

Introduction

Sylviane A. Diouf and Komozi Woodard

June 1966, Greenwood, Mississippi: Stokely Carmichael of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) introduced “Black Power” as a slogan. His fellow SNCC organizer, Willie Ricks, had tested the phrase at rallies earlier. Like no other ideology before, the heterogeneous and ideologically diverse movement that gave the powerful rallying cry its strength and depth shaped black consciousness and built an immense legacy that continues to resonate in the contemporary American landscape. If the exact chronology of the movement is controversial, it is clear that a decade of struggle, including the ferocious repression against it, has had a tremendous impact on issues of not only race and citizenship in the United States but also identity, politics, criminal justice, culture, art, and education globally. Indeed, Black Power’s successes and weaknesses have largely molded the past half century.

The year 2016 marks the fiftieth anniversary of Black Power, one of the least understood and most criminalized and vilified movements in American history. Too often presented or remembered primarily as the violent, villainous urban northern counterpoint to the nonviolent, virtuous rural southern civil rights movement, the Black Power movement has been eclipsed in the general public’s memory. That blinding binary is an obstacle to our understanding of a more complicated past. Recent scholarship suggests that the civil rights movement in the Jim Crow North preceded the one in the Jim Crow South; and that Black Power.



*Photographers at a Black Panther rally,
Oakland, 1968. Bob Fitch Photography
Archive, © Stanford University Libraries,
Department of Special Collections.*



emerged in the Jim Crow South simultaneously with its ascent in the Jim Crow North and the Jim Crow West. But everywhere, young adults and teenagers led the Black Power movement. Whether they were in Boston, Chicago, or Los Angeles the activists were often the sons and daughters of southern migrants or Caribbean immigrants. Between 1966 and 1976, they developed countless cultural, political, social, and economic programs under the banner of the Black Power ideology. Those programs and organizations, and the art, literature, drama, and music they created, galvanized millions of people in the broadest movement in African American history.

This new generation had become impatient with the civil rights' leadership and limited goals. They were suspicious of official declarations and legislation that suggested an official end to segregation, when they could see that the walls of employment, housing, and school segregation were becoming newly fortified from New York to California. Indeed, the 1964 Civil Rights Act specifically excluded any attack of segregation in the Jim Crow North. Thus, a heated debate developed in the civil rights movement between leaders who declared the struggle for desegregation was over and those who argued it had to continue. Even Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was attacked by the more conservative leadership, including Roy Wilkins of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who insisted the time for protest was over after the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Of course, the movement, just like the concept of Black Power itself, was never monolithic. Black Power was heterogeneous, fusing together a number of ideologies and programs, including not only cultural nationalism, socialism, Marxism, and Islam, but also revolutionary nationalism, welfare rights, tenant rights, student voices, revolutionary union movements, Pan-Africanism and so forth—not to mention the rise of black elected officials. The crowded field of organizations included a bewildering spectrum of groups as diverse as SNCC, the Republic of New Afrika (RNA), the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), the Black

Panther Party (BPP), the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), Us Organization, the Congress of African People (CAP), Third World Women Alliance (TWWA), the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), the Young Lords Organization (YLO), the Black Students Unions (BSU), and the Black Arts Movement (BAM). All of those voices came under the Black Power umbrella.

If Black Power was heterogeneous, it was also fluid. Some activists moved from one organization to the other or belonged to several at the same time. Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown were members of SNCC before joining the Panthers. Carmichael then moved on to the All African People's Revolutionary Party, influenced by Kwame Nkrumah, the deposed former president of Ghana. Muhammad Ahmad, a co-founder of the Revolutionary Action Movement, was also a founder of the African Liberation Support Committee and the African Peoples Party (APP). Robert Williams, formerly of the NAACP, and Queen Mother Moore, once a Communist Party member, were leaders of the Republic of New Afrika and RAM. Some activists belonged to the BPP and the Young Lords. Japanese American Richard Aoki, a field marshal for the BPP, was also the spokesperson for the Asian American Political Alliance (though recent evidence suggests he might have worked for the FBI).

Despite their diversity and, for some, antagonism, all Black Power organizations shared a few fundamental features: they saw themselves as heirs of Malcolm X, defined Black America as an internal colony of the United States, and demanded self-determination.

The awareness of forming a "black nationality," a nation within a nation, and of being subjected to systemic racism, became central to the vibrant, self-confident expression of the new black urban experience that marked the era.

While the movement organized countless peaceful demonstrations, the exacerbation of racial conflicts and police brutality led also to increasingly violent confrontations. In the early 1960s, over 320 major rebellions erupted in 257 cities. Following Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination on April 4, 1968, 200 uprisings shook 172 cities. A year later, 500 racial clashes electrified young people,

“ FROM GREAT BRITAIN TO THE CARIBBEAN AND FROM INDIA TO ISRAEL, COLONIZED OR MARGINALIZED YOUNG PEOPLE RALLIED AROUND SLOGANS FASHIONED AFTER ‘BLACK POWER,’ AND ORGANIZATIONS WERE MODELED OR NAMED AFTER THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY. ”

reshaping black consciousness and reinforcing the quest for autonomy.

In line with Malcolm X's emphasis on the model of the 1955 Bandung Conference that united African and Asian newly independent countries, Black Power also inspired a “Bandung West” of antiracist movements organized by communities of Puerto Ricans, American Indians, Chicanos, Asian Americans, and impoverished working-class whites. Coalitions beyond race, ethnicity, geography, and social origin emerged to fight injustice, discrimination, and economic inequality. Organizations supported each other's struggles, and together their members and sympathizers attended rallies to demand the release of political prisoners. In Chicago, under the leadership of Illinois Black Panther Party deputy chairman Fred Hampton, black, Puerto Rican, and white activists founded the Rainbow Coalition. The 1970 Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention organized by the BPP in Philadelphia gathered ten thousand to fifteen thousand people with, among others, delegates from the American Indian Movement, the Chicano Brown Berets, the Puerto Rican Young Lords, the Asian American I Wor Kuen, and the mostly

white Students for a Democratic Society. Similarly, in the Newark Black Power experiment, the United Brothers—who wanted to achieve Black Power through the electoral process—and the Young Lords signed a mutual defense pact against white terror. They joined together in the 1969 Black and Puerto Rican Political Convention, running candidates on a Rainbow political slate. Los Angeles SNCC's Ralph Featherstone and Us's Maulana Karenga established an alliance at the Alianza summit in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with Chicano leader Reies Lopez Tijerina and Hopi chief Tomas Ben Yacya.

In addition to unifying various segments of the American population, the Black Power movement also resonated abroad. Black Power became a global phenomenon, capturing the imagination of anticolonial and other freedom struggles. From Great Britain to the Caribbean and from India to Israel, colonized or marginalized young people rallied around slogans fashioned after “Black Power,” and organizations were modeled or named after the Black Panther Party. Young Samoans, Tongans, Cook Islanders, and Maoris founded the Polynesian Panther Movement in New Zealand in 1971, which later became the



Polynesian Panther Party. In Israel, Mizrahi, mostly immigrant Jews from the Middle East and North Africa, called themselves Black Panthers and demanded equality with the European Jews. Dalits, who belong to the lower echelon of society and are outside of the rigid Indian caste system, formed the Dalit Panthers in Bombay. Globally, where youth were denied full citizenship or where governments questioned their very humanity, activists claimed the language of Black Power in the fight for their human rights. Ironically, this suggests the rarely understood paradox that ultimately Black Power was not racial but rather a movement against racism.

The radicals in the Black Power movement believed that their antiwar, anticolonial, anti-imperialist, revolutionary stance made the movement a natural ally of the countries that were part of the Soviet bloc during the Cold War: Cuba, Vietnam, China, Ghana, North Korea, Algeria, Tanzania, and Guinea; and of the liberation movements of the Portuguese colonies of Africa as well as of South-West Africa (Namibia) and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). Whereas few African Americans had actively supported or even been aware of the decolonization movement in Africa in the early 1960s, by 1970 the efforts by Black Power nationalists to support African



The unity between Malcolm X and Abdul Rahman Mohamed Babu, leader of the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution, paved the way for the success of the 1972 African Liberation Day that also honored Malcolm X's birthday on May 19, 1972, as well as the birth of the important African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), which aimed to isolate, alienate, and eliminate colonial regimes in southern Africa. Dar es Salam, 1964. Associated Press.

ALSC with United Nations diplomacy. Thanks to Tanzanian support, the Congress of African People gained nongovernmental organization status at the United Nations along the lines that Malcolm X had envisioned for his Organization of Afro-American Unity. The Tanzanian connection also influenced cultural nationalists. Kiswahili, the Bantu/Arabic/European lingua franca spoken in parts of East Africa, became one of Black Power's African languages of choice. Inspired by Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere and the 1966 Arusha Declaration, Maulana Karenga of Us used Kiswahili terminology to express the tenets of his cultural nationalist ideology, such as Kawaida and Kwanzaa, the seven-day cultural holiday he created and launched on December 26, 1966.

Flyers, journals, newspapers, books, pamphlets, posters, photographs, poetry, plays, dance, music, publishing companies, and bookstores helped spread the Black Power message in all its diversity. The West Coast Panthers were particularly media savvy, documenting their activities extensively and soliciting photographs from their members. They welcomed professional and amateur photographers and gave them access to their offices, rallies, and homes. In contrast, many of the activists involved in the Revolutionary Action Movement or the Black Liberation Army, for example, were very discreet. Thus, the photographic record of the Black Panther Party and its leaders in Oakland is much more abundant than that of other organizations and militants.

If the Black Power movement was originally fluid and open, by the late 1960s, tragically, it was becoming more rigid and ideologically polarized as a number

liberation reflected the sentiments of millions of African Americans. There again, the late Malcolm X proved to be a visionary and a profound influence. His relation with Abdul Rahman Mohamed Babu, the Marxist and Pan-Africanist leader of the 1964 Zanzibar Revolution, connected the Black Power generation to Malcolm's vision of global black revolution. Through Malcolm, Amiri Baraka met Babu, who was instrumental in gaining Tanzanian support for the important African Liberation Support Committee. The ALSC and Baraka's Congress of African People established an office in the country's capital, Dar es Salaam. Moreover, Tanzania helped the

of groups claimed the singular title of the revolutionary vanguard. A new, more radical generation of Black Power organizations demanded black self-determination based on four main political ideologies: Marxism, revolutionary nationalism, territorial nationalism, and cultural nationalism. Ideological conversations between the political factions were a normal development; however, when each group claimed the exclusive title of the revolutionary vanguard, conversations turned into debates and at times debates turned into violent clashes.

The antagonism between Karenga's "cultural nationalism" and the Panthers' "revolutionary nationalism" became a major part of the ideological struggle over the direction of the Black Power movement. And even within the ranks of cultural nationalists, dissensions emerged. Amiri Baraka, who belonged to the Kawaida network founded by Karenga, cut off his affiliation and turned to Marxism. Howard Fuller's influential Youth Organization for Black Unity (YOBU) switched from Pan-Africanism to Communism, breaking away from Stokely Carmichael's influence. Schisms also opened up in Detroit, where the Republic of New Afrika and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW) stood on opposing sides of the black struggle.

The death of veteran revolutionary theoretical leaders such as Pan-Africanist Kwame Nkrumah in 1972, and the assassination in 1973 of Amilcar Cabral—leader of the anticolonial movement in Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau—contributed to an ideological vacuum. Into the mounting pessimism and the growing ideological and personal rifts stepped special units of the police departments and the FBI's COINTELPRO—counterintelligence program—which provoked and manipulated youthful organizations and activists into violent clashes and political factions. COINTELPRO's mission regarding "Black Nationalist Hate Groups" was to infiltrate the organizations, disrupt their activities, propagate false rumors, and ridicule and discredit their leaders. As the FBI explained in 1967:

No opportunity should be missed to exploit through counterintelligence techniques the organizational and personal conflicts of the leaderships

of the groups and where possible an effort should be made to capitalize upon existing conflicts between competing black nationalist organizations... Particular emphasis should be given to extremists who direct the activities and policies of revolutionary or militant groups such as Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, Elijah Mohammad (sic) [Muhammad, leader of the Nation of Islam] and Maxwell Stanford [Muhammad Ahmad of RAM].

The Black Panther Party not only split between the West Coast and the East Coast, but the former also saw a fallout between Eldridge and Kathleen Cleaver on the one hand and Huey Newton and Bobby Seale on the other. In addition, the BPP and Us were bitterly opposed. The local police played a role as well, pursuing the movement's most brilliant and charismatic leaders. Chicago Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were killed by police as they slept. Panther headquarters were attacked in Los Angeles, Des Moines, and Philadelphia. There, militants were stripped naked and paraded through the streets at gunpoint. Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal and Assata Shakur of the BPP and the Black Liberation Army, who asserted they were framed, were imprisoned. Shakur later escaped from prison and took refuge in Cuba, where she still lives, while Abu-Jamal, sentenced in 1982, spent thirty years on death row before being condemned in 2011 to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Facing distrust and violence, groups became weaker and more divided. The May 1974 African Liberation Day debate in Washington, DC, showcased these dissensions. Instead of building consensus, the radical leaders divided into two hostile camps: the black nationalists and the Marxist-Leninists. The contentious and toxic debate continued during the long-awaited Sixth Pan-African Congress that took place in Dar es Salaam, in June 1974. Influential Caribbean intellectuals such as Trinidadian C.L.R. James and Guyanese Walter Rodney boycotted the Congress to protest political repression in the West Indies. With trouble in the Caribbean entering the new equation, the two political camps

divided even further and another layer of discord was added to the mix—one between the African and Caribbean states and the nonstate liberation movements.

Dramatic and rapid political changes in the black world were pushing the movement to the left. The Portuguese colonial empire in Africa—Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Angola—collapsed under the double assault of the African liberation movements and the 1974 Portuguese “Carnation Revolution.” This outcome, added to the defeat of the United States in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, appeared to some American radicals to indicate that revolution was imminent in the United States. The delusion that “revolution was just around the corner” was a fatal mistake. Divisive attempts to form a Russian-style revolutionary party led a number of Black Power groups to demobilize or unravel key national organizations—including the Congress of African People—that controlled vital links in a national political and communications infrastructure. In addition, the Russian reputation for secret cadres made it even easier for police groups and agent provocateurs to stir conflict and cause unnecessary strife. Mutual trust was an invaluable asset to the youthful Black Power movement, but by 1976 that asset was replaced by widespread mutual distrust. At a few New York political rallies, activists fought each other with baseball bats. Howard Fuller and his allies were kidnapped and tortured by rival factions in a new “Revolutionary Wing.”

Across the broader movement, signs of unravelling were everywhere. In academia, black studies programs were shaken by ideological debates, and the editors of the Black Scholar journal—founded in California in 1969—split into two opposing camps: the cultural nationalists accused the others of favoring a Marxist agenda, which the latter denied. Black World, edited by Hoyt Fuller, was shut down by publisher John Johnson in 1975. Some political organizations disappeared overnight. The leaders of the African Liberation Support Committee vacated its national headquarters without notice; the regional and local branches were left in chaos. The National Black Political Assembly, which grew out of the Gary Convention,

exploded into warring camps. In the end, key Black Power militants surrendered leadership, while others were unable to stop the movement’s downfall.

Despite its divisions and weaknesses, the Black Power movement’s influence is still felt today in ways that have become so woven into the national fabric that few recognize them as the legacy of this youth-led movement.

On the cultural front, the Black Arts Movement inspired the creation of some eight hundred black theaters and cultural centers in the country. Writers and artists in dozens of cities, from Newark to San Francisco, New Orleans, Chicago, and Detroit, created alternative institutions. Many disappeared, but some are still in operation, as are Black Arts festivals and journals. The central influence of the Black Power on hip-hop and spoken word artists cannot be overstated. And Kwanzaa has been part of mainstream America for decades.

On the social front, free school breakfasts, first established by the Black Panther Party, were the precursors to the free lunch program that exists throughout the country. Sickle-cell anemia awareness campaigns and testing were also launched by the BPP, which understood health as a basic human right.

One further, crucial legacy of the movement is so prevalent that it is nearly taken for granted. Following in Black Power’s footsteps, American Indian, Asian American, Hispanic, LGBT, and women’s groups asserted themselves and demanded representation. The politics of group identity—once limited to white straight males—entered mainstream education, academia, culture, politics, and society at large.

To understand recent African American history, and ultimately American society more generally, one must come to terms with the depth and breadth, and the achievements and shortcomings of the Black Power movement.

CHAPTER I

The Black Power Movement

Peniel E. Joseph

The Black Power movement's modern face draws from both the New Negro radicalism of the 1920s and the Great Depression and World War II-era freedom surges—distinct yet overlapping political and historical traditions that indelibly shaped twentieth-century radical black activism. Black Power activists extolled the virtues of radical political self-determination, brokered alliances with third-world revolutionaries, and emphasized racial pride as both a shield against white supremacy and a sword capable of defeating institutional racism, global capitalism, and Western imperialism.

Black Power activists observed, criticized, and participated in the civil rights movement's heroic years. These years, from 1954 to 1965, were marked by bus boycotts, sit-ins, political assassinations, and legal and legislative victories that riveted the national consciousness and have been successfully upheld by contemporary historians as the most important social and political development of the postwar era. The civil rights era has by now become enshrined in America's national memory as a collective moral and political good.

However, Black Power is still too often

viewed as a destructive, short-lived, and politically ineffectual movement that triggered white backlash, resulted in urban rioting, and severely crippled the mainstream civil rights struggle. Black Power's classical period (1966-75) is most often characterized as a kind of feverish dream dominated by outsized personalities who spewed words of fire, making this a justly forgotten era. Moreover, histories of the New Left tend to blame Black Power radicalism for inspiring white radicals toward a simplistic and tragically romantic view of "revolutionary" violence.

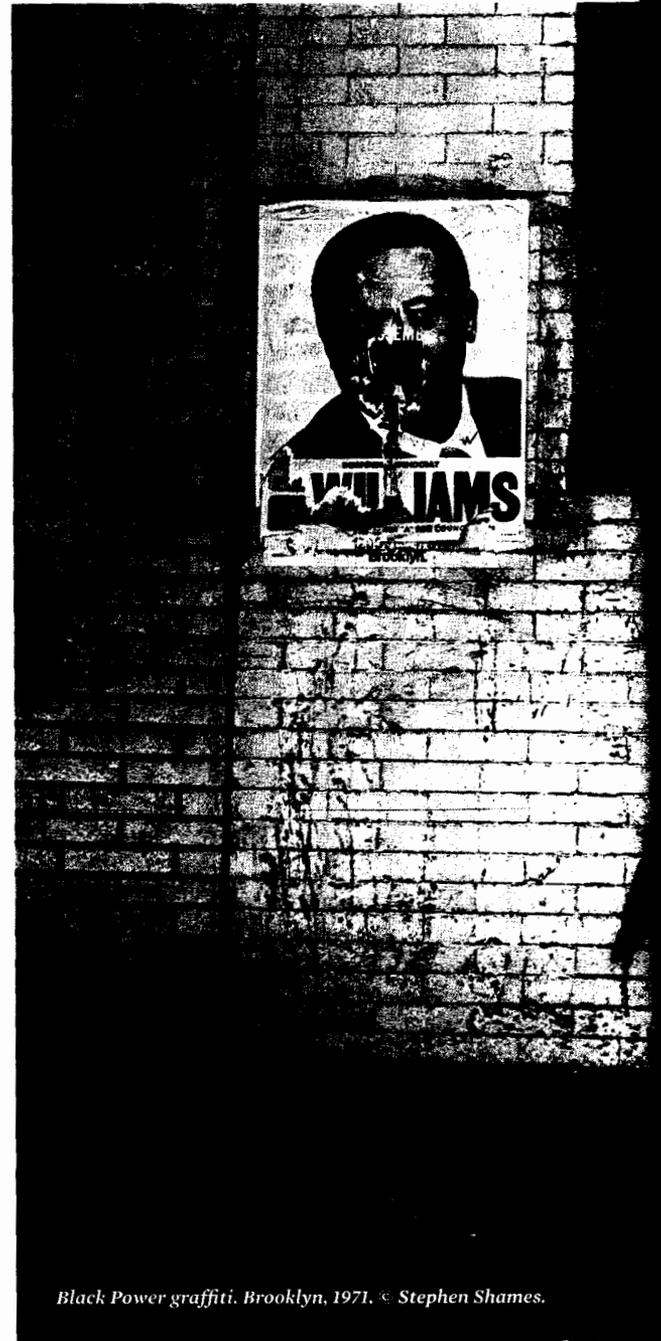
New scholarship, which I have called "Black Power Studies," is changing the way in which historians, teachers, students, and the general public view Black Power, civil rights, the 1960s, and more generally, postwar American history. Black Power is too often portrayed as a temporary eruption that existed outside the confines of American history; the movement's important antiwar activism, antipoverty efforts, foreign policy interventions, intellectual and political debates, local character, and national influence have been virtually ignored. Black Power studies place this history back within the broader context of American and African American history at the local, national, and international levels.

The roots of the modern Black Power

“THE ROOTS OF THE
MODERN BLACK POWER
MOVEMENT ARE FOUND
IN THE DOMESTIC AND
INTERNATIONAL
FREEDOM STRUGGLES
OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION
AND WORLD WAR II ERA.”

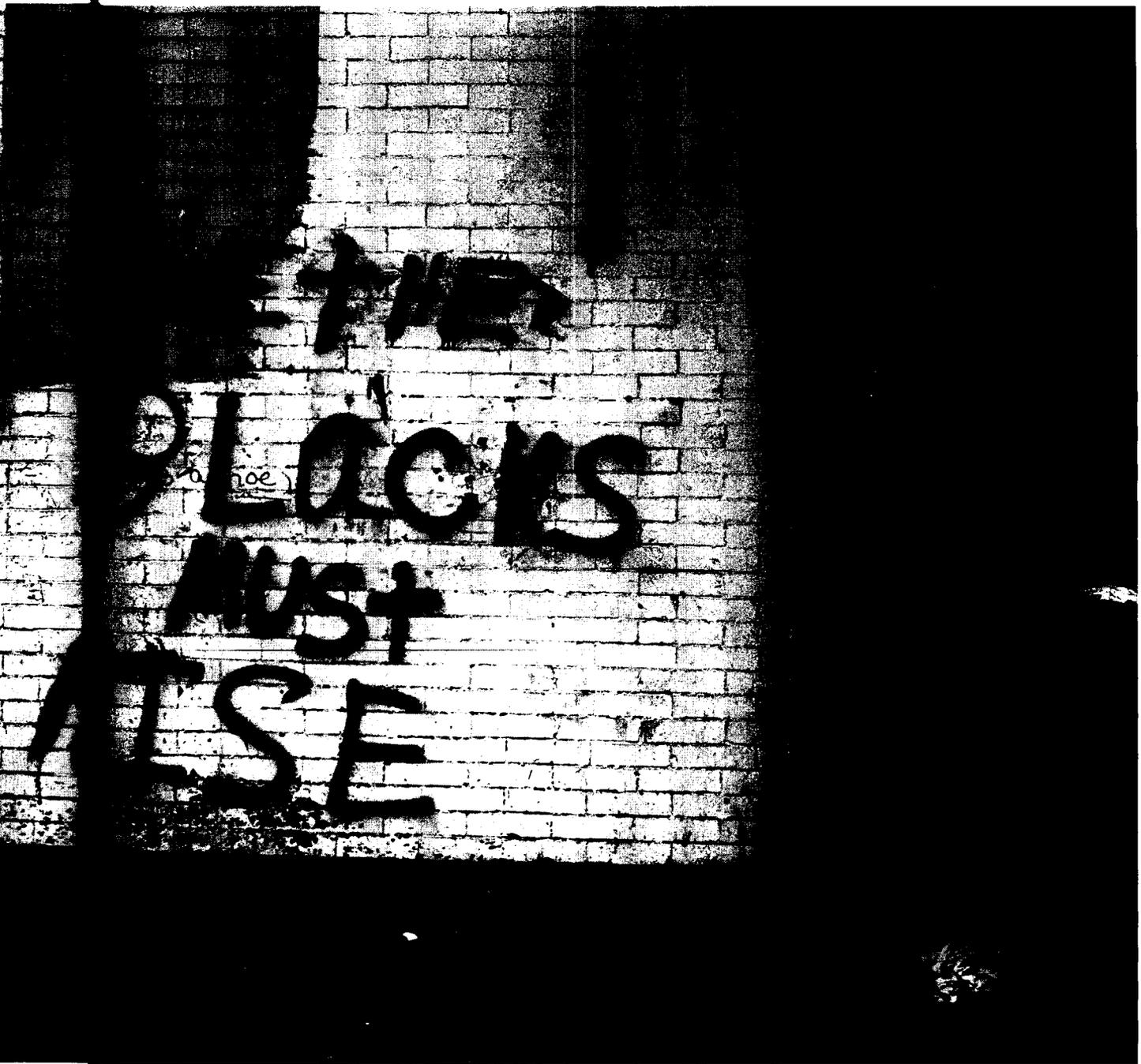
movement are found in the domestic and international freedom struggles of the Great Depression and World War II era, a time when coalitions of civil rights activists, trade unionists, liberals, radicals, and pan-Africanists demanded a deeper, more expansive vision of American democracy. Political mobilizers such as performing artist Paul Robeson, labor leader Asa Philip Randolph, New Dealer Mary McLeod Bethune, and the venerable intellectual W.E.B. Du Bois advocated a national movement for racial and economic justice and world peace. Grassroots organizers such as Ella Baker gave the movement local voice, and it took root from Harlem's bleak street corners through the union organizing efforts in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and interracial antiracist activities in Birmingham, Alabama, to the postwar boomtowns of Oakland and Los Angeles. Cold War repression dramatically scaled back these efforts, which would be replaced, at least at the national level, with a southern civil rights movement that gingerly couched its efforts within the context of Cold War liberalism's pungent anti-Communism.

In 1954, the same year as the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregation decision, Malcolm X arrived in Harlem as the head minister of the Nation of Islam's Muslim Mosque No. 7 on West 116th Street.



Black Power graffiti. Brooklyn, 1971. © Stephen Shames.

Over the course of the next decade Malcolm would practice a unique brand of coalition politics that attracted two generations of African American radicals. The older group included veteran street speakers, activists, and radicals who had come of political age during the freedom surge of the 1940s only to be disappointed (and at times criminalized) by the Cold War. The most notable of



these figures included the writer John Oliver Killens and Harlem historian John Henrik Clarke, both leading members of the Harlem Writers Guild. Malcolm also attracted a younger generation of activists, including the poets LeRoi Jones (later Amiri Baraka) and Maya Angelou. Harlem powerbrokers such as Congressman Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and New York Amsterdam News editor James

Hicks were among the coterie of influential political, journalistic, and civic figures whom Malcolm counted as allies.

On February 15, 1961, Maya Angelou, Abbey Lincoln, and Rosa Guy, at the helm of the Cultural Association of Women of African Heritage (CAWAH), were joined by many of Harlem's leading activists who viewed Malcolm as their political leader to stage a

demonstration at the United Nations Security Council in protest against the murder of Patrice Lumumba, the first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the ensuing melee dozens were arrested. The *New York Times* described it as the "worst day of violence" in the UN's history. Ralph Bunche may have deplored the "hooliganism" of the blacks who "rioted" at the United Nations, but James Baldwin and Lorraine Hansberry sounded a different note, writing to the *Times* to express deep disappointment with stories and rumors that characterized the demonstration as a Communist plot. According to Baldwin and Hansberry, the Lumumba demonstration represented a call for radical democracy that connected anti-colonial struggles being waged in Africa with domestic freedom surges engulfing America.

Outside of New York City, Malcolm made deep inroads among organizers in Detroit, where in 1961 local militants such as Reverend Albert Cleage, James and Grace Lee Boggs, and Richard and Milton Henry formed the Group On Advanced Leadership (GOAL), an organization that represented early Black Power impulses. Detroit also housed the militant group UHURU, Swahili for "freedom," taken from Kenya's Mau Mau movement. UHURU featured some of the city's angriest and most youthful militants. On June 23, 1963, political organizers in Detroit associated with Malcolm shared a stage with Martin Luther King during the Motor City's massive "Walk to Freedom," a pro-Birmingham sympathy march that drew 125,000 participants. Five months later, Malcolm delivered the keynote address at the Grassroots Leadership

EMORY DOUGLAS

Love for the Community

Emory Douglas was the minister of culture of the Black Panther Party.

Were you, like many young people involved in the Black Power movement, part of the Second Great Migration of Southerners moving west?

No, I was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan. My mother came to Michigan from Oklahoma. She had a sister in San Francisco. I had asthma as a kid, and the doctors told her that they thought the climate here might be better for me, so that's why we came to San Francisco in 1951.

How did you get involved with the Black Panther Party?

I got involved with the BPP while in the Black Arts Movement where I had created and contributed my own artwork, such as poster art, event announcements, and flyers, along with doing simple stage-prop designs for Amiri Baraka's plays. I also did the cover artwork for Sonia Sanchez's first poetry book, titled *Homecoming*. I was

basically self-taught. I had a limited amount of professional art training at City College of San Francisco where I majored in commercial art and learned the commercial aspect of doing graphic designing for various types of publications, point-of-purchase displays, posters, film animation and all the overall production aspects of graphic design. While I was in the Black Arts Movement, there was the Northern California Black Panther Party based in San Francisco; they were planning an event to bring Betty Shabazz, Malcom X's widow, to the Bay Area to honor her. I was asked by an activist friend to do the poster for that event. During the planning sessions they talked about some guys coming over to the next planning session and let it be known if they would do security for the event, which they did agree to do. That was Huey Newton and Bobby Seale. After I met them I asked how



The Lowndes County Freedom Organization, which became known as the "Black Panther Party," chose a black panther because the animal does not attack, but would not move back. Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale later used the name and emblem for the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. © Dr. Laurance G. Henry Collection. Photographs and Prints Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

could I join. That became my first introduction and the beginning of my transition into the Black Panther Party, in late January 1967, about three months after the Party started. I was just about twenty-one, going twenty-two. The pioneering members were from sixteen to eighteen, nineteen years of age. I think Huey Newton was twenty-three and Bobby Seale and Elbert "Big Man" Howard were around twenty-eight and thirty.

The newspaper, the Black Panther, is renowned globally because of your art; and fifty years later you're still invited all over the world to show it and talk about it. Were you involved in the paper from the start?

When I joined the BPP the newspaper had not started as yet. Bobby Seale and Elbert "Big Man" Howard, who was the first editor and an original member of the Black Panther Party, put out the first issue

on April 2, 1967. It was a mimeograph paper. It was after that first issue that I began to work on the newspaper. I was the revolutionary artist, it was my first title. In mid-1967, that is when we first started to get titles. And then later I became the minister of culture.

The newspaper looked quite professional.

In the beginning it was just myself and Eldridge Cleaver



and then Kathleen Cleaver, and we used to work out of a studio apartment. But then we developed to the point where I had a cadre of people who worked with me. We had a photography department, we had our typesetters, we had editors. We had those who coordinated the design and lettering and formatting, and we had a darkroom where we developed film and photographs. As we evolved, the quality got better. It was a grassroots paper but as we critiqued and evaluated our work, we improved. Our newspaper national distribution operation was located in San Francisco, where the production work was done to ship the papers to the different chapters and branches and to wherever else they were being requested.

Two years after joining the Party you went to Algeria.

In 1969, I went to Algeria for the first time. Eldridge was in

exile because he didn't want to go back to prison. He went to Cuba and then he was on his way to Algeria. Kathleen worked it out for me to travel with her to Algeria. We went to France first, and we stayed with Julia Wright, Richard Wright's daughter, and her mother Ellen. And from there we went to Algiers. I remember we met Yasser Arafat, who was there for a conference. We had roundtables with all the different African Liberation movements. And we were invited in 1969 to participate in the first Pan-African Cultural Festival where countries from all over Africa were represented.

What was it like to live and work with the Panthers?

As the Party evolved, it became clear what it needed to do in order to stay cohesive and to get the work done was to develop our collective living situation. We knew people who were in real

estate and they helped us rent apartments we shared collectively. Plus, we knew how to hustle the game. When Panthers went to see about renting apartments—but not in uniform—they would tell the building manager, "I work at such and such a place, this is the number." So the landlords or the agents would call the Panther number that we had set up for them to inquire about the rental application details. Of course there was always high praise given. Then you had veteran Panthers who came out of Vietnam into the Party. They got GI loans and could buy houses. We had veterans in the organization across the country who bought houses where we lived collectively.

Education was a crucial part of the Black Panther Party and the Black Power movement in general.

We always had political education classes; we talked about

The National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), active between 1966 and 1975, had at its height about thirty thousand members, mostly African American women, and over three hundred local affiliates. The objective of the NWRO was to improve the lives of welfare recipients and provide them with adequate income and respectful treatment. The organization used demonstrations, lobbying, and boycotts to reach its goals. March in Atlanta, Georgia. Photographer Boyd Lewis. Boyd Lewis Papers, Kenan Research Center, Atlanta History Center.

Conference in Detroit, an event that featured key early Black Power activists and culminated in an effort to build a national movement for black self-determination.

In Ohio in 1962, militant black college students formed the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), a group that anticipated

the Black Panther Party's call for armed self-defense and viewed Malcolm X and Robert F. Williams as the leaders of a radical movement for African American liberation. This loose coalition of militants included journalist William Worthy, who founded the Freedom Now Party in 1963 and formed a political relationship with Malcolm X and Dan Watts, the publisher of the radical monthly magazine Liberator, which documented the relationship between the Third World and domestic civil rights struggles.

In short, from 1954 up until his death in 1965, Malcolm X led a movement for Black Power that paralleled and intersected with the civil rights movement's high tide. Conventional civil rights historiography largely ignores this story. Instead, it begins its coverage of Black Power in June 1966,

world history and domestic issues. There were required readings in the Party. Even though people weren't on the same level, you had to put the effort in, read the newspaper, discuss what was in it, critique and evaluate our work and responsibilities. How to improve the quality of work; all those things were always a part of the learning process. And that became consistent all across the country. The chapters and branches that wanted to start had to come out to the base here in California to see how things were run. There was a structure. They were required to sell newspapers and help with education classes.

The Panthers' community work is often overlooked.

There was a time when we were in uniforms, and there were all these shootouts happening and we were thinking we were going

to start a revolution. But the people are not rising up. It's the Black Panthers being shot and the people on the sideline saying, "Right-on Black Panthers," but they're not getting involved en masse. So it was time for us to take off the uniform and get into the community and begin doing some real serious organizing. It was like, "Put down the books, now you know all the theory; go out there and put it into practice." We went to merge with the community, to serve the interests and needs of the community and to be an inspiration. We also educated and enlightened people about their government's misdeeds. And that's how you have all these alternative institutions and schools. People were really interested in that and it became the real thorn in the side of the government, because now we're beginning to transform the mindsets of people about what the government should have

been doing to help people in need and by so doing we became the government's public-enemy number one.

What is the Panthers' legacy?

The Party's legacy is that we left a blueprint not to duplicate but to be inspired by: our social programs, genuine love for the community, and our self-determination for basic human rights.

— Interview by Sylviane A. Diouf



TOP: Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale co-founded the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in October 1966. The Party's earliest political thinking was rooted in "revolutionary nationalism," a combination of black nationalism and anticolonialism. Oakland, 1972. © Stephen Shames. LEFT: SNCC activists Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown embrace after Carmichael's release from prison in Prattville, Alabama, in June 1967. Jim Pepler/Southern Courier Photograph Collection/Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama. RIGHT: With twelve thousand delegates, the March 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, was perhaps the zenith of Black Power politics. Delegates drafted a fifty-five-page document, the National Black Agenda, which challenged the white establishment monopoly on American political discourse. © Chester Higgins Jr./chesterhiggins.com. All rights reserved.

“BLACK POWER IS NOT USUALLY ASSOCIATED WITH WELFARE, TENANT-RIGHTS ACTIVISM, AND ANTIPOVERTY EFFORTS, YET THE MOVEMENT MADE THESE ISSUES SOME OF ITS CORE PRIORITIES.”

with Stokely Carmichael's fiery declaration on a humid Thursday evening in Greenwood, Mississippi. Yet even the Black Power era's classical period has received inadequate attention by professional historians.

Black Power grew out of the political, economic, and racial reality of postwar America, when the possibilities of American democracy seemed unlimited. Black Power activists challenged American hegemony at home and abroad, demanded full citizenship, and vociferously criticized political reforms that at times substituted tokenism and style over substance. Some activists did this through a sometimes bellicose advocacy of racial separatism contoured by threats of civil unrest. Others sought equal access to predominantly white institutions, especially public schools, colleges, and universities, while many decided to build independent, black-led institutions designed to serve as new beacons for African American intellectual achievement, political power, and cultural pride. Yet such efforts did not exist in a vacuum. Organized black activists encountered political repression at the local, national, and international levels. A complex web of criminal justice and police agencies infiltrated, harassed, and helped to eventually cripple Black Power's most visibly militant groups.

Black Power is not usually associated with welfare, tenant-rights activism, and antipoverty efforts, yet the movement made these issues some of its core priorities. The National Welfare Rights Organization, which represented a far-flung series of local welfare rights chapters and organizations, stands out as one of the most important Black Power groups of the 1960s and early 1970s. Activists in such cities as Baltimore, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Newark, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas used the movement's insurgent rhetoric, bold strategies, and defiant tactics to push for bread-and-butter issues, especially those impacting poor black women heading single-family households.

The movement advocated radical goals that were tempered by an at times surprising and effective blend of militancy and pragmatism. Organized protests for Black Studies, efforts to incorporate the Black Arts Movement into independent and existing institutions, and the thrust to take control of major American cities through electoral strength exemplified these impulses. Black Power activism's influence stretched from prisons to trade unions to local and national political elections. Internationally, Black Power militants forged alliances with iconic Third World leaders including Fidel Castro, Mao Tse-tung, Kwame Nkrumah, Sékou Touré, Amílcar Cabral, Nelson Mandela, Mohammad Babu,

and Julius Nyerere. Leading American political figures of the postwar era, most notably Lyndon Baines Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, Ramsey Clark, Nicholas Katzenbach, Richard Nixon, and J. Edgar Hoover, regarded the movement as dangerous, unpredictable, and a threat to national security. Yet the movement's impact on American history, its successes, failures, and shortcomings as well as its contemporary legacy, remain undervalued and understudied.

The historiography of the modern civil rights movement generally views Black Power as a movement composed of armed urban militants inspired more by rage than an actual political program. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP), a group of young black men and women from California's Bay Area, has come to personify the period in the

LEFT: Amiri Baraka became the general-secretary of the National Black Political Assembly that grew out of the 1972 Gary Convention. Left to right: Congress of African People chair, Amiri Baraka; Detroit, Michigan, U.S. representative and Black Congressional Caucus chair Charles Diggs; and Gary, Indiana, mayor Richard Hatcher at Gary Convention press conference. © Risasi Zachariah Dais. RIGHT: Saidi Nguvu of the Newark Congress of African People; Stokely Carmichael/Kwame Ture and Cleveland Sellers of the All African People's Revolutionary Party. Ture and Sellers were veterans of SNCC. © Risasi Zachariah Dais.

historical imagination. The Black Panthers are most often remembered for their bold public persona—replete with leather jackets, tilted berets, and guns—than for their ten-point program, which called for the fundamental transformation of black poverty in central

DR. MAULANA KARENGA

Black Power, Black Liberation, and Us: A Reflective Remembering and Recounting

The Black Power movement and our organization Us emerge at a critical juncture in the history of our people, this country, and the world. It is a time of fundamental turning defined and shaped by several interrelated factors including: 1) the historical exhaustion of the civil rights period of the Black Freedom movement and the emergence of its Black Power period; 2) the assassination and martyrdom of Min. Malcolm X and the embrace of his legacy by Us and other nationalist groups; 3) the Watts rebellion and subsequent revolts

and other forms of resistance across the United States; and 4) the liberation struggles of continental Africans and other peoples of the Third World.

Malcolm X noted in *Malcolm X Speaks* that "We are living in an era of revolution and revolt, and the (African American) is a part of the rebellion against oppression and colonialism which has characterized this era." Thus, Us is conceived and constructed in the crucible of struggle, both political and ideological, and when I called together a cadre of men and women to my house

to found Us, September 7, 1965, we were well aware of and eager to engage in these critical struggles. We saw ourselves as the ideological sons and daughters of Malcolm, veterans of the Watts rebellion, and heirs of a long legacy of struggle. We were new soldiers and warriors who would carry the struggle forward in honor of our ancestors, in the interests of our people, and in cooperative advancement of the liberation of the world from racism and white supremacy in its various forms.

We called our organization



Us, i.e., us Black people, African people. It was a name chosen to declare commitment to all of us, all of our people, everywhere; to stress the collective and cooperative character of our philosophy, practice, and project; and to express and maintain a clear distinction between us and "them," the oppressor, on every vital and necessary level. Moreover, we declared ourselves a revolutionary vanguard, committed to our people and to our liberation struggle. Clearly, Us's signature, most widespread, and most known achievements are the pan-African institution of Kwanzaa and the black value system of *Nguzo Saba*, the Seven Principles: *Umoja* (unity), *Kujichagulia* (self-determination), *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *Nia* (purpose), *Kuumba* (creativity), and *Imani* (faith). And although it is not as

well known, *Kawaida* philosophy is not only the intellectual anchor and animating philosophy of these institutions, but the foundation and framework for all of Us's work, struggle, and achievement. Indeed, both Kwanzaa and the *Nguzo Saba* are creative and intellectual products of *Kawaida*, which is defined as an ongoing synthesis of the best of African thought and practice in constant exchange with the world.

Part of Us's uniqueness and importance lies in its role as the founding organization of Kwanzaa, celebrated by millions throughout the world African community and which I created in 1966. Kwanzaa is a communal practice that stresses and reaffirms Africanness and binds Black people together in ways unlike any other institution or celebration. The *Nguzo Saba*, at the heart of Kwanzaa, are not only central to its practice, but also serve as

philosophical grounding and a guide to daily living for millions of African people throughout the global African community and thousands of organizations representing a wide range of educational, political, social, economic, and cultural formations. Indeed, no other organization or philosophy from the 1960s has had such a similar widespread programmatic and philosophical impact on African organizational, family, and personal life.

We defined Black Power as the collective struggle of our people to achieve three overarching and yet basic goals: self-determination, self-respect, and self-defense. Self-determination called for control of the space we occupied, the end of internal colonialism, liberation from oppression in all forms, and freedom to realize our potential and flourish as persons and a people. Self-respect called for a rootedness in the best of our

cities. The BPP's organizational history offers a window into the era's political and ideological diversity. The group's earliest political thinking was rooted in "revolutionary nationalism," a combination of black nationalism and anticolonialism that gained momentum in the early 1960s through not only the CAWAH United Nations protest but also the cultural criticism of writer Harold Cruse and the political activism of Robert F. Williams.

The BPP's co-founders, Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, adopted an interpretation of revolutionary nationalism that they were introduced to via the Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM), a group that included Muhammad Ahmad (Max Stanford) and Donald Freedman and came to be considered a forerunner to Black Power-era groups of the late 1960s. RAM admired Malcolm X and Williams, formed

alliances with Detroit radicals James and Grace Lee Boggs, and helped publish Soulbook, an influential political magazine whose staff included Bobby Seale and Ernie Allen.

The organizational genealogy that produced the Panthers usually ignores the powerful, direct influence of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO), which combined local grassroots activism with a call for radical self-determination that proved historic. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activists Stokely Carmichael, Bob Mants, and Judy Richardson in Lowndes County and H. Rap Brown in Greene County joined forces with local sharecroppers and activists to help transform the buckle of Alabama's black belt into the headquarters of a political revolt whose reverberations reached all the way to Oakland, California.

own culture in ways that gave us the consciousness and capacity to be ourselves, free ourselves, and reaffirm our identity, dignity, and humanity. And self-defense called for a defiant assertion of our right and responsibility to protect ourselves and our people, resist oppression, and seek freedom by any and all appropriate and necessary means—armed or otherwise.

Reading and absorbing the writings of the major revolutionaries and liberation leaders of our time, especially Malcolm X, Frantz Fanon, Sékou Touré, Julius Nyerere, Robert Williams, Amílcar Cabral, Marcus Garvey, and others, we stressed cultural revolution, liberation struggle, pan-Africanism, and Third World solidarity. We took Malcolm's teachings that we are a nation within a nation, and we understood our people as a nation, a cultural nation struggling to come into political existence, i.e., struggling to free itself and be itself.

Thus we defined ourselves as *Kawaida* cultural nationalists, *revolutionary* cultural nationalists, in spite of mischaracterizations and misinformation about Us spread by the FBI and other opponents. *Kawaida* cultural nationalism is for Us thought and practice rooted in three basic propositions: 1) the defining feature of a people or a nation is its culture; 2) for a people to be itself and free itself, it must be self-determined, self-conscious, and rooted in its own culture; and 3) the quality of life of a people and the success of their liberation struggle depend on their waging *cultural revolution within* and *political revolution without*, resulting in a radical restructuring of self and society and ultimately impacting the world.

We were anticapitalist, advocating African socialism, defined in great part by Mwalimu Nyerere's concept of *Ujamaa*. We taught and practiced draft resistance, cooperatively organized

and held antiwar rallies and teach-ins against imperialist wars in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and supported the right of self-determination for all peoples. We advocated reparations and prisoners' rights, trained *Kasisi* (chaplains) to counsel and advise prisoners, and provided literature and lawyers where possible. As pan-Africanists, we supported African liberation movements and pan-Africanist projects; and we built alliances with various Third World organizations engaging in the struggles that gave rise to and defined the times.

Realizing with other liberation movements that we have to build and sustain the people as we fight, we committed ourselves to work, service, struggle, and institution-building. Thus, we established numerous organizing initiatives and worked in cooperative community projects to build institutions to provide affordable housing, accessible health care, and quality education; end police

In an effort to gain political autonomy, the LCFO ran local candidates for political office, featuring a Black Panther on the ballot—a symbolic repudiation of the Democratic and Republican parties as well as racial terrorists who practiced violent intimidation in an effort to quell black power.

The organization Us (black people, African people) helped raise black consciousness through its promotion of cultural practices, but is most often remembered for a series of violent confrontations with the Black Panthers. Us introduced the black holiday Kwanzaa to the African American community. Founder Maulana Karenga's (formerly Ron Everett) advocacy of a black value system found its most important disciple in Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones), who would adopt and revise the Nguzo Saba in Newark through the

Committee for a Unified Newark (CFUN) and later the Congress of African People (CAP). For a brief but important time, Us was one of the most important Black Power groups, organizing the National Black Power Conferences and showcasing the way in which black nationalists in Los Angeles utilized culture in an effort to transform the racial and political consciousness of the black community. By 1969, however, Us and the Panthers were engaged in violent and sectarian conflicts

Stokely Carmichael/Kwame Ture of the All African People's Revolutionary Party, a Pan-Africanist, socialist party that advocated the revolutionary unity of Africa. Stokely Carmichael, 0227527, Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University Libraries, Raleigh, North Carolina.

World
ved
the
people
It will
umph
tion of
world
ery
principle
oblit





LEFT: The Black Panthers provided free sickle-cell anemia testing. Oakland, 1972. © Stephen Shames. RIGHT: The Young Lords Party was founded in New York in 1969. It offered free breakfasts and daycare centers for children, and helped bring about changes in public sanitation, improvements in health care facilities, elimination of lead-based paints, and reforms at the Board of Corrections. Co-founder Felipe Luciano (on stage with microphone) introduces the YLP at a meeting in Tompkins Square Park, New York, July 26, 1969. © Hiram Maristany.

abuse and violence; establish economic cooperatives; increase political participation; and expand space for cultural grounding, creativity, and performances. Practicing the Kawaida principle of operational unity, unity in diversity, unity without uniformity, Us initiated and helped build Black united fronts across the country in places such as Los Angeles, Newark, San Diego, and Dayton.

Having been invited to participate in the first Black Power Conference in Washington, D.C., called by Rep. Adam Clayton Powell in 1966, Us played a major role in co-planning, co-hosting and providing ideological grounding for the two subsequent Black Power Conferences in Newark, 1967, and Philadelphia, 1968. At the Newark conference, we were given the assignment of organizing a political campaign to actualize Black Power and chose Newark as the site for the initiative. There we led and organized

a political campaign I called "Peace and Power" and during which I trained and organized political workers and candidates. This initiative involved the building of a Black united front, the Committee for a United Newark (CFUN,) and led to the election of many city councilpersons and Newark's first Black mayor.

Like other organizations of the Black Liberation Movement, Us was initially patriarchal. However, the organization began to change to an egalitarian formation as a result of several interrelated factors. These include: 1) the ongoing dialog on gender relations in which the women of Us began to question and resist established relations; 2) the heightened state of suppression of the organization and an increasing number of male members being imprisoned or going underground or in exile; 3) the emergence of the women in new and expanded administrative, security, and public roles and

accompanying dialog and decisions on mutual respect, equality, and shared responsibility in life, love, and struggle; 4) the changing context of the Movement itself and the need for Us to reaffirm its revolutionary character; and 5) the demand of Kawaida to practice the best of African culture in constant exchange with the world. Representative documents of this dialog and change are the Malaika Women's Statement, "View from the Woman's Side of the Circle," published in Us's paper, *Harambee*, on April 25, 1969, and in articles I wrote in the *Black Scholar* during my political imprisonment, including "A Strategy for Struggle: Turning Weakness into Strength" (1973) and "In Love and Struggle: Toward a Greater Togetherness" (1975).

Although it is routinely omitted in the literature, we, like other Black Power organizations, were victims of the COINTELPRO, the FBI program to "discredit, disrupt



LEFT: White radicals and activists who wanted to work with white youth in poor and working-class neighborhoods of Chicago to help overcome deep-seated racism founded *Rising Up Angry*. They allied themselves with the Black Panther Party, the Young Lords, and other groups to form the Rainbow Coalition. © Michael James. RIGHT: Deputy chairman and co-founder of the Illinois chapter of the BPP Fred Hampton (center with beret) alongside co-founder and former SNCC member Bobby Rush at a Panther rally in Chicago, 1969. Hampton launched the Rainbow Coalition. During an early morning raid on December 4, 1969, the police assassinated Hampton and fellow Black Panther Mark Clark while they slept and wounded seven other members. © Hiroji Kubota/Magnum Photos.

and destroy and otherwise neutralize" all Black leadership and organizations deemed to be a security threat. Other targets of this program included the Nation of Islam, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Republic of New Afrika, the Black Panther Party, the Revolutionary Action Movement, and the Movement in general. We were on every list any other Black Power group viewed as a threat to the country's security was on. According to FBI files, such a group was considered a revolutionary organization if it was "armed and dangerous," if its leader "plans a revolution, . . . is currently training members in revolutionary tactics and is currently storing arms," and if it is an "organization whose aims include the overthrow of or destruction of the U.S. by unlawful means." And according to another report, the FBI stated it had "information which indicates Us is engaged in activities which could violate"

a series of U.S. Title 18 Codes, including those against: "revolution or insurrection," "seditious conspiracy," and "advocating overthrow of the Government," as well as Title 22 concerning "Neutrality Matters," i.e., dealing with foreign countries deemed enemies.

This led to ongoing surveillance and suppression of Us and its members by the national and local police and security forces, resulting in deaths, shootings, attacks on our homes and headquarters, persistent harassment, and continuing character assassination. Us members were driven underground and into exile, and in some cases, including my own, suffered political imprisonment on trumped-up charges. Also, the FBI was responsible for manipulative propaganda and the provocation of intergroup struggles, especially the deadly shootouts between the Panthers and Us. What Hoover feared, after all, was not any one group,

but rather the unity and coordinated struggle of our groups as a self-conscious revolutionary and transformative social force.

We are simultaneously *victims* and *survivors* of the COINTEL-PRO, refusing to be dispirited, defeated, or diverted from the ongoing struggle to radically restructure society and contribute meaningfully to a new history and hope for Africans and humankind. In September 2015, Us advocates/members celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the organization and the Nguzo Saba, and by extension Kawaida, the philosophy and value system used by millions of Africans throughout the world African community to ground themselves, do their work, and to orient, enrich, and expand their lives.

Us has continued to play a unique and vanguard role in Black intellectual, creative, and political culture since the 1960s, including Black Arts, Black

that were based on ideological disputes, personal grudges, and youthful ego, tensions that were exploited by the FBI's illegal COINTELPRO Program, which attempted to destroy black radicalism through harassment, surveillance, and sometimes violence.

Us also illustrates the close and overlapping organizational histories of the era.

Members of the Brown Berets, a Chicano organization founded by David Sanchez, an East Los Angeles high school student, in 1967. The Brown Berets had close to ninety chapters in the West and the Southwest, as well as in Michigan and Minnesota, and about five thousand members total. Reies Lopez Tijerina (center) crusaded for land grants for Chicanos in New Mexico, as the Republic of New Afrika did for African Americans in the South. Oakland, 1968. Bob Fitch Photography Archive, © Stanford University Libraries, Department of Special Collections.

Karenga belonged to the Los Angeles chapter of the Afro-American Association, a Bay Area black consciousness-raising group that included Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton. Like Newton and Seale, Karenga considered himself a disciple of the slain black icon, Malcolm X. Karenga presided over the Black Congress, an early effort at organizational solidarity, including Elaine Brown and the BPP. The Black Congress helped to coordinate California's Black Power organizations, mediate disputes, and was an early supporter of efforts to free Black Panther minister of defense Huey P. Newton. Also, in an event that attracted 6,500 people, Karenga hosted keynote speaker Stokely Carmichael one year after the Watts rebellion.

Stokely Carmichael (later Kwame Ture) is usually dismissed as a temperamental



rabble-rouser who helped to subvert more promising movements for social justice. Yet such a characterization ignores Carmichael's civil rights activism in the Deep South between 1960 and 1966, where he suffered physical violence and racial terror in pursuit of radical democracy. Carmichael's willingness to endure personal sacrifice and years of struggle for democratic principles that upheld black sharecroppers as symbols of a new American egalitarianism complicates old narratives of the Black Power era. Carmichael's political evolution took place within SNCC, the most important grassroots civil rights/Black Power-era organization.

SNCC housed competing political ideologies, including liberal integrationism, black nationalism, feminism, and anti-imperialism. By 1966 SNCC's dreams of interracial democracy

had been transformed by traumatic and tragic experience. The group issued a stinging denunciation against the Vietnam War, a manifesto that placed the organization at the cutting edge of a Black Power-led anti-imperialist movement that would soon include the Black Panthers, Students for a Democratic Society, and the New Left. In 1970 SNCC activists Frances Beal and Gwen Patton organized the Third World's Women Alliance (TWWA), which grew out of SNCC's Black Women's Liberation Committee. A daring combination of radical black feminism, socialism, and Black Power-era militancy, TWWA organized black and Puerto Rican feminists in consciousness-raising groups, political demonstrations, and anti-imperialist discourse. The organization also published *Triple Jeopardy*, a cutting-edge radical newspaper that illustrated the intersection

Power, Black Studies, Black Student Unions, independent schools and rites of passage, and Black liberation theology and ethics. More recently, it has played a key role in the movements of Afrocentricity, ancient Egyptian studies, Black united fronts, Maatian and Ifa ethics, reparations, and the Million Person Marches. In fact, I wrote the mission statement for the Million Man March/Day of Absence on behalf of the executive committee.

Internationally, Us has maintained relations with continental and other diasporic organizations and activists, and participated in major African projects such as the second Pan-African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC '77) and initiatives by the African Union. Us continues to maintain relations and work with other Third World activists and organizations. As I have noted elsewhere, in the 1960s we had stood up, seeing ourselves as descendants of Malcolm with

an awesome obligation to wage the revolution he had conceived and called for. Thus, as Simba Wachanga, the Young Lions, we youthfully and self-confidently declared for ourselves and our generation that "We are the last revolutionaries in America. If we fail to leave a legacy of revolution for our children, we have failed our mission and should be dismissed as unimportant."

The message retains its original meaning and urgency even today and we remain ever grounded in our culture and steadfast in our struggle to create a just, good, and sustainable world and help rebuild the liberation movement to achieve this. For we embrace the ancient African ethical imperative: to know our past and honor it; to engage our future and improve it; and to imagine a whole new future and forge it in the most ethical, effective, and expansive ways.

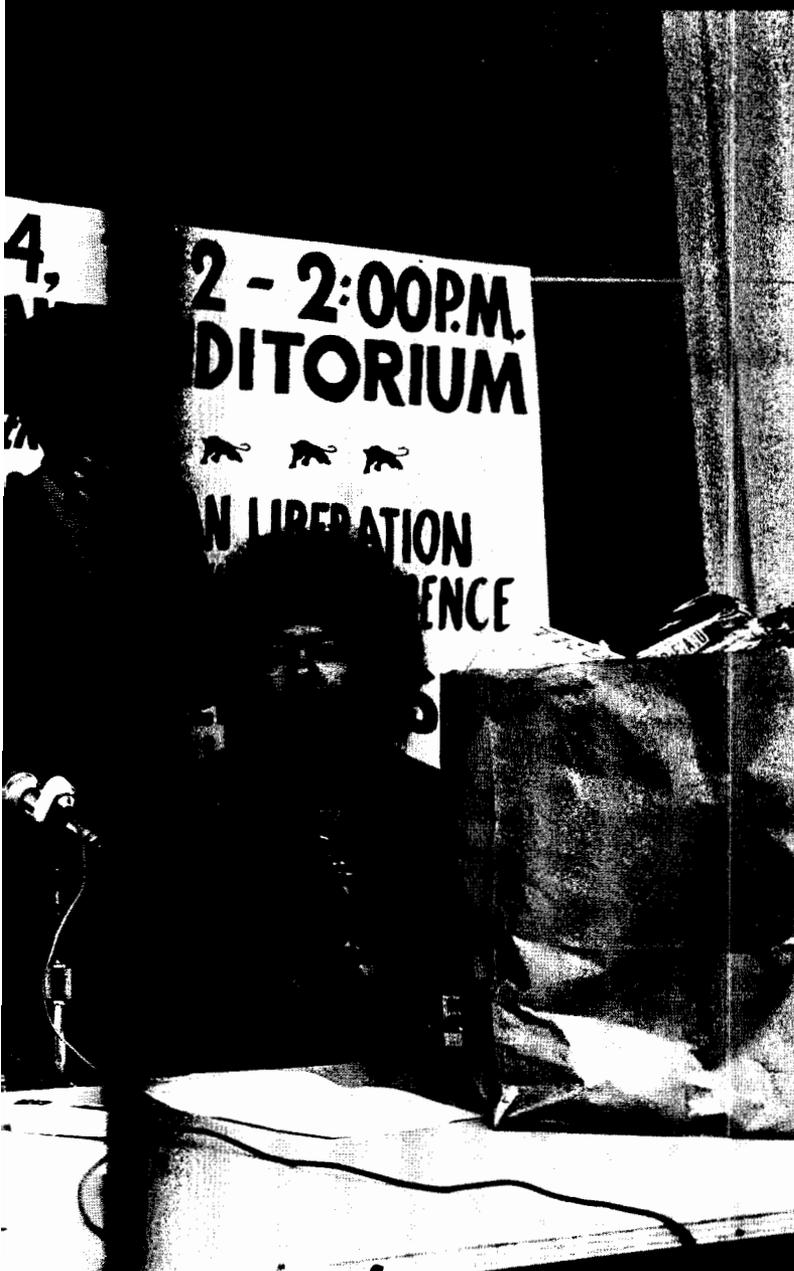
**“WE ARE THE LAST
REVOLUTIONARIES
IN AMERICA. IF WE
FAIL TO LEAVE A LEGACY
OF REVOLUTION FOR
OUR CHILDREN, WE HAVE
FAILED OUR MISSION
AND SHOULD BE
DISMISSED AS
UNIMPORTANT.”**



of race, class, and gender on social movements long before such an intellectual intervention became the topic of conversation among professional scholars.

Black Power transformed American democracy. At the local level, in cities such as New York, Baltimore, New Orleans, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Oakland, and Los Angeles, urban militants used the movement's ethos of self-determination and cultural pride to advocate for burning issues such as decent housing, better public schools, employment, welfare benefits, and an end to police brutality. In Detroit, black trade unionists and labor activists such as Luke Tripp and General Baker, who had been mentored by

James and Grace Lee Boggs and had been a part of the early Black Power group UHURU, were part of the Dodge Revolution Union Movement (DRUM). Beginning in 1967, DRUM challenged white supremacy in the United Auto Workers labor union through a series of highly effective and nationally disruptive strikes. The revolutionary union movement consolidated its forces in the League of Revolutionary Black Workers (LRBW) and during the late 1960s briefly galvanized Black Power-era Marxist labor organizing. The idea that black liberation would be rooted in understanding, challenging, and transforming economic inequality helped to inspire the Student Organization of Black



Black Panther Party in Oakland. Seated from left: co-founder Bobby Seale; future chair (1974-77) of the Party Elaine Brown; and Ericka Huggins, former political prisoner and future director of the Oakland Community School (1973-81); Minister of Culture Emory Douglas (standing right). June 24, 1972. © Stephen Shames.

Unity (SOBU) to drop its back-to-Africa program and to publish *African World*, one of the most sophisticated Black Power-era publications. *African World* argued that the Black Liberation Movement required a practical and theoretical understanding of the workings of global capitalism. SOBU, which later became the Youth Organization of Black Unity (YOBU), defined racism as the institutional arm of a dying empire. The organization exposed and analyzed the racial face of capitalism, highlighting the economic exploitation of African workers abroad and black workers in the United States.

Nationally, activists such as Stokely Carmichael argued that institutional racism had

distorted the shape and character of American democracy. Carmichael's call for Black Power included eloquent and angry denunciations against the Vietnam War that made him the subject of a wide-ranging, meticulous, and illegal surveillance by the FBI, White House, CIA, and State Department.

Carmichael may have become the most visible face of black militancy in the late 1960s, but Black Arts icons such as Sonia Sanchez, Amiri Baraka, and Larry Neal advocated a cultural revolution that carried with it profound political implications. Black Arts activists promoted a redefinition of black identity that wedded indigenous African American cultural traditions to a reconstructed vision of Africa, the Caribbean, and the wider global black diaspora.

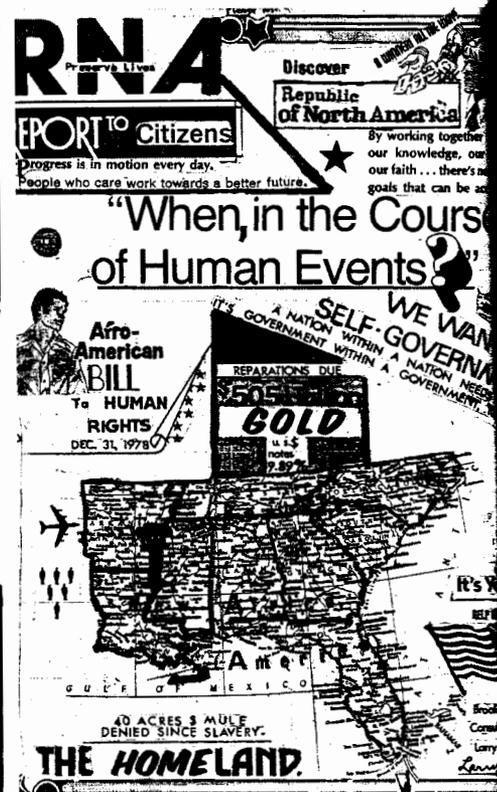
Poet Amiri Baraka's political influence reached new heights with the organization of the Congress of African People (CAP) in 1970. CAP formed one of the leading groups in what historian Komozi Woodard has characterized as a "Modern Black Convention Movement," one that echoed nineteenth-century organizational efforts to achieve black citizenship. The modern version of this movement included the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), which promoted African Liberation Day (ALD) as a global event designed to promote anticolonialism, resist economic inequality globally and domestically, and educate a new generation of black activists about the history of pan-Africanism and imperialism. In fact, the ALSC and CAP went on to become United Nations NGOs.

[[THE BLACK POWER MOVEMENT REPRESENTS NOTHING LESS THAN AN EPIC IN AMERICAN AND WORLD HISTORY, ENCOURAGING HUMAN RIGHTS STRUGGLES FROM LONDON TO PARIS, FROM JAMAICA TO INDIA, AND FROM ISRAEL TO AUSTRALIA.]]

Internationally, activists visited Africa, formed lobbying groups, and made decolonization the hallmark of efforts to transform American foreign policy toward the Third World. By 1972 the movement was driven as much by international political considerations as local and domestic ones. A remarkable but ultimately short-lived alliance between urban militants and black elected officials resulted in arguably the most diverse array of voices in African American political history speaking at the 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana. Simultaneously, Kwame Ture's All African People's Revolutionary Party (AAPR-P) argued that black liberation in America was rooted in the liberation of Africa under scientific socialism. The AAPR-P defined itself as a cadre-, rather than mass-, based organization. African socialism rooted in the thought of pan-African giant Kwame Nkrumah and personified by the political practice of Guinean president Sékou Touré became the hallmark of the group's efforts to build cadres in the United States and around the world. Ture, who moved to Guinea in 1969, returned to the States for frequent and well-publicized tours extolling the virtues of intense historical study, the need for political organizing, and the inevitability of

a Third World revolution capable of defeating Western capitalism and imperialism against mighty odds.

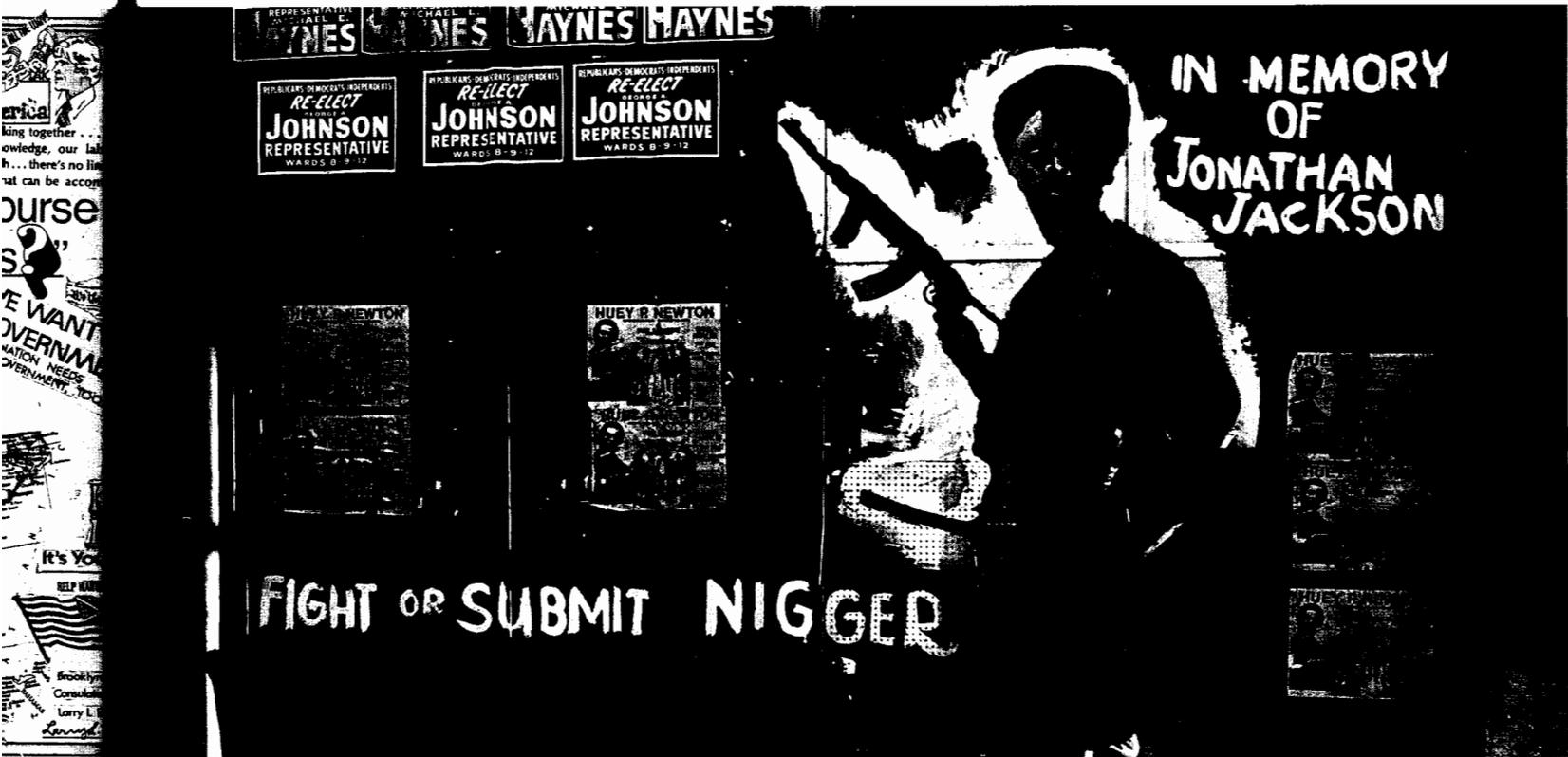
Black Power's reach extended to white activists in the New Left as well as a broad range of racial and ethnic minorities ranging from Puerto Rican militants in Chicago to Mexican Americans in Los Angeles to Asian Americans in the Bay Area and Native Americans in the Midwest. The Young Lords Organization (YLO), which formed political beachheads in Chicago and New York, transformed Puerto Rican and Dominican former gang members into political activists who fought urban renewal, demanded clean streets and safe neighborhoods at the local level, exposed police brutality, and (inspired by the Black Panthers) called for an anti-imperialist world revolution. At the local level the Young Lords fought for better social services, Nuyorican architecture, antipoverty programs, and tenants' rights in New York City. The Young Lords, like the West Coast-based Brown Berets, the American Indian Movement (AIM), and Asian American radicals of the Red Guard, reflected Black Power's racial and ethnic diversity, what historian Jeffery Ogbar has characterized as the era's "rainbow radicalism."



LEFT: Republic of New Afrika leaders. Sitting from left: Mabel Robinson Williams; Robert Williams Sr., RNA president; co-founder Gaidi Abiodun Obadele (Milton Henry). Standing first row: Audley "Queen Mother" Moore and co-founder Imari Abukari Obadele (Richard B. Henry). Detroit News Collection/ Walter P. Reuther, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University. MIDDLE: The RNA declared Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina its national territory, and asked for reparations to establish an African American nation in the Deep South. Manuscripts Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library. RIGHT: Black Panther Party and Republic of New Afrika (RNA) signs, fliers, posters and graffiti. Roxbury, Boston. 1971 © Stephen Shames.

The Black Power movement represents nothing less than an epic in American and world history, encouraging human rights struggles from London to Paris, from Jamaica to India, and from Israel to Australia. Like any watershed historical period, the era is filled with iconic individuals and organizations as well as more obscure and relatively anonymous, but no less important,

activists and groups. New scholarship attempting to chronicle this era can only do justice to its vast panorama by studying both the iconic and the obscure. On this score, important historical figures such as Stokely Carmichael, Kathleen Cleaver, Huey P. Newton, and Angela Davis helped to shape the movement through participation in local, national, and global liberation struggles. Similarly, the intellectual and political work of Black Arts icons such as Sonia Sanchez, Amiri Baraka, and Haki Madhubuti transformed the era's cultural and intellectual landscape in profoundly important and historically resonant ways. The movement's intellectual legacy is comprised of the publication of thousands of books, pamphlets, speeches, essays, and poetry; and institutionalized through bookstores, independent schools, black studies programs and departments, and educational and community activism that flourish in hundreds of grassroots organizations around the country. Most importantly, thousands of grassroots activists—ranging from welfare mothers to trade unionists to school teachers—adopted



the rhetoric of Black Power militancy in an effort to transform the local conditions of everyday black people, especially during the height of Great Society reform. Thus Black Power, while usually associated with the fiery revolutionary polemics of groups such as the Black Panthers, had a compassionate side that surfaced in the political programs of local activists across the United States.

The Black Power movement transformed the political, cultural, and historical landscape of postwar America and the larger world. The movement's multifaceted organizations, from SNCC to the National Welfare Rights Organization, radically altered America's social, political, and cultural landscape. In doing so they helped give birth to and sustain one of the twentieth century's most important, and controversial, movements for social justice. Black Power's impact was panoramic, triggering revolutions in knowledge, politics, consciousness, art, public policy, and foreign affairs along lines of race, class, gender, and sexuality. The movement's heyday forced a reexamination of race, war, human rights, and democracy

and inspired millions of global citizens to reimagine a world free of poverty, racism, sexism, and economic exploitation. From Harlem to Haiti, New Orleans to Nigeria, and Birmingham to Bandung, black liberation activists called for a new and more humane political order, one that would be democratically controlled. Ultimately, Black Power's legacy reverberates through organizations that gave the era its full breadth and depth of expression and the people who animated their dreams of a liberated future in movements that simultaneously burst forth in violent staccato, threatening upheavals in their wake and unfolding with the gentle fury of a soul- and blues-tinged gospel song. Black Power was and is jazz, blues, gospel, and hip-hop. It transcended the boundaries and limits of blackness even as it filled in the unseen contours of a blues people whose country, Amiri Baraka reminds us, always was and always will be black.