

This book is not the one I "had" to write, it sprouted from another project. The manifesto could have been called "Black in/of France", but that obscure title would not have shed much light on the attempt to propose a political horizon contained within these pages.

The point is brief, it could have been contained within an extensive aside, but it had to stand on its own. I spent a certain amount of time trying to lengthen sentences, to add more detail, efforts that always led to a dead end.

As this manifesto addresses a specific audience, any attempt on my part to try to flesh it out with things that we already know, that have already been said and written, also seemed superfluous. I wrote what I would have liked to say many a time, what I started to say, what had to be brought together in one utterance, the most important elements, things I regretted not knowing and that I should/could have said. It sometimes seems to me that we have a billion conversations pending, but only two questions keep coming up: will we get there? Will we reach a political horizon that's synonymous with liberation?

The political horizon, that's the crucial issue here, a horizon that is difficult to see or even imagine when you're caught moving from one struggle to the next, one emergency after another, controversy after controversy. Where the reflex is to go for the ant/hill metaphor activism within the afro movement in France is more akin to the sensation of emptying the ocean with a teaspoon - one with a hole in it. This feeling stems from the immensity of the task and the promised objective: the black anti-capitalist and Pan-African liberation. Many consider community building as the starting point, my position is that it is precisely this assertion that prevents "community building" in the first place. My position is that of an afro-feminist activist and is part of my political reading of the world: the need for any liberation project to put an end to the structures of economic, social and political exploitation that are racism, patriarchy and capitalism. We often hear talk of unity, but is this unity a reality? This question lies at the origin of these pages and structures my analysis. Do we really know what this unity should look like? And what are the limits of this unity?

This is not a magical recipe book to create community where all black people living in France would happily come together in a cozy and safe environment. The goal is to think through

building a community as part of a political project, and like any political project its necessary to define with whom, how and for what.

It feels better to know a train's destination before you board; my destination and my discourse are around building an afro-revolutionary political community in France, with the goal of black and Pan-African liberation. How do we think it, shape it, build it and make it the main tool of our liberation? By framing the question in this manner, I hope to sidestep sociological debates on whether or not the/a black community exists and furthermore, to clarify that this vision integrates an acknowledgment: some individual interests (class, gender, sexual orientation and administrative status) are antagonistic to the Revolutionary Black Liberation Project. Given the current state of urgency, we do not have the luxury of waiting until there is complete agreement on all the points of a political agenda in order to work together and move forward.

I made the deliberate choice to skip the mandatory portrait of the Black question. The purpose of this manifesto is to be a practical tool regarding the challenges, questionings and paths that are available to us from an afro-revolutionary and Pan-African perspective. This manifesto is based on the following statements:

- whereas anti-blackness exists and is structural and global,
 - whereas anti-blackness is linked to the existence of capitalism,
 - whereas anti-blackness is a product of the histories of slavery of the Arab slave trade in Africa and the transatlantic Western slave trade,
- capitalism will not save us from racism, building our political organization for a radical change of system is the only path to liberation.

How to be black and escape a singular identity? It is interesting to note that the Black forms of community organizing that are seen as non-problematic are those based on cultural or national identities. Black people coming together, without even organizing, on the basis of a unifying political blackness, is quickly met with questioning, skepticism, opposition and even contempt. To reactions based on arguments from "humanist-universalist" camp (racism, Leon Blum-style) coming from the White left, struggle against communitarianism (racism, general de

Gaule-style), splitting the struggle, convergence of struggles coming from the mostly non-black, decolonial anti-racist movements (patronizing anti-blackness Frantz Fanon-style¹), and finally the very famous "we mustn't victimizing ourselves" coming from the Black people whom nothing offends as long as they can strategically position themselves for diversity spots (Audrey Pulvar-style strategy).

What non-black groups and individuals have to say about organizing an afro political movement is of little to no interest. What should catch our attention is Black people's discomfort in belonging to Black groups or organizations that do not hinge on nationality. You encounter this discomfort, which is sometimes outright, virulent opposition, throughout the political spectrum, from the friendly startup-nation, left-leaning black people and those from working-class neighborhoods. We are offered two modes of political organization in which blacks should dissipate themselves: on the one hand, universalist and assimilationist republicanism; on the other, a model denouncing universalism and anti-racism on moral and individual bases, that doesn't acknowledge the need for autonomy in the fight against anti-blackness.

I have long since stopped expending my energy trying to convince people who seem to attach a moral principle to black people organizing among themselves. To organize politically as Black people around anti-blackness, Pan-Africanism and beyond is a political choice, it does not reflect in any way the moral value of the individuals who engage in it or not, nor does it grant them a privileged status within woke blackness². We still should interrogate this uneasiness or discomfort. Not suffering from it personally, I must admit that the only hypothesis I can offer is the fear of being seen as selfish or even the unconscious thought that any initiative only with Black people is doomed to fail. In any case, politically involved non-black aren't unaware of this

¹Frantz Fanon, known for his writings on national liberation struggles and psychiatry, worked in Algeria for a portion of his life and was a member of the FLN. His person is very often used by anti-racist movements composed mainly of North African people, erasing his specific work on Black issues or even regarding the so-called "DOM-TOM".

² Tongue-in-cheek imaginary of political and activist Black people.

situation. Mwasi³ members have often found themselves in interactions, where non black activists (white or racialized), feel an burning need to inform us that such and such activist is not at all interested in joining or participating in black organizations. It's obvious that using one set of black activists to try to delegitimize another group of black activists is easier than publicly saying "You're aggravating as shit with this "black this, black that" all the time", it's still more strategic to use black people who criticize anti-blackness but aren't involved in Black organizing.

Do we even have the right to be black and be involved in political organizing in France? We know we can be black and an athlete, comedian, member of the government, entertainment host, entrepreneur... But to be black and to politicize blackness from a collective standpoint seems to be cause for a great deal of drama. This is compounded by the fact that we are part of a category whose function is to entertain, to prove that France-is-not-the-United States and to contribute to the global influence of the former. Category in which belong the most famous Black people of France: professional footballers. And it is no coincidence that this representation monopolizes much of the discourse on Black people in France, thanks to the continuous effort of the political and media powers but also thanks to our own focus as a community on these issues.

This situation sometimes seems paradoxical to me: although there seems to be widespread consensus that the discourse that the concept of "diversity" is a hoax, the conversation continues as if the two main objectives of our political organizing were the recognition of our victim status and the diversification of power, of intellectual and artistic production within the upper echelons of salaried earners and of the bourgeoisie. Joao Gabriell⁴ explains very well how, although roundly criticized, the system in which we operate is still perceived as legitimate and is not struck with infamy despite all that it produces in terms of violence, destruction of lives and inequality:

³ Mwasi: afro-feminist collective based in Paris metropolitan area.

⁴ Guadeloupean nationalist activist, member of the Pan-African Umoja League. Le blog de Joao, *"Nationalisme guadeloupéen, panafricanisme, afro- féminisme. In short, an unorthodox and Afrocentric version of the class struggle."*

“The main problem, then, is the argument that despite everything, regardless of the political orientation and the program applied in practice, the accession of a Black person to a position of power always contains an element of progress in itself: the current political framework - capitalism and western hegemony - isn't seen as de facto illegitimate. A system that creates such inequality, whether at the national or international level, while being very different from slavery, isn't rejected outright. Yet, although the context and intensity of violence differs greatly, the principle of exploiting some for the benefit of others carries its share of social, cultural and ecological disasters. Worse, one might even say that currently, politicians have much more room for maneuvering than afrodescendants had during slavery, who were granted relative power over the other enslaved individuals. Today, to gain access to these positions of power, despite the reality of racism and the structural barriers it generates, is to choose a certain orientation and seek above all to protect one's individual interests”⁵

In 1949, Friedrich A. Hayek – one of the thinkers, the "grandfather", founder of neoliberalism - published *The Intellectuals and Socialism*. Within it he questions the reasons for socialism's success. Let us recall that after the Second World War many countries of Eastern Europe embraced Soviet ideology, nationalizations took place in Great Britain, and the African independence movements re-tooled and integrated socialism as part and parcel of their visions. The reason for this success, according to Hayek, was socialists' courage in proposing utopias. Utopias that inspired and nurtured political agendas. In this essay he exhorts liberals to draw inspiration from their opponents, in order to carry out their (sinister) social projects. Seventy years later, we are here: we live in the near-complete neoliberal utopia and hegemony. This utopia did not need a detailed plan or modeling, but simply a social vision with on the one hand implementation by waves of economic policies of deregulation and favoring the monopolization of wealth by the few, and on the other the manufacturing of consent and adherence of the wider population to this utopia.

⁵ Joao Gabriell, «Sibeth Ndiaye, Lori Lightfood, comme autrefois Barack Obama: commandeurs contemporains de la plantation», <https://joaogabriell.com/2019/04/08/sibeth-ndiaye-lori-lightfood-comme-autrefois-barack-obama-commandeurs-contemporains-de-la-plantation/>.

It may be tempting to consider that being Black is in itself a political positioning, given our history, but that would be falling into the trap of essentialization. Being Black is not enough to build a political agenda, so we have to think through the We, and know what we want to do with it. Define our goal, and above all create the means to achieve it. And in order to achieve this objective, we cannot do without defining who we are politically and the means to be used. This manifesto is a call to build an afro-revolutionary utopia piloted by what we can change, modify and overthrow politically together, which can light our path, and give us the courage to pursue it. We must walk this path together, for we only have ourselves.

"We have dared to be free, let us dare to be free by ourselves and for ourselves", Jean-Jacques Dessalines.