



The East Is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination

By Robeson Taj Frazier

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During the Cold War, several prominent African American radical activist-intellectuals—including W.E.B. and Shirley Graham Du Bois, journalist William Worthy, Marxist feminist Vicki Garvin, and freedom fighters Mabel and Robert Williams—traveled and lived in China. There, they used a variety of media to express their solidarity with Chinese communism and to redefine the relationship between Asian struggles against imperialism and black American movements against social, racial, and economic injustice. In *The East Is Black*, Taj Frazier examines the ways in which these figures and the Chinese government embraced the idea of shared struggle against U.S. policies at home and abroad. He analyzes their diverse cultural output (newsletters, print journalism, radio broadcasts, political cartoons, lectures, and documentaries) to document how they imagined communist China's role within a broader vision of a worldwide anticapitalist coalition against racism and imperialism.

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Editorial Review

Review

"In this masterful and beautifully written book, Robeson Taj Frazier executes a remarkable feat by braiding inextricably the foremost domestic reform of the past half-century—the collapse of Jim Crow—with the most important global trend of this same period: the rise of China."

(Gerald Horne, author of *The Counter-Revolution of 1776: Slave Resistance and the Origins of the United States of America*)

"*The East Is Black* is one of the most brilliant examinations of the possibilities and limits of the global radical imaginary to appear in the last quarter century. In charting the encounters of six black intellectuals/activists with Mao's China, Frazier offers a sophisticated, sobering view of transnational solidarity. He skillfully peels back the romantic exterior of revolution, revealing a complex set of misunderstandings, misrepresentations, and political dissembling alongside powerful moments of recognition and revelation. If, as Stuart Hall famously wrote, 'hegemony is hard work,' then Frazier demonstrates that global counter-hegemony is even harder."

(Robin D. G. Kelley, author of *Africa Speaks, America Answers: Modern Jazz in Revolutionary Times*)

"*The East Is Black* deepens studies on transnational political activism and knowledge travels. Well organized and accessible, this book will work well in upper-division undergraduate and graduate seminars on African American studies, media studies, and U.S. Cold War history."

(Cindy I-Fen Cheng *Journal of American History* 2016-06-01)

"As it stands, Robeson Taj Frazier has written a monumentally successful monograph that is close to flawless in assessing other horizons and limits of Cold War China for Black radicals. Frazier has helped to raise the bar for future scholars assessing what C. L.R. James once called the "rise and fall" of world revolution."

(Bill V. Mullen *Black Scholar*)

"*The East is Black* is a brilliant work that explores how the People's Republic of China (prc) inspired the political imaginations of African American radicals during the Cold War.... Overall, *The East is Black* is a delight to read. Frazier writes in a fluid and compelling manner... [the book] should attract a broad readership among academics and students who are interested in race and radicalism in the United States and Asia."

(Judy Tzu-Chun Wu *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations*)

"Frazier's *The East is Black* is a deeply nuanced and well-researched book that enriches the literature on twentieth century black internationalism.... Through careful and in-depth analysis, Frazier has written an important study, which will enhance undergraduate and graduate course syllabi on a range of topics including Race and Ethnicity, Transnationalism, and the modern African Diaspora."

(Keisha N. Blain *American Studies* 2016-06-01)

"*The East is Black* is a compelling account of transnational interaction between American black political radicals and China from the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 until the 1970s. Robeson Taj Frazier's book is a valuable addition to an exploding historiography on transnational contacts between individuals and groups separated by territorial borders but united by commonalities beyond the

nation-state."

(Pete Millwood *History* 2017-01-24)

About the Author

Robeson Taj Frazier is Assistant Professor at the Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism at the University of Southern California.

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