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REDNECK REVOLUTIONARIES: THE YOUNG PATRIOTS AND THE RAINBOW COALITION

Emily Ann Wilson

In the spring of 1969, the Chicago branch of the Black Panther Party announced the formation of the Rainbow Coalition—an inter-racial, anti-capitalist organization which aimed to unify marginalized communities in pursuit of material equality and an end to racism. In addition to the Black Panthers, the Rainbow Coalition was made up of the Puerto Rican Young Lords as well as a group of white Appalachian migrants known as the Young Patriots Organization (YPO). While there is a great deal of historical precedent for solidarity among Black and Brown peoples, the Young Patriots’ success in organizing white communities on the basis of anticapitalism alongside the Panthers and Young Lords significantly complicates narratives of interracial organizing in the Black Power era, as history has often painted alliances between *the* Black Panthers and the middle-class white ‘New Left’ during this period as tenuous, at best. Wrapped within the story of the Young Patriots and their role in the famous Rainbow coalition are profound insights into the nature of intersectional anti-capitalist organizing, and by studying the actions and ideology of the Patriots, as well as their limitations, one can better understand the ways in which they both drew from and helped strengthen existing pathways for solidarity among oppressed peoples.

Although the Young Patriots were founded in Uptown Chicago, their story does not begin there. Instead, it begins in small, rural towns across Appalachia, where class hierarchy and stark inequalities in landownership combined with underdevelopment and a lack of jobs to create the abject poverty in which most of the Patriots were raised. In *Revolutionary Hillbilly: Notes From the Struggle on the Edge of the Rainbow*, former Patriot Hy Thurman recollects his experience growing up in rural Tennessee as he worked in

the fields alongside his single-mother and siblings starting at the age of three.¹ He describes the hardship which pervaded Appalachia, an existence dominated by manual labor, cruel landlords, worn-out clothes, and empty stomachs.² The collapse of the job market only worsened conditions as the corporatization of farming, increased importation of foreign goods, and the mechanization of both coal mining and agricultural production eliminated mining jobs and undermined local farmers to the point of eviction.³ Deep class divisions and local corruption meant police harassment and violence was near-constant, Thurman explains, as cops “would arrest and falsely accuse young men and women for crimes...committed by the more privileged in the county.”⁴

These conditions across the rural South led to the ‘Great Migration’ of both Black and white southerners to industrial cities in the Midwest as they searched for jobs and improved standards of living. In the 1973 article “Appalachia’s Hillbillies Trek North for Jobs,” William K. Stevens wrote about the mass migration for the *New York Times*:

For three decades and more the hillbillies have trekked northward from the green hills and coal country of job-poor Appalachia, seeking the steady employment and solid security offered by the industrial Middle West...Though the vast interstate Movement of these fiercely proud and independent but often shy and diffident people has paralleled that of the blacks, it has been much less noticed.⁵

As white Appalachians fled to major city centers in the Midwest they often found themselves compared to and in competition with Black migrants, just as Stevens’s article demonstrates. Using Detroit ‘hillbillies’ as his example,

Stevens calls white migrants an “economic success story,” lauding the fact that whites had “pulled themselves [out] of the inner-city ghettos” and were not “about to create their own version of the black, Chicano or Indian Dower movements” despite their newfound ‘hillbilly’ pride.⁶ “That is just not their way,” Stevens insists, “they have not generally proved to be the organizing or joining kind, so independent are they. Nor have they seemed to find a sufficient cause for grievance.”⁷ This, of course, proved not to be the case.

When Hy Thurman told his older brother Ralph he planned to join him in Chicago—a place Hy had idolized as a ‘gangster’ town, a wild-west with high-rises where “anyone could get rich”⁸—Ralph’s message to his younger brother was clear: “There is no promised land.”⁹ This was not enough to deter Hy from leaving Tennessee, however, and when he arrived in Chicago in March of 1967, he was met with the same violent and impoverished conditions that met millions of southern migrants in industrial centers across the country.¹⁰ In “Storming Hillbilly Heaven: The Young Patriots Organization, Radical Culture, and the Long Battle for Uptown Chicago,” Jesse Ambrose Montgomery explains that “many [of] the cities they arrived in—with their promise of steady, well paid industrial work—were beginning to register the early shudders of deindustrialization. Most migrants arrived with little to their name and settled in poor parts of the cities or in outright slums.”¹¹ Poor housing, underemployment, and police brutality plagued migrant communities. Hy Thurman described Uptown Chicago as a place where glass littered the ground, “trees and grass were practically non-existent,” and children in worn-out clothes “played in the street alongside passed out drunks” and stood on the corner begging for money.¹²

Martin Krzywy explains that government-established programs in Chicago failed to meet the needs of residents, particularly in poor neighborhoods like Uptown, where

people instead “relied on a patchwork of privately funded organizations to fulfill many of their basic needs, receiving food donations from the Campbell Soup Company and employment training and placement from the Chicago Conference on Religion and Race, while medical services like the Board of Health clinic maintained limited and inconvenient hours.”¹³ Police harassment was also incessant, as Chicago PD heavily patrolled Uptown and other poor neighborhoods in search of trouble. Despite crime in Uptown being comparable to that in other Chicago neighborhoods, Krzywy points out that “the white Southern community in Uptown...garnered a reputation for knife-fighting, public drunkenness, and other forms of criminal disorder that...resulted in a high degree of police brutality and repression.”¹⁴ Ultimately unable to escape the abject poverty and police violence from which they originally fled, groups of white Appalachian migrants were radicalized in cities across the North and Midwest as they sought an end to their own oppression and found solidarity among other oppressed peoples.

When the Thurman brothers, along with Jack “Junebug” Boykin, Doug Youngblood, and Bobby McGinnis, decided to transform their local street gangs, the Peacemakers and the Goodfellows, into the more explicitly political ‘Young Patriots Organization’ in 1969, they did so by following closely in the footsteps of both the Jobs or Income Now Community Union (JOIN) and the Black Panther Party. In the midst of the Civil Rights Movement in 1963, a group of predominantly middle-class white college students, known as the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), were inspired to create community programs in poor urban areas under the name JOIN with the goal of “[winning] ‘short run social reforms’ that would create conditions for leadership and participation beyond campuses and the South.”¹⁵ Students moved into the Uptown neighborhood of Chicago as founders were “anticipating a spike in joblessness and a recession, [and] looking...to

locations where a truly bottom-up organization might dovetail with the civil rights movement and growing radicalism among discontented middle-class youth.”¹⁶ Police brutality, along with unemployment, was JOIN’s primary focus when trying to connect with Uptown residents, and as Hy Thurman explains, JOIN organizers “began hanging out with street guys, drinking in their bars, smoking weed and [engaging] them on police brutality and other issues that effected their everyday lives.”¹⁷

In August of 1966, JOIN organizers marched on the police station in Summerdale alongside former Peacemakers, members of the Goodfellows, and other community residents in order to demand the firing of a particularly brutal cop, Sam Joseph, and a general end to police violence. Thurman notes “the civilian review board that the protesters were demanding never materialized, but the beatings, arrests, and harassment continued,” if not worsened.¹⁸ Police targeted attendees of the ‘March on Summerdale’ and other anti-police actions around Uptown with arrests, raids, and beatings, particularly singling out activists who ended up on Detective Joseph’s personal “enemy list.”¹⁹ Another march on Chicago City Hall in September of 1966, led by Goodfellows and JOIN, continued their call for a citizen review board “to investigate and stop the Summerdale Police District from ‘framing, beating, and killing people they don’t like.’”²⁰ With their demands still unmet by early 1967, activists from JOIN and the Goodfellows began organizing their own “police watch committee modeled after the Black Panther Party’s ‘Police Patrols’ in Oakland, California.”²¹

By 1968, JOIN had a strong presence in Uptown as its membership among residents grew and the community was increasingly active in organizing against their own oppression. Though students had “for their part, believed that the [role] of an organizer was to work themselves out of a job and allow the community leadership to have control over

their own destiny,” when Uptown leaders like Bobby McGinnis and Peggy Terry asked SDS to leave, it created strife among students genuinely dedicated to the cause.²² In spite of SDS’s work to help residents combat unsuitable housing and police brutality, community leaders felt it was essential that Uptown “organize its own,” in part due to the irreconcilable class differences between students and full-time residents. Thurman explains that “class and cultural differences were sources of tension” as some residents felt “students had the opportunity to return to their middle-class homes when it suited them.”²³ Community members in Uptown, on the other hand, had nowhere else to turn—having already been driven from their homes in Appalachia into cycles of urban poverty—so they felt students were more inclined to misunderstand the reasons for criminal behavior and ongoing poverty and less invested in the well-being of the neighborhood, especially as some left in favor of the anti-war movement.

Within months of the JOIN split, the Young Patriots branched off in search of more radical, community-based organizing and began attempting to unify Uptown. From their eleven-point platform demanding “decent housing, prisoners’ rights, and an end to racism,”²⁴ to the structure and focus of their community-aid programs, the Young Patriots drew heavily on the work of the Black Panther Party and the Young Lords, both of whom were already organizing widely throughout Chicago.²⁵ In the 1969 documentary film *American Revolution II*, Howard Alk and Milk Gray captured the early days of the Patriots’ formation, as filmmakers not only interviewed community leaders, but also sat in on small parties in Uptown apartments where young white men with thick Southern accents debated the reason for poverty, the cause of the Vietnam war, and how to organize their community in search of solutions to the problems they faced. In addition to these scenes of parties and heated debates among Patriots, the film shows Black Panther leader Bobby Lee, along with other

rank-and-file members of the BPP, as they attempted outreach in local bars. That is, until the two narratives merge in a small community center as Lee enters alongside the Patriots, discussing the need to organize Chicago in favor of meeting the needs of the poor, both Black and white. *American Revolution II* exemplifies the deep connections between the Black Panthers and the radicalization of Uptown's poor whites, as well as the role of the Panthers' own ideological transformation in the formation of the Young Patriots leading up to the Rainbow Coalition.²⁶

In May of 1969, the newly formed Young Patriots made their direct-action debut as they swarmed the East Chicago Avenue police station alongside the Black Panthers and Young Lords in protest of the murder of Young Lord Manuel Ramos by an off-duty police officer.²⁷ As the Patriots marched on the police station, taunting officers with chants of "pig" and breaking windows along the street, they cemented their organization's commitment to radical anti-police demonstrations that crossed racial and ethnic lines. A month later, the Black Panther Party would announce the Rainbow Coalition.

At the Black Panthers' United Front Against Fascism Conference (UFAF) in Oakland, California in July of 1969, members of the YPO would give rousing speeches on stage and stand shoulder to shoulder with Panthers in a powerful display of solidarity.²⁸ In *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*, Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin note that this display at UFAF was a direct manifestation of the Black Panther Party's recent shift in ideology as they sought to widen their revolutionary appeal across racial lines. Bloom and Martin explain that "in July of 1969, two weeks before the United Front Against Fascism Conference, the Panthers changed point three of their Ten Point Program from 'We want an end to the robbery of the white man of our Black Community' to 'We want an end to

the robbery by the CAPITALIST of our Black Community' [emphasis in original]."²⁹ This inter-racial appeal for revolution, however, came at a cost. As Sonnie and Tracy explain in *Hillbilly Nationalists*, the Black Panthers and Young Lords saw their membership drop after they announced the Rainbow Coalition with the Young Patriots, but both Bobby Lee and Cha-Cha Jiménez emphasized "it was a necessary purging."³⁰ In Lee's words, "Rainbow Coalition was just a code word for class struggle."³¹

It was this reformation of revolutionary ideology around a common class struggle, as opposed to a primarily racial or ethnic movement, which caused the Panthers, Patriots, and Lords to lose members; however, the greatest conflict that arose from this ideological shift came not from internal division, but from increased suppression by authorities at every level of government. In an interview with the *Daily World* in February of 1970, Tom Dostou, field marshal of the Young Patriots New Haven chapter, detailed the programs the Patriots had set up in collaboration with the Black Panthers, including free breakfast programs, political education classes, and a "Rainbow clinic" all designed to meet the needs of community members while forming inter-racial solidarity.³² Dostou's description of "racial problems in the high schools" and the Patriot/Panther plan for political and racial education for students is particularly illustrative of the increasingly class-focused (yet still fundamentally race-conscious) ideology of the Rainbow Coalition.³³ He explains that "we are trying to set up political education classes for the students, the Panthers for the black students and the Patriots with the whites. We want to show the kids that bad education, unemployment and bad housing are the enemy, not color."³⁴

By March of 1970, the YPO began distributing its own newspaper, *The Patriot*, which strongly emphasized the group's race-conscious, yet ultimately class-focused ideology.

A brief article titled “The Real Enemy” is particularly illustrative of this point, as it clearly explains the Patriots’ belief:

Poor and oppressed white people, like all oppressed peoples, have been blaming others for their poverty. The others usually have been other oppressed white people or peoples of color—black and brown, who are just as oppressed or more...By oppressed peoples fighting and blaming each other for their poverty, they never have the time or energy to fight the Real Enemy—the Power of the Rich.³⁵

The goal of the Patriots and the Rainbow Coalition was to confront racism and racial inequality, but to do so primarily within the context of class and material realities; thus, racism is portrayed within Patriot literature not as a unique system of oppression, but one of many tools of capitalist exploitation more broadly.

This radical class alliance across racial lines appeared to pose a threat to local, federal, and state authorities, as Tom Dostou noted the “record of harassment” which plagued the organizing efforts of both the Patriots and the Panthers.³⁶ Police constantly surveilled their breakfast programs, intervening wherever possible in an attempt to shut down these so-called “communist organization[s].” Just hours after his interview with the *Daily World*, Dostou, along with the rest of the Young Patriots’ central committee, was arrested in a police raid “for questioning about...bombings at the home of Supreme Court Justice John M. Murtagh, presiding judge in the New York Black Panther Conspiracy case.”³⁷ Not only does this exemplify the strength of the Rainbow Coalition and the close connections between the Patriots and Panthers, it also makes clear the extent to which U.S. authorities view class struggle (even more so than race) as an existential threat to national sovereignty.

The Young Patriots, though short-lived, had an undeniable

impact on the liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Their organizational efforts, alongside the Black Panthers and Young Lords, deeply complicate common narratives of inter-racial organizing in the mid-20th century, narratives which often “paint [these] radical movements...as tenuous alliances between middle-class whites and more economically precarious minority groups.”³⁸ The alliance formed through the Rainbow Coalition represents a race-conscious, class-focused revolutionary ideology, where Patriots, Panthers, and Lords were able to come together for the express purpose of working and under-class liberation. So the question remains, how did this alliance come to be? How did hillbillies from Appalachia end up so deeply entangled with America’s most infamous Black Nationalist group, organizing to arm poor communities of every color and teaching high school students about the complexities of racism?

Though the Young Patriots’ origins as an organization can be traced back to middle-class white groups like JOIN and SDS, members of the YPO were predominantly working class, and their experiences both in Appalachia and in industrialized cities across the North and Midwest helped to create clear “points of solidarity”—or commonalities among oppressed groups which allow for an alignment of interests across race, class, and gender. The common narrative that alliances between *the Black Panthers* and groups like Students for a Democratic Society in the 1960s and 1970s were perpetually tenuous is a testament to the difficulty of organizing across these lines without evident points of solidarity. As Bloom and Martin explain,

Young white activists did not face racial oppression. And the Appalachian Young Patriots notwithstanding, many white New Left activists came from the middle class and did not personally suffer class exploitation either...[Huey] Newton argued that because middle-

class white revolutionaries had not experienced class exploitation or racial injustice, their oppression was ‘somewhat abstract’[emphasis added].³⁹

This “abstract quality of white revolutionary struggle,” Newton argued, “could be made real—that whites could prove their allegiance and truly become revolutionary—through support of the black struggle against oppression.”⁴⁰

While middle-class whites faced a purely ‘abstract oppression,’ the Patriots lived the harsh reality of class exploitation, positioning them to create a much stronger alliance with Black revolutionaries based, not on intellectual or moral grounds, but primarily on common material needs. In November of 1969, Art Turco, an attorney with the Young Patriots, gave an interview with Charles Hightower of the Daily World in which he succinctly conveyed the underpinning of the Rainbow Coalition:

Originally, I came from the streets...I think that is why the Panthers and I got along so well from the start.’ He said that common street experiences, including ‘the junkie scene and the brutality of the cops,’ were the real basis for the Rainbow Coalition, which transcended the racism between black, white, and brown. ‘All of us had been through the hell of the slums...and we all knew how it was to hustle to stay alive.’⁴¹

Turco also spoke about the failure of other organizations to meet the needs of poor white people, stating that these organizations, presumably run by middle-class whites, did not understand the particular oppression of “hillbillies, sharecroppers, and the white poor in the cities.”⁴² Expounding on the meaning of this oppression, Turco explains “when we talk about oppression—and it’s the same for the Patriots, Panthers, and the Young Lords—we’re talking about the essentials: food, decent housing, adequate clothing.”⁴³ The

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The Young Patriots were distinctly aware of the similarities between their own exploitation and the oppression of communities of color, and by emphasizing the failure of both the political and corporate class (or the bourgeoisie more broadly) to meet the essential needs of the people, the Patriots, along with the Panthers and Young Lords, were able to clearly articulate capitalism and imperialism, rather than race, as the “real enemy” among them.⁴⁴

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When the field secretary of the Young Patriots Organization, William “Preacherman” Fesperman, gave his speech at UFAF,

he donned a beret with both a 'Free Huey' pin and confederate flag patch as he emphasized the importance of unity among the People against the fascist and capitalist forces which perpetually oppressed them.⁴⁵ His language was brash and explicitly militant as he spoke about the necessity of arming the working class: "a gun on the side of a pig means two things, racism and capitalism, and the gun on the side of the revolutionary, on the side of the people, means solidarity and socialism. Right on? Now who...is gonna let the motherfucker with the gun shootin' capitalism and racism outshoot the people?"⁴⁶ He also emphasized the importance of self-determination for all oppressed people, claiming as he closed his speech, a fist held in the air, "All power belongs to the People. Red Power to Sittin' Bull...and yellow power to Ho Chi Minh and Mao...and brown power to Fidel and Che...and Black power to the Black Panther Party."⁴⁷ Preacherman concluded this demand for self-determination by also declaring "white power to the...white revolutionaries" [emphasis added]. From the passionate militancy of his speech, to his outward denouncement of racism in favor of unity for the purpose of liberation, and even to his use of language and imagery which elicit deep ties to anti-Blackness and white violence, Preacherman's talk at UFAF acutely represents the complex, sometimes counter-intuitive revolutionary ideology of the Young Patriots.

Though they emphasized community aid and working-class unity, the Young Patriots broader ideological foundation was somewhat murky, and heavily drawn from both contemporary sources like the Black Panthers and Young Lords, as well as deeper historical traditions of white radicals. Martin Krzywy explains the ways in which the Patriots understood their radical roots, noting that,

Though American political life may have trended towards poor whites organizing along racial rather

than class lines (ignoring alliances with similarly impoverished blacks for ones with richer whites), examples such as the Progressive and Fusion movements of the late nineteenth century showed that such alliances were possible...Young Patriots demonstrated a strong grasp on this interracial history, and many of them could trace their ideological roots—and, potentially, their genealogical roots as well—to the Unionists that resisted Confederate rule in many upland counties in the Civil War South" [emphasis added].⁴⁸

This notion presented by the Patriots stands in stark contrast to the groups' infamous use of the Confederate flag as a symbol of white revolutionary potential, but it nonetheless paints an important picture of how they saw themselves.

The Patriots' connection to the Civil War South is further exemplified by their first publication of *The Patriot*, where a bright centerfold with the confederate flag as its background displays the headline: "One of Our Main Purposes is to Unify Our Brothers and Sisters in the North with Our Brothers and Sisters in the South."⁴⁹ The brief text, positioned within the flag, explains that the Young Patriots interpreted the Civil War as a battle fought not for enslaved peoples' freedom, but for Northern capitalist expansion into the feudal, slave-holding South. The Patriots acknowledged that the confederate flag was "waved in the interest of the robber-baron-plantation-owning ruling class," but they determined that the "spirit of rebellion" it represented was worth appropriating for the greater cause of anti-capitalist revolution by the white working class. "The people make the meaning of a flag," they declared, and "this time we mean to see that the spirit of rebellion finds and crushes the real enemy rather than our brothers and sisters in oppression."⁵⁰

Along with the confederate flag and 'Free Huey' emblems

Preacherman displayed at the United Front Against Fascism Conference, the Young Patriots were often seen with pins bearing the phrase “Resurrect John Brown” alongside the 19th century abolitionist’s portrait, as well as patches displaying the Patriots’ name above an image of chained fists. Each of these symbols were carefully chosen so as to signal ties to both the white Southern culture of the Patriots and the revolutionary goals of the larger Rainbow Coalition in an attempt to start conversation during community outreach.⁵¹

As the Young Patriots sought to unite the white working class, they did so based heavily on the example set by the Black Panthers; but the Panthers’ pioneering model of revolutionary organizing, which also inspired the formation of numerous other groups such as the Young Lords, the Red Guards, and Los Siete de la Raza, was built largely around a combination of class and racial or ethnic oppression. In the Patriots’ endeavor to follow this example, they found themselves drawing on existing symbolism which, to them, marked poor white Southerners a distinctive ethnic group. The YPO sought to co-opt these stereotypical symbols of whiteness—from the confederate flag, to “white power” and “the South will rise again”—and combine them with a larger historical framework for anti-racist and anti-capitalist white rebellion, which they believed was embodied in both John Brown and Southern Unionists. However, the sheer fact that the Patriots felt compelled to use language and imagery deeply entangled with white supremacy and anti-blackness in order to build a class of poor white revolutionaries is illustrative of gaps in their historical analysis and ideology. By simply playing into confederate symbolism rather than confronting the underlying reasons for the Civil War nostalgia which continues to grip the South, the Young Patriots were in many ways able to skirt the historical realities of their community.

The Patriots’ declaration that ‘all power belongs to all the People’ was revolutionary in its demand for full self-determination, but it also drew heavily on the idea of ‘forgotten’ poor whites and suggested them as an equally oppressed minority. From Preacherman’s speech at UFAF to articles published in *The Patriot*, the YPO heavily emphasized unity and solidarity across racial groups to the point of dismissing racism as solely a tool of capitalist division, as well as denying the uniquely oppressive role of whiteness and the extent to which race intersects with class to create a compounding oppression for poor people of color. Though members of the YPO and white Appalachians suffered from lack of food, housing, and health care along with other minority groups, their position was markedly different, as exemplified by William K. Stevens’s assertion in the *New York Times* that white migrants were an “economic success story” in comparison to Black migrants and those of color.

In her introduction to Sonnie and Tracy’s *Hillbilly Nationalists*, indigenous-rights activist and author Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz sheds light on the unfronted reality of the Young Patriots and the larger historical role of ‘rednecks,’ ‘white trash,’ and ‘hillbillies.’ Poor whites, she explains, must be evaluated within their proper context as “descendants of the original landless or land poor settlers, the ones that kept moving westward with the United States, squatters sent to fight the native inhabitants...they were not in control of their destinies, although they committed many crimes.”⁵² The Young Patriots acknowledged the role of the robber-baron-bourgeois in the enslavement of Black peoples and the theft of native land for capitalist expansion, and they also heavily emphasized their lack of control over their own destinies, but they failed to truly acknowledge the extent to which the white working class committed these crimes on the bourgeois’ behalf or even in an attempt to establish their own self-determination. Dunbar-Ortiz continues: “These descendants of the early settlers,

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The Patriots used Civil War nostalgia and references to white nationalism in an attempt to relate to Appalachian migrants, and yet they refused to acknowledge the dark history of these symbols even when confronted by the people who understood their real-world harm. Dunbar-Ortiz claims that she “asked if they were teaching their members about past white populist movements in which anti-government sentiments were merged with Jew hating and racism” but rather than facing this uncomfortable truth, “they argued that getting the poor white kids hooked up with Blacks and Puerto Ricans and Indians dissolved their racism.”⁵⁵ Though the YPO sought to meet the material needs of the people, their broader ideology fell significantly short in its analysis of the hierarchy of oppression in America, and their resulting dependency on other groups like the Black Panthers and Young Lords to ground their revolutionary struggle led to chaos and collapse in the face of intense state surveillance.

The Young Patriots Organization left a complicated legacy, strife with anti-capitalist sentiment, pro-Black organization, and white supremacist symbolism. In the wake of twenty-first century political divides and the rise of Trumpism, the Patriots have become even more difficult to interpret, though perhaps the dissemination of their history is more essential than ever. The white working class has been largely credited with Trump's election and the rise of racism and fascism in mainstream American politics, while the confederate flag has become synonymous with the alt-right movement and the “specter of the white worker and his politics [has] captivated the mainstream of political discourse.”⁵⁶ In the 21st century, poor, rural, white Americans increasingly aligned themselves along racial rather than class lines in the face of economic difficulty, seeking protection from the perceived threat of minority groups in the arms of wealthy businessmen and politicians. From Reagan's “War on Drugs” and the infamous “Stranger Danger” campaign of the 1980s, to the “Crime Bill”

those with little or no land or other property, have...been the point-men on the front lines, killing Indian farmers to take their land, only to be displaced by land companies.”⁵³

Additionally, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz details her own interactions with the Young Patriots in the early 1970s as they worked alongside women's liberation activists and labor organizers. Upon meeting Preacherman and the Patriots at an event in New Orleans, she told them that she “objected to their use of ‘Patriot,’ explaining it was reactionary and supported a racist mythology dating back to Andrew Jackson and Indian killing... The very definition of patriotism was patriarchy.”⁵⁴

“ The political climate has changed drastically since the 1970s, and overt white supremacy looms heavy over the American political sphere, but just as material needs remain the same, so do the pathways of solidarity exhibited by the Young Patriots organizing efforts alongside the Black Panthers and Young Lords, ready to be amended and fully realized for a new era of revolutionaries. ”

to the current socio-political issues facing the American working class. The Patriots’ focus on material needs laid the foundation for their organizing and participation in the Rainbow Coalition, and the fight for these material needs—food, housing, health care—continues into the 21st century, only exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The political climate has changed drastically since the 1970s, and overt white supremacy looms heavy over the American political sphere, but just as material needs remain the same, so do the pathways of solidarity exhibited by the Young Patriots organizing efforts alongside the Black Panthers and Young Lords, ready to be amended and fully realized for a new era of revolutionaries.

of the 1990s and the influx of pro-police and anti-immigrant sentiment in the 21st century media, the history of the United States since the end of the Young Patriots in the 1970s has been marked by anti-community fearmongering, carefully coded fueling of racial tensions, and cycles of crime scares followed by increased criminalization. Decades of fear headlining the national news, often painting Black, Hispanic, and Muslim groups in particular as the origin of white middle and working class strife, has left the lower class of white America seeking protection with the wealthy rather than finding common ground among those who share their material conditions.

Though the Young Patriots were far from perfect, the example that they set for class-focused, race-conscious, material community organizing poses a potential solution

ENDNOTES

1 "Scientific Expedition to Account for the Romanov Children," [ENDNOTES]

1. Hy Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly: Notes from the Struggle on the Edge of the Rainbow* (Berkeley, CA: Regent Press, 2020), 16.

2. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 17-18.

3. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 25.

4. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 19.

5. William K. Stevens, "Appalachia's Hillbillies Trek North for Jobs," *New York Times*, March 29, 1973. <https://www.nytimes.com/1973/03/29/archives/appalachias-hillbillies-trek-north-for-jobs-4-million-migrants.html>.

6. Stevens, "Hillbillies Trek North," 49.

7. Stevens, "Hillbillies Trek North," 49.

8. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 25.

9. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 24.

10. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 23-24.

11. Jesse Ambrose Montgomery, "Storming Hillbilly Heaven: The Young Patriots Organization, Radical Culture, and the Long Battle for Uptown Chicago" (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 2020), 4.

12. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 24.

13. Martin Alexander Krzywy, "Chicago's White Appalachian Poor and the Rise of the Young Patriots Organization," *Journal of African American studies* 23, no.4 (16 September 2019): 365. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-019-09438-6>.

14. Krzywy, "Rise of the Young Patriots," 365.

15. Amy Sonnie and James Tracy, *Hillbilly Nationalists, Urban Race Rebels, and Black Power: Community Organizing in Radical Times* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2011), loc. 429 of 3735, Kindle.

16. Sonnie and Tracy, *Hillbilly Nationalists*, loc. 429 of 3735

17. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 49.

18. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 61.

19. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 62.

20. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 64.

21. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 64-65.

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22. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 67

23. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 67.

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25. Thurman, *Revolutionary Hillbilly*, 12, 195.

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34. Delvin, "Talk with Dostou."

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37. Delvin, "Talk with Dostou."

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