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The Imprisoned Black Radical Intellectual Tradition

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We can date the imprisoned Black radical intellectual tradition from when Marcus Garvey, from a US federal prison in the early nineteen hundreds, spurred his followers on by writing... “look for me in the whirlwind.” A political prisoner, Garvey was already a world renowned intellectual and organizer, and remained one until his death as a free man.

Malcolm X and George Jackson, on the other hand, highlight another aspect of that tradition: the aimless and antisocial youth, who through self education and political consciousness, develop a burning need to struggle for justice. Though Garvey’s contribution to that tradition is not well known, Malcolm’s has been lionized in all arenas. George Jackson, nowadays, is only known amongst imprisoned and free world radical and intellectual circles.

Presently, the imprisoned Black radical intellectual tradition circles are a shadow of what they were a generation ago. Its spread has been contained by decades of isolating, through

solitary confinement, those who adhere to it. It happens that technology handicapped the tradition because of its reliance on books, while narrowing the pool of potential adherents through the introduction of an almost endless selection of music, games and television programs.

Added to the imprisoned skeleton of the tradition that remains, small circles exist in the free world. The decades of isolation has been curtailed, allowing imprisoned Black radical intellectuals more room, while a number of them have gained their freedom from incarceration.

Technology has the potential to broaden and deepen the tradition. How? Wisely utilized, technology has the potential to elevate many imprisoned individuals out of their present distraction into organically acquired postures of leverage over their futures. With the aid of radicals in the free society, the imprisoned radical intellectuals can build enough support to gain access to the technology they can offer the imprisoned as the key to their freedom, financial security and self-esteem.

After all, the imprisoned possess two key elements of this endeavor: free time and a burning desire to go home.

1. Join hands between the imprisoned and the free world to struggle for real access to technology for the imprisoned.
2. Offer the imprisoned a real opportunity to learn technology, thereby enabling them to leverage this knowledge into freedom, economic stability and self-esteem.
3. In the tradition of Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X and George Jackson, know that punishment of imprisonment can be neutralized by utilizing their time and mental capabilities, as earlier imprisoned Black radical intellectuals have done.