

COMMENTARIES on “Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition”

By Leonard Harris, Purdue University

The collision of irreconcilable approaches to human liberation are mirrored in Williams’s crusade for justice: racism as a moral stance and nonviolent, direct action as its tool to create civil rights versus Negroes with Guns as a moral stance of self defense, and that defense as a tool used to overthrow capitalism and racism. Williams’s history reveals anti-Black racism within nations ostensibly committed to race blindness. Paradoxically, it also reveals the limits of solidarity when the interests of a nation do not conjoin with an interest in fighting racism, within that nation or in another country. Williams’s efforts to align the interests of nations with the interests of those suffering anti-Black racism is a fascinating sojourn.

By Antonio D. Tillis, Dartmouth College

The strong point of this work is its global and hemispheric contextualization of the fight against U.S.-based Black terrorism and the efforts of Robert Williams in globalizing the plight of the American Black under a racist and vile U.S. regime, which condoned segregation and violence against Blacks. It emphasizes or deconstructs the myth of Cuba and the Cuban government serving as a safe haven for Black political/radical exiles during the 1960s. Clearly, and as the author suggests, any Black American who has spent time in post-Revolutionary Cuba can attest to the author’s presentations of Williams’s challenges with sectors of Castro’s government, particularly Piñero. However, the author does nuance the reception of American Black revolutionaries in Cuba. Additionally, the author’s account of Williams’s reception by the Chinese government and the assistance offered to him broadens the scope of the internationalization of the struggle against U.S. racism by Black revolutionary leaders. This piece was of particular note. My only quibble with the article is its abrupt conclusion. I would have liked to see the author spend more time reconnecting the cyclic movement of Williams’s journey from the United States to Cuba, then from China to the States. For the readership, it is important to mention more on Williams’s re-entry to the United States and his participation in global, Black social movements.