

Michael Eric Dyson ~ Think Out Loud. An Emerging Black Digital Intelligentsia Has Embraced Online Technology To Change American Ideas



TWENTY YEARS AGO, less than two years after I'd received my doctorate in religion from Princeton, I appeared with [Cornel West](#), [Derrick Bell](#), and [bell hooks](#) in an illustration accompanying an article in *The New Yorker* about the rise of a new generation of black public intellectuals. Those were heady times. "A new African American intelligentsia has become part of this country's cultural landscape," wrote literary scholar Michael Bérubé. "It's a development as noticeable as the ascendancy of the New York intellectuals after the Second World War." The comparison was apt. Like the New York intellectuals, we had come to prominence as a group, our race a defining feature of identification and struggle in the same way that their Jewishness had supplied inspiration and subject matter. Many New York intellectuals were leftists searching for a Marxist and anti-Stalinist alternative to Soviet communism; many black public intellectuals were also leftists, who grappled with the enchanting, if insular, siege of black nationalism while combating the unheroic ubiquity of white supremacy.

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