Antonio Soggia

«Their Own Society». Race, class, and political struggle in African-American organized medicine

Abstract

Keywords: United States - Nma- African-American physicians.

The National medical association, the organization of African-American physicians, was born in 1895 from the American medical association's refusal to accept black professionals in the southern states. In different phases, the association represented a kind of adaptation to segregation, a concrete means of resistance against racism in medicine and a separated organization (although not formally segregated). The Nma had a dual identity: it was both a professional group and a racial organization; consequently, black physicians' profiles resulted from a permanent negotiation between class and race demands. The dual identity caused internal conflicts and originated contradictory attitudes towards social reforms which dealt with black masses' welfare; consequently, the Nma was divided within its ranks on the federal role in health care, and until the Second world war's aftermath strongly opposed a public health insurance. Gradually the Nma's political role prevailed on professionals' self-interest; during the 1960s, the Nma evolved as a militant group, attracting progressive physicians of all races interested in health problems of black and underprivileged masses.
In response, they formed their own society, culture, and religious practices as best they could. African Americans in the Revolutionary War. By the time of the American Revolution, about 2% of people in the North were slaves, mainly used as personal servants, while in the South about 25% of the population was comprised of slaves working on large plantations and smaller farms as well as in manufacturing, brickmaking, offloading ships, and virtually all other forms of manual labor. Some American colonists recognized that slaves’ struggle to be free of their masters was similar to their own struggle for freedom from British rule; slavery began to be seen as a social evil that reflected poor African Americans would function in an environment of running their own businesses, banks, government, media and so on and so forth. Black nationalism is the opposite of integration, and Carmichael contended integration is harmful to the black population. As blacks integrate to white communities they are perpetuating a system in which blacks are inferior to whites.