United States. Three published texts from the early 1950s exemplify this aspect of Cox’s thinking: “The New Crisis in Leadership Among Negroes” (Autumn 1950); “The Programs of Negro Civil Rights Organizations” (Summer 1951), and “The Leadership of Booker T. Washington” (October 1951).[[23]](#footnote-23) Cox, not unlike Du Bois in the much earlier text “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others,” offers a genealogy of Black leadership “since the coming of freedom in the United States.”[[24]](#footnote-24) In the 90 years since the end of the Civil War, Cox argues, four distinct types of Black leadership became prominent, each exemplified in a figurehead. These were: (a) Black protest, exemplified by Frederick Douglass; (b) collaboration, exemplified by Booker T. Washington; (c) racial nationalism most clearly pursued by Marcus Garvey; and (d) revolt, “probably led” by Paul Robeson.[[25]](#footnote-25) A year later, Cox included several more rubrics, none mutually exclusive, but each establishing a particular vector it would predominantly follow. These were: (a) protest, (b) collaboration, (c) nationalism, (d) association and pressure, (e) exposure, and (d) proletarianism. It is worth mentioning at the outset that Cox’s own preferred vector combines integration, protest, and especially proletarianism. Proletarianism, for Cox, is linked to a universalistic and democratic program that emphasizes the global class conflict that, as it were, “goes beyond” racial classification, typified most acutely (for Cox), in Booker T. Washington, Marcus Garvey, the early Du Bois, and E. Franklin Frazier.

By the early 1950s, Cox had identified a veritable crisis among “racial” leadership, mirroring the crisis in racial antagonism apparent in American society. Particularly in the context of the Red Scare, Robeson, who had been in decline, especially after his infamous comments in 1949 that got him labelled in the popular press as an un-American, villainous traitor.[[26]](#footnote-26) By the early 1950s, W.E.B. Du Bois had also been blacklisted, his career and public persona strategically and systematically ruined.[[27]](#footnote-27) Such conditions left a veritable vacuum for racial leadership, according to Cox. Under the Jim Crow regime, a subjected people still needed a politics—and a political leader. One who could provide a universal program to liberation, and one who addressed not only the “racial” aspects of American racism, but its function within the most powerful capitalist nation in the world. For Cox, most candidates would fall short.

Primary Case Study: Cox on E. Franklin Frazier

In 1965, the young sociologist and social psychologist Nathan Hare published a book entitled *The Black Anglo Saxons*. It was a study situated somewhere between Frazier’s *The Black Bourgeoisie* and Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks.* Cox himself provided a highly critical introduction. In a subsequent edition five years later, Floyd McKissick provided a glowing preface which today sits afront the book. In time, Hare removed Cox’s introduction. Why?

What was curious, especially for Nathan Hare, was that Cox decided not to introduce Hare’s study but rather took the opportunity to criticize the sociological method and oeuvre of E. Franklin Frazier, who had died three years prior, in 1962. For Cox, Hare was a young scholar who, in time, would come to know better than to follow a Chicago-School line of sociological study which bought into the idea that the race relations were (or could substantially be understood as) caste relations and, additionally and subsequently, that some kind of politics of racial exclusivity could plausibly result from such an understanding of race relations.

What did Cox mean? First of all, he did not believe that black Americans were not the specific victims of racism—Jim Crow segregation, lynching, white terrorism, and the like. But he understood independent black organizations—such as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party—were Black organizations *per se*. Rather, Cox believed, such movements became semi-independent from the general (white) party politics not out of choice or by political preference but out of strategic necessity. The Democratic Party in the 1960s was still dominated by a Southern oligarchy and its ruling political class interests and a was committed ideologically to white racial domination, Cox argued. The logical structure of white southern aristocratic ideology ran as follows:

When typical racial situations become established, many social facts come into play to perpetuate hostile attitudes between the groups. Some of these social facts are segregation, derived economic benefits accruing even to white workers, nationalism, withholding of the dominant culture from the exploitable group, and socially distorted interaction arising from various forms of cultural isolation. Moreover, the antagonism tends to be transmitted transnationally, from generation to generation, thus causing the illusion of instinctive interracial behavior.[…][[28]](#footnote-28)

Thus, a vital economic interest of the ruling class in the south—a ruling *political* class that had established itself and its interests in the Democratic party—was to create and perpetuate illusion of racial instincts as naturally and biologically derived. The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party could play no part in such a party structure from the inside. But the Party recognized that there was no politics absolutely autonomous from the formal party structure. In other words, it was a faction intent on changing and integrating, not on remaining separatist. For Cox, “racial groups” which appeared to desire to stay *outside* of formal politics, and who seemed disinterested in the general proletarianization of American workers—to say nothing of the global trend of proletarianization, seen from Cox’s perspective as part of a global and total capitalist system—were doomed to fail. They also, he suspected, relied on a mythical racial homogeneity from which they thought coherent group-interest could be derived. In short, the goal of the termination of racial antagonism was dissolved, made foreign to the underlying class struggle, where no search for an endpoint Cox called “harmonious adjustment” could possibly be found.[[29]](#footnote-29) This is the critique of Frazier. Let us briefly see why.

First, according to Cox, recourse to uniform racial interest was always illegitimate because they were always “statistical categories of unstable dimensions.”[[30]](#footnote-30) The social scientist who attempts to reify racial classifications must then assume a kind of homogenous racial block from time immemorial. Such for Cox was the basis of racial nationalism whose basis was a fictitious moment in history where racial blocs lived in harmony, and where racial interests aligned. “It is possible that Frazier [does not recognize his] nationalistic adherence,” Cox writes, “a likely fact which, I think, contributes to the ultimate sterility of [his] exercise. The nationalism of *Black Bourgeoisie* seems to be nativistic yearning, a turning back to some mystical Negro folk culture and a revulsion to evidences of Negro assimilation.”[[31]](#footnote-31)

Connected closely was Cox’s contention that Frazier believed that certain pathologies of the Black middle class emerged from a background of universal psychic harmony. Stuck between an agricultural South and an industrializing North, the Black [man] *developed* a kind of schizophrenic attitude. This, in short, leads to a kind of dispassionate assimilation—behind, the racially authentic past; before, a white megastructure of culture and economy made unavailable to Black persons. For Frazier, this middle-ground led to the impotence and moral and personal pathologies apparently unique of the Black middle class. Cox saw things differently. He believed that the Black middle class was not pathological but developed independent institutions which mirrored dominant institutions (such as political parties) not because they were pathological but because of long-term goals of assimilation. The most authentic (that is, the most successful) racial leader would understand the goal of integration within the context of proletarianization. The structural trend, therefore, was not to *racially* assimilate but to enjoin in the cultural life of a nation. Here is a typical example from Cox:

One of the most intriguing notions of the black-bourgeois school, followed consistently by Hare [and Frazier], is that Negro institutions and practices are largely ‘make-believe.’ It is a trap into which no sociologist should be led. Their caricatures of Negro business, the Negro press, and Negro ‘society,’ even if they were not caricatures, *should be studied as vital solutions to social situations.* The same cultural imperatives which motivate Negro women to dye their hair and Negro men to install bars in their homes—types of foibles with which the school deals in profusion—also motivate groups to establish such institutions as the Negro church, the Negro baseball league, or the Freedom Democratic Party. These solutions are the outcome of assimilation under pressure. It is a perversion of thought to say that by so acting Negros are ‘aping the white man’ (p. 4-5).

Black persons and institutions for Cox could neither be fully (or even largely) autonomous from the dominant cultural patterns. Nor could they be “authentic” to some mystified past.

A racial nationalism, for Cox, falsely believed in both the autonomy of Black life and institutions and in an authentic, homogenous racial past. And a “race leader” of the false type allows such myths to flourish. As Cox writes, “The culture of Negro Americans is not an immemorial heritage of the race but rather a version of Western culture. It has been developing into the authentic pattern within a context of racial discrimination” (p. 10). The critical error, then, was for racial leaders to believe that “race relations” were the alpha and omega of “racial politics.” Racial politics was rather one expression of a much wider proletarianization of the world. Racial problems and struggles develop *within* and not independently of capitalist society, a society which by the middle of the 20th century had global reach. Cox says that when Frazier “confin[es] his vision to the ‘Negro problem’ without investigating its settings in its capitalist milieu, he apparently subconsciously arrived at a conviction that this untoward behavior is *inherent* and thus he succumbed to self-condemnation.” (pp. 12-13). Thus, by shadowboxing, as it were, with “race relations” as the central node of political struggle, and not as a unique expression of capitalist society—based on exploitation and the invention of racial antagonism—Frazier “hardly confronted even tangentially a real power structure” (p. 13). All subsequently leadership that followed such a pattern would, likewise, fall into political impotence.

The condemnation of middle-class pathologies was therefore, for Cox, not an effective political maneuver, especially for Black Americans. If race antagonism was to continue—that is, if capitalism was to continue—then a universal program was demanded to revolutionize the social requirements which gave *rise* and necessitated race prejudice. The question was: Was this to be solely the work of those in actual power—white leaders? Or could a Black leader emerge who did not fall into all—perhaps any—of the modern nationalist traps?

Secondary Case Study: Du Bois, King, and the Universal Leader

Among the figures we have mentioned in this paper, it was Du Bois who received the least harsh critique from Cox. Cox, on his part, appeared to see Frazier and Fanon as among those who simply rearticulated a reformist and racial nationalist program for Black leadership, a program whose genealogy Cox believed had stalled out with Marcus Garvey and Booker T. Washington. Indeed, Du Bois likely would have been the target of the same critique had he not moved into a position Cox would describe as radical proletarian. This position emphasized the need to “go beyond” racial nationalism and emerge as a militant for the global class conflict, as a partisan for the world proletarian, no matter their “race.”

Another reason for this relative kindness was perhaps due to Du Bois’s immense stature as a scholar; indeed, there was likely no single American intellectual more important that Du Bois in the twentieth century—among intellectuals, perhaps only John Dewey or William James exerted a similar influence—and neither compared to Du Bois’ amazing breadth of study, fluent as he was in some half dozen academic disciplines (philosophy, German, political science, sociology, anthropology, religion, Africana studies, at least). And by the time Cox had published his first book, in 1948, Du Bois had long become the seminal American intellectual.[[32]](#footnote-32)

In his final book, Cox offers a brief but suggestive remark about Du Bois and his proposed leadership role in anticolonial affairs.[[33]](#footnote-33) Cox wrote:

Perhaps the most lamentable of these seekers after some compatible social harbinger of their doctines was the great W. E. B. Du Bois himself. [Tom] Mboya could have told him that Ghana had no place for his type of personality or his ideology---that he would merely be a guest of Kwame Nkrumah. His death (1963), before the banishment of Nkrumah (1966), probably spared him some of the bitterest frustrations of his long productive life. This is by no means a complete listing of the course of all the spurious racial theories and their programs. Recently they have mushroomed all over the community, and they range from the highly ridiculous to the reasonably pardonable. We cite them as illustrations of dead ends in the quest for leadership among Negroes.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Thus, among the final published concerns of Oliver Cox was the role of racial leadership in the early 1970s, the period following the successes of the Civil Rights Struggle when American leadership seemed more hostile than it had been for many generations. The question for Cox was whether Black Americans would seek out some kind of authenticity in racial or geographic terms (as Cox believed Black Power attempted to do) or to, in a more moderate sense, attempt to establish a kind of panethnic solidarity, rather than in terms concerned with proletarianization and labor.

Indeed it appears that only Martin Luther King, Jr. was a completely legitimate leader, for Cox. Briefly stated, it is because King exemplified each of the important characteristic needed not *only* to be a “leader” of a “race” of people, but because such leadership aimed at the total abolition of racial antagonism though an increasingly universal, increasingly democratic, and increasingly proletarian program.

After King’s assassination in April 1968, Cox wrote a two-part editorial in the *Lincoln Clarion* explaining why King had been such a miraculous and successful leader. These were Cox’s factors for King’s success:

**Non-violent direct action:** This is a mass action involving a common cause of the people: it emphasizes goals and it appeals to the ethical sense of the opposition. The leader shows faith in what Gandhi calls **satyagraha** or “soul force.” Nonviolence, King argues, is a weapon of the strong. The resister should be able and willing to stand firm when it would seem proper and even wise for the user of violence to run for cover.

**Need for Discipline:** In violent mass conflict, including war, injury or even death of participants is to be expected. But in nonviolent action, only the resisters may suffer physical injury. Nonviolent actionists, form Gandhi to M.L. King, Jr., believe that prayer constitutes the essential means of achieving discipline. Nonviolence thus tends to become increasingly involved with religion: and indeed the resister may find that its discipline exacts no less than exemplary personal conduct.

**Tactics:** The group, through pressure, makes known its intentions to continue with increasingly overt and drastic action if its demands are not met. This tactic includes insistence upon negotiations, especially negotiations at the outset of a campaign; public announcements of intent to initiate a campaign of passive resistance; mass demonstrations such as marching and assembling; boycotts, strikes, picketing.

**Civil Disobedience:** As mass action, civil disobedience involved concerted infraction of laws deemed unjust and inimical to the welfare of the group. Next to revolution and rebellion, this is probably the most highly charged form of action in struggles for civil rights. It is essentially direct mass resistance to edicts of a government—defying certain laws.

**Role of love:** If it is possible to bring an opponent to heel through the various techniques of nonviolent action, including disciplined, courageous behavior, of what use is the injunction to love the enemy? The injunction not to hate the enemy constituted the critical reliance of Dr. King. Its acceptance remained the touchstone of his greatness. His reification of the doctrine of love through faith in the brotherhood of man became his most abiding and exalted achievement. He never compromised with it.[[35]](#footnote-35)

The strategic political advantage for King was that “the nonviolent movement tended to bring universal moral pressure upon the constituted authority of communities. Its procedure gained the sympathy of courts and legislatures; restrained the police; tied the hands of racist officials; caused them to capitulate and sometimes publicly even to confess injustices.” The major counter-pressures, for Cox, and for the universal democratic politics of King, was the tendency for opposition groups to become increasingly willing to resort to physical violence, often at enemies who were totems of proper enemies of exploitation (namely propagandists of race antagonism, the southern oligarchy). Thus, for Cox, “There can be little doubt that the major frustration of King’s public life was his failure to cope effectively with the anti-white rancor and the advocacy of aimless violence among the Negro masses: the milieu for which he is not responsible, but which, nevertheless, seems to have been part of his legacy to the group. Nothing, it would appear, could do greater honor to his memory than cooperation with those who seek to make this unfortunate legacy but a transient incubus.”[[36]](#footnote-36)

For Cox, the march back to a universal politics is what virtually all other “race leaders” failed to do—from Garvey and Washington to E. Franklin Frazier and W.E.B. Du Bois (and Fanon, as Cox came to understand him)—as great as the latter was. In the end, Du Bois himself had traveled to Ghana, betraying the universal class struggle in favor of (what Cox believed to be) a recourse, regressive indeed, to uniform racial interest. Cox had manifestly interpreted this departure less as a symbol of global solidarity—less as racial solidarity—than as a member of the American bourgeois intelligentsia instructing a “backward” nation about its proletariat liberation, as if the people of Ghana were incapable of organic political struggle. To Cox even this gesture, no matter how well-intended, had the whiff of neocolonialism masked in the language of racial solidarity. For Cox, such a gesture was, in fact, retrogressive, very far indeed from the proletarian class-dominated third-world socialist revolution required for global emancipation.

Conclusion

There was likely two broad and contradictory views in Cox, and making them explicit may help us see why, if we look at his work broadly and not simply identify parts in isolation, he had made political antagonists in nearly every quarter. As we have seen, perhaps figures such as King, A Philip Randolph, and Tom Mboya could escape Cox’s ire because they exhibited certain key political commitments and theoretical characteristics that, for Cox, appeared or tended to “lead” toward the next phase in race relations in the world history of capitalist development—a global proletarian universalism. And yet, Cox himself could never quite synthesize his two projects into a coherent whole. On the one hand, he maintained that for Black Americans, the best political program was constant assimilation into the broader culture. Any signs of progress—including, for example, integrated baseball leagues or sophisticated and highly regarded performers such as Leontyne Price—were signs of ultimate racial progress because they signaled the diminution of the negative significance of racial markers in American life. In other words, Black Americans would be “following the leader” position by themselves becoming sub-leaders within the leader nation. At the same time, he seemed equally devoted to the anticolonial struggle which devalued the political possibilities of the leader nations to turn against their capitalist interests for the benefit of a world socialism. The transition to a competitive and exploitative society to a society based on cooperation might seem, on a global scale, to make such assimilationist politics null—why bother assimilating the oppressed into the dominant society of the core if such a society was hopelessly mired in the exploitation of the world? To put it simply, domestic and international politics demanded apparently incompatible, perhaps even schizophrenic, programs. In one man, such a position appears contradictory; and yet, it allowed Cox a double-perspective with which he criticized nearly all his contemporaries.

Thus, from one perspective, Cox could criticize Frazier (and Hare, as well as a slew of Black scholars) for what he claimed was a kind of domestic ethno-chauvinism, which claimed for itself a transhistorical, indeed, a transglobal racial identity, and the mistaken view that assimilation was a sort of “betrayal” of a previous racial authenticity. In the same way, he thought he could criticize Fanon for believing that there was a kind of colonial authenticity outside of the capitalist world system—though, it must be said that his criticism of Fanon is mostly at the level of rhetoric and is never developed systematically. Probably it was reverse engineered out of Cox’s 1960s-70s opposition to Black power, and what he saw as their illegitimate claim to be “race leaders”—leaders who had never won significant victories for the constituencies they claimed to represent, nor indeed were able to leverage political power in the halls of Congress, as Randolph, King, and Rustin had appeared to attempt.

Finally Du Bois, with whom Cox was nevertheless most impressed. If anyone could claim to be a racial leader, it was he, Du Bois. But near the end of his life, when he travelled to Ghana, Cox, it seems, began to believe that, as an American, Du Bois was moving toward a type of transnational racial authenticity that, though clearly internationalist and socialist in spirit, betrayed a politics of human solidarity. Africa, for Cox, could only create its *own* political and economic leaders (hence his reference to Tom Mboya, as well as Kwame Nkrumah); it did not need to rely on Americans—members of the leading capitalist nation—exporting themselves, no matter how sympathetic, to the decolonizing nations.

Soon, however, this era would come to an end; perhaps Cox had always been fighting a rearguard battle—volleying at targets who had long been in decline, attempting, a generation too late, to restart the politics and intellectual inquiry into racial and economic equality. For example, Fanon died suddenly of leukemia in 1961; Frazier in 1962; Du Bois, after a long life, only a year later; Nkrumah would be ousted in a coup d’état in 1966; King would be assassinated in 1968, and Mboya himself would be killed in 1969. Many of the leaders and major actors in Cox’s analysis—leaders and alienators—would be dead or exiled by 1970. And a new generation would go on without him. As Nathan Hare said, after he had removed Cox’s introduction to *The Black Anglo Saxons*, “time has proven Cox wrong… [he] does not deserve a serious rebuttal now” (pp. 133-134).

Cox himself died in relative obscurity in 1974, after one final battle with Black power trade unionists in Detroit. Cox was indeed a strange and paradoxical figure. But, I think, in order to understand the immeasurably complex history of political thought during his era—the deep battles of integration and assimilation; nationalism and Black power, the fraught history of race and labor relations, global political economy, and international relations, of leadership and organization, he also remains an utterly indispensable figure.

1. I do not make a distinction between the contemporary academic discipline of “political theory” and the type of historical political sociology Cox was engaged in. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This is not to say that his work has been utterly forgotten. Indeed, Fernand Braudel, Paul Baran, Paul Sweezy, Andre Gunder Frank, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Samir Amin have all included him as a key figure in world system theory. Beyond them, CLR James, Adolph Reed, Jr., and Charisse Burden-Stelly are probably his most sympatric scholarly allies. Cedric Robinson claimed him as a theorist of race and the Black radical tradition but whose project, I believe, is radically opposed to the one Cox articulated. Others, such as the philosopher Liam Kofi Bright and historian Robin D.G. Kelly make significance reference to him. Still others, such as Isabel Wilkerson and Charles Tilly are hostile to Cox. The primary trajectory of Cox’s scholarship, then, it seems to me, and when it comes to the matters of political economy and the production of racial prejudice is academic and scholarly indifference. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. To elaborate on the previous footnote: As I have previously written, most scholarship on Cox has—and has always been—so superficial that it hardly warrants mentioning. This is true even for those who ostensibly admired his work, such as Cedric Robinson, or contemporary theorists such as Liam Kofi Bright and Olúfémi O. Táíwò who, primarily and for the most part, merely *mention* Cox but do not engage with him or his ideas. It was also clear that by the middle of the 1960s, American and especially elite liberal social science in the United States had little time for Coxian historical analysis. This disavowal is demonstrated by a viciously dismissive 1965 review of Cox’s complex text *Capitalism as a System* by Harvard sociologist Charles Tilly, who deemed it “pseudo-history.” On the other hand, the Egyptian Marxist historian and economist Samir Amin, and around the same time, concluded that the same text constituted “a very fine study of the world capitalist system” (Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale* *vol. 1* 1974, 97). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. “Wayne Adds 4 Sociologists” *Detroit Free Press* (Sunday, May 10, 1970). Archival. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Christopher A. McAuley, “Oliver C. Cox and the Origins of World Systems Theory” in *American Social Thought and Political Economy in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Nelson Lichtenstein(Philadelphia, 2006),pp. 175-190 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Hubert B. Ross, “In Memoriam: Oliver C. Cox” *Phylon* vol. 36, no. 2 (2nd Qtr., 1975), pp. 204-207. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In other words, as the scholar Jerry G. Watts once observed, Cox was among that generation of black scholars (such as Carter Woodson, Allison Davis, Horace Mann Bond, Charles Johnson, E. Franklin Frasier, Alaine Locke, and WEB Dubois) who, despite their immense achievements “were forced to teach at academically inferior black colleges while their white graduate school peers enjoyed the prestige, intellectual status, and research facilities of elite white institutions” (“The Case of a Black Conservative: Thomas Sowell: Talent and Tragedy,” 303). A few, such as St. Clair Drake and John Hope Franklin would receive appointments at elite universities late in their careers. But Cox, whom Watts elsewhere described as “this unique Afro-American intellectual,” was never one of them. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. For instance, as he writes in *Capitalism as a System:* “In such countries as Russia and China, where both the population and natural-resource complement are favorable, the socialist leadership can develop the desired enthusiasm in the people to make the awesome initial sacrifices in labor and savings, and sustain their hope perpetually by a show of cumulative results. Frustration is overcome by incremental reassurance of progress. The domestic demand is so large that factories, mills, water-power projects, irrigation schemes, educational institutions, and so on are under steady pressure to operate with increasing efficiency, a fact which tends to demonstrate the necessity of socialist discipline. Capitalist man, it should be recalled, endured his own age of severe discipline. This, then—the rewarding drive to achieve economic and cultural goals—becomes the basis of human motivation and incentive in socialist society. Satellite countries cannot experience it fully; as entities, they may even experience cumulative disillusionment—they cannot “takeoff.” Cox, *Capitalism as a System,* 242. I doubt very much Cox strayed from this view before his death. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <https://projects.library.wayne.edu/12thstreetdetroit/exhibits/show/aftermathofunrest/drum>. See also Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and race in a Modern American City* (Cornell University Press, 2017). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Thomas J. Mann. “Oliver C. Cox, Gunnar Myrdal, and the Political Limits of Race Relations.” Nonsite.org June 16, 2023. https://nonsite.org/oliver-c-cox-gunnar-myrdal-and-the-political-limits-of-race-relations/. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. It is unclear if Cox was familiar with the work of, or perhaps ever encountered, James Boggs, Grace Lee Boggs, or Raya Dunayevskaya during his short time teaching in Detroit. It is also unclear whether Cox seriously engaged in the work of CLR James, who had been active, working with/for the Johnson-Forrest Tendency, in Detroit a few decades before Cox arrived. James, however, was familiar at least with *Caste, Class and Race* and had offered a lengthy—if admiring—critique of the book. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. In this way, from Cox’s perspective, the left had already fragmented into an unworkable and deeply alienated, myopic identity-based narcissism long before the advent of “Neoliberalism.” It is also important to note that while Cox took an adversarial position toward all three thinkers, he was not a universal critic. Among those figures he admired were Chandler Owens, A. Philip Randolph, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Kenyan trade unionist Tom Mboya. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Oliver C. Cox, *Caste, Class and Race* (Modern Reader, 1948/1970), p. 581. A similar point must be raised here. I have recently discovered a lecture Cox delivered in 1957 at Brandeis University entitled “The Resolution of Racial Antagonism” which I will refer to in passing and with spare quotation. In his concluding remarks, Cox clarifies what he seems to mean by the above statement. He evidently meant that the masses of Black disenfranchised persons cannot rely upon themselves *alone* to constitute a sufficiently powerful constituency, but rather must rely upon powerful political actors. Such political actors, in Cox’s view, were political in the most literal sense, for he seemed not only impressed by Roosevelt’s movements to empower workers as a class, but also (though he does not name him) frustrated with President Dwight Eisenhower for not doing more—both verbally, through threats and coercion, as well as the deployment of forces—to secure desegregation in the south, much the same way the United States kept military forces in the south during the early period of Reconstruction. Thus, for Cox, the equation was not strictly for “white” leadership, but for institutionalized political leadership, which in the postwar period meant, of course, white men. We can also note that this was not dissimilar to the strategies that would develop among A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, and Martin Luther King, Jr. in the succeeding years, just has his early advocacy for ensuring the right to vote has profound similarities with the strategic vision of Fannie Lou Hamer. One reason why, I think, Cox believe that King had become a legitimate leader was precisely because he knew the proper organs of power and how such organs could deliver legal and political guarantees to Black people. At the same time, Cox is consistent in denouncing the use of violence, racial nationalism, separatism, or Black Power as methods of resolving the problems associated with “racial antagonism.” [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See Oliver C. Cox, *Capitalism and American Leadership* (Philosophical Library, 1962). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Marx, *Capital*, preface (Penguin edition), p. 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage, 1941), xlix. Much more on this can be found in my “Oliver C. Cox and the political economy of racial capitalism” *Dialectical Anthropology* (2022), in a section called “The Political-Class Struggle.” Take a typical example from Cox, who enjoyed taking Mississippi Senator James Eastland to task for pontificating about the natural attributes of racial markers on the Senate floor. After quoting Eastland at length, Cox concludes “That such a statement could be made in the Senate without engendering widespread revulsion seems to confirm the fact that racial prejudice and antagonism are attitudes not essentially incompatible with optimum operation of a capitalist society. In the present period of capitalist crisis, however, the leader nation, in its largely verbal allegiance to democracy, must at least pretend to mankind, weary of such equivocation, that these attitudes are particularly abhorred in the ‘free world.’” Cox, *Capitalism and American Leadership*, 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Some years later, in a lecture on Cox’s *Caste, Class and Race*, CLR James would pick up on this peculiar understanding of an earnestly “communist” Roosevelt; James called it “a terrible mistake.” See CLR James, “The Class Basis of the Race Question in the United States” https://newpol.org/issue\_post/class-basis-race-question-united-states/. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Cox made the following statements in April 1957; Eisenhower intervened in Little Rock September in the same year. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Hear the echo of Cox’s sentiment in the words of Henry David Thoreau a century prior. In the following brief passage of his address, Thoreau speaks in Massachusetts to condemn the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law: “I listen to hear the voice of a Governor, Commander-in-Chief of the forces of Massachusetts. I hear only the creaking of crickets and the hum of insects which now fill the summer air. The Governor’s exploit is to review the troops on muster days. I have seen him on horseback, with his hat off, listening to a chaplain’s prayer. It chances that that is all I have ever seen of a Governor. I think that I could manage to get along without one. If he is not of the least use to prevent my being kidnapped, pray of what important use is he likely to be to me? When freedom is most endangered, he dwells in the deepest obscurity... Has he had as much as he could do to keep on the fence during this moral earthquake? … He was no Governor of mine. He did not govern me.” Henry David Thoreau, “Slavery in Massachusetts.” In *Walden and Other Writings* (New York: The Modern Library, 698). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Cox, “Resolution of Racial Antagonism in America” Brandeis Speech April 1957. These are, let us note briefly, hardly the words of a crude “class reductionist” Cox is often accused of being. See Houssam Hamade and Christoph Sorg, “Rassismus und Kapitalismus” in *Rassismusforschung I: Theoretische und interdisziplinäre Perspektiven* (2023). “Dieser Argumentation folgt etwa der Soziologe Oliver C. Cox, dessen Ansatz wiederholt als »klassenreduktio- nistisch« kategorisiert wurde.” (“This argumentation roughly follows Sociologist Oliver C. Cox, whose approach has repeatedly been categorized as ‘class reductionist.”) [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. That Cox probably believed historical progression was largely determined by the might of the stronger probably also led him to have hopes that a sympathetic Supreme Allied Commander would galvanize his troops over the Southern aristocracy, which of course, had lost a previous decisive war in the 19th century. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. I hasten to add two things. First, Cox especially saw no *shame* in this cross-race alliance, as if Black leaders were somehow betraying an in-group authentic racial politics. The best of the American tradition of struggle, for him, had always been “multi-racial” and it was the racists who believed otherwise. Second, for the strategic background, see Bayard Rustin, “From Protest to Politics” (February 1965) which outlines the need for oppositional infiltration of the political elites and joining the sympathetic white majority in coalitional politics. He wrote:

    The answer is simple, deceptively so: through political power. There is a strong moralistic strain in the civil rights movement which would remind us that power corrupts, forgetting that the absence of power also corrupts…Our problem is posed by those who accept the need for political power but do not understand the nature of the object and therefore lack sound strategies for achieving it; they tend to confuse political institutions with lunch counters. A handful of Negroes, acting alone, could integrate a lunch counter by strategically locating their bodies so as directly to interrupt the operation of the proprietor's will; their numbers were relatively unimportant. In politics, however, such a confrontation is difficult because the interests involved are merely represented. In the execution of a political decision a direct confrontation may ensue (as when federal marshals escorted James Meredith into the University of Mississippi—to turn from an example of non-violent coercion to one of force backed up with the threat of violence). But in arriving at a political decision, numbers and organizations are crucial, especially for the economically disenfranchised[.] [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. According to a report in *The Lincoln Clarion*, Cox also gave several speeches on the topic of Black leadership in the early 1950s. It was on this occasion that Cox declared that “Two great leaders have changed. And the people are confused.” For Cox, the “great leaders” of a previous generation had been W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson. In the early 1950s, he suggests, there had been a distinct shift in leadership *from* Robeson and Du Bois and *to* Walter White, who had been the Executive Secretary of the NAACP since 1929. Of course, White and Du Bois had quarreled since the 1930s when Du Bois had assumed a more radical position on desegregation and resigned from his position in the NAACP. By 1951, there had been no clear “race leaders” because of this apparent dichotomy. See “Community Center Assoc. Holds 1st Annual Banquet,” *The Lincoln Clarion*, February 14, 1951. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* cp. 3 “Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others” (New York, 1903/1986), pp. 392-404. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Oliver C. Cox, “The New Crisis In Leadership Among Negroes” *The Journal of Negro Education*, vol. 19, no. 4 (Autumn 1950), p. 459b. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Tony Perucci, “The Red Mask of Sanity: Paul Robeson, HUAC, and the Sound of Cold War Performance” *TDR*, vol. 53, no. 4 (Winter 2009), pp. 18-48. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. A Concise summary can be found in Andrew Lanham, “When W.E.B. Du Bois was Un-American” *Boston Review* (January 13, 2017), https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/when-civil-rights-were-un-american/. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Cox, “Resolution of Racial Antagonism in America” Brandeis Speech April 1957. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Cox quoted in *The Lincoln Clarion* Vol. XXIV, No. 19, Friday, March 15, 1957. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Cox quoted in the “Introduction” to Nathan Hare’s *Black Anglo-Saxons*, p. 3 (1965). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Cox, “Introduction”, p. 2. See also the quite similar set of criticisms of Frazier by William P. Jones in *The Tribe of Black Ulysses: African American Lumber Workers in the Jim Crow South* (2005). As Jones writes, “Inspired by the proletarian literary movement of the 1930s, Frazier and the others argued that *cultural breakdown* associated with sawmill towns and logging camps in the rural South provided a necessary first step toward African Americans’ assimilation into the multiethnic working-class culture that they believed to be emerging in the proletarian neighborhoods in the urban North” (p. 4, my emphasis). [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Two points may complicate this view. First, there was an aspect of Du Bois’ personal experience that may have shielded Du Bois from Cox. Du Bois was not a sociologist in the same vein as Cox, nor of those in the later generations, among whom Frazier may be the among the first—with Robert Park and Ruth Benedict. Du Bois also had the benefit of European education—outside of the University of Chicago—which seemed to be, for Cox (himself among its graduates), among the departments which deployed the most specious methods to study American race relations. This may appear to be a superficial argumentation, but it is also similar to CLR James’ critique of Cox’s *Caste, Class and Race*, namely that Cox, unlike Du Bois, fell into the error of believing that Roosevelt’s New Deal program was a significant step in the direction of socialism. For James, such a mistake could only have been made under the conditions that Cox had been educated in the United States and had little experience traveling or researching outside the country. Thus, without the benefit of the advanced socialist politics to which he would have been exposed had he, like Du Bois, spent significant time studying in Europe, Cox remained a kind of political liberal, even as he espoused a platform of socialist economic revolution (see: https://newpol.org/issue\_post/class-basis-race-question-united-states/). The second aspect was that, from Cox’s perspective, Du Bois had been moving closer to a kind of universalism as he aged. This included, for example, a commitment to a kind of Marxist doctrine (e.g., his essay in *What the Negro Wants*, entitled “My Evolving Program for Negro Freedom” evinced a steady march towardwhat might be considered a somewhat more “traditionally” universalist, if increasingly internationalist, politics—focusing on the proletariat as the primary agent of socialist revolution), which, indeed, had lost him many allies by the end of his life. As Du Bois biographer David Levering Lewis noted, both Du Bois and his friend, the singer and actor Paul Robeson, had been among the preeminent victims of the Cold War witch hunts that began immediately after the Second World War: “[Du Bois’] reputation would lie in ruins and his freedom to work and walk among his compatriots would hang in the balance of cold war justice” (Lewis, *W.E.B. Bu Bois: A biography* (New York: 2009), p. 682.) Further, during a particularly sad episode in his *Autobiography*, Du Bois reflects on how many of his friends had abandoned him in his last years. “Of the 50 presidents of Negro colleges, every one of which I had known and visited—and often many times as speaker and advisor—of these only one…publicly professed belief in my integrity before the trial; and only one congratulated me after the aquittal”; “I lost my leadership of my race. It was a dilemma for the mass of Negroes: either they joined the current beliefs and actions of most whites or they could not make a living or hope for preferment. Preferment was possible. The color line was beginning to break. Negroes were getting recognition as never before. Was not the sacrifice of one man, small payment for this? Even those who disagreed with its judgment at least kept quiet. The colored children ceased to hear my name.” Du Bois, *Autobiography*, 390-395. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. The following remark about Du Bois was made in the last section of Cox’s last book, *Race Relations*. There, he criticizes, in summary fashion, some key ascendant “new theories and agendas” for Black politics. Among these figures are Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, Huey Newton, and Eldridge Cleaver. While Cox is sensitive to some of the differences among these figures, Cox dismisses all of them. He writes, “I think it should be recognized that concern about Negro emancipation is basically a trivial preoccupation in race relations. IT involves no urgent problem…The Negro who alienates himself psychologically from the United States is most likely to remain stranded, a man without a country.” Cox, *Race Relations*, 298. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. He continues: “The action phase of the civil rights movement has been largely disorientated and squelched through infiltration of anticivil [*sic*] rights, black racist elements. A major loss has been the disappearance of its nonviolent, civil disobedience ideological basis.” Cox, *Race Relations*, 299. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Cox, “The Critical Instruments of Martin Luther King, Jr.” *The Lincoln Clarion*, May 17, 1968 Volume XXXVI, No. 25 & 26 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Lincoln Criterion Volume XXXVI, No. 27 Friday May 24, 1968. For an excellent review of the troubles King had with violent uprisings in his spring final campaign in Memphis, see Michael Honey, *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King’s Last Campaign* (New York 2007), pp. 335-399. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)