8-2004

Beguiling beginnings and dialectical salvaging : the presidential inaugural speech and African-American leaders' speeches.

Jacqueline Elaine Brown
University of Louisville

Follow this and additional works at: https://ir.library.louisville.edu/etd

BEGUILING BEGINNINGS and DIALECTICAL SALVAGING: THE
PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURAL SPEECH AND AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERS'
SPEECHES

By

Jacqueline Elaine Brown
B.A., University of Louisville, 1975
M.A., University of Louisville, 1991

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

August 2004

Beguiling Beginnings and Dialectical Salvaging:
The Presidential Inaugural Speech and African
American Leaders' Speeches

By

Jacqueline E. Brown
B.A., University of Louisville, 1975
M.A., University of Louisville, 1991

A Dissertation Approved on

June 17, 2004

by the following Dissertation Committee:

_____
Dissertation Director

_____

_____

_____

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother and grandmother

Fannie Elizabeth Brown

and

Ruby Howlett Brown

who reached beyond insurmountable obstacles to teach me invaluable lessons.

In addition, I want to dedicate this dissertation to Dr. Lucy Freibert and Dr. Mary Ellen

Rickey, Dr. Robert Miller, Dr. Dennis Hall, Dr. Tom Van, and Dr. Israel T. Naamani for

the intellectual

and spiritual growth. Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation chairman, Dr. Carol Mattingly, for her invaluable guidance and patience. I would also like to thank the other committee members, Dr. Bronwyn Williams, Dr. David Anderson, Dr. Karen Chandler and Dr. James Blaine Hudson. I would like to thank my two sisters, Helen and Sandra, my aunt, Delores, and my niece, Yvette Frank, for their support during this lengthy ordeal. In addition, I would like to thank all the professors of U of L's English department, for it is their extensive erudition upon which my own knowledge is predicated. Finally, Vernon Johnson's help in combating the formatting problem was priceless. Thanks.

ABSTRACT

BEGUILING BEGINNINGS and DIALECTICAL SALVAGING : THE

PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURAL SPEECH AND AFRICAN AMERICAN LEADERS'

SPEECHES

Jacqueline E. Brown

August, 2004

This dissertation explores how presidential inaugural speeches reflect the

overarching mindset of the government, and how, in the postmodern era, this mindset

manifests the same sort of African American erasure that has existed since Middle

Passage. In addition, I explore the rhetorical engagement black leaders use to respond to,

Passage. In addition, I explore the rhetorical engagement black leaders use to respond to,

prevent, or to circumvent erasure. This dissertation examines presidential inaugural

speeches, during the Civil Rights and Black Power era, from the Kennedy administration

to President Lyndon Baines Johnson, to prove that, most times, this type of speech is little

more than epideictic formality in regards to black interests, and, perhaps, the initial step

in an administration's disregard for the concerns of African Americans—or the first

indication that an administration is ensnared in a dilemma of catering solely to white

American interest. Correspondingly, I explore the theory that African American leaders'

speeches attempt to respond to Presidential inaugural addresses.

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter covers Kennedy's

inaugural speech and corresponding African American speeches that seem to respond to

Kennedy's racially evasive issues and ideologies in his inaugural address. Chapter two covers Johnson's first inaugural address and corresponding African American responses to inherent race issues. Chapters three, four, and five cover Johnson's second inaugural speech and corresponding African American speeches. In the conclusion, this dissertation explores the nature and function of the presidential inaugural address, based upon theorists' past assumptions about the address's function and nature, arguing that not only is the inaugural address normally more deliberative than epideictic, but, is most deliberative. In addition, the conclusion argues that current African American response to the presence or absence of race issues in presidential inaugural addresses has a broader platform than during the Civil Rights and Black Power movements.

Table of Contents

Prologue

[W]hen the gods first created living creatures on the earth, they charged Prometheus and Epimetheus with the task of giving each living creature abilities appropriate to its survival. Epimetheus persuaded Premetheus that he could do this task alone and that Prometheus could do the inspection after all the abilities had been distributed. Epimetheus went on to distribute speed, strength, and other abilities to the animals, making sure that each received what it needed for survival. But he squandered all abilities too freely, and when it came to human beings he had none left to give. Upon inspection, Prometheus found that the animals were sufficiently endowed but humans were "naked, unshod, unbedded, unarmed" (321c). Feeling sorry and responsible for them, Prometheus stole from the gods fire and the arts of daily life and gave them to humans. While Prometheus received a severe punishment from the gods, human beings were able to survive on account of the stolen gifts. They used fire to keep themselves warm, and the arts of daily life, including speech, to communicate, come together in numbers, create cities, and invent daily necessities. But because they did not possess the civic arts, humans fought against each other and headed down the path of destruction.

Seeing all this, Zeus felt sorry for humans and ordered Hermes to go down to earth and give them the two elements of the civic arts: justice and respect for one another. According to the myth, Hermes asked Zeus how he was to distribute these gifts: give justice to some and respect to others, or both justice and respect equally to all? "To all," replied Zeus. "Let all have their share; for cities cannot be formed if only a few have a share of these as of other arts. And make thereto a law of my ordaining, that he who cannot partake of respect and [justice] shall die the death of a public pest" (322d). This is why, Protagoras explains, when the Athenians "meet for a consultation on civic arts, where they should be guided throughout by justice and good sense, they naturally allow advice from everybody, since it is held that everyone should partake of this excellence, or else that states cannot be" (323a). For Protagoras, then, deliberation is more than the art of advocating a specific course of action for the city. It is a human excellence inextricably tied to the virtues of justice and respect—the two most important constituents of social coherence. When [people] articulate their interests, they speak . . . as citizens concerned with the common good. . . . [T]heir speeches act as reminders that to deliberate means to uphold those virtues that hold the community together and strengthen its bonds. (*Greek Rhetorical Theory 40)*

Beguiling Beginnings and Dialectical Salvaging: The Presidential Inaugural Speech

and

African American Leaders' Speeches

> "I am an invisible man. . . . I am invisible . . .
> simply because people refuse to see me. . . .
> it is as though I have been surrounded by
> mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they
> approach me they see only my surroundings,
> themselves, or figments of their imagination
> indeed, everything and anything except me."
> (Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*)

"I was so out of things, I'd never heard
of the Jehovah's Witnesses." (Robert Lowell, "Memories
of West Street and Lepke")

> "In a tradition of perpetual struggle, spirituality is a way to survive."
> (Michael Eric Dyson)

Introduction

The archaic definition of the word "inaugurate" stems from the Latin word

"inaugurare," meaning to take omens from the flight of birds, to consecrate or install after

taking such omens or auguries. Today, the word means to admit or induct into an office

of formal ceremony, to consecrate, instill, or invest. "Inauguration" means a consecration

or installment under good auspices or omens; therefore, an inaugural speech should more

closely resemble the "deliberative" type of rhetoric that argues about "future action in the

best interests of the state" (*On Rhetoric* 7), as defined by Aristotle. One may argue that

1

presidential inaugural addresses are epideictic. Though the presidential inaugural address has as its platform a formal ceremony, it neither praises nor censures someone. Moreover, as Aristotle points out as one criterion of epideictic addresses, the presidential inaugural is neither concerned with the present nor seeks to prove honor or dishonor.

Investigating presidential inauguration speeches for evidence of rhetorical disregard as to the welfare of African Americans necessitates adopting the archaic definition of the word "inauguration." For close observers of presidential inaugural speeches realize that these speeches have little correlation to issues concerning blacks— in spite of the race issue being America's most persistent and debilitating problem. Moreover, the more ancient practice of choosing and shaping a leader's objectives according to "divine" forces that have little or no correlation to the actual needs and desires of the constituents is no more primitively puerile and simplistic than the "flighty" (if readers will pardon the "bird" pun), ambiguous, and occult inaugural oratory of U. S. presidents in reference to the welfare of blacks. The rhetoric employed in Presidential inaugural speeches seems to, at the very least, carry a tone of irrelevance to the more earthy, day-to-day problems of African Americans living in a racist society while, simultaneously, going to great lengths to include nearly all the major concerns of whites.

African Americans have been victims of various forms of erasure in American society, both literally and figuratively. To "erase" means to remove, delete, cease existence or memory, to nullify the effect or force of something, or to discontinue. Literally, this erasure can be in the guise of actual physical erasure. Figurative erasure may come in the guise of economic disenfranchisement, or social, academic, and political exclusion.

2

Michel Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge* discusses the unities of discourse, whereas he says that "discontinuity" or "erasure" is a "great accident" that creates "cracks" in the history of any given unity. According to Foucault, what one should examine, as a result of a discontinuity, is the "incision" or gap that emerges within the given unity. Exploring the political rhetoric of U.S. Presidents during the second half of the 20th century in American government, one discovers various types of erasure of African Americans, or, in other words, "gaps" where African Americans are omitted or phased out. This dissertation's purpose is to study that erasure in presidential inaugural speeches.

African American political leaders sought to reverse the effects of this erasure by closely scrutinizing the political rhetoric of white political leaders and responding in ways that were minority *inclusive* (when blacks were ignored or omitted) or *re-interpretive* (when the issue at hand was important, but in a different way, from a black perspective). To be exact, speeches by black politicians and leaders attempt to correct political erasure by directly addressing or responding to African American problems *and* the politicians that helped shape progressive and regressive policies. Often, black political leaders chose to act as *interlocutors,* positioning and engaging themselves in actual *dialogue* with presidential inaugural addresses.

Perhaps, too, the argument could be that presidential inaugural speeches are not speeches about race. However, an argument can be made that since a presidential inaugural speech attempts to focus upon the nation's pertinent problems and give some hint as to the solution for those problems, besides seeking to provide some sort of direction for the policies with which a president must grapple, to avoid the race issue is severely negligent. It is as though we are avoiding four-hundred-year-old festering

3

garbage posed in the nation's living room, everyone pretending that it isn't there or does not exist, in spite of its hideous smell. The fact that few previous inaugural addresses before President Johnson deals with race is evidence enough for reason to assume that racism has been a perpetual problem because presidents have always refused to discuss race on major national platforms, thereby contributing to the perpetuation of the problem.

Bradford T. Stull's *Amid the Fall, Dreaming of Eden* (1999) analyzes the rhetoric of W.E.B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King, and Malcolm X. Stull labels the rhetoric of these three men (and, I might add, similar black rhetoricians) "emancipatory composition."[1] Stull points out the paucity of theoretical analyses concerning this sort of composition or rhetoric, and constructs his own theory concerning sociopolitical rhet/comp that is inclusive of nearly all the theorists mentioned in his book, augmented by certain nuances.[2] Stull theorizes that "emanicipatory composition" is "theopolitical"[3] because "it seeks to set free the captives and give sight to the blind," is "rooted" in "theopolitical and political language of the American experience," is "conservative and extreme," and, moreover, adopts the foundational vocabulary of the nation while embracing what Kenneth Burke call "the comic extreme"[4] (3).

Yet, Stull begins his book asking pertinent questions: "Can the study of composition serve the creation of a just commonwealth?" "If it can, how can it?" "What might emancipatory composition, composition meant to set free the captives and give sight to the blind, be?" (3) To formulate my own theory concerning rhetoric and

---

[1] It is necessary to point out that Stull defines "rhetoric" and "composition" as one and the same.
[2] Stull cites theorists such as Paulo Freire, Ira Shor, Henry Giroux and Donald Macedo. See pages 1-2.
[3] Stull defines "theopolitical" as the enjoinment of sociopolitical and religious language that entails four major tropes—the Fall, the Orient, Africa, and Eden. A discussion about the more religious nature of Civil Rights rhetoric versus the more secular rhetoric of the Black Power movement occurs later in the dissertation.
[4] Stull defines this as "an attitude that would allow it to subvert this vocabulary in order that its telos might be reached: the emancipation of the oppressed and . . . oppressors" (3).

composition by African American leaders that addresses America's sociopolitical problems, I must begin with the personal in order to seem less antagonistic.

As a child, I was extremely shy, self-effacing, studious and quiet, never causing anyone problems and always going to extreme measures to circumvent problems created by other people. However, as with most of us, I encountered my share of "demons" in life. These nemeses were in the form of neighborhood/school "toughs." Mind you, this era precedes today's politically correct era, whereas, today, the concern about student/student and student/teacher violence is subject to much debate. Naturally fleet-footed, back then, my smartest and most favored option in the face of personal adversity was to *run*. However, my mother, in her infinite wisdom, warned me one day running would *not* be an *option*. I would have to turn around and *fight back* or *respond* in some way. Finally, that day came; and, miraculously, it was the rare bully who bit at my heels after that deciding moment. There *is* a point here. Fighting back, be it with fists or words, is, many times, one's *only* option. This is what African American leaders, non-militant and militant alike, realized they must do in order to forge a *weapon* of *defense* against the perpetual rhetorical and legislative "dissin'" (dismissal, disrespect, disregard, denial, hence, erasure) white American political leaders, especially presidents, have dealt black Americans throughout our history. Perhaps when black leaders read "Keep these Negroes running" in Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1947) or saw how Richard Wright's "Bigger Thomas" was forced into a "relay" that ultimately lead to his demise, they decided the sole solution to end racial injustice and discrimination was to adopt "confrontational" posturing and respond directly to white political leaders concerning black societal needs. Hence, African American leaders *talked back.*

5

Call it response, interlocution, dialogue, direct rebuttal, refutation, confutation, retorting, riposte, retaliation, or just plain *sass, talking back and talking black* (to borrow bell hooks' phrase) was the modus operandi of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, movements that had a telos to correct social injustice. Plato's *Phaedo* points out how "justice . . . itself (is) a kind of purification" (*Phaedo* 241). Perhaps black leaders decided the time was ripe to seek justice by shedding the vestiges of a perpetually puerile and silently obsequious personae projected upon them by whites, and they used rhetorical retaliatory tactics to "purify" both their self-image and white America's perception of the black image, as though attempting to correct what Du Bois refers to as the "double conscious."

Religion and the church are two areas in which Civil Rights rhetoric is grounded. Nearly all Civil Rights leaders, such as Martin Luther King and members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), were products of the Gentile religious tradition and Judeo-Christian philosophy. It is religion from which elements of "non-violence" and "passive resistance" grew. Moreover, religion and the church acted as geographic and philosophical agencies for the Civil Rights movement, as black leaders such as King argued on the basis of moral persuasion for black human rights *and* used the church as a gathering place where Civil Rights could be included as part of the church agenda. However, alongside those black leaders whose emancipating rhetoric was based in religious tropes, there was a black leadership faction whose rhetoric rejected both the church and biblical allusions. There seemed to be a direct correlation between the militant tone of a black leader's speech and his or her aversion to religiously based rhetoric. At first, this group of black leaders was small in number; however, by the beginning of Johnson's second inaugural address, the more secular black leaders' voices

grew in such a sizeable number as to equally compete and challenge those such as King. The Black Power movement provided the most prominent representatives of secularly oriented African American leaders.

Black Power militants, or revolutionaries, either shunned, blamed or mocked the black church for the claudicant progress blacks had made during and after the Civil Rights movement. When Black Power leaders, such as Malcolm X, used biblical references or allusions it was most often in irony.[5] Moreover, militant rhetoric was used to convey a more martial or war-like overtone, be it the "war" against racism, poverty or injustice. Militant or revolutionary rhetoric, it could be conjectured, also conveyed a more *demanding* and *threatening* posture, encouraging a sense of urgency or immediacy to those who listened. The most common rhetorical phrase or sense of timing of the average black militant is, "THE TIME IS NOW!"

In addition, Presidents Kennedy and Johnson use rhetoric predicated upon biblical references in their inaugural addresses. Kennedy refers to the Book of Isaiah in his inaugural address. Johnson, at the very end of his first inaugural, recites the refrain of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," a song that combines religious and political tropes to help convey the message or belief that, whatever America's policies may be, God is on America's side. That Johnson uses the idea of "Covenant" philosophy, which dates back to the Puritans, to frame his second inaugural address indicates that he wanted to ground Civil Rights rhetoric, and all other policies, in religious tropes. However, by this time, foregrounding religion in a system viewed by Civil Rights leaders as hypocritical and

---

[5] Several sources point out how, in the early stages of Malcolm X's career as a speaker, his speeches were laced with allusions and references to Muslim religious doctrine and Elijah Muhammad. However, during the latter stage of his career, Malcolm seemed to rely less upon Black Muslim teachings and more upon black revolutionary, militaristic rhetoric.

Black Power leaders as a racist kakistocracy backfires and serves as a basis for a strong Civil Rights and Black Power retaliatory response.

This dissertation will explore how presidential inaugural speeches reflect the overarching mindset of both the government and white Americans, and how, in the postmodern era, this mindset manifests the same sort of African American erasure that has existed since Middle Passage. In addition, it will explore the rhetorical engagement black leaders used to respond, to prevent, or to circumvent this erasure. Federal government complicity in the substandard conditions of African American well-being is not a novel revelation. The list of scholars and theorists (Levine-Rasky, 2002; Jones, 2001; Wildeman, 1996; Delgado, 1995; Michaels, 1995; and Williamson, 1986) who attempt to decipher governmental complicity in the distressed plight of minorities is endless. James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* (1962) is a relatively early treatise that rules out any possibility of change for blacks "without the most radical and far-reaching changes in the American political . . . structure" (84). Critical race theorist Derrick Bell's *And We Are Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice* (1989) explains how the federal government's lack of enforcement of Civil Rights laws and a "contradictory" Constitution have perpetuated, long after the Civil Rights era, a segregationist mentality towards African Americans. And though Paula S. Rothenberg's *White Privilege: essential readings on the other side of racism* (2002) never directly points an accusing finger at the federal government, she does reveal how "white privilege," an unwieldy institution constructed by the hands of federal government, is so intrinsically saturated ("institutionalized" and "woven into the fabric of society" are the phrases she uses) within the American social and cultural systems that unraveling the social and cultural threads that make up the fabric of white privilege is "virtually impossible"—without the

assertive assistance of ordinary citizens. Rothenberg's analysis of government

complicity and responsibility for racism is filtered through the prism of social and

cultural racism. She poses the question as to how can whites not help *but* reap benefits

from these privileges. Moreover, Rothenberg seems to place the burden upon individual

white citizens, whereas she proposes how whites can turn the tables and use white

privilege to fight racism and the system of white privilege as a whole. Rothenberg

suggests that whites use their more privileged venues and avenues of access to "speak out

against racism and other social inequities." Rothenberg suggests that,

> We can protest incidents of racist harassment or intolerance on our
>
> campuses and challenge admissions policies that favor those who are
>
> white and well-to-do over those who are not. We can go to school
>
> board hearings and argue against public school budgets and policies
>
> that perpetuate white privilege. We can appear at town council meetings
>
> and speak out against zoning policies that perpetuate segregation while
>
> "protecting" white property values. We can speak out against racial
>
> profiling and police brutality. Closer to home, we can refuse to laugh at
>
> racist jokes and we can challenge our friends, neighbors, and colleagues
>
> when they . . . parrot positions that reinforce the unfair advantages that
>
> white people enjoy in a myriad of venues. (Rothenberg 4-5)

Though Rothenberg pulls her punches as to where the blame for institutionalized racism

lies, her revelations and suggestions indirectly reveal Uncle Sam's complicity in the

matter.

Like Rothenberg, Deborah Mathis looks at the social, cultural and political

ramifications of governmentally perpetuated racism. Mathis' *Yet a Stranger* (2002) points

9

out the social, psychological, economic, and intellectual alienation, afflictions and "bi-polarism" blacks experience due to governmental inadequacy in regards to blacks. Lani Guinier's *The Miner's Canary* (2002) warns all of white America—including the government—that the distress of the racially marginalized is a foreshadowing of things to come for all races. Ellis Cose's *The Envy of the World* (2002) enlightens Americans as to how most of the ills concerning black education, crime, and economics are exacerbated by government policies. Yet, in spite of the myriad of scholars and theorists who approach the subject, none focuses specifically on the formal political rhetoric (speeches and/or official statements) of presidents and major politicians to look for evidence of government complicity in the problems of blacks. This dissertation examines presidential inaugural speeches, during the Civil Rights and Black Power eras, from the Kennedy administration to President Lyndon B. Johnson, whereas it places presidential inauguration speeches and Civil Rights/Black Power speeches side by side for fuller understanding.

Halford Ryan's *The Inaugural Addresses of Twentieth-Century American Presidents* (1993) theorizes that there are several topics scholars should consider when analyzing the inaugural address: (1) "the political situation surrounding the inaugural with regards to rhetorical purpose"; (2) "the campaign rhetoric that may have been carried forth into the address"; (3) "the evolution of the speech's preparation, with special attention given to the president's themes and emendations versus the speech staff's contributions." In addition to all this, "style of language," "organization strategy in relationship to persuasive purpose," and the "speech's delivery," according to Ryan, are also considered (Ryan xv-xvi). Previous scholars have studied presidential inaugural addresses and, as a result, were able to standardize the rhetorical topics to be considered

when analyzing an inaugural address: four generic elements reflect the "contemplative" nature of this type of speech. In addition to his own inaugural considerations, Ryan quotes Karyln Campbell's and Kathleen Jamieson's theories concerning presidential inaugural addresses, whereas the two scholars construct a theoretical basis for honing the inaugural address into a distinct genre. Campbell and Jamieson say that the presidential address (1) "unifies the audience by reconstituting its members as 'the people' who can witness and ratify the ceremony"; (2) "rehearses communal values drawn from the past"; (3) "sets forth the political principles that will govern the new administration"; and (4) "demonstrates that the President appreciates the requirements and limitations of the executive function." The scholars conclude their assessment of the inaugural speech by saying that "[e]ach of these ends must be achieved through means appropriate to epideictic address, i.e., while urging contemplation not action (Ryan xvi).

In various fashions, and more or less, all the considerations and criteria proposed, by Ryan, Campbell and Jamieson, for the genre of the presidential inaugural speech, are considered in this dissertation; for these considerations/criteria help support the argument of some form of African American erasure within Kennedy and Johnson's inaugural addresses. However, I use these four criteria only as a guide while specifically dealing with erasure. Moreover, while dealing with erasure, I focus upon topics of interest to African Americans.

In an era of pervasive race lynching, nationally indiscriminate discrimination and political suffocation, Kennedy's inaugural address has as its thematic telos global visions and promises. In an era of face-to-face black/white racial turmoil and confrontation, Johnson, at first, rightfully purloins Kennedy's "thunder," supporting the Civil Rights Bill and, ironically, the African American notion of the "dream"—only to steal both

11

"crowns" long enough to propose what *he* thought was best for blacks, with little black leadership consideration. In his second inaugural address, Johnson adopts the rhetoric and personae of the pilgrim preacher (Increase Mather?) to reason with (and reunite) a racially polarized or divided white America, while nudging whites towards a reminder of original American ideals and towards "contemplation" (to use Campbell's and Jamieson's word) of what America could be if it lived up its promises. However, viewing both Kennedy's and Johnson's inaugural addresses in light of precedent, neither leader can be excused; for the fact is that race issues and the African American plight had been issues, though spuriously dealt with issues, during previous administrations. Since Lincoln's tragic ordeal with the Civil War, only Truman and Eisenhower were forced to openly deal with race issues. Truman's belated focus upon America's race issue might have given Kennedy a clue as to its pertinence as a necessary issue for inclusion in his inaugural address. Truman's focus upon the race issue could have alerted Johnson to the frustrations of African American leaders who had endured the "suffered patience" of hundreds of years of fighting for black rights with little or no progress. Ryan's theory that one of the rhetorical considerations of any inaugural speech is the political situation surrounding the inaugural with regard to rhetorical purpose indicts Kennedy, as he not only succeeded Truman but, too, Eisenhower and Little Rock, Arkansas as acknowledgement of the importance of race issues. Johnson had been immersed in the thick of the race issue since earlier presidential administrations *and*, despite the fact that he uses history to frame his second inaugural address, he disregards his own historical acumen concerning black leadership's lengthy, frustrating struggle for equality.

In Memoriam: "Don't Expect Too Much of Me": Harry Truman

When Harry Truman mounted the podium to address the people on April 12, 1945 his

initial words were, "Don't expect too much of me!" Because he never explained what he

meant, hearers of the national address were encouraged to interpret the phrase within

light of their own national experience. While this dissertation will not explore the

presidential rhetoric of Harry Truman, there is a need to borrow his words in light of its

thesis. Truman, as President, is the first American leader to openly and publicly address

the race issue, and the first to acknowledge (by way of legislation and public address)

prominent and influential black groups fighting for improvement of the welfare of blacks.

Hitherto, the subject of racism in the upper chambers of American government was as a

gigantic elephant posing in the center of Congress that everyone pretended did not exist,

or was simply ignored. In short, the appropriation of Truman's initiatory phrase is,

basically, a "nod" of *respect*, in return for the respect he showed to African Americans

during his tenure as President. Truman is not being hoisted as an "icon," or symbol of

black American progress. However, he is the first to officially *attempt a dialogue* and,

using the slang of the streets, "take it to the stage"—all the way to the White House and

the media, whereas, hitherto, leaders merely appeased blacks with political handshakes

and sphinx-like smiles. Garth E. Pauley's *The Modern Presidency and Civil Rights*

(2001) points out that Truman was the first to consider the race issue a "crisis," though,

as with all successive Presidents, he "struggled with the same paradoxes about civil rights

that later presidents would encounter: the apparent disparity between historic principles

and present deeds, between Cold War ideals and domestic performance" (33). In

addition, Truman, Pauley points out, publicly declared that the *federal government,*

including the chief executive, had a duty to advance civil rights (italics mine). Ronald

Brown, in James Riddlesperger and Donald Jackson's *Presidential Leadership and Civil

Rights Policy* (1995), says that Truman and his administration "went against the grain of

history" in their attempt to appropriate African Americans within the "mainstream of

American life" (Riddlesperger and Jackson 29). Brown goes on to tell how Truman, at a

4 December 1946 meeting with the National Emergency Committee against Mob

Violence, stated "My God. I had no idea it was as terrible as that. We've got to do

something!"—after being told of the blinding attack on a black serviceman. On 4

December, 1946 Truman did something. He officially created, by executive order, the

President's Committee on Civil Rights (35-6). As Garth Pauley describes it in *The

Modern Presidency and Civil Rights* (2001), the most "pivotal" act Truman made is his

29 June 1947 speech before the NAACP, where he "urgently" (Pauley's word) spoke this

introduction:

> The occasion of meeting with you here at the Lincoln
>
> Memorial affords me the opportunity to congratulate
>
> the association upon its effective work for the improve-
>
> ment of our democratic processes. I should like to talk
>
> to you briefly about civil rights and human freedom. It
>
> is my deep conviction that we have reached a turning
>
> point in the long history of our country's efforts to guar-
>
> antee freedom and equality to all our citizens. Recent events
>
> in the United States and abroad have made us realize that
>
> it is more important today than ever before to insure that

all Americans enjoy these rights. (Quoted in Pauley 43)

This address received a wide audience of black and white Americans. Moreover, besides being the first to directly address the civil rights issue and taking concrete steps to desegregate the military, Truman added the spice of "immediacy" to America's race issue. The time, to Truman as it was to African Americans, was *now*. Yet, Truman, like most blacks, was ahead of his time; for his next two successors, Eisenhower and Kennedy, failed to pick up where he left off. Both Eisenhower and Kennedy took stands on race issues only when absolutely necessary. More than anything, Truman's introductory phrase, like the antiquated definition of "inauguration," aptly describes the lachrymose nature of the relationship, or lack thereof, between presidential inaugural promises and the vivid reality, in regards to minorities.

Most presidential political speeches have demonstrated black erasure by totally ignoring or showing a disregard for the African American situation. More explicitly, white politicians err geographically, looking beyond the more immediate concerns of African Americans who live within their own borders, or intentionally, cloaking black concerns in a manner that totally snuffs out or erases black issues. When it came to winning the Presidency, nimbleness on the race issue was required; that is, politicians had to know how to play the race card. Those who did won the black vote and, when public sentiment concerned itself positively with black concerns, they won the presidency. Those who cleverly played the race card during "white backlash" years also won the Presidency. Yet, overall, blacks who sought economic and social equality were constantly juxtaposed against whites who wanted to maintain their complacent and prosperous status quo, unwilling to increase the black share of the American "pie."

Government intervention into this quagmire of postmodern racial tension always looked out for the best economic interests of whites, and, in doing so, persistently dealt African Americans a "hand" of backlashes. When civil rights legislation was passed that was too progressive, white backlash spoke out in fear, precipitating a "roll-back" from much of the progress attained during the movement.

Mary L. Dudziak's "Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative" discusses Derek Bell's concept of "interest convergence," whereas he points out the direct correlation between black progress and white priorities. Dudziak explains, "In one important deviation from the dominant trend in scholarship on desegregation . . . Bell has suggested that the consensus against school segregation in the 1950s was the result of a convergence of interests on the part of white and blacks, and that white interests in abandoning segregation were in part a response to foreign policy concerns and an effort to suppress the potential of black radicalism at home." Duziak quotes Bell's theory that major civil rights legislation such as Brown vs. Board of Education would have never manifested itself if not for white American ambitions to "window dress" so-called American democracy before the eyes of the world (Quoted in Delgado111).

Bell and Dudziak's opinions focus upon the concept of *motive*. Foucault's theory on discourse attempts to help us understand the motives behind what is and isn't said. Foucault says in analyzing thought we ask ourselves "what was being said in what was said?" In discourse one has to analyze the statement within the context of its occurrence, determine why it exists, its limits, how it is related to other statements, and the statements it excludes. Foucault suggests an "underlying murmur of another discourse" one hears in a statement, and that this other discourse tells the hearer just what the statement is truly

saying, what is being excluded in the statement, and how a statement is situated in a place where no other statement can occupy its place. There is a relationship between statements, and to reveal the arena or space of a statement or discourse lends to the meaning. To examine the crack, split, or gap also lends to interpretation of the meaning. The purpose of this dissertation is to position presidential inaugural speeches against speeches by Civil Rights and Black Power leaders in order to show how inaugural addresses exhibit a gap, split or crack in their concern for African American interests, and how black leaders, in turn, respond to or interpret the meaning of these gaps in order to reveal this lack of concern.

Chapter One

Evading the "Shadow" To Acquire the Substance: President John F. Kennedy

And Challenges to Erasure

> "These are the tranquilized *Fifties,*
> and I am forty. Ought I regret my seedtime?
> I was a fire-breathing Catholic C.O.,
> and made my manic statement,
> telling off the state and president, and then
> sat waiting sentence in the bull pen
> beside a Negro boy with curlicues
> of marijuana in his hair." (Robert Lowell's "Memories
> Of West Street and Lepke")

Sojourner Truth once said, "I sell the shadow to support the substance." Truth

was referring to her mission of preaching about the plight of the African slave to unaware

white Americans in order to garner sympathy and eventual abolition. The term "shadow"

in American history, the *moral* problem that underlies (or is shrouded by) the more ideal

outward appearance of things, involves, according to Carl Gustav Jung's *The Principles*

of Archetypes, the "*dark aspects*" embedded in the personality, be it the personality of an

individual, group of people, or an entire society. As Perry Miller's *Errand Into the*

Wilderness tells us, anyone who has had to sit and listen to a "hell-fire-and brimstone"

sermon is familiar with a personal "shadow." Those who have reflected upon the odious

beginnings and perpetually disadvantaged state of certain American minorities, African

and Native Americans for example, realize the societal "shadow" cast upon America. To

recognize or become conscious of a "shadow," Jung says, one must exert considerable

"moral effort" (518), or suffer some feelings of guilt.

President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address reveals a man who, initially, failed

to demonstrate recognition of a shadow, or an examined moral consciousness in regards

to U.S. race relations. Kennedy, members of his State Department, and other government

officials repeatedly invoked the name of Reinhold Niebuhr, Harvard scholar and

philosopher, as their "svengali," to "justify a realistic approach to global issues" (Davis

26). David Davis quotes the Kennedy administration's McGeorge Bundy as calling

Neibuhr "probably the most influential single mind in the development of American

attitudes which combine moral purpose with a sense of political reality" (Davis 26-27),

and Richard Wightman Fox states that Neibuhr "helped them maintain faith in

themselves as political actors in a troubled—what he termed a sinful—world. Stakes

were high, enemies were wily, responsibility meant taking risks: Neibuhr taught that

moral men had to play hardball" (Davis 27). Yet, in his inaugural address, Kennedy

either fails to heed, or re-interprets, Neibuhr's warnings against "national egotism,"

violence in the name of politics, and his philosophy on social injustice when it comes to

his own nation. Both Kennedy and King were protégés of Neibuhr; yet, their

interpretations of Neibuhr's philosophies on moral purpose/political reality and

violence/national egotism part ways as each interpret the scholar in relation to what is

most important to himself. Kennedy, as previously pointed out, shows that he lacked a

sense of moral purpose combined with political reality when he ignores America's

smoldering race problem, even after criticizing Eisenhower for his handling of the Little

Rock incident. Instead, Kennedy adopts a global focus that encourages him to promise to

help protect the liberties of a Europe divided between the free world and the Iron Curtain. King, as a persecuted African American, utilizes Neibuhr's philosophy by harnessing the words "moral purpose and political reality" to appeal to white America's consciousness for long awaited black equality. Until he expresses concern for Vietnam and Africa towards the end of his career, King forfeits any recognition of global issues. Both men, finally, choose what is expedient for their own political aims.

Kennedy's retarded address of American social injustice is, perhaps, due to the necessary political posturing he displayed during the presidential election. Before the election, in order to carry the South, Kennedy had learned to act, think, and feel like a "Southerner"; that is, he had to carry on the presidential tradition of rhetorically evading, unless circumstances absolutely required, race issues; he had to pander to southern constituents about foregrounding states' rights over those of the federal government; and, he had to display the traditional southern suspicion of, as Pauley refers to it, "Republicanism." Pauley quotes *The Christian Science Monitor* to inform readers how Kennedy transformed from a "figure of southern opposition into an adopted southerner"—"Dixie's favorite Yankee"—in order to garner the southern vote and win the presidency. Kennedy's political game was one of blindsiding and charades, as he cleverly adopted a "don't ask/don't tell" position on race issues and hyped a type of public posturing and rhetoric that convinced southern voters that his handling of the Little Rock incident would have treated it as a state matter and not one involving federal troops. Pauley quotes *The Christian Science Monitor* whereas he says the journal points out how Kennedy's clever handling of the South and civil rights was achieved by, "combining traditional southern suspicion of Republicanism with the reaction against the Eisenhower

administration for using federal troops in Little Rock" (Pauley 105). When questioned as

to his position on the Little Rock situation, Kennedy evaded the issue by saying,

"Whether we favor the decision or oppose it, it is going to be carried out. It is the law of

the land" (105). Moreover, a myriad of ingredients were responsible for the success of

Kennedy's election tactics. According to Pauley, Kennedy's anti-Republicanism was

combined with an "Eisenhower"-style rhetoric and a publicly displayed reticence in

indicating his support for *Brown* vs. *Board of Education*, all of which helped Kennedy

override suspicions about his Catholic background and navigate a smooth course into the

hearts of southern voters. (Pauley 105) Although, further into his administration, he was

forced to handle American civil rights and desegregation issues as *moral crises* (standing

in opposition to the South), on the day of his inauguration Kennedy obviously intended to

maintain his "Southern Yankee Son" reputation.

Foucault's theory regarding erasure can be applied to John F. Kennedy's

inaugural speech, a speech that indicates that post World War II globalization and

European détente (holdovers from the Eisenhower administration) were the main interests

in American policy, to the exclusion of domestic policies—including the increasingly

contentious issues of race relations and civil rights. Notwithstanding the simmering

national and highly publicized crises during the Eisenhower administration,[1] Kennedy

began his administration, according to Pauley, detached and uncommitted to issues

concerning civil rights. Yet, perhaps, Kennedy might deserve *some* exoneration for his

domestic oversights. Many scholars have pointed out how Kennedy rode into politics

---

[1] Emmett Till (the black teenager murdered in Mississippi for whistling at a white woman), Rosa Parks (the black woman who refused to give up her seat to a white man and move to the back of the bus), Little Rock (referring to Little Rock Arkansas's heated controversy concerning school desegregation), and Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka (the legal case that dis-established the separate but equal philosophy for public schools) were pertinent incidents of the day.

and the White House on the personal ambitions, money, and desires of his father, Joseph

Kennedy. In addition, Kennedy scholars have theorized that the younger Kennedy, as a

presidential candidate, sought to rectify the fatal mistakes Joe Kennedy had made as

ambassador to Great Britain. Joe Kennedy committed a political faux pas concerning

Adolf Hitler and America's role in World War II.[2] Considering this, it seems very likely

that the son believed the stage of "real" politics played out on the global stage. For

Kennedy's inauguration speech is indicative that he had a global "vision" that extended

far beyond the gripes and complaints of an American population concerned with the

segregationist tactics that saturated American culture. Scholar Theodore Otto Windt[3]

points out how Kennedy's speechwriter, Theodore Sorensen, whose original outline for

the speech contained an "inventory" of the nation's condition—"the gold crisis," "the

domestic slump," etc.—was advised by Kennedy to "drop the domestic stuff altogether"

in order to "concentrate on foreign policy" because Kennedy was "dissatisfied with

attempts to weave domestic issues into the address" (Ryan 184).

Perhaps Kennedy was merely voicing the sentiments of his constituents and major

supporters. It was a time when the nation, as a whole, avoided the unpleasantness of

racism and racist violence. For avoiding "domestic" issues, especially when it pertained

to race, seemed to be very influential with every major American institution's (including

the so-called ultra-liberal media) ilk during this period. For example, PBS's *American*

---

[2] Joe Kennedy was accused of harboring anti-semitic sentiments regarding Hitler's role during the Holocaust and America's involvement in WWII. Robert Dallek's *An Unfinished Life* (2003) thoroughly discusses the dichotomous political relationship between Jack and his father Joe Kennedy. At one point he mentions a "staged" public exchange, as the Kennedy's always had an intense concern for public image, between the father and son in order to convince the public that Joe's influence upon Jack was minimal, to avoid "hurt[ing] Jack's political standing" (141). Dallek also discusses many of Joe Kennedy's alleged shortcomings, such as Joe Kennedy's "reputation as an appeaser, isolationist, and anti-semite—or at least someone ready to accommodate himself to Nazi domination of Europe" (Dallek 141).

[3] Windt's essay, entitled "President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address, 1961," was taken from *The Inaugural Addresses of Twentieth-Century Presidents* (1993), edited by Halford Ryan.

Masters series did a special on screen writer Rod Serling, whereas they point out the interesting issue concerning the then currently popular TV screenwriter Rod Serling and his screenplay, entitled "A Town Turned To Dust," written as a re-enactment of the Emmett Till incident. TV executives censored the script until Serling agreed to change Till's character from a young black boy to that of an adult Mexican immigrant. Moreover, the story changed the nature of the alleged "eye-balling crime" committed by Till to horse-thievery. In the final re-write of the story, a gang of white cowboy vigilantes lynched the Mexican horse thief. This, perhaps, is a more palatable, though fictional, re-enactment of one of the most tragic incidents of erasure of a young African American male since Middle Passage. The incident involving Serling's restrained creative consciousness is commonly referred to, by those in the industry, as the "Serling Compromise." Taken at face value, Kennedy's inaugural address exhibits a man peering idealistically through the telescope of global world events. The address is riddled with words and phrases such as "freedom," "human rights," "liberty," "unity," etc., juxtaposed against such words as "tyranny," "fate," "adversary," and "fear." He evokes the Bible on two occasions: "God's work must truly be our own," and "Let's both sides unite to heed all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah—to undo the heavy burdens, . . . and let oppressors go free." He acknowledges the influence and power of technology while admitting to technology's binary capabilities to assist mankind and to destroy.

However, the young leader would have been more effective for oppressed minorities (and, for intransigent whites) had he focused his "gaze" more closely on the race problem. Kennedy's speech expressed theoretical concerns immersed in the "big picture" of international human drama; he would soon be forced to practice within the

little picture of everyday occurrences and problems of American race relations. The irony in Kennedy's vision is that he focuses upon the problem of a divided Germany—a Germany that only less than two decades before had exhibited one of the most horrendous examples of racial erasure in modern history—the Nazi Holocaust.[4] One can surmise that Kennedy was playing "make-up"; that is, he was making an attempt to throw off the mantle of anti-Semitism placed upon the shoulders of Joe Kennedy. The sins of the father may have been visited upon the son; and John Kennedy, trapped in a Scylla and Charybdis position, somewhere between pleasing his father and erasing his father's odious past, dealt with this quagmire as he best could. Yet, perhaps the greatest irony is that Windt claims that Kennedy's speech was conceived in the political clime of a sterile American foreign policy, a confused psyche among Americans about their "purpose in an increasingly baffled world," the "1950's sense of blandness about political life," and an "aching need" and "linguistic void" among Americans.[5]

Perhaps any consternation at Windt's analysis of the political "blahs" and confusion permeating the American psyche concerning our place in the global scheme of things deserves a more insightful assessment. For, if Windt's analysis is accurate, one

---

[4] Elie Wiesel's *Night* (1960) says, "For him, Nietzsche's cry expressed an almost physical reality. God is dead, the God of love, of gentleness, of comfort, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, has vanished forevermore, beneath the gaze of this child, in the smoke of a human holocaust exacted by *Race* (italics mine), the most voracious of all idols" (ix). Wiesel seems to identify Jews as a *race*. I agree. Yet, moreover, all this is especially disconcerting when one considers that the U.S., itself, is partly responsible for the perpetuation of 20th century Nazi racist philosophy, as late 19th and early 20th century theories on eugenics were part of the brainchild of American "pseudo-science." See Edwin Black's *War Against The Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (2003).

[5] Moreover, Windt's analysis is most galling, especially when one considers that while African Americans were at the lowest ebb of the civil and human rights struggle; whites, as America's most privileged racial group (which included the President) behaved as though they possessed no clue as to their "purpose" in an "increasingly baffled" world created at the hands of whites and that existed before whites very eyes. Moreover, privileged whites experienced boredom at the climate of political "blandness" in a political arena that omitted nearly an entire sector of their own population, which was anything but bland. Finally, saddest of all is the fact that Americans felt, as Windt puts it, an "aching need"/"linguistic void" for anything *but* rhetorical and moral self-examination of and admonishment for their own actions—actions that, in turn, precipitated a more drastic "need," "void," or *erasure* of the lives of blacks.

can conclude that America's general populace suffered from symptoms identical to that

of the new president, symptoms precipitated by the tensions of exalting capitalism as the

economic American ideal as opposed to the economic shortcomings of communism. In

short, it *was* a disease of the times, a psychological malaise that encouraged Americans to

adopt telescopic analyses for what is morally wrong with a world threatened by

communist influence in order to evade or hide what is morally wrong within an America

that claims to include everyone in the economic benefits of capitalism.[6] Perhaps, of

course, the real issue Kennedy discusses about Germany is more a concern about the

Soviet Union's appropriation of Eastern Germany into the Soviet Bloc, behind the Iron

Curtain. Kennedy's obvious aims were to applaud the advantages of capitalism and the

American way of life over those of communism. The issue of race, and the fact that

Germany had recently committed racist atrocities, was of little or no consideration to

Kennedy, just as American racism was of no concern. Germany's previous racial

atrocities might have reminded both the President and all Americans of an overdue and

neglected race problem.[7]

Yet, all Americans did not exist in such a void. Norman Mailer intrepidly

ventures into the American psyche to discern that *all* white Americans were not as

---

[6] Perhaps, a note to prove America's preoccupation with communism is its influence on popular culture. David Halberstam, in *The Fifties* (1993) says, "America's obsession with the Cold War was so great that it finally convinced Mike Hammer" (a popular recurring detective in Mickey Spillane's mystery novels) "to stop chasing the garden variety of gangsters and corrupt pols and concentrate instead on stopping domestic Communist subversion" (59).

[7] Halberstam discusses how Kennedy was able to perceive that Americans suffered "anxieties" over the Cold War and how he used these anxieties, especially in regards to our close neighbor, Cuba, to play upon American anti-Communist fears and eventually beat a more politically seasoned Nixon, who was silenced by his privileged knowledge of covert CIA operations. Halberstam says that Kennedy "represented the Democrats as hard-liners" in regards to Communism. Halberstam also says that the Democrats, lead by Kennedy, "were determined to show that if anything, they were tougher foes of Communism than the Republicans" (728-9). Considering Halberstam's remarks, one could suppose that Kennedy would not make a clean break, in his inaugural address, from what was, perhaps, the most important agenda during his campaign. In addition, Halford Ryan's introduction points out that it would be in error to "assume that all presidents necessarily make a clean break with their rhetorical (that is campaign rhetoric) past" (Ryan xv).

"clueless" to America's social problems as Windt makes it seem. The relevance of Mailer's analyses is that they provide evidence as to whom America's leaders have historically heeded—or ignored—and felt obligated to please—the white middle- and upper- class mainstream. Mailer's short, terse and surreptitiously comical treatise, entitled *The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster* (1957), maintains that there existed a subterranean segment of the American population, referred to as "Hipsters," who were consciously aware rebels. The Hipster is the American "existentialist" (or beatnik?) whose psyche was conceived out of the primordial pool of World War II's Holocaust, concentration camps, the atom bomb and jazz. As Mailer puts it, the Hipster was what manifested itself upon the "bleak scene" of all this post-war anxiety equipped with the knowledge that the human condition in America had limited options: those of an "instant death by atomic war, relatively quick death by the State as *l'univers concentrationnaire*, or a slow death by conformity with every creative and rebellious instinct stifled." The Hipster reacted by adopting and emulating, as closely as possible, the "Negro" way of life, morality and language. Mailer says the source of Hip is the Negro because "he has been living on the margin between totalitarianism and democracy for two centuries" (Mailer n. pag.). Therefore, one is encouraged to ask how America's society could exist at the edges of two extremes: one part of American society as totally clueless to its race problems, another part so savvy and aware as to be able to figure out America's problems. Perhaps, it was because the "Hipster" was not a politically engaged voter and had little or no political power.

Recently, professional black psychoanalysts have attempted to explain white racial moral behavior in regards to Civil Rights. African American psychoanalyst Bobby

E. Wright, in his book entitled *The Psychopathic Racial Personality* (1984), accuses whites of having "psychopathic" personalities; he points out that the outstanding characteristics of the psychopath are "absence(s) of ethical and moral development and an almost total disregard for appropriate patterns of behavior" (6). According to Wright, the psychopath *knows* the difference between right and wrong but *ignores* the concept.[8] However, Wright thinks blacks, too, have symptoms of "pathological" behavior because blacks have, in turn, *ignored* the white lack of ethical and moral development, thereby making a "tragic mistake in basing the worldwide Black liberation movement on moral suasion" (6). Wright makes this statement: "It is pathological for Blacks to keep attempting to use moral suasion on a people who have no morality where race is the variable" (6).

Pathological or otherwise, African American leaders attempted to appeal to white consciousness based upon moral suasion and reason. Another, perhaps more likely, reason for black leaders to rely upon white moral suasion for black progress is that the Civil Rights movement was predicated upon religion, with most of its leaders, including King, having their origins in the mainstream church. The Civil Rights movement was conceived in good Christian morality, a morality with which blacks chose to work. One

---

[8] Wright points out the lack of a conflict between white Christian religion and historic racial oppression; the fact that whites have historically exploited, oppressed, and killed blacks in the name of God and Jesus Christ; the fact that the Ku Klux Klan is "primarily a religious organization"; the fact that the Pope "bless(ed)" the bombing of Ethiopian men, women, and children; and that the white use of the book of *Genesis* to validate black servitude are a "concrete reality," whereas all are direct proof of white psychopathology (5-6). Though, Wright fails to consider benevolent anti-slavery and anti-segregationist Christian groups, such as the Quakers, white abolitionist preachers, etc., he makes an interesting observation concerning all black/white relationships, reflecting his radical position. For example, Wright says this in relation to all black/white relations: "[E]verywhere one finds Whites and Blacks in close proximity to each other, Whites are in control, whether it is Chicago or Zimbabwe. Yet, Blacks rarely question this extraordinary universal phenomenon which defies every known statistical law of probability. In fact, Blacks denounce those who simply raise this question with admonitions such as 'we should not be racists and treat them as they have treated us.' In fact, Whites are not going to stand for Blacks treating them as they have treated Blacks so that requires no discussion" (Wright 2-3).

has to start somewhere. Unlike Wright, who attributes an almost animalistic or instinctive racism to whites (an "it's in their nature" positioning), Civil Rights leaders believed in the basic moral or God-like inner nature of humans. Moreover, Civil Rights leaders believed that whites had been conditioned or programmed to be racists; that all humans were born with a "tabula rasa" psyche in regards to race.

African American Domestic Responses to an Evasive Global Call

> "A girdle of orange, Puritan-pumpkin colored girders
> braces the tingling Statehouse,
> shaking over the excavations, as it faces Colonel Shaw
> and his bell-cheeked Negro infantry
> on St. Gaudens' shaking Civil War relief, ...
>
> Two months after marching through Boston,
> half the regiment was dead;
> at the dedication,
> William James could almost hear the bronze Negroes
> breath.
>
> Their monument sticks like a fishbone
> in the city's throat.
> Its Colonel is as lean
> as a compass-needle.
>
> He has an angry wrenlike vigilance,
> a greyhound's gentle tautness;
> he seems to wince at pleasure,
> and suffocate for privacy.
>
> The stone statues of the abstract Union Soldier
> Grow slimmer and younger each year
> . . . .
> When I crouched to my television set,
> the drained faces of Negro school-children rise like
> balloons. (Robert Lowell "For The Union Dead")

King's "Inaugural Address"

Yet, African Americans were making themselves heard, and they were retaliating against the muffled voices of America's politicians and society, in general. Kennedy's America *was* saturated with race problems; and blacks (perhaps naively, perhaps not) sought retribution for hundreds of years of American oppression by appealing to the moral consciousness of America. It took Martin Luther King and other Civil Rights leaders to help bring Kennedy to a more proximate reality. In fact, black leaders responded to Kennedy's speech by rhetorically including African American domestic problems within many of his proposed agendas and re-interpreting Kennedy's perspectives concerning various issues. King's Lincoln Memorial Address in Washington, D.C. on August 28, 1963 directly addresses Kennedy's Inaugural Address, given a year and a half earlier. There are many similarities in the speeches. Both call for "peace," freedom," "brotherhood," "unity," control of the use of arms and weapons, and both contain references to previous generations, the Bible, warnings of impending danger if necessary progress is ignored, and global awareness (Kennedy's speech has a pervasive global focus; King, in his speech, said, "'One man, one vote,' is the African cry. It must be ours, too.").

There are a myriad of other similarities. Kennedy's speech begins with this statement: "My Fellow Citizens: We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom— . . ." King posits Kennedy in a kind of "embarrassing irony" as the first line of *his* address states, "I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the greatest demonstration *for freedom* in the history of *our nation* (italics mine)." Kennedy, preoccupied with the threat of Cold War and proliferating nuclear weapons in Europe, focuses upon the international and warns, "Finally to those

nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction." Kennedy's concern with the Cold War is partly justified; however, one cannot "clean up" another's house without first cleaning up his own. King, with a more domestic vision, focuses upon *our* nation and warns, "It will be fatal for the nation to *overlook* the urgency of the moment." "Overlooking," on all levels, is what Kennedy is guilty of. King recognizes not only that a racially divided America cannot, itself, stand; America is not in the position (as far as strength and moral authority) to tell other nations and peoples how to conduct their business.

Rhetorical scholars may argue the importance of *place* and *occasion* of any given speech and refute the claim that King's speech is a response to the foregrounded issues in Kennedy's address. Moreover, some may argue the necessity of addressing the needs of a portion of America's voters during an occasion that includes the general populace. The question must be posed as to whether or not an American president serves the needs of Americans first and foremost, and whether or not a president, in his inaugural address, is obligated to address the real and immediate needs of those who voted him into office. Halford Ryan quotes Kenneth Thompson, who says that the "context of [inaugural] addresses is the spirit of the times. . . . [I]t is the times in part that shape the President's outlook, and what he feels called on to say. Moreover, each historical era brings with it social and intellectual tendencies that influence contemporary thought" (Ryan xvii). Any consideration of Thompson's assessment of the purpose and value of presidential inaugural addresses could lead one to conclude that Kennedy's inaugural address fails to

"tune in" to the "spirit of the times" and, moreover, fails to heed the "social and intellectual tendencies" of the nineteen sixties—a major Civil Rights period. One would be encouraged to think that Kennedy's inaugural address and presidential administration were personal quests to acquire the "grail" of the office of the American Presidency that Joe Kennedy ethically failed to achieve. This is only one perspective on the "Camelot" leitmotifs that saturated the Kennedy era.

Yet, one must admit the similarities between the addresses of the two speakers. Both, as speakers, are exemplary of what Cicero defines as ideal orators, in that they both possess "a knowledge of very many matters," both have formed a "distinctive style" in "word choice" and "arrangement," both are aware of the "mental emotions" of the "human race," both exemplify "wit" and "culture befitting a gentleman," and both display a "terseness" and "readiness," "charm" and "urbanity" (De Oratore, I. V. 17). However, hindsight is always 20/20, as King's speech was given *after* Kennedy's speech, and is, therefore, armed with the advantage of, as Cicero puts it, "repelling and delivering the attack" (De Oratore, I. V. 17).

Like Kennedy, King delivered his speech in the nation's capital in front of a monument of recognized distinction and, moreover, both speeches were nationally and internationally televised. The speeches were ceremonial and dealt with what both leaders felt were the immediate and imperative needs of a great mass of people. Kennedy's reference to "those peoples in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery" and the "free society that cannot help the many who are poor," that "cannot save the few who are rich" could include shacks, huts, and shanties of poor and rural blacks of America, but do they? As King was the quintessential leader of

African American people, he sought to rhetorically respond or address the blatant oversight (and rhetorical erasure) of American and African American interests in the U.S.—as represented in Kennedy's inaugural address. For it was Kennedy's America that necessitated as much attention to the fact that a minority portion of its people were still seeking the democracy that the major portion of its people have always enjoyed. Moreover, both speeches are, in many respects, "protests". The word derives from the Latin word "protestari," meaning "forth" ("pro") + "testari"(meaning "call to witness"). The dictionary definition says that the word "protest" literally means "to make a statement or gesture in objection," or "to make solemn declaration or affirmation." Kennedy protests the global threat of communism; King protests white America's threat to the democratic well being of African Americans. In short, *King's speech is the African American "inaugural address."*

King intentionally riposted Kennedy's speech almost word for word, or rather idea for idea, and aim for aim, to make Kennedy's speech relevant to African Americans. Perhaps, it is impossible to prove King's intentions regarding his "March on Washington" address and Kennedy's inaugural address, but some evidence of King's decision to respond in such manner can be supported by his opinion of Kennedy's maiden presidential speech. Stewart Burns' biography of King, entitled *To The Mountaintop: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Sacred Mission To Save America* (2004), ventures to delve into King's psyche in order to explain King's reaction to Kennedy's inaugural address. Burns gives this analysis of King's reaction:

> Like many Americans, King was lifted by the new spirit of idealism and commitment that Kennedy's New Frontier was purveying to the nation. . . . He [King] sought to harness this rejuvenated patriotism away from Kennedy's prime target, the Cold War, toward the unfinished revolution at

home. Although JFK's magnetic inaugural address echoed Lincolnian
tones, he did not draw upon Lincoln's call for equality as the essence of
American union. He was leery of rekindling Civil War memories that
might divide the nation when it sorely needed unity to face global
communism—and that might alienate the white South that dominated
Congress and could be crucial to his reelection. Play up Lincoln's image,
play down what he stood for. King . . . saw a one-time chance to wed New
Frontier idealism to the "mystic chords of memory" of the Civil War,
Whose centennial was being commemorated, more vigorously South than
North. . . . King wanted the President to honor the centennial of the
Emancipation Proclamation that had freed slaves by delivering a second
Emancipation Proclamation to abolish slavery's afterlife of segregation;
. . . So far the commemoration had been exploited by white southerners
who were using it to refight the Civil War and to defend the southern way
of life. King . . . wanted to exploit Civil War memories to bolster the civil
rights crusade. (Burns 173)

It would be a grave remission to fail to mention, at this point, that just as Kennedy's

inaugural address is saturated with the words and ideals of global "liberty" and

"freedom," juxtaposed against King's "March On Washington" speech that begins with

the declaration, "I am happy to join with you today in what will go down in history as the

greatest demonstration for freedom in the history of our nation," few readers can object to

any conjecture that King is making a direct reference to Kennedy's inaugural oversight.

Kennedy refers to the contemporary dichotomous human capability to "abolish all

forms of human poverty and all forms of human life." King refers to the historically

perpetual American capability of forcing, "One hundred years later, the Negro" [to]

"liv[e] on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity."[9]

---

[9] John L. Lewis's *Walking With the Wind* (1998) elaborates upon the relationship between blacks and the
1960 election campaign between Kennedy and Nixon, whereas he points out the "distant" and "irrelevant"
attitudes the two candidates and their parties displayed towards blacks and the failure of Kennedy to live up
to his campaign promises. At one point, Lewis tells how the Democratic and Republican platform
committees "ignored" a SNCC representative, failed to recruit blacks for campaigning on behalf of both
candidates in the South—until King's October 1960 arrest and Kennedy's and Nixon's "forced" responses
(Nixon says, "No comment," Kennedy "called Coretta . . . to offer his moral support, but issued no public
statement. His brother Robert, . . . *did* call the judge . . . and urged the man to let King go" (Lewis 125-6)).
Lewis continues by citing how Kennedy reneges on the promise to blacks about federally supported
housing regulations and the failure to invite King to the inauguration. Though Lewis says that he listened

33

Both Kennedy and King refer to the men who founded America, with Kennedy referring to these men as "Fathers" and King referring to them as "Architects." In addition, both men refer to the original intent and formulated documents of the men who founded America, King referring to the "Constitution" and "Declaration of Independence," Kennedy, to "revolutionary beliefs." The words "free" and "liberty," or one of their derivatives, are bantered about frequently in King's and Kennedy's speeches. For example, Kennedy "welcome(s) the world "to the ranks of the free" and pledges to "pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

Moreover, Kennedy astutely realizes that the freedom and welfare of one nation is attached to the freedom of other nations, thereby promising to maintain the anti-colonialist philosophy of newly liberated nations. "To those old allies whose cultural and spiritual origins we share, we pledge the loyalty of faithful friends. . . . We shall not always expect to find them supporting our views. But we shall always hope to find them strongly supporting their own freedom—and to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside." Elsewhere in the speech, Kennedy promises "our sister republics south of our border" (Latin America) assistance in "casting off the chains of poverty" and fighting against "aggression or subversion." King, too, recognizes a symbiotic relationship in regards to freedom and socioeconomic welfare. Kings says, "[F]or many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom." Moreover, both King

---

to Kennedy's inaugural with a "sense of hope," he observes that Kennedy "didn't mention race or civil rights." Lewis says he "assumed" it was "simply a matter of political expediency" (Lewis 129).

and Kennedy attach warnings of extremism to their proposed symbiotic relationships. Kennedy warns nations whose anti-colonial revolutions may precipitate exacerbated forms of tyranny, "To those new States whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny." King warns against the "marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community" and how it "must not lead us to distrust of all white people[.]"

However, there are some spots in both speeches where King and Kennedy have identical intent but differ geographically. For example, both men recognize the misery and suffering of the groups they are addressing. One speaker's group is in closer geographic proximity. Kennedy refers to "those peoples in the huts and villages across the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery . . . ." King, addressing African Americans who live within America, says, "[W]e can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. . . . I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow cells. Some of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality." In addition, both leaders point to "gifts" given to Americans, and, as usual, African American gifts come up short. Kennedy points out how the "rights of man come not from generosity of the state, but

from the hand of God"; King starts his speech accusing America of having "given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked 'insufficient funds'." King, a formal man of the clothe, gives a speech that expresses the knowledge that African American tribulations, their "defaulted promissory note," has had very little to do with "God" –and everything to do with American humans. Therefore, both seem to agree that only God, alone, can be trusted to do what is right and just in relation to human rights.

There are some points where King and Kennedy engage in chiasmic rhetorical inversions. At one point, Kennedy pledges to match force with violence, as he says, "Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction. We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed." King, on the other hand, pledges to match force with peace, as he says, "we must conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence." Another inverted philosophy that both speakers rhetorically express is that there is a difference of opinion as to the use of violence. Kennedy, at one point says, "though arms we need"; King, at one point says, "Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force."

Finally, there is disagreement as to the state of America's social and political "credit rating," in regards to human rights, between Kennedy and King. Kennedy says, we should "Let every nation know . . . that we shall pay any price . . . in order to assure

the survival and the success of liberty." King says that America has short-changed African Americans. "In a sense," he says,

> we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. . . .
>
> [T]he architects of our republic . . . were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This promissory was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check that has come back marked 'insufficient funds'. But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation.

Comparison between the promises Kennedy makes to nations around the globe and the vitriolic charges King makes regarding black economic and social disparity encourage an assumption that Kennedy is like a man flashing resources and money to strangers, while he has yet failed to pay the people he owes.

Most puzzling is the fact that one could surmise that King's knowledge of American history and precedence (so important to Cicero) is more domestically focused than Kennedy's—especially with regards to African American history—due to Kennedy's embarrassing omissions concerning the oppressed within the borders of the

country he would be leading. Roy Wilkins recognized the global repercussions of

Kennedy's hyperopic visions:

> The continuing mistreatment of Negro citizens *is* hurting
>
> our country. It *is* handicapping our ambassadors and
>
> other foreign service personnel. It hurt our President on
>
> his delicate and important trip to Europe. It embarrassed
>
> him in his exchanges with Chairman Khrushchev, for how
>
> can Mr. Kennedy plead for democracy in Laos when at the
>
> very moment, Khrushchev is reading about discrimination,
>
> segregation and mob action in Alabama? (Taken from Wilkins'
>
> speech entitled "For 'Shock Troops' and 'Solid Legal Moves.'")

It took Civil Rights leaders and Cold War European leaders behind what Kennedy and

America once referred to as the dreaded "Iron Curtain" to remind him that the dearth of

democracy is an issue that permeates America, and many other countries of the Western

hemisphere.

Beginning of the Civil Rights Movement: Americans Answer Kennedy's Call For

"Good Deeds"

In addition to King, there were many, including whites, who answered Kennedy's

inaugural calls from an opposing domestic perspective, fighting, instead, for *black* human

rights rather than for the rights of those abroad, as though some whites, themselves, were

aware of the pertinence of more eminent problems at home than abroad. Whites who

answered Kennedy's global call for "good deeds," for the most part, joined the Peace

Corps. Whites equipped with the acumen for discerning the truly imperative needs in

America often applied their energies and efforts domestically, and, many times, placed

their lives on the line for African American Civil Rights. Yet, whites who chose to

participate in the Civil Rights struggle alongside blacks became the center of debate

among Civil Rights workers, Black Power workers *and* whites who did not support Civil

Rights. Most important is the fact that many Caucasians involved in the domestic struggle

for African American human and civil rights suffered, yet rhetorically elaborated upon

experiences that belied the evasive global focus and promise of Kennedy's inaugural

speech.

Sally Belfrage's recollection of her experiences participating in the Summer

Project of 1964 is a bittersweet tale of suspicion, tested loyalties, and potential anarchy.

Her 1965 book, *Freedom Summer*, is a telling description of the severity of white

American naiveté (including the naiveté of powerful white politicians) concerning the

legacy of white racism and the abhorrence of white participation in the black Civil Rights

movement. Belfrage's book can serve as a metaphor for the reason why the Civil Rights

movement, in spite of its political and social gains, was, to some, a failure. The

movement, many black leaders felt, acquired public or surface gains (such as public

facility equality and voting rights) for blacks, but few of the deep economic and moral

gains King and others thought they would achieve.[10] By the summer of '64, and only a

few months after the Kennedy assassination, America had shed its innocence; and as

---

[10] The PBS documentary, *Citizen King*, quotes King as saying, "Desegregating lunch counters . . . did not cost the nation a penny." Now, King says, blacks have to work on encouraging America to engage in equal economic opportunity, equally spreading the nation's wealth. (PBS, January 19, 2004) One could apply Bell's "interest convergence" theory here, meaning that Bell theorizes that African American progress is always in direct correlation to the wants, interests and needs of European Americans.

Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates says, things went to "pot" after Kennedy was killed; people became "cynical."[11] This attitude pervaded the consciousness of many Americans. Belfrage says,

> Bob Moses wrote in 1961 "that McDew . . . has taken on the
>
> deep hates and deep loves which America, and the world, re-
>
> serve for those who dare to stand in a strong sun and cast a sharp
>
> shadow." This could as well describe many SNCC Negroes,
>
> whose deep hates and loves were often translated into simple
>
> whites and blacks. They were automatically suspicious of us, the white
>
> volunteers; throughout the summer they put us to the test, and few, if any,
>
> could pass. (Quoted in Carson et al. 180-181)

Belfrage continues with psychologically self-examining questions: "But we didn't *have* to come, did we? . . . Among all the millions who could have realized their responsibility to this revolution, we alone came . . . Don't we earn some recognition, if not praise? *I want to be your friend, you black idiot*, was the contradiction evident everywhere" (180-1). Moreover, her book gives an explicit example of the Sturm und Drang tension permeating Civil Rights groups that advocated non-violence in face-to-face confrontation with gun-toting, excessively angry whites, and those who persistently espoused violence in retaliation to angry and armed whites.

Yet, there were those blacks encouraged white activist participation in the Civil Rights movement, insisting upon walking within the "grey" margins of black *and* white America as activists in the 60's black movement. These black Civil Rights activists

---

[11] This statement was made during Henry Louis Gates' 20 January 2004 Kentucky Author Forum interview.

retaliated against increasing sentiments concerning white participation in the Civil Rights movement. Eventually, however, blacks who supported a multi-racial participation in black activism were literally delegated subordinate or almost non-existent positions in the drama of Civil Rights. Robert Parris Moses is, perhaps, the best example of a Civil Rights activist who opposed the conventional rhetorical posturing of other more intense speakers, adopting an informal "anti-rhetorical" disposition while encouraging whites to join as organizers and rhetoricians in the movement. Harvard and Stanford educated, he forged a reputation as the self-possessed proletarian, quiet, yet captivating rhetor of the Civil Rights movement whose rhetorical function was as "one of the great listeners of the world" (Jensen and Hammerback 12) with a following among the working classes of the movement.

Moses seemed an embodiment of Franz Fanon's theory, explicated in his 1963 work entitled *The Wretched of the Earth*, concerning the behavior and relationship of a colonized intellectual to those that are colonized. Fanon says, "In order to assimilate and to experience the oppressor's culture, the native has had to leave certain of his intellectual possessions in pawn"—including his forms of thought of the colonialist bourgeoisie" (Fanon 39). Placing himself at the forefront of the heated issue concerning white involvement, he argued that he would "resign before working in a segregated movement" (Jensen and Hammerback 8). Moses' assertion concerning his position on this issue was, according to Jensen and Hammerback, that white "personal commitment and sacrifice were indispensable in demonstrating the national and interracial scope of the problem of racial discrimination against blacks" (Jensen and Hammerback 8). To further explicate Moses' position on the matter, Jensen and Hammerback quote Moses from another article

41

by Jack Newfield, whereas Moses says, "Our fight is not between the black and the white, . . . but between the rational and the irrational. . . . Negroes must get to know whites in all their qualities, good and bad, because that is the only way to break down the depersonalization of people" (Jensen and Hammerback 8).[12] As a result of his bi-racial open-door policy for recruiting Civil Rights workers, Moses is delegated to the position of "alternative"; that is, scholars usually view his discourse in light of the more preachy and outwardly persuasive rhetors of the time. Moses' position is ironic, in that he is an objective correlative of the underlying thesis upon which desegregation was predicated— black and white unity—during the Civil Rights epoch. Moses' position in the legacy of the Civil Rights movement is the result of the pervading climate of the time; for as the final outcome of this movement was eventually delegated a back seat to other more vociferous issues, he was delegated to a subordinate position in the legacy of Civil Rights history, a relatively minor figure.

Kennedy and African Americans: "They Say They Want A 'Revolution'"

As Windt states, "We should remember that words are not so magical in and of themselves that they can cause [a] kind of reaction among people" (Ryan 181), and therefore, there were a variety of responses to Kennedy's speech. Windt cites *New Yorker*'s "Talk of the Town" as having given this response:

---

[12] White Civil Rights workers had different experiences. At one point Belfrage says, "Implicit in all the songs, tears, speeches, work, laughter, was the knowledge secure in both them (blacks) and us (whites) that ultimately we could return to a white refuge" (181). Moses could not morph himself into a white man, but as a Harvard graduate he could return to the intellectually elite white world—a world light years beyond that of most blacks.

Whatever the impact of the Inaugural Address on con-temporary New Frontiersmen, we find it hard to believe that an Athenian or Roman citizen could have listened to it unmoved, or that Cicero, . . . would have found reason to object to it. [H]e has reestablished the tradition of political eloquence. (Ryan 181)

Black leaders, also, responded to Kennedy's use of the term "peaceful revolution." Besides calling for the assistance of constituents in the fight for justice, Kennedy attaches his speech to the idea of "revolution"; that is, he uses the word in a positive sense to denote progressive change and a means of forging a "grand and global alliance" against "tyranny, poverty, disease, and war." He says, "And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forbears fought are still at issue around the globe— . . . We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution. . . . But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hostile powers. . . ." Kennedy's perception of this word did not fall on deaf ears; for there were many who heeded the call and adopted "peaceful" revolutionary aims for situations they felt necessitated change—especially black leaders. Reverend James M. Lawson's, a divinity scholar who helped influence the founding of the Students for Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, wrote "Eve of Nonviolent Revolution," in November 1961, whereas he constructs a plan for, as Carson puts it, a "total revolution that would question all existing social institutions" (Carson et al.130). According to Carson, Lawson believed violent revolution "counterfeit, because it sought only to destroy an evil regime without creating anything better in its place." Moreover,

contrary to Kennedy's global inaugural proposal, Lawson points toward America and its

systemic racism as the site of his nonviolent revolution.

Lawson focuses upon segregation and gives this insightful analysis:

> It is interesting to notice that while we recognize segregation as
> harmful to the whole nation and the South, we rarely blame this
> on the system and the structure of our institutions. Most of us
> work simply for concessions from the system, not for transforming
> the system. But if after over 300 years, segregation (slavery) is
> still a basic pattern rather than a peripheral custom, should we not
> question the American way of life which allows segregation so
> much structural support? Does not our political system encourage
> segregation? Is it not just the lack of Negro voting, but the failure
> of systems to provide real choices for voters? . . . We . . . are . . .
> in the prelude to revolution, . . . The sit-ins won concessions, not
> structural changes; the Freedom Rides won great concessions, but
> not real change.
> There will be no revolution until we see Negro faces in all
> positions that help mold public opinion, help to shape policy for
> America. . . .
> One federal judge in Mississippi will do more to bring revolution than
> sending 600 marshals to Alabama.

(and, in a direct reference to Kennedy)

> We must never allow the President to substitute marshals for putting
> people into positions where they can affect public policy. . . .
> Remember that the way to get this revolution off the ground
> is to forge the moral, spiritual and political pressure which
> the President, the nation and the world cannot ignore. . . . (Quoted in
> Carson et al. 130-1)

Needless to say, in 1961, Lawson's insight and questioning were quite revolutionary. For

they rip away the superficial trappings of racism to reveal where the inherent problem

lies, exposing America's governmentally intrinsic racist mien. Moreover, instead of the

lofty, indirect, and nebulous rhetoric that accompanies some proposed revolutions,

Lawson lays out concrete steps for a "nonviolent army" of seven to eight thousand

volunteers, work camps for "training, study, reading, meditation, and constructive work"

to mend the tattered, fractured, and worn political and community infrastructure (Carson

132). Lawson concludes his speech with what is seemingly a direct reference to

Kennedy's preoccupation with the world instead of "home." "We would lay this issue,"

Lawson says, "on the soul of the nation and perhaps cause the nation . . . to adjust to the

world by beginning a revolutionary change at home" (132). Lawson's complete speech

rings a "bell" in more contemporary ears. Decades later, critical race theorists such as

Derek Bell would reiterate Lawson's theory, indicting our very government, as far up as

the office of the President, for its implicit relationship in black inequality, hence, erasure.

Bell's *And We Are Not Yet Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice* (1989) is

a "tragic-comedy," if anything, in its discussion of the past, present, and future plight of

American blacks, taking the concept of "revolution" back to our revolutionary times.

According to Bell, the saga of the black plight began with the Founding Fathers who, by

the way, were in need of *serious "counseling"* (Bell 24). Starting with the constitutional

ambivalence on the slave issue, Bell progresses his narrative and argument by imagining

that his brilliant deceased friend, Geneva Crenshaw, takes a quantum leap into the past

and interrupts the Virginia delegation at the Constitutional Convention. Making a

panoramic sweep of American history, she inevitably points out to the Founding Fathers

that "The stark truth is that the racial grief that persists today, . . . originated in the slavery

institutionalized in the document [the American Constitution] you are drafting." Citing

various "compromises" and the odious contradictions between what the Constitution

espouses and what it actually practices towards blacks, Geneva, Bell's deceased friend,

warns that the initial pattern of compromising and self-interested sacrifices by those that

control U.S. government "will . . . become a difficult-to-break pattern in the nation's

politics" (Bell 32). Indeed it did, as the tale the future told hundreds of years later during

the Civil Rights movement and afterwards was that there is a government dearth of

energy, *stability* and *enthusiasm*[13] when it came to promoting, providing and securing

equality for African Americans. Decades after the Civil Rights movement blacks are

continuing the struggle against the "backlashes" and the gains that the Civil Rights

movement failed to procure. The job requires relentless effort.

Whitney M. Young's "For Protest Plus 'Corrective Measures'," a speech given at

the1963 National Conference of the Urban League, (a mixed race organization) further

elaborates upon the type of revolution necessary to enact real change in America.[14]

Young adumbrates his vision of the proposed American Revolution thus:

> This revolution bears no similarity . . . to the American
>
> Revolution, or to the French Revolution, or . . . Russian
>
> Revolution. There is no attempt here to overthrow a
>
> government. This is a revolution against historic injustice,
>
> against a way of life, against persons who maintain that the
>
> measure of achievement of man is determined by and related
>
> to the color of his skin. This is a revolution peculiarly
>
> characterized by a heroic drive and a courageous fight to gain
>
> the rights and respect that should be synonymous with the
>
> word "American." It is a revolution not by black people

---

[13] At one point in Geneva's dialogue at the Covention, James Madison, secretary of the delegation says, "I expect, . . . that many will question why I have agreed to the Convention. And, like General Washington, I will answer: 'because I thought it safe to the liberties of the people, and the best that could be obtained from the jarring interests of States, and the miscellaneous opinions of Politicians; and because experience has proved that the real danger to America & Liberty lies in the defect of *energy & stability* in the present establishments of the United States'" (33). Madison, blatantly avoiding the real issue, was, perhaps, the greatest "compromiser" of them all. He literally, "played back" (in tape-recorder fashion) what General Washington had previously stated.

[14] The original title of this speech is "The Social Revolution: Challenge to the Nation Address."

against white people, but by people who are right against

those who are wrong.

This revolution is unlike any other also, because

after 300 years of deprivation, the deprived need redress

for their grievances in an expression of faith in a nation that

has done very little to develop and nurture such faith.

This revolution is what I chose . . . to call a

"Revolution of Expectation." . . . a "Revolution of Witnessing." (Quoted

in Meier et al. 324-5)

Young's strong message continues (by use of anaphora) with a description of what

America's "witnessing" revolution means to various groups of people:

For the Negro citizen, . . . these are acts of bearing witness

to his faith in democracy through peaceful non-violent de-

monstration , . . .

For the white citizen these events mean bearing witness to

the fact that democracy is more than a convenient institution

through which privileges and material products flow to him.

For both, democracy is a way of life, . . .

For the church and its membership, . . . a time of witnessing

that piety rests . . . in the confirmation of deeds.

For the public official—whether city state or federal—

witnessing means a greater concern for broad, democratic

promises and human rights, . . .

For the private sector . . .—whether business, labor, or health

and welfare—. . .a time for witnessing that the free enterprise

system works equally well for *all* American citizens. (Quoted in Meier et

al. 324-5)

Most important, Young directly addresses Kennedy by deflecting Kennedy's famous

inaugural antimetabole, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do

for your country," and saying, "Today the nation and its Negro citizens ask of the Urban

League: What have you done for me recently? What will you be doing for me

tomorrow?" (Quoted in Meier et al. 325) He concludes his speech by citing Kennedy's

harsh criticism of whites who protest black demonstration and (again, by the use of

anaphora) by discussing the "tasks" of white leadership.

African Americans Address The "Tyranny" Of Home

Kennedy's concern for "tyranny," "colonial" use of "arms and weapons" to

coerce weaker nations into submission ("oppression"), and the arms race are prominent

issues addressed in his inaugural speech, as all these concerns are veiled threats to the

Soviet Union and the ongoing Cold War. "To those new States," he says, "whom we

welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control

shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny."

Elsewhere, he says "tyranny" is one of the "common enemies of man." In another part of

his speech he makes a subtle threat to use arms in order to control other nations' weapons

use against weaker nations:

Finally, to those nations who would make themselves our

adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request: that both

sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark pow-

ers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity

in planned or accidental self-destruction.

We dare not attempt them with weakness. For only when

our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain

beyond doubt that they will never be employed.

"Colonialism" or the issue concerning "colonial powers" (and their usage of

weapons to acquire and maintain power) is a psychologically troubling term to many

Americans, if nothing but for the reason that more than a few Americans fail to realize

America, itself, is and always has been a colonial power—a country founded upon

colonialist tactics and motives. Europeans did not just "visit" America and decide to stay

because they liked the weather, politics, economy and scenery. Nevertheless, shoving all

pretenses aside concerning our delusions about the conditions under which we acquired

America, America *is* a colonial power and country. Having stated this truth, one is forced

to compare America to the "tyrannizing" colonial powers to which Kennedy refers—and

African American leaders (including black *and* white critical race theorists) did not fail to

do so. Melissa Steyn's article, "White Identity in Context,"[15] gropes for a vivid

comparison between America and another colonial power—such as her native South

Africa—whereas she discerns that the most significant difference between the two

countries is that "the United States fostered a 'white' identity in which the structuring

---

[15] This article was taken from the book entitled *Whiteness: The Communication of Social Identity* (1999), edited by Thomas K. Nakayama and Judith N. Martin.

framework of colonial imperialism came to be psychologically more distant, more out-of-awareness." Steyn, a white South African herself, says that other differences between colonizing America and colonizing South Africa (*and* other European colonizing powers) are that America was founded upon an "optimistic construction as the land of limitless opportunity," as well as a "thorough colonial victory" (the Revolutionary War) that posited the very people who were themselves colonizers "in a particular relationship both to the land they occupied and to the various "others" (Native Americans and African Americans) in contradistinction to whom their identity continued to be framed" (Nakayama and Martin 266). In short, Steyn is saying that Americans, after winning the Revolutionary War, have always deluded themselves into a belief that the Revolutionary War expelled the "colonizer," when, in actuality, the true colonizers remained. Extermination of Native Americans and the forced relinquishing of African slaves' native culture facilitated this fantasy, she continues, leaving only a remnant of one subjected population behind (Native Americans) to instill fear in whites, and the other a (psychologically) subjected population (African Americans). Therefore, it can be said that America is no different from any other colonizing power; and, as Steyn says, we need to "fess up" to our true identity in order to "end the cycles of denial and projection" that have kept our racist status quo in place (Nakayama and Martin 266).

While Kennedy called for an end to such colonizing atrocities on behalf of other European countries, two years later the *tyranny* of *arms* and *weapons* to which African Americans were subjected within our own borders was as forceful as any in the global community. As African Americans fought for the right to vote, in particular, and every other freedom of the Civil Rights movement, in general, high-powered rifles, guns,

makeshift bombs, and dynamite were the tools of those who could not tolerate impending racial change in America. Foreign tyranny may have been on a more immediate and massive scale; however, the isolated incidents of violence towards black Americans where enough to keep a massive portion of America *in its place*. There is a *temporal* difference here. And that difference is the annihilation of many in very little time (such as the Jewish Holocaust), or a strategic annihilation of a relative few at a time, in order to convince a people that the destruction of one is an example of the resulting fate of all others (such as African Americans). Blacks were exposed to the type of tyranny that had existed since slavery, the type that whites knew works best on a people who have spent nearly half a millennium in various degrees of slavery. The perpetual "slave mentality" makes the latter form of tyranny more expedient. One has to destroy fewer of a necessary people; for, until latter 20th-century black progress, white America *needed* blacks.

Tyranny, on America's own shores, was a common condition for blacks. Yet, Kennedy did little, besides launching "investigations," to curtail the threats and intimidations blacks suffered in their own quest for human rights. "Birmingham: People in Motion" (Carson 147-9) a 1966 booklet published on the tenth anniversary of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, gives a chilling account of the events of the April and May 1963 campaigns of mass protests in Birmingham, Alabama. The essay tells how blacks endured bombed out homes, electronic surveillance, political, fiscal, and police intimidation as a result of efforts towards black equality. African Americans were forced to "put their bodies on the line in a challenge to the old ways" (Carson 149) in order to gain various freedoms that even the federal courts had already allowed. To begin,

the pamphlet refers to Birmingham as the "Johannesberg of North America," giving the

description of the town a global spin that recalls Steyn's earlier comparison.

Subsequently, the booklet launches the very words Kennedy used in his inaugural speech

("Freedom from Tyranny and Oppression") to explain why blacks were persistent in their

quest for equal rights in spite of harrowing obstacles. "We Negroes shall never become

enemies of the white people," the pamphlet says. "But," it continues, "America was born

in the struggle for Freedom from Tyranny and Oppression." The pamphlet goes on to

describe the December 25th bombing of Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth's (leader of the

ACMHR) home, one day before a scheduled protest. (Carson 147-9) As many

Americans know, the Shuttlesworth bombing was not an isolated incident; in fact, police

surveillance, phone and mail death threats, phone taps, KKK kidnappings and beatings,

and general harassment went with the territory of nearly all Civil Rights leaders and "foot

soldiers."[16]

In spite of the geographic dissimilarities between European colonial powers and

America as a colonizing power, similarities exist between the behavior of the colonizers

and their treatment of the colonized in Europe to the plight of white America and African

Americans during the Civil Rights movement. By 1963, Franz Fanon, French race

psychologist and theorist, was also responding to European colonization, analyzing the

---

[16] See Carson's *Eyes on the Prize* for detailed descriptions of various incidents of oppression by way of
weapons and technology. Carson tells of the FBI wiretap transcript of the April 15, 1963 phone
conversation between Martin Luther King and his wife, Coretta. In addition King's April 16, 1963 "Letter
from Birmingham City Jail" talks about the tyranny black leaders faced during this period. This is just one
of many incidents were King and other leaders such as Malcolm X were subjected to FBI surveillance. In
fact there were a number of racist killings, including, according to Robert Moses' "Mississippi: 1961-
1962," that of Herbert Lee (September 31, 1961). Fannie Lou Hamer's "To Praise Our Bridges" tells how
she (and her fellow voting rights marchers) was jailed (because their "bus was the wrong color-- . . . too
yellow"), expelled from her sharecropping job, endured a shooting spree through a house where she was
staying, and was beaten by two black prisoners at the behest of white State Highway Patrolmen. In
addition, whites shot through the house of a fellow voting rights worker, Mrs. Sissel, and shot two girls.

psyche of both colonizer and colonized. As American Kennedy shows concern for tyranny and oppression on foreign shores, Fanon, as a European, points out how colonial powers use tyranny to control their subjects, the colonized. Fanon says, "the colonial world is cut in two, with a dividing line [marked] by barriers and police stations." Fanon goes on to tell how the policeman and the soldier are "go-between(s)," "spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression" (30). When southern segregationist leaders, such as George Wallace and Bull Connor, call the police and dogs, their actions against the oppressed are no different. The same "rifle-butts" and "napalm" (or teargas) backed by frequent and direct action of the police/militia forces "advises" him (the colonized subject) "not to budge"; it is a "language of pure force" by "agents of government" (31). Moreover, Fanon delineates the separate "zones" in which the colonized and the colonizer live, while American readers make geographic parallels here in America. In America the colonized "zone" was commonly referred to as the "ghetto," and the colonizer zone as a "good neighborhood"; these separate zones in America were just as "(un)complementary" as any foreign zone inhabited by settlers and natives--if not worse. The "settler's" zone in America during the Civil Rights movement was the downtown shop, the uptown and downtown white-collar office job, white churches, white eyeballs (Remember the Emmett Till incident: whites could look at blacks but blacks could not look or make eye contact with them), white neighborhoods and any person, place or thing whites frequented.[17]

---

[17] The white zone could be extended, modified or superimposed upon the black zone, when necessary. As previously mentioned, black churches, homes and schools were bombed, black privacy was invaded (tapping of Civil Rights leaders home phones and electronic bugging devices in the hotel rooms of black leaders) and, worst of all, the attack upon the black psyche—by way of using excessive force to instill life-threatening fear into the minds of many blacks if they dared actively support desegregation.

Roy Wilkins' "For 'Shock Troops' And 'Solid Legal Moves'" (June 7, 1961) also delivers an acerbic attack against white Americans for their acedia concerning unacknowledged, surreptitious and tyrannizing attacks against blacks:

> The Klan has played its part, and a dirty part it has been . . .
> The Klan is a disgrace to the decent people of the South, . . .
> The animal exhibition . . . did no credit to those people
> who brag that they are of the superior race.
>   And the so-called good white people . . . must
> share some of the blame for the Klan mobs, for they have
> brushed the K.K.K. under the rug and pretended it was not
> there. The Birmingham *News* wrote a shocked editorial
> after the riot of bloodshed and the do-nothing action. It
> is time such newspapers were shocked.
>   The truth is that if the mobs are permitted today
> to run loose against Negroes and their allies, tomorrow they
> will run loose against anyone they do not like, white or black.
>   We might as well face, . . . the fact that the South can
> no longer wave aside the charge that the treatment of the Negro
> is "the South's business" and is of no concern to the United
> States in the world of nations. . . .Our governmental system is
> on trial. (Quoted in Meier et al. 319)

Wilkens' speech attempts to alert the government to the fact that America, itself, has problems with tyranny. In addition, Wilkins seeks to include the "South" and its "business" in Kennedy's global community in order to provide some avenue of retribution for African Americans living within these shores.

Others joined the chorus of protest against the tyrannizing conditions in which black Americans were forced to live. "The Great Lessons of Birmingham," Bayard Rustin's June 1963 speech, is a Civil Rights "overture," whereas he gives a broad-based analysis of the Civil Rights struggle that touches upon domestic tyranny at the hands of violent and intransigent segregationists. He quotes Ghandi and A.J. Muste to explicate why blacks continue to fight in the face of such tyrannical adversity. Rustin writes, "Ghandi use to say that the absence of fear was the prime ingredient of nonviolence: To

be afraid is to be a slave. A.J. Muste . . . says that to be afraid is to behave as if the truth

were not true. It was the loss of all fear . . . children as young as six paraded calmly

when dogs, fire hoses and police billies were against them. Women were knocked down

to the ground and beaten mercilessly. Thousands of teen-agers stood by at churches . . .

waiting their turn to face the clubs of Bull Connor's police . . . Day after day . . .

hundreds of well-disciplined children eagerly awaited their turns." (Quoted in Meier et

al. 335) Rustin points out a "method to the madness" of non-violence. He says, "the

protesters pledge themselves to refrain from violence in word and deed, thereby

confining whatever inevitable violence there may be in the situation to an irreducible

minimum" (337-8).

    African American leaders were, obviously, disturbed at federal government and

public reactions (or lack thereof) to the increased harassment and physical endangerment

of Civil Rights workers. As a whole, black leaders considered the federal government

ineffective in its efforts to curtail white violence against blacks. On April 16, 1963, the

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights issued a report condemning such terrorizing acts,

calling them a "defiance of the Constitution," a "complete breakdown of law and order,"

and an affront to the "conscience of the Nation." While the Commission recognized

efforts made by Kennedy to use necessary force during the University of Mississippi

case, it simultaneously admonishes Kennedy's reticence in employing his powers in other

cases. "It is mindful," says the Commission, "of the unequivocal public statements of the

President expressing his belief that discriminatory practices are morally wrong. The

Commission, nevertheless, believed that the President should, consistent with his

Constitutional and statutory authority, employ to the fullest the legal and moral powers of

his office to the end that American citizenship will not continue to be degraded in Mississippi" (Quoted in Carson et al. 180).

Southern states such as Alabama and Mississippi had no corner on the market of terrorism and tyranny. Ronnie M. Moore's September 6, 1963 speech, "We Are Catching Hell Down Here," casts a spotlight on the state of Louisiana's Parish seat, Plaquemine, and its relatively odious retaliatory tactics against CORE's voter registration drive leaders and supportive citizens. In response to the 9 July, 1963 picketing of two local stores, West Brothers Department Store and Food Town Supermarket, the city council adopted, according to Moore, "25 ordinances, limiting picketing to 2 persons at each store, outlawing peaceful assembly, protest marches, sit-in demonstrations," and delegating all CORE activities and tactics to the level of "subversive," conspiratorial," and "contributing to the delinquency of juveniles" (Quoted in Meier et al. 342).

African Americans Demand Human Rights For Humane Reasons

Human rights. Kennedy exhibits a preoccupation for this concept in that the protection of human rights is the bedrock for which all other of his concerns are based. "Freedom and liberty" are coefficients of human rights. "Revolutionary beliefs"; "self autonomy"; "national loyalty"; control of "the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science" and "technology" for human progress instead of destruction; and control of the proliferation of "arms" are all weapons his speech proposes to use to protect *global* human rights. Yet, nearly three years after the promise, blacks were at the bottom of the domestic human chain of human rights. A myriad of speeches were given in support of black yearnings for human rights and the lack thereof; but the May 10, 1963

"Birmingham Truce Agreement," written by the SCLC and the ACMHR, was a pivotal agreement in response to a week of negotiations between protest leaders of the two groups and Birmingham's business leaders and merchants. The saddest point to be made of this document is that, upon reflection, blacks were demanding what, by evidence of progress, seem to be the most basic of human elements for minimal civility and survival. The demands were for desegregated fitting rooms; removal of race designated signs on wash rooms, rest rooms and drinking fountains; desegregated lunch counters; city government upgrading of Negro employment (to include at least one sales person or cashier) (Carson 159-60). Perhaps, the greatest achievement to come out of the Birmingham agreement is that it precipitated a strong response from Kennedy, himself. It was as though, for the first time, he realized the severity of America's race problem.

On June 11, 1963, Kennedy gave a nationally televised speech in which he gave what Carson refers to as a "ringing endorsement" of the black Civil Rights movement (Carson 160). Kennedy's speech reiterates what "ought to be," and "what should be," as he labels Civil Rights issues as "moral" issues and defines the parameters for the struggle. "This is not even a legal or legislative issue alone," he said. "It is better to settle these matters in the courts than on the streets, and new laws are needed at every level. But law alone cannot make men see right. We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the Scriptures and is as clear as the American Constitution." Kennedy had finally addressed the federal government's responsibility for implementing African American civil rights.

Yet, analysis of this speech injects a point of irony here. In the beginning of the address Kennedy says, "And yet the same revolutionary beliefs for which our forbears

fought are still at issue around the globe—the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God." On the other hand, the speech ends with the phrase "but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own." Kennedy seems to agree that human rights is a moral issue protected by God's law which, in turn, puts the responsibility in supposedly responsible human hands—human governing bodies and leaders.[18] When governing bodies fail to enforce God's law, they encourage their constituents to do likewise. The concept of the ruler or governing body being reflected in the behavior of his or its people is as old as time itself.[19] Kennedy's nationally publicized endorsement of the Civil Rights movement was a pivotal moment in which blacks gained but suffered a tragic loss at the hands of whites other than the President. Within hours of Kennedy's address, Mississippi NAACP leader Medger Evers was shot by a sniper, and died outside his home. Within five months Kennedy, himself, would die at the hands of a sniper.

Why begin this dissertation with a detailed analysis of the Kennedy inaugural speech? To begin, the Kennedy administration may not have been the first administration since Abraham Lincoln to deal with America's race problem, but it was the first administration to deal with African American civil rights to a sizeable degree. Moreover, as previously pointed out, Kennedy did not specifically embark upon an administration that intended to concern itself with race issues; they were literally dumped into his lap. Just as Abraham Lincoln is said to have pronounced that if he could save the Union

---

[18] At one point Kennedy says, "In your hands, my fellow citizens, more than in mine will rest the final success or failure of our course."

[19] See James Frazier's *The Golden Bough*. In addition, readers should look at Daniel C. Matt's *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (1994). Matt quotes Annemarie Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (1975) wereas she says, "God most high has said: 'When I love a servant, I, the lord, am his ear, so that he hears by me; I am his eye, so that he sees by me; I am his tongue, so that he speaks by me; I am his hand, so that he takes by me' (191)."

without freeing one slave he would do so, Kennedy would have breezed through one international crisis to another without ever considering a thing such as the "Civil Rights Bill." Yet, as fate would have it, it was Kennedy and America's *global* interests that helped to precipitate the strong, impatient, and demanding black cry for consideration of their *American* substandard situation. Within a more comprehensive Western historical perspective, it was *postmodernism*. That is, it was a time, as Perry Anderson's *The Origins of Postmodernity* (1998) quotes from Toynbee's *Study of History* (1934), of "decolonization," a burgeoning "industrial working class in the West," and the success of non-Western cultures in mastering the "secrets of modernity" in order to turn them against the West. That black America was and is a separate third-world colony within the dominant first-world white America has already been discussed. Therefore, it could be reasoned that the Civil Rights movement was merely another attempt, as it was globally, for a third world "nation" to rid itself of an "imperialist master." Perhaps the genesis of this "universal thump," so to speak, was African American exposure to Europe (through the world wars) and Europe's (especially France and, compared to the U.S., Britain) relatively more relaxed racial attitudes. Black war veterans returned with a renewed sense of self worth and lofty expectations as compensation for having fought and died for their country. This new awareness, in turn, lead to increased scrutiny of what federal political leaders promised as they sought the much needed black vote. Those in the South who lacked the vote became aware that they were deterred from controlling their own political fate. They realized the inaugural address careened towards a rhetoric that was as concretely segregating as any white "segregationist," any "racist law," any "racially

discriminating sign," any "race attack dog" and any "racially demarcating boundary"—

by sheer omission (erasure) if nothing else.

Chapter Two

"A public speaker may offer you two opportunities. Instruction or confession. . . . Is
there a black man in the house? . . . Well ah'll just have to be the *impromptu* Black power
for tonight. Woo-eeeeee! Woo-eeeeee! HMmmmmmmm. . . . Get your white butts
moving. . . . I think of Saturday, and that March and do you know, fellow carriers of the
holy unendurable grail, for the first time in my life I don't know whether I have the piss
or the shit scared out of me most. . . . [W]e are up, face this, all of you, against an
existential situation—we do not know how it is going to turn out, and what is even more
inspiring of dread is that the government doesn't know either." (Mailer, *Armies of the
Night*)

"[H]e might nonetheless have made a fair country orator, for he loved to speak, he loved
in fact to holler, and liked to hear a crowd holler back." (Mailer, *The Armies of the Night*,
from Robert Penn Warren's *All The King's Men*)

Synchronized Discord: Lyndon B. Johnson and His 1st Inaugural Speech

A Prelude To Major Dissatisfaction or The Bridge From Kennedy to Johnson's

Administration

African American leaders were gearing up for Johnson's prime inaugural interests

before he had opportunity to express them. Surely, Johnson, as Vice-President, was well

aware of Malcolm X's increasing popularity, for radical black leaders such as Malcolm X

gave retaliatory speeches that dovetailed the denouement of the Kennedy administration

and the demarche of Johnson's administration. In addition, speeches by radical black

leaders began to take on a more secular overtone, at times repudiating the religious and church-based rhetoric of black leaders such as King. Though not a direct response to Johnson's first inaugural address,[1] Malcolm X's "Message to the Grass Roots"[2] speech merits initiatory recognition because it is one of the, if not the first, speeches to *radically* address *all three* of what would be Johnson's main inaugural issues, *before* Johnson was even President, and give them a retaliatory rhetorical twist on behalf of African Americans: a blatantly *extremist* overtone, espousal of *unity* among blacks, *and* the foregrounding of a *global African alliance* with African Americans within the context of racial progress within the United States,[3] previsioning for white American leaders a new black-nationalist agenda in the struggle for black human rights—an agenda that would proliferate during Johnson's tenure in office. In addition, Malcolm X teetered on the precipice of breaking all ties with the Nation of Islam and Elijah Muhammad. As a result, this speech lacks the religious rhetoric that habitually preceded and was dispersed throughout Malcolm's previous speeches. Malcolm X clearly foregrounded the pertinent issues of the time and of Johnson's inaugural speech. As previously stated, this speech occurred on the cusp of Kennedy's and Johnson's administrations and acts as an "overture" to the tone, nature, and philosophy of many speeches by African American leaders; for it accurately *forecasts*, more or less, the sentiments of a few black leaders during this period of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Frustration with the

---

[1] The speech was given a few weeks before Kennedy's assassination and Malcolm's departure from Elijah Muhammad—November 9th and 10th 1963.

[2] This speech was taken from *The Eyes On The Prize Civil Rights Reader* (1991) and *Black Protest Thought In The Twentieth Century* (1965).

[3] Speeches by black leaders who espoused black unity (and separatism from whites) and deployed extremist rhetoric to delineate and define all black agendas are numerous. See Robert F. Williams' "Is Violence Necessary to Combat Injustice? For the Positive: Williams Says 'We Must Fight Back' " or W.E.B. DuBois and Walter White's "Debate on Racial Separatism." Marcus Garvey's "The Challenge of Black Nationalism." comes closest to the ideologies of Malcolm X's speech, the difference being that he proposed a "back to Africa" agenda instead of arguing for improvement of the black situation here, in America.

limited progress of Civil Rights, the increasing and encroaching backlash of American whites, and the continued evasive tactics of the federal government in using strong arm methods and tactics to fight racial inequality brought about what some black leaders felt was a need for more stringent demands in a more strident overtone.

The occasion for "Message to the Grass Roots" was the Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference, and in this speech Malcolm X advises emulation of the 1954 Bandung, African conference[4] as a model for a conference on unity among African American leaders. However, the Negro Grass Roots Conference, itself, was the result of discord concerning the more radical agenda for black progress. Though the Grass Roots Conference's goal was a gesture toward *unity* among America's black leadership, the indaba, itself, was *born* out of retaliation; for it was a simultaneous *talionic* move in response to another conference scheduled by the Detroit Council for Human Rights—the Northern Negro Leadership Conference—due to its exclusion of black nationalists and Freedom Now party advocates. (Carson 248) In short, the Northern Negro Leadership Conference was a conservative venture that sought to omit more radical black leaders such as Malcolm X; in turn, radical black leaders formed their own conference (The Grass Roots Conference) to propose and espouse their more radical ideology.

In regards to *unity* issues, Malcolm X, to reiterate his point, pleas for *all* leaders of color to close ranks and model the conference according to the Bandung conference's philosophy—that is, a conference based upon the exclusion of white participation and white influence. "The number-one thing that was not allowed to attend the Bandung conference was the white man," Malcolm X says. "Once they excluded the white man,

---

[4] The 1954 Bandung, Africa conference was attended by, according to Malcolm X, "all the dark nations of Africa and Asia" (Carson 249).

they found they could get together," he continued. "Once they kept him out, everybody else fell right in and fell in line," Malcolm X reasons (Quoted in Carson 250). "And once you study what happened at the Bandung conference, and the results of the Bandung conference," X said, "it actually serves as a model for the same procedure you and I can use to get our problems solved" (249). The "model" provided by the Bandung conference relinquished all attachments to religion and political partisanship as criteria for differences among black leaders. "What you and I need to do," Malcolm X says, "is learn to forget our differences. When we come together, we don't come together as Baptists or Methodists. . . . You don't catch hell because you're a Methodist or Baptist, you don't catch hell because you're Democrat or Republican, . . . because you're Mason or Elk, . . . and you sure don't catch hell because you're an American; because if you were an American you wouldn't catch hell. You catch hell because you're a black man. . . . all of us catch hell for the same reason" (249). According to Malcolm X, all dark races across the globe and, especially, in America had a "common enemy" (250).

Again, Malcolm X's "Message to the Grass Roots" acts a "drum major" for other black leaders as he relates his reasoning concerning black global issues with those concerning black unity. He says, despite religious, economic, and political differences, unity among African Americans against what he considers the same "phantom" faced globally—the white man—is essential. "[W]e too realize here in America we all have a common enemy, whether he's in Georgia or Michigan . . . He's the same man . . .So what we have to do is what they did," he says (Quoted in Carson 250). Malcolm's exclusionary principle concerning race relations extends as far as omitting whites from deliberations concerning black disputes. He says, "Any little spat they [whites] had, they'd settle it

among themselves, go into a huddle—don't let the enemy know that you've got a

disagreement" (251). Malcolm X explains that what the white man did was practice total

exclusion of blacks; therefore, blacks should do the same with whites in their fight for

progress. White participation in the black struggle is *infiltration* to Malcolm X.

Regarding the "*global*" nature of the speech, Malcolm X runs the gamut of

references to European countries that served as colonizers, and their African and Asian

colonized counterparts. Moreover, he does so in a manner that leaves no white ruling

country, including the United States, unscathed, responding to America's global promises

in a manner that literally says since America insists upon looking West for its best

interests, African Americans, in *their* best interests should look to Africa—be it under the

leadership of Kennedy or Johnson. At one point he says,

> That one African came from Kenya and was being colonized by
>
> the Englishman, and another African came from the Congo and
>
> was being colonized by the Belgian, and another African came
>
> from Guinea and was being colonized by the French, and another
>
> came from Angola and was being colonized by the Portuguese. . .
>
> . When they came to the Bandung conference, they . . .began to
>
> recognize who their enemy was. The same man . . . in the Congo
>
> was colonizing our people in South Africa, and in Southern
>
> Rodesia, and in Burma, and in India, and in Afghanistan, and in
>
> Pakistan. They realized all over the world . . . where the dark man
>
> was being exploited, he was being exploited by the white man"
>
> (250).

Malcolm's global vision would differ from the global vision Johnson would

espouse in his first inaugural address only two weeks later. Johnson pledges to be a

"formidable foe" to those who present the "yoke" of tyranny to America and America's

allies. Malcolm X's vision suggests that white American presence in countries occupied

by people of color, in itself, is tantamount to tyranny. What's more, Johnson's first

inaugural promise to "carry on the fight against poverty and misery, and disease and

ignorance, in other lands" are, to Malcolm X, suspicious and potentially exploitative

gestures not to be trusted.

Malcolm X serves pungent doses of "extremist" rhetoric that he feels is necessary

for black awakening, and hence, progress, rhetoric that stands in dialectic and

philosophical juxtaposition opposes the satyagrahaic actions and rhetoric of more

conservative Civil Rights leaders, and the Fabianistic, though not socialist, timetable of

sheepish white political leaders who bleated for more "time" to balance the "scales" of

American racial equality. To begin, Malcolm X calls for a reconfiguring of the demands

of blacks in order to achieve freedom and equality. Malcolm X calls for blacks to cease

figuratively using the word "revolution" while asking for superficial public posturing

rights, and consider actions that would define the word in a literal manner. Malcolm felt

the need for blacks to demand "land" or property: "Land is the basis of all independence.

Land is the basis of freedom, justice, and equality" (Quoted in Carson 253). Positioning

the so-called black revolution against the Colonial Revolution, he points out that black

progress may require, as did the American Revolution, some "bloodshed" (251). For

passive blacks who insisted upon the bit-by-bit struggle for first-class citizenship,

Malcolm X gives a stark description of China's successful method of ridding itself of

British rule in order to promote the Chinese Revolution. Malcolm X describes Chinese

revolutionary tactics: "The Chinese Revolution—they wanted land. They threw the

British out, along with the Uncle Tom Chinese. . . . They set a good example. . . . When I

was in prison, I read an article in *Life* magazine showing a little Chinese girl, nine years

old; her father was on his hands and knees and she was pulling the trigger because he was

an Uncle Tom Chinaman. . . . [T]hey took a whole generation of Uncle Toms and just

wiped them out" (252). Continuing with a capsule analysis of all the revolutions of

recent history and valid descriptions of the whys and wherefores of their success,

Malcolm finally tells his audience why the Civil Rights movement has not, is not, and

will not work. Pointing out the incessant bickering and deception among recalcitrant

black (and white) leaders who spend more time and money fighting among themselves

than for the average oppressed black, he explains how the March On Washington was

usurped by powerful whites as he attempts a logical segue to an argument as to why he

believes *separation* from whites is the only answer for black progress:

> The Negroes were out in the streets. They were talking about how they
> were going to march on Washington. . . . It was the grass roots out there
> in the street. It scared the white man to death. . . .[T]hey called
> inWilkins, . . . Randolph, they called in these national Negro leaders that
> you respect and told them, "Call it off." Kennedy said, "Look, you all are
> letting this thing go too far." And Old Tom [Martin Luther King?] said
> "Boss, I can't stop it, because I didn't start it." . . . And that old shrewd
> fox, he said, "If you all aren't in it, I'll put you in it. I'll put you [King]
> at the head of it. . . . Once they formed it, with the white man over
> it, he [Kennedy] promised them and gave them $800,000 to split up
> among the Big Six;[5] . . . split up between leaders that you have been
> following, going to jail for, crying crocodile tears for. And they're
> nothing but Frank James and Jesse James and the what-do-you-call-
> 'em brothers. Originally they [the Big Six] weren't even in the
> march. You were talking this march on Hastings Street, . . . Lenox
> Avenue, . . . Fillmore Street, . . . Central Avenue, . . . 32nd Street, . . .

---

[5] Malcolm's "Big Six" refers to the most influential black political leaders, such as Martin Luther King, A.
Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, James Farmer, Whitney Young, and John L. Lewis.

and 63rd Street. . . . But the white man put the Big Six at the head of
it . . . They became the march. They took it over. And the first move
they made after they took it over, they invited Walther Reuther, a white
man; . . . a priest, . . . a rabbi, . . . and an old white preacher . . . The
same white element that put Kennedy into power . . . joined the march
on Washington.

It's just like when you've got some coffee that's too black,
which means it's too strong. What do you do? You integrate it
with cream, you make it weak. . . . [T]oo much cream . . . you
won't even know you ever had coffee.   (Quoted in Carson et al. 258-60)

Malcolm X considered the Civil Rights movement a failure, as he points out how

"desegregated lunch counters," "desegregated theaters," "desegregated parks," and the

freedom to "sit down next to white folks—on the toilet" do not a "revolution" make

(Quoted in Carson et al. 253).

Certainly, Malcolm X's new stratagem for black emancipation was startling for

some whites *and* blacks, especially conservative whites who, as scholar Andrew Hacker's

The End of an American Era (1970) points out, "don't really care whether black

Americans are happy or unhappy." Hacker reasons beyond this exacting statement by

explaining, "But at the same time they [conservatives] remain vigilant for signs of

discontent, especially if stirrings have ominous overtones" (Hacker 51). Other political

scholars with an eye (and an ear) on America's more conservative political leaders see

similar attitudes concerning black radicalist leaders. Condit and Lucaites rent the doors of

our very own legislative "country club"—Congress—to reveal the rumblings of

conservative legislators concerning the new black-nationalist agenda, rumblings that,

many times, resembled the audacious rant of a kakistocracy, instead of an enlightened

democracy, offering more evidence that fear of black nationalism was prevalent at this

time of Johnson's first inaugural address. Black nationalist fear pervaded the entire Congress. Here is an excerpt of what Condit and Lucaites reveal:

> Congressman Jack Miller, in the age-old tradition of the slaveocracy, was
> willing to sacrifice free speech to supremacy as he denounced Malcolm X,
> insisting that "irresponsible statements designed to promote bloodshed
> and violence should not be permitted in the name of free speech." He also
> rejected Equality on the grounds that it required the elimination of Liberty,
> reading into the *Congressional Record* an article from the *US News and*
> *World Report* that warned the nation against the "terrible equality that is
> slavery." Congressional racists continued to use many of their arguments
> from the previous decade, but they replaced older attacks on the character
> of Negro people with tirades against the new black nationalists. . . .
> [B]lack power advocates [were] Negro "hate groups" . . . frightening
> alternatives to white supremacy. . . . They . . . indulged themselves in a
> Second Reconstruction fantasy . . . (Condit and Lucaites 199)

While it is easy to imagine what whites, conservative and liberal, thought of Malcolm's new agenda, it is more interesting to refer to other black scholars' views of liberal whites who wondered "*What happened?*" in the change of rhetoric among black leaders, in general, and, more specifically, the gradual depletion of rhetoric of racial "fellowship" that permeated the Civil Rights movement. Hacker gives his explanation:

> As liberals see it, the erosion of the interracial alliance
> did not come from a decline in white commitment.

Rather, blacks turned from building bridges to shriller

forms of politics that seem to indict all whites. . . .

Liberals can claim they worked for open housing, better

schools, and vocational training. So some feel that they

have been let down, if not actually betrayed. . . .

Perhaps the most vivid evidence of altered attitudes comes

from soundings by Democratic candidates and officeholders,

who sense dwindling interest for wars on poverty and racial

redress. (Hacker 64)

Though some of Hacker's analysis precedes the period *after* what we would officially

consider the Civil Rights era, in that he not only gives insightful readings of white

liberals during the dawn of black nationalism and the ebb of Civil Rights--during the

early to mid 60's --also, he explains some of Johnson's and fellow liberal Democrats'

future sentiments and rhetoric that will saturate Johnson's second term in office.

However, more problematic was the reaction of other African American

leadership to Malcolm X's animadversion about Civil Rights, black progress, and Civil

Rights' more moderate leaders—scathing criticism made more palatable by humorous

asteism. John Lewis speaks for many less radical and more mainstream black leaders

concerning African American leadership reaction to Malcolm X. *Walking With The Wind*

(1998), his autobiography, is an insightful perspective on how Civil Rights leaders felt

about Malcolm X's burgeoning influence and his philosophy:

> "I respected Malcolm," Lewis says, . . . "But I never accepted his ideas. I
> didn't . . . have any sympathy with black nationalism, separatism, the
> attitude of an eye for an eye or violence of any sort. Malcolm was not a
> Civil Rights leader. . . . not part of the movement. . . . The movement had

a goal of an integrated society, an interracial democracy, a Beloved Community. What Malcolm X represented were the seeds of something different, . . . To his credit, he preached personal independence and responsibility, self-defense and self-reliance. But he also urged the black man to fight back in self-defense—"by any means necessary," . . . And I just could not accept that. But there were many that summer of '63 who did . . . There was no question Malcolm X was tapping into a growing and understandable feeling of restlessness and resentment among America's blacks. . . . [W]hen Dr. King delivered a speech in Harlem, a section of the audience jeered him, chanting, . . . "We want Malcolm!" The President, however, did not. Neither did the other black leaders who arrived at the White House that June afternoon-- . . ." (Lewis 204-5).

Lewis' assessment of African American leadership's reception of Malcolm X supports the notion that Malcolm's revelations and accusations about a "whitened" and "unwanted" (on the White House's part) March on Washington in his "Grass Roots" speech were true. The "Big Six" and other more moderate black leaders knew that Malcolm X's speech was a retaliatory response (and revelatory message) to the secret June 1963 White House meeting, convened to persuade, as Lewis says Kennedy said, "black people [to] stay(ed) off the streets" (205). Six months hence, and a few weeks before Kennedy's death, Malcolm took the occult repartee from the meeting directly to the streets.

Lewis' repugnance for Malcolm X's seeming proclivity for matching violence with violence as a retaliative weapon seems to be the basis of his, and other more moderate leaders', rejection of Malcolm X and his philosophy, as though violence is an extraneous and unnecessary "by-product" of racism or white supremacy. However, the issue is debatable.[6] Lewis (and others) reject, on blacks' behalf, the espousal of the very

---

[6] However, Howard University scholar Camara Jules P. Harrell supports Hacker as he verifies that violence—be it physical or psychological—is a necessary component of racism. Harrell's *Manichean Psychology* (1999) reasons that racism, itself, is "a violent phenomenon" "because at its [racism's] core are the power and the willingness to violate and, as we will see, the history of violating human beings on the

71

antics that a racist white America has always deployed to promote and perpetuate racism. No less than Fanon makes this startling statement: "National liberation, national renaissance, the restoration of nationhood to the people, commonwealth: whatever may be the headings used or the new formulas introduced, decolonisation is always a violent phenonomen" (Fanon 29).

Perhaps the discerning difference between the "turn-the-other-cheek" Kings and "eye-for-an-eye" Malcolm Xs is *religion*; that is, Lewis' more Apollonian (constrained and conservative) stance is the result of the influence of *Christianity* upon African Americans. Harrell points out how Africans (thus African Americans), in spite of the fact that elements of Christianity had permeated African religion before the appearance of the colonizer (Harrell says "abuser"), and how after the colonizer's appearance both Christianity (and Islam) were "reintroduced on new terms." Embracing Christianity (and Islam) went beyond mere "cross-cultural options" for acceptance and became a "part of cultural hegemony" (Harrell 95-96). Harrell implies that this reconfigured Neo-Christianity, with its ubiquitous and arcane white supremist racist philosophy,

---

basis of their 'race'" (Harrell 11). Harrell reasons that racism, be it "institutional," "cultural," or "individual," may not openly *intend* to violate but it always *does* in its many overt and surreptitious forms, because it "limits another's personal access or liberty," "publish[es] scholarly works . . . [that] downplay gently the personal characteristics, values, or historical contribution of another group of human beings, [and] violate[s] the integral functioning of others" (11-12). Even Hacker attempts to explain the quagmire among black leaders concerning the militant/pacifist issue. Discussing the Civil Rights era, Hacker points out "the viciousness and violence so common in the South" and how it "shocked even white conservatives." Hacker goes on to point out how in spite of the fact that black voter registration precipitated scores of black churches being burned to the ground, local leaders, such as Medgar Evers being openly gunned down, civil rights workers being murdered "at the connivance of public officials," and the murder of four little girls during the bombing of a Birmingham Sunday school class, Southern blacks, curiously, maintained a "saintly" and "stoic" "demeanor" and "remained respectful and deferential" toward "liberal well-wishers" in order to "sustain" "white opinion." Hacker says King personified this attitude and posturing, as he was, is, and will always be the white leader of choice, because he is "safe and respectable," had earned academic "credentials" "in the white world" ("Dr. King"), and "represented a mainstream religion, Baptist," a religion that "gave his movement moral impetus." However, Hacker goes on to say that, in spite of the fact that King was showered with praise and crowned the leader of black choice, he was the leader of *white* choice. Blacks knew it, but could do little about it, until the time when New York's city council changed Harlem's 125 Street to Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard and, local residents defied and aired their own views by renaming Lenox Avenue after Malcolm X. (Hacker 63)

reinterpreted Christianity as a signifier that conflated "goodness" with "whiteness"; or, in

Hacker's words, "To be white is to be 'civilized'" (62), and to be civilized is to be

Christian. African Americans, as apt pupils of Caucasian "lessons" on Christian

"civility" and "turn-the-other-cheek" philosophy bought into, at first, a subordinated

existence and representation of the black race and, later, a debilitating submissiveness in

regards to their own plight.

Lyndon B. Johnson's 1ˢᵗ Inaugural Address

On November 27, 1963, Lyndon Baines Johnson, during his first "inauguration"

said, "All I have I would have given gladly not to be standing here today." The Texas

millionaire meant his words to be a solemn and sincere expression of his grief for the

fallen president, John F. Kennedy. Unbeknownst to Johnson, his initial words as

President would come to mean far more than he anticipated. For Kennedy's abbreviated

administration would dump America's two most contentious issues entirely into

Johnson's lap—the quagmire of Viet Nam and the conundrum of Civil Rights. In

addition, black leaders were wary about whether or not Johnson would continue

Kennedy's support of the Civil Rights Bill, as both Kennedy and Johnson could,

according to scholars Celeste Condit and John Lucaites, be "legitimately chided for their

slowness, reluctance, and inactivity" on race issues (Condit and Lucaites 198).[7] In

addition, Robert A Caro's *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Master of the Senate* (2002)

sheds light on Johnson's civil rights record by pointing out how, during the twenty years

---

[7] One rather humorous point several scholars of the Johnson administration point out is that Johnson made
some black leaders leery of his sincere support of the Civil Rights movement, due to his proclivity for
pronouncing the word "Negro" in a manner that resembled "Nigra."

he served in the Senate and House, Johnson failed to support civil rights legislation ("any civil rights legislation," Caro emphasizes), and how Johnson's "record was an unbroken one of votes against every civil rights bill that had ever come to a vote," be it "voting rights bills," "bills that would have struck at job discrimination and at segregation in other areas of American life," and "even against bills that would have protected blacks from lynching" (Caro xv). However, the president shared relatively similar aims and objectives as black leaders for black progress; but this is as far as similarities go. For black leaders interpreted black problems and sought solutions for these problems in radically different ways.

Yet, no one listening to Johnson's speech could accuse him of not being acutely aware of the nation's pre-eminent problems. Nor could anyone accuse him of erasing blacks from the landscape of his inaugural vision. However, examination of Johnson's first inaugural speech proves his proclivity for taking up for the defenseless—especially when the "defenseless" is one of his own. Johnson's initial rhetorical posturing was as though Johnson, himself, recognized King's retaliatory response to Kennedy's evasive inauguration speech and, therefore, chose to respond to King's speech in defense of the slain president. Johnson, already famous for his "pugilistic" demeanor and reputation with Senators and Representatives in Congress, chose to defend the former President. He "answers" or matches the idea of King's "dreaming" with dreams of his own—that is, Johnson chose to literally *continue* or *pick up where the slain leader and King left off* in the ongoing inaugural "conversation" between Kennedy and King by addressing, in response, King's speech. The use of anaphora—repetition of the phrase "the dream"— echoes King's own:

No words are strong enough to express our determination to continue the

forward thrust of America that he began. The *dream* of conquering the

vastness of space—the *dream* of partnership across the Atlantic—and

across the pacific as well—the *dream* of a Peace Corps in less developed

nations—the *dream* of education for all our children—the *dream* of jobs

for all who seek them and need them—and above all, the *dream*

of equal rights for all Americans, whatever their race or color—

these and other American *dreams* have been vitalized by his drive

and by his dedication. And now the ideas and the ideals which he

so nobly represented must and will be translated into effective

action.

However, it seems Johnson had no notion that his use of the anaphora of King's

phrase, "the dream," and certain other points of emphasis—global issues, national unity,

and extremism—would position him as a target for strong rhetorical responses from black

leaders. In short, Johnson's recognition of race problems in this speech reveals he

mistakenly took a "knife" to a "gun battle." African American leaders were now

radically equipped to decide for themselves as to how best solve the "Negro problem."

Moreover, most of them were outside the Civil Rights mainstream, and considered what

Johnson labeled "extremists."

Notwithstanding all else that can be said of Johnson's first inaugural speech,

Johnson attempts to "seize the moment" or take advantage of the nation's *pathos*

concerning the issue of the Civil Rights Bill proposed before Kennedy's death, both in

mourning for the late President Kennedy and in the continuing debate concerning the

Civil Rights movement. The nation's feelings concerning the slain leader were, even for those who did not support him, shock and grief; the nation's feelings concerning the Civil Rights Bill were, for many who did not at first support it, guilt. Johnson cleverly capitalized on a combination of these two sentiments, hoping to add to the sum total of supporters the dissenters of the Civil Rights Bill. Johnson employs the rhetorical device referred to as *kairos*, in that his appeal for passage of the Civil Rights Bill was a timely response to the situation. Johnson, himself, reiterates the temporal expediency of his appeal:

> First, no memorial oration or eulogy could more eloquently honor
> President Kennedy's memory than the earliest possible passage of the
> Civil Rights Bill for which he fought so long. We have talked long enough
> in this country about equal rights. We have talked for one hundred years or
> more. It is time now to write the next chapter, and to write it in the books
> of law. I urge you again, as I did in 1957 and again in 1960, to enact
> a civil rights law so that we can move forward to eliminate from this
> Nation every trace of discrimination and oppression that is based upon
> race or color.

Pauley and political scholar Jeremy D. Mayer support the claim that Johnson was a president who attempted to utilize kairos as a rhetorical device, but was "a day late and a dollar short" in his public appeal for black political progress. Pauley points out how Johnson uses the Greek rhetorical device referred to as kairos" (161), as he recounts Johnson's response to a future crisis that occurred during his second term in office—the voting rights crisis. Pauley says,

Johnson planned carefully his voting rights strategy, he considered both the legislative and rhetorical implications of speaking publicly about the voting rights bill. The president also directed his rhetorical appeals toward what Greek rhetoricians called *kairos*—a timely response to a given situation. . . .Johnson's speech was a timely response because it reshaped time itself, not by taking the immediate case outward to an extended time and space but instead by focusing all of America's history and ideals inward to bring them to bear on the immediate situation. . . . Although Johnson's speech was tactically timely, it was too little and too late for the rising militancy within the civil rights movement. LBJ's voting rights address was timely, timeless, and, ironically, out of time—all at the same moment" (Pauley 161).

Mayer's analysis of Johnson's political behavior towards Civil Rights immediately after Kennedy's death attributes Johnson's change from an early (until 1956) "supporter of segregation" to a "New Deal Democrat" whose father battled the Klan in the legislature, whose family historically embraced egalitarianism, who was a "quiet integrationist as head of the National Youth Administration," and who was "one of two southern senators who did not attend a southern strategy caucus to stop Truman's civil rights policy in 1949." To be exact, both Johnson *and* Kennedy "evolved"; and, as Mayer puts it, Johnson, upon Kennedy's death, made the Civil Rights Bill a "centerpiece of Kennedy's legacy" and refused to let the bill die in its most potent form "without a fight." That Mayer cites an African American supporter who commented that Johnson had a knack for using the 'given moments' to get legislation, particularly civil rights

legislation, through Congress supports assumptions of Johnson's use of kairos to subvert

the entire segregated southern social system (42-43).

Johnson reiterates commitments to South Vietnam, the United Nations, and West

Berlin, while assuring Americans domestic interests will not be subsequently back-

grounded. "We will carry on the fight against poverty and misery, and disease and

ignorance, in other lands and in our own," he says. "This does not mean that we will not

meet our unfilled needs or that we will not honor our commitments. We will do both," he

continues. Black leaders, too, make "global" commitments, deal with issues of

"extremism" and "national unity"; and they do so in black self-interest, geographically

focused interests that are as distant from West Berlin and South Vietnam as the Western

world is from the Third World.

Self Reliance—And Separation

"[S]ee here, you know who I am, why it just came to me, ah'm so phony, I'm as full of
shit as Lyndon Johnson. Why, man, I'm nothing but his little alter ego. That's what you
got right here working for you, Lyndon Johnson's little old *dwarf* alto ego. How you like
him?" (Mailer, *Armies of the Night*)

"The comedy of the New Left, its Achilles' heel, black as tar, was now being displayed.
. . . [M]ost of the blacks in this roped-off section had moved into the future, into that
Black Twenty-first Century when Black Power had succeeded in rendering the white man
invisible at will for the black; so these Blacks moved . . . with an exquisite disdain which
left whites next to invisible, washed out. . . . Nobody quite understood in those days the
dark somewhat incoherent warnings of Jimmy Baldwin being true to his own, yet trying
to warn his old white friends. . . . What a sore! The best of the Whites recoiled in horror
from what was now seen, for the evil they had visited on the Blacks was either
indescribably worse than they had ever conceived, or the Black had made a Faustian pact
with Mephisto, and the Devil was now here to collect. These Blacks moved through the
New Left . . . as if ten Blacks could handle any hundred of these flaccid Whites, and they
signaled to each other across the aisles, and talked in quick idioms and out, an English
not comprehensible to any ear which knew nothing of the separate meanings of the same

word at separate pitch . . . [T]hey seemed to communicate with one another in ten dozen modes, with fingers like deaf and dumb, with feet, with their stance, by the flick of their long wrist, with the radar of their hair, the smoke of their will, the glide of their passage, by a laugh, a nod, a disembodied gesture, . . . seeming to speak through silent mediums among them who never gave hint to a sign." (Mailer, *Armies of the Night*)

Black leaders wasted no time responding to Johnson's main concerns and they addressed Johnson's three prime issues, "globalism," "extremism" and "national unity." *Globally* speaking, speeches by African Americans reveal that the prime sector of the planet that was increasingly imperative to African American global interests was the continent of *Africa*. As for concerns for racial *unity*, black leaders resigned themselves to the fact that true union between the races in these United States was moving at a claudicant pace. Finally, *extremism* was the most rhetorically ballistic and alarming African American leadership riposte in its rhetorical effectiveness for its *attention grabbing capabilities*. For instance, what is "extreme" to some may not be "extreme" to others. Moreover, some African American leaders grasped the term, redirected and reconfigured it, from a rhetorical and behavioral weapon utilized by bigoted southern extremist leaders against blacks and black progress, to an attitude and rhetorical posture that threw back to all of white America what white America was throwing to blacks.

African American Responses To Johnson's "Global" Appeal

Other speeches by African Americans did not fail to philosophically follow suit— more or less. Ever the "pendragon" for other contemporary black leaders, Malcolm X's speech commemorating the founding of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, on

June 28, 1964, also shows a decisive focus towards Africa for attainment of African

American progress. Moreover, although Johnson had become President since Malcolm's

"Grass Roots" speech, this address seems a more direct refutation of Johnson's first

inaugural address that makes an appeal for a global commitment in Vietnam and West

Germany. One gets the sense of a more focused and earnest plea for what is best for

African American interests in the global arena. Having recently dissolved his

relationship with the Nation of Islam and traveled abroad to Mecca and Africa, he

returned with relatively novel ideas concerning race relations and solutions to the black

problem. Malcolm X had shifted his focus toward Africa and decided to use as a model

the "letter and spirit," according to the editors of the second edition of *Black Protest*

Thought of the Twentieth Century (Meier 1971),[8] of the Organization of African Unity

that was established at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in May of 1963. Summarizing the aims,

goals, and objectives of the fledgling organization, Malcolm X says, "The time is past

due for us to internationalize the problems of Afro-Americans. We have been too slow in

recognizing the link in the fate of Africans with the fate of Afro-Americans. We have

been too unknowing to understand and too misdirected to ask our African brothers and

sisters to help us mend the chain of our heritage" (Quoted in Meier et al. 413).

Malcolm X would repeat the refrain a few months later, in "To Mississippi

Youth," when he tells a group of teenagers visiting Harlem from McComb, Mississippi,

"In my opinion, the greatest accomplishment that was made in the struggle of the black

man in America in 1964 towards some kind of real progress was the successful linking

---

[8] The editors of this book are August Meier, Elliott Rudwick, and Francis L. Broderick. The first edition was copyrighted in 1965.

together of our problem with the African problem, or making our problem a world

problem" (Quoted in Meier et al. 200).

With somewhat less force but a considerably ample amount of humor is John O.

Killens' June 7, 1964 *New York Times Magazine* essay, "We Refuse To Look At

Ourselves Through The Eyes Of White America," a piece that, according to August

Meier et al, reflects Killens' attempt to globally "form a conscious cultivation of cultural

pluralism," (420) whereas he compares and contrasts the reactions of blacks and whites to

American cultural artifacts such as the cinema, literature, and other stereotypes, while

forging a global cultural identity with Africa. As for American cinema, Killens says,

[when] "black folks laughed at the antics of Amos 'n' Andy and wept copious tears at a

ridiculous movie . . . named "Imitation of Life" we [blacks] were "looking at life through

the eyes of white America." He parallels the antics of the British literary novel and its

colonized character "Gunga Din" with America's personification of "Uncle Tom" or

"Mister Charlie," the black "Mammy," and the "good old happy-go-lucky days of

bondage" (421-22). Finally, Killens' speech presents readers with what he feels is a

scenario that explains why it is useless for African Americans to recognize any global

existence outside that of Africa by recounting how *white Americans* allowed color to

supersede patriotism when they shouted "exhortations" such as "Kill the nigger!" during

the Floyd Patterson/Ingemar Johansson fight, in spite of the fact Johansson was a *Swedish*

citizen! (422-23). Killens' philosophy is that, regardless of patriotism, when it comes to

color, white is always for white; therefore blacks must identify and unconditionally

support other blacks. Notwithstanding, Killens predicts, the two different psyches that

separate America are at a "twilight" stage as "black and brown men everywhere" discard

the "black man's burden," and carve out of the Western World a "space" for non-white

cultural, social, psychological, intellectual, and philosophical differences. To Killens,

going *global*, is not a "tableau" where Western Nations such as the United States play the

"Great White Fathers" role; it is a "world . . . becoming more to (his) liking, . . . taste, . .

. and image" (420-427).

The African connection is extended as well, in James Forman's "Student

Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Report on Guinea," a report written to his American

colleagues on September 23, 1964. The speech is globally focused, as the Students For

Non-violent Co-ordination Committee (SNCC) leader (along with John Lewis, Bob

Moses, Dona Richards, Prathia Hall, Julian Bond, Ruby Doris Robinson, Bill Hansen,

Donald Harris, Mathew Jones, and Fannie Lou Hamer) accepts an invitation from Diallo

Alpha of Guinea, reciprocating Alpha's, the Guinean leader, earlier visit to the United

States. Perhaps the main objective of the visit by the U.S. delegation was as a

reconnaissance mission, as Alpha said that his "main concern . . . was about the relative

unconcern and lack of information that people in America had about affairs outside their

own country" (Quoted Carson 190). Alpha wanted the black delegation to return to

America and dispel the myth about Africa, and vice versa. At one point, Forman tells

readers of his report that Alpha "stated that our struggle was not just ours and that there

existed a great relationship between what we do in the United States: what happens in

Africa and the converse is true" (192-3).

As for Johnson's concern about unity, African American leaders, again, rhetorically constructed a retort to the President's plea for unity among the races with a deflecting appeal that, many times, reasoned and pleaded for unity among African Americans themselves and for a more perfect union with what they considered the "Mother Country"—Africa. Johnson's address called for an inter-racial agenda; African American leaders, instead, cried for an intra-racial platform.

Perhaps Malcolm X's most vivid argument for black unity is his "Statement of Basic Aims and Objectives of the Organization of Afro-American Unity," given in June of 1964, when he draws up a "charter" for the organization that, though he uses the language of a legislative resolution, like Johnson's first inaugural speech, subjects the first words of each line of his declaration as though he aims for the same psychological effects as one utilizing anaphora, to emphasize the emotional and political importance of his words. Here are the initial words and phrases of all lines of this speech:

Convinced that it is the inalienable right of all people to control . . .

Conscious of the fact that freedom, equality, justice and dignity . . .

Conscious of our responsibility to harness the natural and human . . .

Inspired by a common determination to promote understanding . . .

Convinced that, in order to translate the determination . . .

Determined to unify the Americans of African descent in their . . .

Dedicated to the unification of all people of African descent . . .

Persuaded that the Charter of the United Nations, . . .

Desirous that all Afro-American people and organizations . . .

Resolved to reinforce the common bond of purpose our people . . .

Do hereby present this charter. (Quoted in Meier et al. 413-414)

(All italics are Malcolm X's)

To emphasize his appeal for globally simpatico relationships between Africa and African Americans it helps to refer back to some of the last lines of Malcolm X's "To Mississippi Youth" speech, whereas he calls for blacks to consider all persecution from the perspective of a worldwide reverberation. "The same repercussions that you see all over the world when an imperialist or foreign power interferes in some section of Africa . . .nowadays, when something happens to black people in Mississippi, you'll see the same repercussions all over the world. . . . when you're in Mississippi, you're not alone, he says" (Quoted in Carson et al. 201). For Malcolm X, global unity necessitated black unity between Africa and African Americans.

Perhaps the Student Non-violent Co-ordination Committee formed the strongest global bond with Africa, as they went as far as going on a lengthy tour of the continent (19 different countries) and, subsequently, proposing that SNCC establish an "international wing"—an "African Bureau" or "Secretariat" of the SNCC. This proposal was a direct result of the African tour. Forman's inspiration was predicated upon the advice of African leaders such as Guinean President Sekou Toure, whereas he offers the African American delegation the benefits of sagacious advice as to how best forge a cohesive union among black workers in the struggle for racial equality. Toure substitutes the word "organization" for the word "union" as he uses parabolic rhetoric to make his point about the necessity of unity. Foreman tells readers that Toure instructs blacks that

"We must not underestimate the role of organization" and that Toure "took the example of the table in front of him on which there were peanuts and some boiled peeled potatoes. He said that he could lift the table himself, but that if all 20 or more of us who were around the table began to pull in different directions, probably none of us would be able to lift it" (Quoted in Carson et al.193). Toure's advice, if Foreman's report is taken at face value, bears a distinct resemblance to the rhetorical strategies Christ used to instruct his disciples and potential followers of early Christianity, perhaps hoping to achieve results identical to that of the epoch-creating erudition Christ espoused and utilized. It seems that most African and African American leaders were eager to adopt Christ's rhetorical strategies for helping Christianity gain a substantial foothold and flourish; however, Christ's pacifist physical posturing in regards to Christianity precipitated a split, with some agreeing with his non-violent policy and some rejecting it.

In some speeches by African American leaders, it follows that "globalism" *and* "unity" are as doppleganger concerns, as the two seem to walk hand-in-hand. Besides its humorous appeal for globalism, Killens' speech, "We Refuse To Look At Ourselves Through The Eyes of White America" also offers a more serious appeal for black unity. In addition, Forman's "SNCC Brief on Guinea" supplements a global philosophy with one that concerns black unity as a construct, a philosophical/historical symbiosis between the black American presence and that of Africa. Killens' speech refers to Ghana, Africa when he quotes Ghanian wisdom to support his argument that a new epoch in Western history that rewrites the story of blacks is approaching: "For there is great wisdom in the old Ghana proverb, which says "No one rules forever on the throne of time," and "Only a fool points to his heritage with his left hand." Forman's fact-finding tour of Guinea

encourages him to design the strategy for black progress on the basis of American societal structure. That is, just as America has a varied social and political structure from state to state, the organization of black political progress must be as varied. In addition, like Malcolm X, he stresses that on the national level blacks must background religious differences in order to project a foregrounded racial sense of unity. Forman, like Malcolm X, believed that religious differences impede progress toward the necessary black unity required for black progress. As a result, Forman, again like Malcolm X, situates himself in the more secular category of African American leadership rhetoric.

At this point, readers must simultaneously fast-forward in time into the future, one month after Johnson's second inaugural address, while remaining contemporary in relevance to the topics of Johnson's first inaugural address. For it concerns a speech that is the most ironic speech by a more church based or religiously oriented African American leader. It rhetorically expresses a psyche that encompasses a combined "global" and "unity" agenda. The speech is Martin Luther King's "A Letter From a Selma Alabama Jail," which appeared in the New York Times on February 5, 1965, the day of his release from jail for his participation in the SCLC's February 1st, 1965 march. According to John Lewis, King's intention for this epistolary speech was to "arouse the same interest in a federal voting rights bill that his 'Letter From Birmingham Jail' had inspired for the civil rights act"; yet it had diminished repercussions (Lewis 314). This speech stands alone for timely and categorical reasons, as it is direct proof that, when it comes to black progress, time moves at a cunctative pace. Not only was it written at the beginning of Johnson's *second* term in office (remember, we are currently discussing the hopes and promises of Johnson's first inaugural address and term in office), it was also

composed long after other black speeches that seem rhetorically responsive to Johnson's first inaugural address concerns about "globalism" and "unity." Most importantly, it also refers to America's race situation in a manner that superficially acquiesces to Johnson's first-term inaugural pleas for *European* global concerns and unity between white and black American races—while simultaneously turning these same concerns onto themselves for black racial causes—and American embarrassment.

This speech is a rhetorical "in your face" animadversion to everything Johnson's first inaugural speech stands for on these two issues. It as though King is saying, "You want to talk about European global issues and unity between blacks and whites? Why not tell Europe about the miscreant behavior America imposes upon its own black citizens; and how, two years after your first inaugural speech, the only black experience concerning racial unity is as one collective race suffering under the same sordid human conditions at the hands of the same group of people!" Moreover, there is an asteistic tone in this epistolary-type speech that deals with a crisis situation among blacks whereas they *are* "united"—amongst themselves in a Selma, Alabama jail cell. The exordium of King's speech begins in this manner:

> Dear Friends:
>
> When the King of Norway participated in awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to me he surely did not think that in less than sixty days I would be in jail. He, and almost all world opinion will be shocked because they are little aware of the unfinished business in the South. (Quoted in Carson et al. 212)

The references to "unity" in regards to blacks serve to *shame* the face of the South, to the entire world, of the fact that, despite the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Johnson's premier inaugural pleas, blacks still risk jail for merely attempting to cast a vote. Blacks are *united*, but at the wrong place and time. He says, "By jailing hundreds of Negroes, the city of Selma, Alabama, has revealed the persisting ugliness of segregation to the nation and the world. . . . THIS IS SELMA, ALABAMA. THERE ARE MORE NEGROES IN JAIL WITH ME THAN THERE ARE ON THE VOTING ROLLS." (All capital cases are his.) (Quoted in Carson et al. 212)

King's speech continues by admonishing southern black civic plight and posing questions that reveal the disparaging, though unified, black conditions. He asks, "Why are we in jail? Have you ever been required to answer 100 questions on government, some abstruse even to a political scientist specialist, merely to vote?" "Have you ever stood in line with over a hundred others and after waiting an entire day seen less than ten given the qualifying test?" Subsequently, he makes what could be considered a worldwide plea for help from those outside the South *and* the U.S.: "Your help can make the difference. Your help can be a message of unity which the thickest jail walls cannot muffle" (Quoted in Carson 211-212).

Yet, though King admonished the misplaced "unity" among fellow blacks jailed for their attempts to vote, and for a union among outsiders and blacks to assist blacks in gaining voting privileges, Civil Rights' leadership had been increasingly under question since the inception of Johnson's first tenure as President. One may question the paucity of speeches by King during Johnson's first administration. To be exact, King remained an active participant during this period, but, as Lewis points out in his autobiography,

Walking With The Wind, many blacks, due to growing restlessness and resentment, begin

to buy into Malcolm X's "by any means necessary" ideology, averting their attention

away from King's more passive philosophy. Lewis, as previously stated, recalls the time

King was jeered in Harlem with the phrase, "We want Malcolm!" Hacker, again, as

previously stated, tells readers about the controversy and tension among blacks and

between white establishment and African Americans about black leadership, as to whom

should be "crowned" the black leader. Most revealing is Malcolm X's previously

discussed November 1963 speech, "Message To The Grass Roots," where he makes this

statement:

> When Martin Luther King failed to desegregate Albany, Georgia, the
>
> civil-rights struggle in America reached its low point. King became
>
> bankrupt almost, as a leader. The Southern Christian Leadership
>
> Conference was in financial trouble; and it was in trouble, period, with the
>
> people when they failed to desegregate Albany, Georgia. Other Negro
>
> civil-rights leaders of co-called national stature became fallen idols. As
>
> they became fallen idols, began to lose their prestige and influence, local
>
> Negro leaders began to stir up the masses. . . . [L]ocal leaders began to stir
>
> up our people at the grass roots level. This was never done by these
>
> Negroes of national stature. They control you, but they have never incited
>
> or excited you. They control you, they contain you, they have kept you on
>
> the plantation. (Quoted in Carson et al. 257)

To hear Malcolm tell it, it was *almost* like a theatre during its "black curtain" period—

the period where the theatre is closed for business—for King. Malcolm X goes on to

explain African American grass roots action and reaction to this confusing denouement of

Civil Rights leadership as though blacks (together) were a headless, massive body

looking for a leader to fulfill black needs—like a massive chicken with its head chopped

off. Simultaneously, black leaders fought. And Malcolm continues to describe the

lachrymose dissipation of the Civil Rights movement by recounting vicious internal and

media squabbles over money, philosophy, and strategy. At one point Malcolm says,

"King went out to California to a big rally and raised I don't know how many thousands

of dollars. He came to Detroit and had a march and raised some more thousands of

dollars. And recall, right after that Roy Wilkins attacked King. He accused King and

CORE [Congress of Racial Equality] of starting trouble everywhere and making the

NAACP . . . get them out of jail and spend a lot of money; they accused King and CORE

of raising all the money and not paying it back" (Quoted in Carson 257-8).

Malcolm, with his usual verisimilitude, attempts to back up his black leadership

assessments by saying, "This happened; I've got it in documented evidence in the

newspaper. Roy started attacking King, and King started attacking Roy, and Farmer

started attacking both of them. And as these Negroes of national stature began to attack

each other, they began to lose their control of the Negro masses" (Quoted in Carson et al.

258).[9]

Anyone concerned about African American Civil Rights history would be

disappointed by the time they finished this Malcolm X speech; for he literally puts his

---

[9] There are bootleg videos of this speech by Malcolm X, whereas, at this point, he brandishes a group of
newspaper clippings to the audience to prove his point. As I could not acquire the video, I am uncertain as
to which newspapers reported this pitiful chain of events.

"finger on the spot" of that pivotal moment when black revolutionary philosophy managed to steal the black leadership "crown," as he points out the "tit-for-tat" evolution of events that lead, ultimately, to the conception of Black Power. According to Malcolm, leadership squabbles led to a series of events that included blacks taking to the streets to march on Washington, the white Birmingham explosion, the black Birmingham explosion (whereas Malcolm X says that blacks began to "stab the crackers in the back and bust them up 'side their head—yes they did" (Quoted in Carson et al. 258)), Kennedy's deployment of troops to Birmingham, Kennedy's television announcement that racism is a "moral issue," Kennedy's proposal of a "civil rights bill," "Southern crackers" proposed attempts to "filibuster" or "boycott" the bill, and blacks, again, retaliating by talking about marching on every seat of power in Washington--the "Senate," the "White House," and "Congress," tying up the federal government to the point of bringing it to a "halt" and not letting it "proceed." African Americans even went as far as proposing airport demonstrations, whereas they would lie down on "runways" at airplane landings. Malcolm X concludes this portion of his speech by declaring, "That was revolution. That was revolution. That was the black revolution" (Quoted in Carson 258).

And a revolution it was, as militant black leaders shed all vestiges of pacifism, church or religion, and the patience for rhetorically negotiating with white American leaders and rhetorically overtook this period of black progress. The "extremist" voice had carved a niche for itself on the platform of African American advancement.

African American Responses to Johnson's "Extremist" Appeal

The "extremists" observed a rift in mainstream black leadership and engaged in the rhetorical practice of "kairos," coupled with the military practice of "carpe diem." That is, they saw the opportune moment to seize the day and assert a rhetoric that addresses immediate African American wants and needs. Already infuriated by Johnson's theft of King's elegiac use of the word "dream,"[10] extremists responded to Johnson's first ideological inaugural promises to apply "renewed dedication" and "renewed vigor" to "meet in action, in tolerance, and in mutual understanding" the legacy Kennedy began. Johnson goes on to say, "The time has come to respect one another. So let us put an end to the teaching and the preaching of hate and evil and violence. Let us turn away from the fanatics of the far left and the far right, from the apostles of bitterness and bigotry, from those defiant of law, and those who pour venom into our Nation's bloodstream." Johnson concludes his address to extremists by saying, "So let us here highly resolve that John Fitzgerald Kennedy did not live—or die—in vain."

African American leaders, extremist and otherwise, embraced identical intentions as Johnson, the difference being that the extremists intended to *ensure* that black progress moved beyond the passage of a Kennedy initiated Civil Rights Bill during Johnson's first

---

[10] At one point, Pauley points out how Johnson habitually "adopted the discourse of the mainstream movement," "repeated arguments that African American activists had long advanced," that "his speech tapped into the religio-political discourse of the civil rights movement" and "appropriated the discursive tactics and strategies used by civil rights activists" (Pauley 191-2). Moreover, perhaps the best "evidence" that Johnson's appropriated this term from King and the subsequent reaction to this appropriation is by comparison to the reaction of another Civil Rights phrase Johnson borrowed during his second administration's Voting Rights address of 1965, whereas Pauley says that Johnson's use of the phrase "We Shall Overcome," to closely identify with the Civil Rights movement, shocked Southerners and pleased moderate leaders such as King, while militant leaders (such as Malcolm X, Forman and other SNCC leaders) were not as impressed and behaved as though he was not talking to them. Finally, there is a speech by SNCC's militant field secretary, Julius Lester, entitled "The Angry Children of Malcolm X," whereas he tells about the civil rights power struggle during that pivotal moment between Kennedy's death and Johnson's first administration. Lester says, "Big Lyndon, despite his beagle hounds and daughters, fooled everybody. Not only did he strengthen the civil rights bill and support it fully, he started giving Martin Luther King competition as to who was going to lead 'the movement'. King lost" (Quoted in Meier 475).

administration—by any means necessary. As previously stated, Malcolm X's 28 June

1964 speech, entitled "Statement of the Basic Aims and Objectives of the Organization of

Afro-American Unity," is a speech given during the last year of his life, and during the

first year of his break with the Nation of Islam. Malcolm had completed a sojourn to

Mecca and Africa, whereas his political ideas about race and revolution had evolved into

a more inclusive philosophy that included blacks *and* whites. However, Malcolm's belief

was that blacks, themselves, had to be united *first* and that *sincere* whites had to support

or help blacks achieve this goal. Besides the aforementioned "charter" portion of the

speech, Malcolm X lists six subsections ("Establishment," "Self-defense," "Education,"

"Politics-Economics," "Social," and "Culture") to give the particulars of the expectations

and goals of his new organization. One of the more "extremist" subsections is "Self-

defense," whereas he says "since self-preservation is the first law of nature, we assert the

Afro-American's right of self-defense" (Quoted in Carson et al. 415).

Malcolm goes on to point out that "The Constitution of the U.S.A. clearly affirms

the right of every American citizen to bear arms. And as Americans, we will not give up

a single right guaranteed under the Constitution. The history of the unpublished violence

against our people clearly indicates that we must be prepared to defend ourselves or we

will continue to be a defenseless people at the mercy of a ruthless and violent racist mob.

. . . It is the duty of every Afro-American and every Afro-American community

throughout this country to protect its people against mass murderers, bombers, lynchers,

floggers, brutalizers and exploiters" (Quoted in Meier et al. 415). Malcolm sought to end

"extremist" acts perpetrated against blacks by proposing what others considered

"extreme" on behalf of blacks—matching violence with an equal proportion of violence.

Another subsection where some might see "extremism" is "Education," where

Malcolm calls for the control of "ten per cent of the schools to be turned over and run by

the Afro-American community" in order to "end the existing system of racist education"

(416). In the subsection entitled "Politics-economics," Malcolm proposes stringent voter

campaigning in black communities and massive rent strikes to combat the disparaging

housing conditions in which blacks were forced to live. Under the subsection of

"Social," Malcolm makes the unique gesture of citing black community "organized

crime," a device that, he says, "is controlled by policemen who accepts bribes and graft,

and who must be exposed" (418). Malcolm points his finger at a facet of black

oppression that had never been publicly voiced—organized crime's role in the

degradation of the African American community.

Other black leaders, such as John O. Killens, would also use what many would

consider "extreme" rhetoric on behalf of black equality. In "We Refuse To Look At

Ourselves Through The Eyes of White America" he explains how the African American

is a mere invention of the "Anglo-Saxon" mindset and arena for which blacks are

delegated to "play in this drama known euphemistically as the American Way of Life,"

and warns white America of an impending doom. Killens weaves what Johnson's first

inaugural address would consider extremist philosophy into his explanation of black and

white psyches as he warns whites of the ominous consequences of a racially separate

America:

> So now it is time for you to understand us, because it is becoming
>
> increasingly hazardous for you not to. Dangerous for both of us. As
>
> Richard Wright said in his "Twelve Million Black Voices," voices you

chose not to heed: "Each day when you see us black folk upon the dusty

land of your farms or upon the hard pavement of your city streets,

you usually take us for granted and think you know us, but our history is

far stranger than you suspect, and we are not what we seem. (Quoted in

Meier et al. 427)

Killens shoves aside the pacifist philosophy of mainstream black progress leaders by

pointing out that many African Americans "prefer John Brown" as a symbol of heroism,

instead of the white preference of Abraham Lincoln. And he comically reasons that this

diametrically opposed preference as to who should or should not be considered a hero is

due to the white American belief that "the firm dedication of any white man to the

freedom of the black man is *prima facie* evidence of perversion and insanity" (427).

Political extremism goes as far as pre-emptive attempts to share power and

control of the nation's political "machines" at the highest levels. Johnson's Voting

Rights Act of 1965, an act that, by the way, was a result of non-violent direct action of

protesters in Selma, Alabama, had outlawed all laws designed to prevent African

Americans from registering to vote. Yet, this initial taste of political freedom ballooned

into a mouthful as blacks began to pursue political power that bellowed all the way to the

White House—seeking the power to influence as to whom should or should not gain

access within the "boardroom" of America's political processes. SNCC leader, Charles

Sherrod's "Mississippi at Atlantic City" (in Carson 186-9) is a bit of rhetoric that

describes the Freedom Democratic Party's (a party "for everyone") delegates' forceful,

yet unsuccessful, attempt at recognition as part of the official delegation to the August,

1964 Democratic National Convention at Atlantic City, New Jersey to re-elect President

Johnson. Sherrod is quick to point out that they were not a "renegade group" and that

they attempted to work "within the structure of the state Party" to insure state party

loyalty to the National Democratic Party in November; however, when they sought to be

seated with complete voting rights at the upcoming convention, they learned how

"renegade" or "extremist" their actions were, as they were turned down and offered the

watered-down privilege of being seated without voting rights—a position that was, at

once, a "show" but "no-show" status—as "honored guests." The FDP stood their ground

and refused "compromise" after "compromise," while engaging in back and forth

struggle with what Sherrod refers to as "the best political strategists in the country." The

proposal of the FDP was this:

1. Everyone would be subjected to a loyalty oath, both the Freedom Party
   and the Mississippi regular party

2. Each delegate who took the oath would be seated and the votes would
   be divided proportionally. (Quoted in Carson et al. 188)

According to Sherrod, the FDP concluded the proposal by saying, "It was minimal; the

Freedom Party would accept no less." However, the Democratic administration had other

plans, proposing, instead, a more complex and confusing agenda that could only be

designed to erase, evade or marginalize maximum participation in the democratic process

by a group of citizens representative of America's grass-roots constituents. The

Democratic administration's proposal went in this manner:

1. The all-white Party would take the oath and be seated;

2. The Freedom Democratic Party would be welcomed as honored guests
   of the Convention;

3. Dr. Aaron Henry and Rev. Edwin King, . . . would be given delegate

   status in a special category of "delegates at large";

4. The Democratic National Committee would obligate states by 1968 to

   select and certify delegates through a process without regard to race,

   creed, color or national origin;

5. The Chairman of the National Democratic Committee would establish

   a special committee to aid states in meeting standards set for the 1968

   Convention. (Quoted in Carson et al. 188)

That the administration countered with a five-point proposal that ended with promises

that *might* have been fulfilled in the next presidential election, in 1968, is evidence that,

once again, America's privileged white power structure was unready for the type of

grass-roots participants and philosophy that made up the FDP. The FDP delegates

realized that the Democratic administration's proposal was merely another politically

expedient example of America's penchant for staving off immediate compensation to

make up for centuries of African American and grass roots participatory loss in

America's leadership electorial process. Sherrod mentions how the stand-off ended with

the "word" having "come down for the last time" from the Credentials Committee."

Sherrod says, "We had begun to lose support in the Credentials Committee. This came

mainly as a result of a squeeze play by the administration." "The administration,"

Sherrod continues, "had succeeded in baiting us into extended discussion and this was the

end. . . . we had come through another crisis with our minds depressed and our hearts

and hands unstained. . . . We were asserting a moral declaration to this country that the

political mind must be concerned with much more than the expedient; that there are real

issues in this country's politics and 'race' is one" (Quoted in Carson 188-9). The FDP

was trying to bring the presidential electorial process home to the masses, the people.

Sherrod's rhetorical account of the FDP's ordeal begins with the words, "It was a cool

day in August beside the ocean." The Democratic Administration's actions revealed that

it would be a "cold day in hades" before they would allow or accept a rag-tag group of

politically insurgent descendents of slaves and working class whites seat themselves in a

position of power in the electorial "inner sanctum" of America's government.

Sometimes, one fails to realize when they have a so-called "good thing"; that is,

he or she fails to recognize when they have it "good" because things could be a lot worse.

Johnson and his administrative political strategists fall into this category; for they had a

peaceful, organized group of concerned citizens, the FDP delegates, that were earnestly

looking out for Johnson's own good. Unlike President Kennedy, who, in all his

legendary wit and intelligence, retorted to his aids and advisors that they would be in a

far more advantageous position having to deal with King and the SCLC rather than

SNCC because they (SNCC) "had an investment in violence" and were "sons of bitches"

(Quoted in Davis 34), Johnson chose to "dis" the FDP, leaving himself open for the

retributive or fustigating extremism of none other than Malcolm X. The man who "out

extremes" what many consider extremism launches a logical and intelligent attack in two

speeches on African American political progress within (and without) the American

electorial process, as he pours what Johnson's first inaugural address refers to as the

extremist "*venom*" "*pour*[ed]" "*into our nation's bloodstream*" and combines it with a

few sanguinary pieces of insight of his own. In the previously mentioned 31st December

1964 speech, "To Mississippi Youth,"[11] Malcolm X says, "We're with the efforts to register our people in Mississippi to vote one thousand per cent. But we do not go along with anybody telling us to help nonviolently. . . . You get freedom by letting your enemy know that you'll do anything to get your freedom; then you'll get it. It's the only way you'll get it" (Quoted in Carson et al. 201).

Along with violence comes bloodshed. In the November 9-10 1963[12] previously mentioned speech, "Message to the Grass Roots," Malcolm condemns the state of the nation's "bloodstream" to that of hemophilia as he recommends "bloodshed" in any and every situation that deters African American freedom, progress and nationhood:

> Look at the American Revolution in 1776. That revolution was for what? For land. Why did they want land? Independence. How was it carried out? Bloodshed. . . . And the only way they could get it was bloodshed. The French Revolution—what was it based on? The landless against the landlord. What was it for? Land. How did they get it? Bloodshed. . . . I'm telling you –you don't know what a revolution is. Because when you find out what it is, you'll get back in the alley, . . . The Russian Revolution—what was it based on? Land; the landless against the landlord. How did they bring it about? Bloodshed. You haven't got a revolution that doesn't involve bloodshed. And you're afraid to bleed. . . .

---

[11] Readers may notice that this speech was given four months after the Freedom Democratic Party's encounter at the Democratic National Convention, one month after Johnson's re-election and little more than a month before Johnson's second inaugural address.

[12] Readers may remember, as previously pointed out, that this speech was given just before Johnson's first term in office (just before Kennedy's assassination) and first inaugural speech. However, again, as previously stated, as the speech occurs between the Kennedy and Johnson's administration, I feel it is appropriate for discussion under Johnson's first inaugural address to help provide context.

As long as the white man sent you to Korea, you bled. He sent you to

Germany, you bled. He sent you to the South Pacific to fight the

Japanese, you bled. You bleed for white people, but when it comes to

seeing your own churches being bombed and little black girls murdered,

you haven't got any blood. (Quoted in Carson et al. 251-2)

"Blood," to both Johnson and Malcolm, is the life force of the survival of any nation, as it

is a property that is both protected from outside malevolent influences and is shed from

within as a sacrifice for an objective.

Part Two

The "Gentleman's Agreement": Johnson's 2nd Inaugural Speech

Introduction

Notwithstanding the ironic undertones of the use of the term "Gentlemen's

Agreement," its use is imperative here because it explains Johnson's repeated use, and

the implications (whether intentional or un-intentional) thereof, of the term "Covenant" in

his second inaugural address. A Covenant is a "sacred contract," usually between God

and a person, or a group of people. Covenant theology draws upon personal, religious

and civic virtues, as John Cotton's *New Covenant* points out in regards to the American

Covenant, as a binding agreement between God and humans of the "same spirit (that)

quickeneth us unto holy duties" also "sanctifying draweth us into an holy confederacy to

serve God in Family, Church, & Common-wealth." In short, the Covenant is a binding

agreement between God and humans regarding personal, religious, and political (civic)

behavior. "There was a social and religious sanction, as well as a civic obligation," say

authors Samuel Eliot Morison and Henry Steele Commager in *The Growth of the*

American Republic (62). Embedded within Puritan Covenant theology are issues

concerning "election" and "Providence"—that is, the idea that no matter how good one is

or how closely one follows God's laws, it is up to God as to whether or not a person

enters heaven or is "saved." Most ominous in Covenant theology is the notion of

"predestination" (a standard component of Calvinist and Reformed theology), meaning that certain things (such as the human condition and "place" in society) are decided by God before humankind's knowledge. That is, things (such as social hierarchy, wealth, etc.) are the way they are because it is the *will* of God. As many current historians have surmised, the Covenant theology and its accompanying beliefs helped serve American Colonists' ultimate plans regarding slaves, the institution of slavery, and the "place" of Native Americans—and poor, white Americans. The beneficiaries of Covenant philosophy were the Caucasian males, the wealthy and propertied of early upper echelon American society.

Appropriately, Johnson delivered his address in what is considered the 17th century "plain style" of sermon rhetoric, where the form, style, and function, according to Perry Miller, the "plain and profitable way of doctrine, reasons, and uses, which perfectly reflected in form and style as well as in substance the mentality and tastes of Puritans . . ., and lovers of the Word of God" (332). Though Johnson is no Puritan, he uses the "plain style" format for his inaugural address. The qualities of the "plain style" sermon are that it is mechanically and rigidly divided into sections and subheads and has the look of a lawyer's brief. The sermon quotes biblical texts and briefly opens by telling of the circumstances, context, and grammatical meanings of these texts, while reducing its tropes and schemata to prose. Also its logical implications are set forth. Hence, the sermon proceeds in a flat tone to tell about the "doctrine" embedded within, or logically deduced from, the text and proceeds forward from one reason to the next. There are no transitions except a period and a number. Sometimes these are followed by numbered uses and applications until there is nothing more to be said. There is little or no variation

in tone, volume and tempo. (Miller 333) Miller's description of the "plain style" sermon

describes Johnson's second inaugural speech.

After the "My fellow countrymen" greeting, Johnson mentions the "oath" and

launches into what he sees as the current circumstances and conditions of American

society (almost like a State of the Union Address), preparing Americans for the drastic

"changes" in store for the future:

> Even now a <u>rocket moves toward Mars</u>. It reminds
>
> us that the world will not be the same for our children, or even for
>
> ourselves in a short span of years. The next man to stand here will
>
> look out on a scene different from our own, because ours is a time
>
> of change—rapid and fantastic . . . shaking old values, and uprooting
>
> old ways.

The emphasis upon preparing for change encourages one to think Johnson is addressing

Caucasians, as they are the ones who embrace the old values and old ways . Even greater

evidence of this follows. From this opening, Johnson launches into an oral subheading

titled (in big bold letters) "The American Covenant," and he goes on to elaborate the

meaning of the covenant by defining those who originally made the covenant and those it

includes:

> They came here—the exile and the stranger, brave but frightened—
>
> to find a place where a man could be his own man. They made a
>
> covenant with this land. Conceived in justice, written in liberty,
>
> bound in union, it was meant one day to inspire the hopes of all

mankind. . . . If we keep its terms, we shall flourish.[1]

As covenants imply moral responsibility, it is as though he is pleading for white America to accept blacks and other minorities into the fold as part of the covenant, for those who arrived as "exile and stranger" in order to "find a place where a man could be his own man" are, undoubtedly, whites. Moreover, there is an obvious erasure here, as the situation of African American entry into the American landscape was through *slavery*. Subsequently, Johnson divides the remainder of the speech into rigid categories, accompanied by the word "change"—"Justice and Change," "Liberty and Change," and "Union and Change"—each with an elaboration as to what he means by each of the subheadings and the reasons for their proposal. Johnson concludes by giving his audience a vision of a greater America if all his goals are carried out—his "Great Society"—while begging his audience to perform a moral search for the type of democratic America pledged during its founding: "I will lead and I will do the best I can. But you must look within your own hearts to the old promises and to the old dream. They will lead you best of all."

Kurt Ritter's essay[2] concerning Johnson's second inaugural address claims that Johnson's longtime aide, Horace Busby, "recommended that Johnson capitalize upon the circumstance that he had been elected in the 175th year of the American presidency," so as to disassociate himself from any comparison or reference to the recently slain Kennedy (Ryan 195). Ritter adds that Johnson's decision to draw upon America's oldest rhetorical form to "unite national values" with his "national policies" helped him to "eclipse"

---

[1] This passage of Johnson's inaugural is a reference to Winthrop's sermon entitled "On Christian Charity" and the idea of a "city upon a hill."
[2] Ritter's essay is taken from Halford Ryan's book, *The Inaugural Addresses of Twentieth-Century American Presidents* (1993).

Kennedy's memory and provide a "moral justification for his Great Society domestic policies" and the Vietnam war (196).[3] Eric Severeid analyzed Johnson's speech as a speech where "He's been trying to tell us that a secret has been discovered in this generation; that is, that we can all progress together" (196). However, many minorities felt erased from the mindset of the American public in this speech; for mere use of the word "covenant" could ignore the fact that African and Native Americans were never considered part of the covenant; and, moreover, Johnson seems to imply that America's past history concerning Covenant theology did not include African and Native Americans. Black leaders would respond accordingly, as they rendered retaliatory attacks against every facet of Johnson's Covenant address. To Johnson's plans for "Justice and Change," "Liberty and Change," and "Union and Change," black leaders rhetorically expressed their own plans for the issues these "Changes" concern.

Johnson's speech begins, "The oath I have taken before you and before God is not mine alone, but ours together. We are one nation and one people. Our fate as a nation and our future as a people rest not upon one citizen but upon all citizens." Just as Puritan preachers, such as John Winthrop, had preached about the Covenant to the weary, anxious, and frightened voyagers aboard the Plymouth as they were about to land in the New World, Johnson attempts to ease the fears—white fears—of an America that stands at the dawn of a world of change: "the world will not be the same for our children, or even for ourselves . . . The next man to stand here will look out on a different scene from our own, because ours is a time of change—rapid and fantastic change bearing the secrets of nature, multiplying the nations, placing in uncertain hands new weapons for mastery

---

[3] Ritter points out how the speech files in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library reveal that Johnson's aides "viewed important speeches as opportunities to influence national policy" (201).

and destruction, shaking old values, and uprooting old ways. Our destiny in the midst of change will rest on the *unchanged character of our people, and on their faith.*"

The italics (mine) are used for the mere reason that this part of the speech is, in itself, a *contradiction*. At this point, one is encouraged to pose this question: "Will the world be the same for people of color?" For one, the initial call for "one nation" or "one people" can only be *achieved* by "shaking old values and uprooting old ways." Most important is the fact that, if our nation's "destiny" rests upon the "unchanged character of our people," the goals for a unified and progressive America are, like most inaugural promises regarding race, mere lofty words with little verisimilitude.[4] The fears and anxieties that Johnson "preaches" about, and that some whites experienced, are no different from or less than those at the embarkation of the Plymouth settlers--or the denouement of the Civil War:

Of course, most people would fail to see the parallel between their current day situation and those of the nation's earlier settlers. Poulakos, in *Classical Rhetorical Theory* (1999), points out how Isocrates, in *Panegyricus*, displays "practical wisdom" by "using the past to influence the audience's perception of a present situation, and letting the present situation contribute to the reevaluation of the past" (53). Perhaps Johnson is utilizing this ancient Greek rhetorical tactic. Or, as Johnson does not allude to any particular Biblical text, is he merely using typology? More importantly, perhaps Johnson could have explained the parallel to those who could not see. Perhaps, Johnson's speech could have included an explanation to white Americans concerning America's erroneous past, and a formal apology to these most oppressed (Native and African Americans) of

---

[4] At one point, Pauley points out how Johnson responded to complaints from his white constituents that the movement for racial equality and Civil Rights was "moving too fast."

America's people. He could have used the extremely visible and powerful platform of his second inaugural speech to be the first racially politically correct president in the entire history of America. He could have differentiated himself, not only from Kennedy, but from every previous president and precedent by being the first to acknowledge, during such a racially charged era, the error of American ways. To have delivered an inauguration address of this sort at this time would have been appropriate, but he fails to do so. Johnson's speech, like most presidential speeches, fails to "get to the point," to say exactly what he means, and to tell his audience what he plans to do to remedy the nation's problems—especially in regards to race issues. Therefore, Johnson, the gifted politician who utilized the rhetorical device of *kairos* to pass the Civil Rights Bill during his first term in office, fails to recognize the opportune moment and "seize the day" during his second inaugural address. Most important is the fact that Johnson fails to acknowledge that the "covenant" was never meant for blacks and the indigenous people (though it could be assumed that he attempts to redefine American Covenant theology towards a more inclusive or expansive "contract"); and to address them as ever having benefited from the "covenant" or taken such an oath disregards African and Native American history and their present condition. Yet, as the speech seems to imply, he addresses white Americans to ease any fears they may have, due to the anticipated social and cultural changes.

Chapter Three: Justice and Change

"On our part we must pay our profound respects to the white Americans who cherish their democratic traditions over the ugly customs and privileges of generations and come forth boldly to join hands with us." (Martin Luther King, "Our God Is Marching On!")

"A little rebellion now and then is a good thing." (Thomas Jefferson)

The section of Johnson's speech entitled "Justice and Change" deals with

economics, poverty, the American institution of medicine, and education, pointing out

how all should share in these areas of America's bounty—domestic issues. However, as

he acknowledges, many do not, and this disparity between "haves" and "have nots"

precipitates an unjustified "waste of our resources"—America's "real enemy." He vows

to eliminate economic poverty: "Before this generation of Americans is finished, this

enemy will not only retreat—it will be conquered. Justice requires us to remember that

when any citizen denies his fellow . . . he betrays America, ..." Johnson's plea

concerning federal government responsibility for the abolition of economic poverty and

the economic interconnectedness of each American citizen stands in opposition to early

American economic reasoning of leaders such as Winthrop, whose "A Modell of

Christian Charity," argues a more "noblesse oblige" philosophy that posits assistance to

the "have nots" of America in the hands of more fortunate private citizens.

African American Response to Justice and Change

African American leaders were prepared to respond to Johnson's inaugural speech and his plans for a "Great Society." Perhaps they sensed that Johnson's greatest irony in his second inaugural address is his (and white America's) perspective of "history" as a metaphysical conceit. What's more, many black leaders and organizations offered their own designs for racial progress, designs far more radical than Johnson's redefined colonial revolutionary concepts. What Johnson failed to realize was that the mere protest of Civil Rights had, for some, mutated into radicalism and militancy; that Civil Rights patience had, for some, dissipated; and that many black leaders had decided that the expedient antidotal "revenge" for racism is best served hot—sautéed in vitriolic angst. The Black Power Movement had arrived.

Most African American response to the notions and ideas in Johnson's "justice and change" subheading not only responds directly to economic and social injustice, but, moreover, attempts to breach the symbiotic political/religious/social relationship of covenant theology, the binding metaphor Johnson uses in his second inaugural address. That is, most black leaders who respond to this portion of the speech are either grounded outside the confines of the black church or, if grounded within the black church, compose speeches almost totally devoid of religious or Biblical rhetoric. As the Civil Rights movement and its leaders had their genesis and were grounded within the black church, this is quite significant. However, it is the Black Power movement that grounds itself within the secular base. This is not a new stance for militancy. E. Franklin Frazier, noted scholar and sociologist during the first half of the twentieth century, says, "Black churches have done scarcely anything to help black progress; and are more interested in

getting Negroes into heaven than getting them out of the hell they live on earth."[1]

Figuratively speaking, this is the philosophy of the Black Power movement, a philosophy that is different from that of the black church.

Johnson, himself, must have felt betrayed when the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) answered an invitation to march in Chicago, including in the notorious and "feared" (Carson's word) Cicero, one of the most racist and segregated suburbs of Chicago. Blacks answered violence with violence. The Cicero march was a turning point in the nature or climate of SCLC race marches, for its participants, in spite of the fact that they continued to favor black integration into white society, eschewed the non-violence platform and *fought back.* The influx of urban riots indicated African American impatience at the fact that, a year after Johnson's "Great Society" inauguration speech, there remained *two separate* societies, with one, the white one, acting as a direct deterrent and threat to the economic and social welfare and being of the other. King was to appear as leader of the march but, instead, backed down. Left to their own devices, the Cicero marchers questioned and, ultimately, ignored the philosophy of non-violence. According to Carson on this pivotal junction in the protest movement, the Cicero march and the subsequent Detroit march "underscore the growth of divergent ideologies competing for support within black communities in northern urban areas" (290). Some speeches by African American leadership support the assumption that the reason for the transformation from passiveness to increased militancy among some blacks was because

---

[1] This statement was taken from an article entitled "Constant Struggle: E. Franklin Frazier and Black Social Work in the 1920s," by Tony Platt and Susan Chandler.

they questioned the seriousness and earnestness of white intent and promises for racial equality.[2]

Notwithstanding, the SCLC devised its own plans for fighting economic, medical, and educational injustice and inequalities, elements of Johnson's subsection entitled "Justice and Change." Known as "A Proposal by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for the Development of a Nonviolent Action Movement for the Greater Chicago Area," this document, dated 5 January, 1966, one year after Johnson's inaugural address, was the basis for the SCLC's Chicago campaign. The basic thesis of this document is that erasure of African Americans from the benefits of economic, educational and social progress is as prevalent in the North as in the South. Therefore black leaders created their own version of the Johnson administration's focus upon race issues concerning economics, poverty and education. Black economic focus begins by enlightening Americans to the fact that *race* problems were not exclusively *Southern* problems, thereby pointing out the fact that black "pilgrimage" from the South to the North amounted, more or less, to a nomadic or migratory gyration whereas the end result was the confrontation with the same obstacles they previously faced. These phantoms had become "concretized," that is, they materialized into solidified racist constructs (much like the concrete buildings of the urban landscapes) as devastating and frightening as the "big-houses," "lashes," "whips," "chains," "bigoted white massas," and attack dogs of the South.

---

[2] Perhaps they remembered that King's Birmingham "Letter" had forewarned white leaders of the potentially explosive "new attitude" years before. As neither white America nor white American leadership sought extensive or profound changes in the African American situation, King's warning fell on deaf ears.

The report focused on Chicago, a city that, according to the report, had become more racist than any city in the segregated South. "The South is now a land of opportunity," says the report, "while those who generations ago sang, 'Going to Chicago, sorry but I can't take you,' now sink into the depths of despair" (Quoted in Carson et al. 291). The SCLC "proposal" sought to change tactics utilized in the South from concerns with public facility and educational "segregation" to a focus on economics and the disparaging *social* existence of northern blacks. To be exact, the proposal says, "The Chicago problem is simply a matter of economic exploitation. Every condition exists simply because someone profits by its existence. This economic exploitation is crystallized in the SLUM", . . . (which) "means that in proportion to the labor, money and intellect which the slum pours into the community at large, only a small portion is received in return benefits" (294-295).

As Bayard Rustin's "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement" (written in February 1965) speech points out, "(T)he civil rights movement is evolving from a protest movement into a full-fledged *social movement*—an evolution calling its very name into question. It is now concerned not merely with removing the barriers to full *opportunity* but with achieving the fact of equality" (Quoted in Meier et al. 450). Social change is most often achieved through economic change. Comparing the Chicago situation to the system of "internal colonialism" inThe Belgium Congo, the proposal sets out to analyze the "dynamics" of the slum, and cites these areas as pieces of the economically exploitative "puzzle" from which Negroes suffer in Chicago and other northern urban areas: education, building trade unions, real estate boards, banks and mortgaging companies, slum landlords, the welfare system, federal housing agencies, the

courts, the police, the political system, the city administration, and the federal government. (295-6). Here is an abridged example of the actual format of the proposal:

1. Education: $266 per year is the average investment per Negro child; per white child it is $366 in the city of Chicago.

2. Building Trade Unions: Building trades bar Negroes from many employment opportunities which could easily be learned by persons with limited academic training.

3. Real Estate: Real Estate Boards restrict the supply of housing available to Negroes to the result that Negro families pay an average $20 per month more in rent.

4. Banks and Mortgage Companies: Banks and mortgage charge higher interest rates and in many instances even refuse to finance real estate in slum communities and transitional communities, making the area easy prey for for loan sharks.

5. Slum Landlords: Slum landlords find a most lucrative return on a minimum investment due to inefficient enforcement of city building codes as well as building codes . . .

6. The Welfare System: The welfare system contributes to

the breakdown of the family . . . (Quoted in Meier et al.295-296)

And so on, until all twelve integral aspects of African American economic poverty are mentioned. Perhaps readers will notice that the most "uncanny" characteristic of the SCLC's Chicago "Proposal" is the fact that, in spite of the fact that Rustin's is a sociological report, it, like Johnson's 1965 inaugural speech, is written in "plain-style" rhetoric, with its monotonous and serious tone, volume and tempo, its numerated "reasons" and causes of black economic injustice, and its lack of transitions, except for periods and subheadings. What may not be obvious is that there is no biblical reference, encouraging readers and listeners to conclude that the text's origin does not lie within the Bible or any religious text. In fact, the entire report avers from the use of any religious references, instead quoting such notables as James Baldwin and Victor Hugo to substantiate the argument for black economic progress. The significance of this erasure of any religious reference on the SCLC's part is outstanding, as this Civil Rights group, more than any other group of its kind, is based within the black church. Civil Rights leaders were praising their own leaders, much as American Presidents had extolled early white leaders.

Whether secular or religious in nature, King and the SCLC's personalized "war on poverty" was relentless, and, in some respects, peculiar. The public saw a different King, a more assertive, defiant, and militant King—a King who had transformed from the strong, yet passive, leader to an actively agitating leader. His rhetorical form even changed. He dropped the biblical references for which he had always been famous and adopted a sort of straight-talk rhetorical personae, spitting out numbers, statistics and

facts about the plight of blacks and how best to alleviate them. King had cleverly devised a tactic whereas his rhetoric would be less embedded within the context of biblical allusion and more entrenched within the straightforward language of the fiscal-corporate world or workplace—social scientific rhetoric. Yet, for balance, his *actions* would resemble the actions of legendary religious figures whose moral compasses were beacons for others. The previously mentioned SCLC "Chicago Plan" was the first of the transformed King/SCLC "speeches"; six months later King made a similarly bold, militant move that seemed to further belie his and his organization's earlier passiveness. Perhaps, King et al. believed the more direct and secular social scientific approach would prove more effective. On 10 July, 1966 King wrote a speech entitled "Demands Placed on the Door of Chicago City Hall." These "demands" were literally nailed to Chicago's City Hall Door—like Martin Luther—pointing out necessary changes to achieve black economic, political, and labor autonomy. At this point, it is necessary to analyze the nature and meaning of King and the SCLC's actions.

As previously pointed out, King and SCLC's Chicago "Plan" and "Demands" speeches lacked the religious overtones that had become King's trademark; instead, King seemed to have adopted what he believed to be religious physical "posturing," or religious *actions*.[3] Religious or biblical allusions became actions rather than mere passive words, perhaps to exhibit an example of religious *actions* as opposed to rhetoric. That is, in spite of the fact that the "Chicago Plan" document adopts the somber and monotonous rhetorical Early American religious plain style, religious rhetorical references are omitted. Moreover, the physical "act" of delivering the "Plan" is identical

---

[3] One cannot help but notice that the "Chicago Plan" used the phrase the "Promised Land" in the first paragraph of this proposal, as a metaphor for past African American beliefs about the superiority of the North in stark contrast to the South. Henceforth, there are no other religious references in this document.

to the Old Testament's Moses' dramatic deliverance of a proposed plan on behalf of Jewish slaves to the Pharaoh. It is Moses' militant *posturing* that King adopts and combines with non-threatening, plain-style, non-religious rhetoric. Similar conclusions can be made of the "Demands," whereas, once again, stark, straightforward language is used and supported with bold, militant moves similar to those of Martin Luther. Luther's 95 theses on indulgences were nailed to the church door of Wittenberg on 31 October, 1517.

King continued his fight for black economic progress and justice by giving talks and speeches that reverted back to the style he had originally embraced, speeches laced with religious and biblical allusions about black economic and social problems that more than three years after Johnson's inaugural "covenant" speech still persisted. Perhaps this is due to the "place" or religious venues of the talks. On the other hand, perhaps King's (and Johnson's) penchant for biblical and religious allusions is an effort to appeal to the *moral* consciousness of those he wished to change. On one occasion, participating in a "discussion" at the 25 March, 1968, 68th annual convention of the Rabbinical Assembly, he quotes the prophet Amos ("Let justice roll down like the waters and righteousness like a mighty stream"), to lament and explain the lachrymose stalemate in black economic and social progress. King's statement is in response to a question posed by Rabbi Heschel:

> Rabbi Heschel: Placid, happy, merry, the people pursue
> their work, enjoy their leisure, and life is
> fair. People buy, sell, celebrate and rejoice.
> They fail to realize that in the midst of our
> affluent cities there are districts of despair,

areas of distress. . . . Where in America

today do we hear a voice like the voice

of the prophets of Isreal?

King: We see on every hand the restlessness of the comfortable

and the discontent of the affluent, and somehow it seems

that this mammoth ship of state is not moving toward

new and more secure shores but toward old, destructive

rocks. (Quoted in Carson et al. 394-5)

Some may conclude that King's reference to "rocks" is biblical in nature; yet, King's

reply to Rabbi Heschel seems to mock Johnson's historical or early American inaugural

references by pointing out how those who were affluent and comfortable (participants of

the "covenant") when Johnson made his second inaugural speech three years prior are the

same people currently reaping benefits. Blacks had yet to gain. That is, American

history since Johnson's inaugural "covenant" and "justice and change" promise is

repeating itself, playing by the old rules and exclusively rewarding the same constituents.

King's use of the phrase "old destructive rocks" also reminds listeners and readers of

Malcolm X's 1964 Easter Sunday "Ballot or the Bullet" speech, whereas Malcolm X

refers to the "Plymouth Rock" having "landed" upon blacks as an analogy for the

economically repressive plight in which African Americans live. It is as though King

secretly gives Malcolm X a "nod" in agreement to the "Plymouth Rock" analogy—their

own private "*gentlemen's agreement*" (a reference to this chapter's title) between the two

philosophically different black leaders. Perhaps the biggest irony is that King builds this

psychic rhetorical bridge between himself and Black Muslim leader Malcolm X during a

public conversation at a large and prominent Jewish assembly. Carson states, "In early 1967 Martin Luther King, Jr. was considerably more pessimistic about the future . . . of the black freedom struggle, . . . American society, and . . . his own individual future" (Carson 383). Could this subtle rhetorical gesture from King towards Malcolm X be interpreted as an increased inclination, on King's part, towards the Black Muslim leader's black progress philosophy? If so, King, as a mainstream African American Civil Rights leader, is *reacting* to Johnson's (and white America's) continued erasure of African Americans after Johnson's second inaugural address, thumbing his nose at mainstream America's embrace of his more passive philosophy.

"Occasion," according to professional rhetoricians, is very important to the nature and tone of a speech. The occasion of King's "I See The Promised Land" speech, his last, can support the belief that the sensitive and great among us are able to foresee the approaching end of our days. King's 3 April, 1968 speech to lead a demonstration in Memphis for sanitation workers is laced with religious and biblical references and instructions on how to carry out the fight for that which Johnson's second inaugural address promises but fails to deliver—economic "justice and change." Moreover, the occasion of the speech (a sanitation workers' strike) speaks for itself as far as being a response towards Johnson's inaugural plea for economic "justice and change" for minorities. The "I See the Promised Land" speech is a *history* of the nature of intra-African American relationships during moments of severe crises, and *instructions* as to how best get along and make progress during such crises. King talks of a rhetorical "conversation" with God, alongside many religious parallels between biblical slave situations and those of blacks today, seeing the two situations as similar despite the

historical and temporal disparities. However, the sense of finality in this speech is supported by the fact that he begins by giving a history or capsule assessment of the Civil Rights movement and the African American emancipatory psyche from its birth to maturity, the past and present: "I can remember when Negroes were just going around," King says, . . . "scratching where they didn't itch, . . . But that day is all over. We mean business now . . ." (Quoted in Carson et al. 411). King gives instructions as to how blacks should continue the march toward progress:

> We've got to stay together and maintain unity. . . . Keep the issues where they are. . . . And I want to commend the preachers, . . . And I want you to thank them, because, so often, preachers aren't concerned about anything but themselves. And I'm always happy to see a relevant ministry. . . . It's alright to talk about 'long white robes over yonder,' in all of its symbolism. But ultimately people want some suits and dresses and shoes to wear down here. It's alright to talk about 'streets flowing with milk and honey,' but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and his children who can't eat three square meals a day. (Quoted in Carson et al. 413).

King continues with these instructions for blacks:

> Always anchor our external direct action with the power of economic withdrawal. . . . We don't have to argue with anybody. . . . [W]e've got to strengthen black institutions. . . [W]e've got to give ourselves to this struggle until the end. . . . Let's develop a kind of dangerous unselfishness. (Quoted in Carson et al. 409-19).

King seems to make a "covenant" with African Americans and attempts to prepare

African Americans for the moment of his own *erasure*, by nudging blacks toward a more

balanced, or more earthy or secular rhetorical and visionary allusion in their argument for

economic equality—but, as he had always been inclined, he couches this in comfortable

biblical rhetoric for genuine support in their march towards progress. King instructs

blacks to use their meager economic power as a weapon against white economic

oppression (boycotts) and as an instrument to be "Good Samaritans" towards each other.

King's covenant with his people is to encourage them to *react* to the perpetual threat of

erasure in a racist America by *responding* in ways that help blacks ensure each other's

survival—religiously and economically.

Black Power Leaders

A day after King's "Promised Land" speech he was dead. Yet, here were already other

black leaders gaining momentum to replace the assassinated Civil Rights leader and to

respond to the economic and social failures of Johnson's inaugural plea for "justice and

change," leaders who no longer harbored hopes of black integration into white society,

nor were grounded within the mainstream black church—Black Power leaders. As

Robert L. Scott and Wayne Brockriede's *The Rhetoric of Black Power* (1969) says,

"Black Power's radical confrontation with the established power in this country reveals

strong strains of hypocrisy in the system" (Scott and Brockriede vii). Many blacks

believed that with the persistence of white American racism in the face of the Civil

Rights movement that the only other avenue was a growth of black consciousness and

black solidarity—African American *unionism*.

The most threatening point of this scenario is that, during a time when minority interests are foregrounded, leaders of the Black Power movement had begun to stifle the voice of Civil Rights leaders, relegating Civil Rights leaders to marginalized positions, or making them elements of scorn and ridicule as they lost the trust of grass-roots blacks who accused them of playing alongside of the white power structure. To many who remember the era, this may seem questionable because requisite here is an acknowledgement of how the media shaped the psyche of the American public. The reiterating visages of mainstream Civil Rights leaders in mass media, such as King, lead many, especially white Americans, to *believe* that he maintained his position as the most influential African American leader. However, many of those who abided in the trenches of American racism knew differently, thereby acting out on feelings of frustration and hopelessness in a society that seemed to not care, that was unable or was unwilling to know what blacks truly needed for real progress. At the time, there were few influential blacks in mass media; white journalists interpreted America's race situation according to their own perceptions. And, resultingly, the "*media*" is the only message the public receives. As Scott and Brockriede quote in their analysis of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders' 1968 report, the "principle motivation" of the surge in Black Power philosophy is the "frustrations of powerlessness," a frustration that, according to Scott and Brockriede, even Martin Luther King apparently felt. These two authors derive their insightful assumptions about King from his last address at the annual convention of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. "The impact of Black Power," they point out, "is revealed dramatically in the influence it apparently had on Dr. King's thinking and speaking. At least this is the way we read the last speech he made to

an annual convention of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference" (Scott and

Brockriede 8-9). Obviously, King was not alone; and if such a person as he had become

frustrated with the lethargic nature of black progress, what can one expect from younger,

more impatient blacks dwelling in the subterranean abyss of African American squalor?

Johnson's use of a figurative rhetorical "cloaking device" to erase the presence of

blacks in his inaugural speech encouraged retaliatory rhetoric in defense of blacks by

Minister Franklin Florence.[4] His 10 September, 1967 speech, "The Meaning of Black

Power," defines the total concept of this step-child of the Civil Rights movement through

the voice of James Baldwin. Florence quotes Baldwin as saying, "To be a Negro in this

country and to be conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time" (Quoted in Smith 161).[5]

To Florence, Black Power is an expression *conceived* in violence and rage with both

economic and social overtones: "Three consecutive summers of violence," "violence and

bloodshed going on now in an immoral war in Vietnam," and "young, strong black men

who object to this war on religious grounds—like Mohammed Ali and they promptly

strip him of his title," and "Dr. King in a Southern jail . . . because he stood up to

Southern bigots" (Quoted in Smith 161). To Minister Florence, Black Power was

nurtured in the futility and frustrations of Civil Rights ("We demonstrated in the late 50's

and 60's . . . Please Mr. White Man give us our Freedom now") and is *matured,*

galvanized, and *aged* in the fact that, as of yet, little *real* economic progress has been

made. Florence refers to the Civil Rights approaches of days past as the "tea sipping,"

"safe Tom" approach of "house Negroes" negotiating with "Master Charlie," "Master

---

[4] No sources revealed Minister Franklin's organizational or political affiliations. However, Nation of Islam leaders traditionally adopted the title "Minister." If Franklin Florence's affiliation is with the Nation of Islam, readers should note that this speech was given more than two years after Malcolm X's assassination in 1965.
[5] This speech was taken from Arthur Smith's *Rhetoric of Black Revolution* (1969).

Kodak,"etc. "Negroes are no longer asking for equality—we are demanding it," Florence declares. He asked an interesting question of whites that seemed to allude to white accusations that the Black Power movement was influenced by Communists or Marxists, as opposed to Christianity: "After sticking and confining us to ghettoes, what kind of power do they expect?—pink?" Most important, Florence adopts an imposing rhetorical posture as he takes each individual letter that comprises the phrase "Power" and defines it in regards to Black Power economic aims and strategies for action:

> POWER. The "P" stands for *Persistence*: You got to
>
> wear them down, like you did 7-Up, like we did Kodak.
>
> The "O" stands for *Organization*: . . . .
>
> The "W" stand for *Whitey*—He's got all the power; it's
>
> called the white power structure. You have to get your
>
> share of it. It won't be given. . . . .
>
> The "E" in "POWER" is for *Effort*: That's the sweat and
>
> heart-aches you have to invest-- . . . .
>
> The "R" in "POWER" is for *Results*. The name of the
>
> game is win, ...
>
> (Quoted in Smith 164)

Florence caps his speech with advice from Saul Alinsky: "Saul Alinsky said to me three years ago: Minister Florence, never wear your best trousers to go out and fight for freedom and battle for justice." Florence means to say that Alinsky enlightened him to the fact that fighting for justice and equality is tantamount to a low-down and dirty business. Like the future Reverend Jesse Jackson, who later adopted the

dungarees/overalls haberdashery to wage his war for the "Rainbow Coalition," Alinsky was telling Florence that posturing and hyping for the American media and public in sartorial splendor, or a three-piece suite, are quite out of uniform for the prescribed duties of a radical or freedom fighter. One shows up for work with sleeves rolled. Moreover, it could be said that the grass-roots image Alinsky advises was intended as a rhetorical/sartorial device that stands in juxtaposition to the sleek, stylish and urbane image of those such as King et al. of the Civil Rights movement.

Therefore, according to Florence, instead of talking to "the man," black leaders of the Black Power movement "are talking to the brothers and sisters," "calling on blacks to mobilize their social strength and gain power" (Quoted in Smith 161). Florence attempts to placate unnecessary white fears by pointing out a common white misconception that Black Power espouses an eradication or erasure of whites by explaining, "This cry has nothing to do with black supremacy but everything to do with black manhood and self-determination." Florence merely warns that blacks taking matters into their own hands, or using self-help, to eliminate perpetual black erasure does not indict these same hands towards violence as a retaliatory weapon against innocent whites.

Yet, few could argue that blacks have reasons for anger, and that whites are pretty much responsible for the reasons of African American anger. Julius Lester's 11 December, 1966 speech, "The Angry Children of Malcolm X" (Meier 469-84) best explains the evolution from integrationist Civil Rights aspirations to separatist cries and challenges for black economic self-autonomy, while pointing out the ever erasing actions of the major Civil Rights period administrations (Kennedy and Johnson, in particular)

and white America, in general. To begin, Lester says, white America has and always will feel "uneasy" with the separate black world in its "midst" while simultaneously creating a *tension* between black and white America, by disallowing black assimilation into mainstream white America, a "mainstreaming" that Johnson pleads for in his second inaugural address. Lester says whites feel "most comfortable when the black man emulates the ways and manners of white Americans" (Quoted in Meier et al. 470). And, as Martin Luther King once said, "Sometimes you get tired," and Lester says he believes what blacks are "tired" of is this dichotomous "Jekel and Hyde" positioning that is forced upon blacks in white America. Basically, blacks are unwanted, but are needed. Most ironic is that when they are present they must be like whites to be accepted. This, in itself, is *erasure*—a negation of anything black, be it mere black physical presence or cultural erasure. Lester brilliantly deconstructs all the mundane and repetitive minutia of the civil rights movement in order to *erase* civil rights' integrationist, non-violent past and to reconstruct the new platform of Black Power. This is how he dismantles the African Americans' "father's house" (meaning Martin Luther King's legacy) of civil rights in order to, in turn, dismantle the white American "father's house," and reconstruct the new weapon of Black Power:

> Some felt more . . . demonstrations were needed . . . Power was what was needed . . . Once you had some say about the government, you could have some say about the jobs. After all, what was the point of desegregating a lunch counter if you don't have the money to buy a hamburger? So began the slow tedious work of going into town. . . . finding a civil rights worker . . . the civil rights worker had to find a minister courageous enough to let his church be used for a mass meeting . . . at the mass meeting there was usually hymn singing and . . . a prayer service. . . . The civil rights worker . . . would have been through sit-ins, Freedom Rides, five or six different jails . . . He had dropped out of college or quit his job . . . Heads that had been

beaten before were beaten again . . . on the six' clock news alongside
ones that still had scabs from the last head-whipping session . . . Don't
sleep by windows if possible [or] answer a knock at the door . . . drive
as if you were training to be an astronaut . . . make a U-turn while doing
ninety. . . . How naïve . . . they were then. They believed . . .
segregation . . . would be abolished. . . . They believed in Coca-Cola
and the American Government. "I dreamed I got my Freedom in a
Maidenform Bra, . . . the Pepsi Generation . . . and the F.B.I. . . . [T]he
Image of Youth and Liberty, Jack Kennedy, propos[ed] a Civil Rights
Bill, which was . . . comprised into ineffectiveness when . . . Bobby,
The K. appeared before the Senate Judiciary Committee. . . . Lyndon
Baines Johnson became President of the United States in a split
second . . . But Big Lyndon . . . fooled everybody. . . .he started
giving King competition as to who was going to lead "the movement."
King lost. [Then] there was the talk of white backlash . . . Big Lyndon
Himself, say, "that if Negroes went about things in the wrong way
they would lose the friends they already had. (Quoted in Meier et al. 472-
4)

Lester continues his perspective on the saga of the Civil Rights and Black Power

movements by saying,

Malcolm X was responsible for the new militancy that entered The
Movement in 1965. . . . He was not concerned with stirring the moral
conscious of America, because he knew—Americans had no moral
conscious. . . . Integration . . . was beginning to be questioned. Negroes
began cutting a path toward learning who they were. . . Identity has
always been the key problem for Negroes. For . . . Negroes the question
of identity is only now being solved by the realization of those things that
are theirs. Negroes do have a language of their own. The words may be
English, but the way a Negro puts them together and the meaning . .
creates a new language. He (also) has the language of rhythm. . . . "Soul."
. . . What was needed . . . was ol' John Brown to come riding into
Birmingham as he had ridden into Lawrence, Kansas burning
every building that stood and killing every man, woman, and child that ran
from his onslaught. . . . Brown, his hand and wrists slick with blood,
would have said . . . Mere Vengeance is folly. Purgation is a necessity. . . .
At one time black[s] desperately wanted to be American, to communicate
with whites. . . .Does . . . this mean that every American white is now a
potential victim for some young Nat Turner? . . . the white man no longer
exists. He is not to be lived with and . . . destroyed. [6] He is simply to be

---

[6] Once again, like most other leaders who spoke on behalf of Black Power, Lester is careful to point out
that Black Power does not call for the physical eradication of whites, only eradication of white control over
African American welfare. Considering this, one is encouraged to ask how the belief that Black Power was

ignored, because the time has come for the black man to control the things
which effect his life. The old order passes away. . . . Everything must be
scoured clean. Trash has to be thrown out. (Quoted in Meier et al. 479-84)

Lester's speech explains to white America the persistent grumblings of black America,

why, after Civil Rights legislation and other such government posturing on behalf of

blacks during Johnson's second administration, they were not yet *satisfied.*

Another seminal anti-integrationist, *revolutionary* speech that responds to the

"Justice and Change" sub-section of Johnson's second inaugural speech is U.S.

Congressman (and minister of New York's Abyssinian Baptist Church) Adam Clayton

Powell's May 1966 Howard University commencement address "Can there any good

thing come out of Nazareth?,"[7] a speech that touches upon every aspect of racial

injustice mentioned within the inaugural address's sub-section. The speech's seminal

attributes lie in the fact that Powell is among the earliest black representatives elected to

the House of Representatives (in 1941) and, moreover, embedded within Powell's

address is the lachrymose fact that history has not worked in favor of African Americans.

Powell asserts that, except for the hard-fought and excessively bloody egression from

slavery, economic, social, and political conditions have never really *changed* for blacks.

Johnson's second inaugural speech is predicated upon early American history (the

Covenant) as he uses the exclusionary Covenant motif in an attempt to encourage

Americans to live up to what the Constitution promises. However, Powell's address

expresses an opinion that "history," in regards to blacks, is a detriment and is like

spinning wheels trapped in mud--change is extremely slow or non-existent. Moreover,

---

a movement that threatened the physical welfare of whites was perpetuated. I have found no Black power
speeches that call for physical harm to Caucasians, only speeches that, in reference to violence against
whites, say that blacks will no longer "turn the cheek" when *they* are attacked by whites, or anyone else, in
cases of police brutality and mere outright attacks by angry whites.

[7] This speech comes from Arthur L. Smith's *Rhetoric of Black Revolution.*

"history" is a concept that *moves*, either in sequential progression, regression or in a fractured manner, except for racist concepts of history to which blacks and other people of color have been subjected. A "history of slavery and a lifetime of indignities" is what Powell refers to as he points out the irony that the Committee on Education and Labor, a federal cabinet committee formed during the Reconstruction "to help black slaves make the transition into freedom" is not only, a hundred years later, existing but, moreover, has a black man (Powell, himself) as its "Chairman" (Quoted in Smith 154). Powell is asking his young, intellectually elite, black audience "how much time does it take," as he points out how blacks still suffer from police harassment, perpetual puerile treatment and control by whites, black "leaders" who are mere puppets of white liberals, and remain pawns of "social workers and various Leagues and Associations" who represent the "decadent white power structure." Powell asserts that "black people (have) been denied first-class acceptance" after 100 years of America's time, legislation, and so-called progress.

Powell's speech is a rhetorician's delight as he relies heavily upon classical rhetorical devices to make his revolutionary argument. He begins his speech with a rhetorical question and response that not only help serve as a title but also as a recurring metaphor: "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Come and see." Many listeners also recognize that Powell relies upon the value of typology to construct the theme of his speech, as this same question and answer were posed by New Testament figure Nathanael to Philip in the book of John. The question mutates from the beginning to the end of the speech, from "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth," to "Can any good thing come out of black people," to "Can there any good come out of Howard

University." However, it must be pointed out that the use of biblical references in Powell's speeches adopts a more ironic undertone than the biblical references used by King in his speeches. King attempts to morally relate or make a moral connection to his listeners. Powell seems to use his biblical reference as a mere metaphor, to make parallels between the odious situations of African Americans and biblical characters. In addition, he uses other rhetorical devices to deconstruct the "infantile" identity and situation of blacks engaged in a struggle for integration and civil rights:

> A black skin means you are still a child, . . . white liberals . . . believe they own your soul, can manage your lives and control your civil rights organizations. . . . [R]esist the seductive blandishments of white liberals. . . . [B]eware of . . . Greeks bearing gifts, [and] colored men seeking loans . . . During those years, our leaders—and black people are the only people who have "leaders"—other groups have politicians, statesmen, educator, financiers, and businessmen but during those years, our leaders drugged us with the LSD of integration. (Quoted in Smith 155-6)

Within these few lines readers see hyperbole, parenthesis, and metaphor as Powell relates "black skin" to childishness, spiritual/intellectual/human bondage and dependence; "integration" is as the hallucinogenic drug "LSD"; the generosity of "white liberals" are as "seductive" as those of the ancient surreptitious Trojan Greeks who crouched in the belly of a gigantic wooden horse to conquer and control their rivals. The mere use of the town of "Nazareth" to represent "Mississippi" and "Howard University" is biblical irony as Nazareth, in spite of its position as a lowly place within the region of Galilee, is the

129

place of Christ. Powell points out that "Can any good come out of Nazareth" was as much a "contemptuous question" as it was posed almost 2,000 years ago.

Powell continues his scorching attack on the previous efforts by whites and blacks to affect integration by referring to genetic and social integration as a "sterile chase" and a "debasing notion."[8] He continues his rhetorical acrobatics when he says, "Like frightened children, we were afraid to eat the strong meat of human rights and instead sucked the milk of civil rights from the breasts of white liberals, black Uncle Toms and Aunt Jemimas." Repeated use of the term "strong meat" is borrowed from the book of Hebrews and is interpreted as a parallel to Adam and Eve eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden: "Historically, strong meat was too risky for . . . black people for it would have enabled them to discern both good and evil, the difference between civil rights and human rights." Afterwards, he uses anaphora to elaborate about the human rights to which every black person is entitled: "the right to be secure, . . . from abuses of the state . . ., the right to freedom of choice . . . , the right to freedom of mobility . . . , the right to the finest education . . . , the right to share fully in the governing councils of the state . . . ." Overall, Powell admonishes the notion of black leadership and all the accoutrements of the civil rights era; instead, he calls for a trait for which he, himself, was always admonished: *Arrogance*. Arrogance to avoid "conferences" (they are, he believes, a balm for procrastinators, an "extravagant orgy of therapy for the guilt-ridden," and a "purposeless exercise in dialectics for the lazy"), arrogance to fight the federal government [with its "more subtle," "more sophisticated,"

---

[8] The ironic thing about Powell's statement that the "debasing notion that a few white skins sprinkled amongst us would somehow elevate the genetics of our development (only) lead to intellectual mediocrity, economic inferiority, and political subservience" is the fact that he, himself, passed for white as a college student at Columbia University. In fact, he, at one point, joined a white fraternity, hiding his actual race (as a joke) until he chose to reveal it.

and "more elegantly structured" racism], and the arrogance to construct what he calls an "audacious leadership" that invites white establishment to "Come and see" all the great things blacks of "educational excellence" and "economic accomplishment" can achieve. Powell's biblical references are tantamount to sarcasm; however, as he was, like King, a minister it was his innate inclination to use such references. The difference between Powell and King are, perhaps, the difference between that of a gentle, but forceful, southern preacher (King) and a more outspoken and urbane northern minister (Powell), who manages to deliver as caustic a non-integrationist and separatist speech as Julius Lester, but, unlike Lester, manages to frame his speech with a biblical theme.

Yet, what white America would show a more blatant concern for were African Americans who remained the most disenfranchised group within an already disenfranchised group—lower class blacks—that had not reaped the benefits of even the substandard education or economic opportunities offered to more fortunate blacks. As these blacks were, by degree, more disadvantaged, they required more militant posturing and a more stringent rhetoric in response to Johnson's "justice and change" plans. The Panthers' programs and speeches were among the first to target the black "grass roots" sector for after school tutoring programs, school lunch programs, and health/welfare programs for the poor and working class blacks and whites. They strove to extend the War on Poverty to the most disadvantaged.

There is no end to the human thirst for a story, especially when the story has improbable origins and endings. This is the case of the notorious Black Panthers, the group that out-radicaled all black radical organizations. This organization was (1) indirectly conceived by Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee worker Stokely

Carmichael, (2) aided by savvy "middle-aged" black ladies in a small, southern,

predominately black (yet, notoriously racist) town (Lowndes County, Alabama), and (3)

begun as a retaliatory measure for a voter registration drive, a drive that, in itself, was a

response to the Klan murder of a white civil rights worker and housewife from Detroit—

Mrs. Viola Liuzzo. She was shot while driving voting rights protestors from the Selma,

Alabama march to the airport. Subsequently, what began as a voter registration drive

morphed into the Lowndes County Freedom Party. From this party or "organization"

(whose emblem, by the way, was a black panther[9]) emerged the Black Panther Party.

That the Black Panthers grew out of the primordial soup of the LCFP seems a quantum

leap; however, John Hulett, chairman of the LCFP, who, on 22 May, 1966, spoke at a

meeting sponsored by anti-Vietnam War committees in Los Angeles, encouraged the

evolution. In his speech, entitled "How the Black Panther Party Was Organized," he

explains the metamorphosis:

> Some time ago, we organized a political group of our own known as the
> Lowndes County Freedom Organization, whose emblem is the black
> panther. . . . We were criticized, . . . Too long Negroes have been begging
> . . . for things they should be working for. So the people in Lowndes
> county decided to organize themselves . . . not only . . . in Lowndes
> County, but for every county in the state of Alabama, in the Southern
> states, and even in California. . . . We feel that we are doing the right
> thing in Lowndes County. . . . And we wouldn't let anybody scare us off.
> We told him, we won't expect you to protect us, and if you don't Negroes
> will protect themselves. . . . I would like to let people here tonight know
> why we chose this black panther as our emblem. . . . [T]his black panther
> is a vicious animal as you know. He never bothers anything, but when you
> start pushing him, he moves backwards, backwards, and backwards into
> his corner, and then he comes out to destroy everything that's
> before him. . . . We aren't asking any longer for protection--we won't
> need it—or for anyone to come from the outside to speak for us, . . . And I
> think not only in Lowndes County, not only in the state of Alabama, not
> only in the South, but in the North—I hope they too will start thinking for

---

[9] The LCFP's slogan was "Now is the time!" (Carson 272).

themselves. And that they will move and join us in this fight for freedom. . .. (Quoted in Carson et al. 273-8)

The rest, to use a colloquial phrase, is history. Hulett's incendiary rhetoric was enough to incite Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton to form what many recognize today as the Black Panthers, only a few months later—October 1966. Moreover, the two leaders wasted no time rendering an acerbic retaliation to Johnson's paternalistic, watered-down "noblesse oblige"—his Great Society platform—soberly described in his inaugural subsection on "Justice and Change." They composed the Panthers' "inauguration" speech, entitled "What We Want" and "What We Believe," to inform Johnson and white American of the disparaging inadequacies of his plans for black *and* lower class white progress.

In response to Johnson's economics and poverty statement "that all who made the journey would share in the fruits of the land . . . families must not live in hopeless poverty . . . children must not go hungry," the Panthers composed their "ten point program," the "essential points for the survival of Black and oppressed people in the United States." These included "full employment for our people," "an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our Black Community," and "decent housing, fit for . . . human beings." Concerning education, Johnson's address promises that "In a land of great learning and scholars, young people must be taught to read and write." More than a year after Johnson's address the Black Panthers' imperative was to demand an "education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society." Though the Panthers mention neither Johnson nor his speech directly, they believe that any "learning" Johnson espouses must enate from an "education that teaches us our true history and our role in present-day society." The Panther speech relies upon the use of

133

anaphora, whereas the jussive phrase "We want" leads every sentence, making black Americans the subject. Most important, the tenth and final point of the program reiterates and expands every aspect of Johnson's poverty plan and then some—for blacks *and* working class whites: "*We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace,*" the Panthers' program says (Quoted in Carson et al. 345-347). These demands paralleled issues mentioned in Johnson's "Justice and Change" subsection, issues that could not be satiated by mere welfare checks, food stamps, and affirmative action.

Chapter Four: Liberty and Change

The subsection of Johnson's speech entitled "Liberty and Change" deals with, for the most part, global issues. Ryan points out how Johnson made "Liberty and Change" the "centerpiece" of the address, devoting it to foreign policy (Ryan 197). What is most ironic in this section of the speech is that Johnson deals with global issues by using the American ideal of self-government and the Bills of Rights as paradigmatic examples for other nations. He says, "Liberty was the second article of our covenant. It was self-government. It was our Bill of Rights. . . . America would be a place where each man could be proud to be himself: Stretching his talents, rejoicing in his work, important in the life of his neighbors and his nation. . . . We must work to provide the knowledge and the surroundings which can enlarge the possibilities of every citizen." Here, according to Ritter's analysis of the speech, Johnson's message reveals that "Liberty required self-government and individual rights on a global scale and victory over 'tyranny and misery' everywhere in the world" (Ryan 197-8). However, as with Kennedy's inaugural address, African Americans would turn the meaning and intent of Johnson's words into a weapon reconfigured for their own emancipation. To begin, many black leaders felt that America was hardly in position to posture itself as an example held up against the tyranny or the non-democratic governments of other nations. Moreover, three hundred and fifty years of frustration and "fed-up" exhaustion encouraged a black response to Johnson's appeal for self-government and freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. Their responses ran the

gamut from acquisition of the simple right to vote—for those of other nations—to the topsy-turvy, hurly-burly demand for black full participation in American political *leadership*.

It goes without saying that "self-government" includes the right of every citizen to vote. However, at this time, the African American right to do so was as exiguous (especially in the South) as it had been since the end of Reconstruction. Moreover, the Bill of Rights (which Johnson, by the way, *underlines* in his speech) *guarantees* certain freedoms that blacks, as groups, utilized as weapons in defense of the acquisition of yet-achieved racial equality.   These were all rights that Johnson promises to help achieve globally for the remainder of the world's people; yet, these were rights that many blacks, as part of America's own people, struggling to survive within close proximity to white Americans, did not yet have. Johnson made a commitment to globally help those outside the U.S. achieve these rights. Johnson uses these words:

> The American covenant called on us to help show the way for the liberation of man. And that is today our goal. Thus, if as a nation there is much outside our control, as a people no stranger is outside our hope. Change has brought new meaning to that old mission. We can never again stand aside, prideful in isolation. Terrific danger and troubles that we once called "foreign" now constantly live among us. If American lives must end, and American treasure be spilled, in countries we barely know, that is the price that change has demanded of conviction and of our enduring covenant.

However, he reasons and pleads with white America to bestow these same rights upon African Americans, by pointing out and explaining his reasoning in this manner:

> Liberty was the second article of our covenant. It was our <u>Bill of Rights</u> . . . America would be a place where each man could be proud to be himself . . ., important in the life of his neighbors and his nation. . . . This has become more difficult in a world where change and growth seem to tower beyond the control and even the judgment of men. We must work to provide the knowledge and the surroundings which can enlarge the possibilities of every citizen.

There, literally, is no promise or commitment to black Americans for these rights; reading his second inaugural address, one gets the sense he is *negotiating* with white America. American blacks are exempted from the global commitment of America's most salient freedoms. Once again, African American interests and situations are couched under the huge and cumbersome umbrella of global interests—in this case, the Vietnam War. And, as with the Kennedy inaugural address and administration, the dark shadow, which this umbrella casts, shrouds to the point of invisibility anything regarding the best interests of blacks. African American leaders responded to President Johnson and white establishment repeatedly and pointedly to *remind* them that they have historically *subordinated black interests* in American attempts at international posturing. Johnson's inaugural address (and America) suggests, in its preoccupation with Viet Nam, that he expects the rest of the world to learn by America's example.

African American Response to "Liberty and Change"

While Amendment XV of the United States Constitution guaranteed African American suffrage on 3 February, 1870, at the half-way point of the 20th century, blacks were still fighting for the right to vote and to place political candidates who espoused their own interests, in Congress. As a result, black leaders began to adopt a retaliatory "bootstrap" psychology; that is, they tried a self-assertive effort to hash out the sources of and solutions for black political problems that centered upon black political self-worth. They adopted a philosophy of political "self-worth" in order to respond to Johnson's second inaugural speech's plea for global political "self-government." African American philosophy of political self-worth evolved into carefully devised retaliatory strategies as to how to acquire what had been promised but never delivered—self-government; and these strategies took on the appearance of a three-headed hydra: (1) those blacks who sought to work within the existing bi-party political establishment; (2) those black leaders who wanted to form their own political party and; (3) those blacks who wanted a total separation from the American government.[1]

Martin Luther King chose to attempt to work within America's established political machine. King's 25th March, 1965 speech, "Our God Is Marching On!," is a speech that is "centered around the right to vote." Delivered on the steps of the state capital at the conclusion of the Selma-to-Montgomery march, King elaborates about how the "flagrant" denial of the right to vote is the "very origin, the root cause" of "racial segregation," that leads to black *and* intra-white segregation of all sorts, especially in the South. King reasons in this manner:

> The threat of the free exercise of the ballot by the Negro and the white
>
> masses alike resulted in the establishing of a segregated society. They

---

[1] The complete separatist faction will be explicitly dealt with in the section "Union and Change."

segregated southern money from the poor white; they segregated southern

mores from the rich white; they segregated southern churches from

Christianity; they segregated southern minds from honest thinking; and

they segregated the Negro from everything. (Quoted in Carson et al. 225-

7)

Obviously, King considers voting rights the very bedrock of human emancipation, as he

points out how the Civil Rights Act of 1964 "gave Negroes some part of their rightful

dignity," but a "dignity without strength" without the right to vote. In addition, King

makes use of anaphora and erotema (rhetorical questions) to assert his point:

Today, I want to tell the city of Selma, today I want to say to the state of

Alabama, today I want to say to the people of America . . .

Then:

We are on the move now. [repeated five times within one paragraph]

Then:

Let us march on segregated schools . . . . . Let us march on poverty . . .

Let us march on ballot boxes until race baiters disappear . . . Let us march

on ballot boxes until the Wallaces . . . tremble . . . Let us march on ballot

boxes, until we send to our city councils . . . Let us march on ballot boxes

until God's children . . . walk . . . the earth in decency and honor.

and

How Long? Not long, because no lie can live forever. How long? Not

long, because you reap what you sow. How long? Not long. Because the

arm of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice.

> How long? Not long, 'cause mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming
>
> of the Lord, ...

King's speech is laced with military and classical rhetorical tropes to create war-like rhetoric as reactionary metaphors for the "battle" of the black vote.[2] Whether King is becoming more militant one cannot say; but it is obvious King speaks from the feelings of frustrations similar to those of black militants at having received some rights as an American but failed to receive the right to vote. Perhaps, too, there are feelings of frustration at having to fight every little step of the way. To King, the military tropes convey the difficulty of the struggle for black political autonomy and the black vote. And was it not Black Panther Huey Newton who once said "politics is war without bloodshed?" (Quoted in Smith 185)

Bayard Rustin, one of the earliest champions of the Civil Rights movement's shift from mere protest for human rights to political activism, believed that working within the existing two-party political system was the best solution. His February 1965 speech, "From Protest To Politics" (Meier 444-460), gives a detailed mapping of his strategy for black political empowerment, a necessary element to combat the structural problems facing black slum dwellers. One month after Johnson's "plain-style" speech, Rustin delivers a speech quite similar in format. Like Johnson's, the speech comprises three rigid sections; begins with an historical account, but of the Civil Rights movement; gives logical reasoning for changes and solutions, but in the Civil Rights movement. It has the

---

[2] King uses metaphors, similies, synecdoche, metonymy, anthimeria, periphrasis, personification (prosopoeia), hyperbole, and litotes to construct his warrior rhetoric. He does this with the use of such phrases as "outpourings of the sweltering sun," "our feet are tired, but our souls rested," "forces of power," of the Alabama government, "the method of non-violent resistance unsheathed from its scabbard and once again an entire community was mobilized to confront the adversary," "the brutality of a dying order shrieks across the land," pilgrimage of clergymen and laymen," "confrontation of good and evil," "centuries old blight," segregation is on its deathbed" and "funeral," "We are moving to the land of freedom," "ghetto of social and economic depression," and "battle is in our hands."

same flat, even tone. The difference is that Rustin's entire speech is an argument and program for increased political autonomy for African Americans. Rustin says these words:

> [It] would be hard to quarrel with the assertion that the elaborate legal structure of segregation and discrimination, particularly in relation to public accommodations, has virtually collapsed. On the other hand, . . . we must recognize that in desegregating public accommodations, we affected institutions which are relatively peripheral both to the American socio-economic order and to the fundamental conditions of life of the Negro people. (Quoted in Meier et al. 445).

What Rustin was saying is now that African Americans can patronize public facilities, they must fight for economic empowerment in order to afford these facilities. "No longer," Rustin says, "were Negroes satisfied with integrating lunch counters. They now sought advances in employment, housing, school integration, police protection, and so forth" (Quoted in Meier et al. 446). Rustin's formulaic analysis of the new African American rights agenda was the result of a triple-pronged mutation of the "classical" (Rustin's description) Civil Rights protest movement.

According to Rustin, the three new elements that emerged from the Civil Rights' "classical" base are (1) the "shifting focus of the movement in the South" (2) the "spread of the revolution to the North" and (3) that, due to the differentiating racial problems of the north and south, the expansion of the Civil Rights movement to both northern and southern regions of America expanded their bases within the black community. Rustin refers to the new expanded bases of the African American rights movement as the

"package deal"; that is, not just fighting for a single privilege, but for all the benefits America offers to whites, and moreover, realizing an interrelationship between racist problems of the South and North. Most important, Rustin points out how blacks began to realize that *"government action"* or *"politics"* (italics mine) is the prime solution to these problems. Rustin explains it in this manner:

> Already Southern demonstrators had recognized that the most effective way to strike at the police brutality they suffered from was by getting rid of the local sheriff—and that meant political action, which in turn meant, and still means, political action within the Democratic party . . .a turn toward political action has been taken. More than voter registration is involved . . . A conscious bid for *political power* is being made, . . . direct-action techniques are being subordinated to a strategy calling for the building of community institutions or power bases. (Quoted in Meier et al. 446)

More specifically, the second part of Rustin's speech is entrenched with numbers and figures to support his argument that there is a direct correlation between the "decline of Jim Crow" and the rise of *"de facto"* segregation in America's socio-economic institutions. He points out how, in 1965, more blacks are unemployed than in 1954, and the increasing gap between white and black employment; how the median income difference between blacks and white has increased; how blacks are relegated to jobs that inevitably succumb to automation; how schools have increased *de facto* segregation; and how the increase in racial slums are "spreading over our central cities and trapping Negro youth in a milieu [that] sows unimaginable demoralization" (Quoted in Meier et al. 447).

Rustin responds by seeking to explicate the problems of blacks whose presence and problems are erased when compared against other minority groups. Rustin points out how even liberal whites fail to understand the Negro problem when they persist in comparing blacks with other ethnic immigrants, such as Jews, who were never forbidden an education and never enslaved in America, have a history of literacy, strong families, intellect, could resort to "passing" and had a superior economic role in comparison to blacks; how the "natural functioning of the market" fails to guarantee even those with "ambition" and "will" a "place in the productive process"; how blacks always run a quarter-step behind encroaching technology; and how the self-help philosophy of groups such as the Black Muslims should migrate into the political arena. "These," Rustin claims, "are the facts of life which generate frustration in the Negro community and challenge the civil rights movement" (Quoted in Meier et al. 447).

The final segment of Rustin's speech sounds like a jeremiad, as it offers the gloom of America's unwillingness to change, a pessimism born out of the fact that moderates consider black problems too "enormous" and "complicated" and that "intelligent moderation," instead of "Negro militancy," is the best solution; he suggests that Johnson's war on poverty is so nimietic that the nation would find it unbearable; that black militants are merely "no-win" "shock" soldiers who aim to "traumatize" "self-flagellating" and "non-agreeing" whites "into doing the right thing." Eventually, Rustin says the solution is for blacks *and* whites together to change the "framework of existing political and economic relations," and that *political power* is the only solution—the kind of political power or coalition that "staged the March on Washington, passed the Civil

Rights Act, and laid the basis for the Johnson landslide" (455). Rustin's expert political analysis discerns the potential power of a more galvanized black vote, if only allowed.

James Farmer's "We Must Be In A Position Of Power" (1 July, 1965) is an annual report of the Congress of Racial Equality's (CORE) 23rd National Convention. What is unique about this annual report to the CORE convention is that it stands in juxtaposition to Rustin's speech, as it calls for "independent" party (Meier et al's word) political action for solutions to black labor and political problems. Moreover, Farmer's "independent" rumblings for a separate black political party not only responds to Johnson's inaugural address plea for political autonomy in the subsection "Liberty and Change," but, ominously, echoes the retaliatory separatist rhetoric used in response to the inaugural addresses' plea for "Union and Change." Farmer has decided that it is best for African Americans to abandon hope of any sort of concessions from America's mainstream bi-party system. According to Meier, this relatively new independent political posturing started in northern cities as early as 1963; however, with the obvious ineffectiveness of demonstrations against black social and political problems, larger activist groups such as SNCC and CORE reversed their positions regarding the political status quo in America and sought to generate or establish a political base within the, as Meier refers to it, "Black Ghetto" (Meier 400).[3]

Farmer writes that his aim is "harnessing the awesome political potential of the black community in order to effect basic social and economic changes for all Americans, to alter meaningfully the lives of the Black Americans, . . . and to bring about real equality of free men" (Quoted in Meier et al. 461). Farmer points out how "past

---

[3] Farmer says that the "Freedom Democratic Movements" must not be racist and should not exclude whites. But their base must be in the black ghetto, else they will be merely another exercise in liberal futility" (Quoted Meier et al. 464).

victories" have not induced any real changes in the black situation, thus the need for political and community organization:

> *This job cannot be done for us by the Government.* In the first place, the establishments—Federal, State, and Local—have too much built-in resistance to fundamental change. Any establishment by definition seeks its own perpetuation and rejects that which threatens it. . . . [P]oliticians take over and seek to make the anti-poverty programs an adjunct of their political aspirations[,] [t]hey attack community action programs of the anti-poverty war as being anti-city hall[,] [s]chool boards . . . reach out greedily to control community education programs and see that they do not shake up the school systems. Powerful lobbies, such as the financial and the real estate interest, exert tremendous pressure to see that programs to relieve poverty do not threaten their interests. (Quoted in Meier et al. 461)

Farmer points out that as long as the government pours billions of dollars "down the drain" in Viet Nam, the war on poverty is a mere sham, encouraging criticism from its most deserved recipients, and discouraging the participation of genuine representatives of the disadvantaged communities and minorities for which they are intended. The CORE official report proposes that "community organizations" gain a more powerful voice in articulating their wants and needs. He points out that, since the "political units" have failed to alleviate social problems, the disadvantaged need the power to change those political units when they fail to respond, dumping the black and disadvantaged vote, instead, into such parties as the Freedom Democratic Party, rather than "ward heelers and

petty precinct captains" ("black or white") that currently exist (Quoted in Meier et al. 465).

The operative words for Farmer's idea of a vital grass roots political party are *dynamism*, *dialogue*, and *interaction*. For he says he believes that any party truly of the people should be able to support, back, drop, or disassociate itself from candidates, programs, policies, or parties as it sees fit. Moreover, there is a distinct irony in Farmer's vision as far as the serendipitous "freedom" that a truly grass roots movement or party possesses. At one point, Farmer says, "There should be no binding Grand Alliances where the black ghetto becomes a tail to some other kite, or a dance to some other political fiddler's tune" (Quoted in Meier et al. 465). This bit of sage advice sounds identical to the advice President George Washington gave to his country upon leaving office. Could it be that not only Johnson draws upon early American politics as an example for current political behavior, and for solutions to current political problems? Perhaps even black leaders such as Farmer found it quite fitting and effective to do so.

Close analysis reveals that as African American rhetorical response to Johnson's inaugural proposal to perpetuate global "self-government" increased, it adopted a *mercurial* nature; its rhetoric acquired an eloquence and ingeniousness; but, as with mercury, the more heated the response, the more *separatist* the nature of the philosophy. The cry for independent parties mutated into demands for separately autonomous black government. The evolution of the Black Panther Party is the best example, as its genesis was in voter activism, which served as a catalyst for an independent party, and, eventually, to the Black Panther agenda as a vehicle for black autonomous government. As previously stated, Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton's voter registration

drive initiated the entire movement. Carmichael and Hamilton's "Black Belt Election:

New Day A'Coming" (1967) plots the evolution of political development in Lowndes

County, Alabama, whereas the two activists point out how SNCC workers almost single-

handedly constructed a minority political platform that eventually lead to minority

placement on the ballot for mayor. The black vote in Lowndes, a county where

Carmichael and Hamilton claim that blacks "could come together to do three things: sing,

pray, and dance," was stagnated by "fear." Moreover, blacks suffered threats and

intimidation for even giving a passing thought to voting, a practice that, Carmichael and

Hamilton say, blacks had been taught was "white folks' business." "And the white

folks," the two activists say, "had indeed monopolized that business, by methods which

ran the gamut from economic intimidation to murder." Apparently, the county's black

population had had severe lessons as examples. Former black Lowndes activists had

been shot, had their houses riddled with bullets, had homes burned down, had lost jobs,

had been evicted from homes, etc.

SNCC had a gargantuan task on their hands in Lowndes, a task that ranged from

obliterating voter apathy and fear in the black community to enlightening blacks about

their *right* to vote, to registering, to explaining the technicalities of voting, to composing

pamphlets, to explaining the psychological, political, and economic power of simply

registering and casting a vote. Carmichael and Hamilton wax philosophic about the

resistant nature of the black vote:

> The *act* of registering to vote does several things. It marks the
>
> beginning of political modernization by broadening the base
>
> of participation. It also does something the existentialists talk

about: it gives one a sense of being. The black man who goes

to register is saying to the white man, "No." He is saying: "You

have said that I cannot vote. You have said that this is my place.

This is where I should remain. . . . I am resisting someone who

has contained me." That is what the first act does. The black

person begins to live. He begins to create his *own* existence . . .

(Quoted in Carson et al. 266)

Hamilton and Carmichael helped create the existence of a political party that ran its own

candidates; and though they all lost the elections the Lowndes County Freedom Party

(LCFO) moved on to bigger things.

This dissertation concerns African American rhetorical reactions against proposed

presidential actions in inaugural speeches. Many times, black rhetorical reaction and

resistance seem as pointed and as pivotal for white lesser constituents as for white

leadership. This reactionary theory can be applied to the advent of the Black Power

movement, in that Black Power is a reaction against the persistent denial of African

Americans' most basic rights, even after major legislative action. Cleveland Sellers and

Robert Terrell's "From Black Consciousness to Black Power" (Carson 279-282) defines

Black Power and its political and rhetorical origins, along with the black political in-

fighting caused by the militant resurgence:[4] This bit of rhetoric, taken from his 1973

autobiography, entitled *The River of No Return*, explains the reaction against the 5 June,

1966 shooting of James Meredith during his voting rights march from Memphis,

Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi, one year and a half since Johnson's attempt to reason

---

[4] According to sources, black militancy was not new. For it had reared its head during the turn of the century.

with white America about the importance of individual political autonomy in his second inaugural address:

> What is Black Consciousness? More than anything else, it is an attitude, a way of seeing the world. Those of us who possessed it were involved in a perpetual search for racial meanings . . . the construction of a new black value system. A value system geared to the unique cultural and political experience of blacks in this country. Black Consciousness signaled the end of the use of the word Negro. . . . Black Consciousness permitted us to relate our struggle to the one being waged by Third World revolution-aries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It helped us understand the imperialistic aspects of domestic racism. It helped us understand that the problems of this nation's oppressed minorities will not be solved without revolution. Participants in the meeting were . . . immediately divided by the position taken by Stokely. He argued that the march should deemphasize white participation, . . . should be used to highlight the need for independent, black political units, and that the Deacons for Defense, a black group from Louisiana whose members carried guns, be permitted to join the march. (Quoted in Carson et al. 279-80)

Sellers and Terrell did not coin the phrase "Black Power," but, according to Carson et al., this excerpt from Seller's previously mentioned 1973 autobiography, tells readers how Stokely Carmichael first coined the phrase during a march in response, as previously stated, to the June 5, 1966 shooting of voting rights activist James Meredith, shot during his lone protest walk from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson Mississippi to, as Carson et

al. say, "serve as an example of individual courage so that other blacks in the state would overcome their fear and actively seek to exercise their right to vote" (Quoted in Carson et al. 279). Sellers captures vividly the pivotal moment when Carmichael,[5] with a raised arm and clenched fist, takes the stand to a roaring crowd and says, "This is the twenty-seventh time I have been arrested—and I ain't going to jail no more! . . . The only way we gonna stop them white men from whuppin' us is to take over. We been saying freedom for six years and we ain't got nothin'. What we gonna start saying now is Black Power! . . . What do you want? Black Power!" (281-2). Carson says that Carmichael was "in his element," as the crowd responded with huge roars, while other black leaders debated the controversy Carmichael precipitated with his militant stand (281-2).

Carmichael's 22 September, 1966 speech "What We Want" is less incendiary, rhetorically speaking; nevertheless, the militant "firebrand" gives a cool and logical explanation as to why "black power" is a necessary progression in the scheme of black political empowerment, and how liberal whites can help the black power movement by inwardly directing their fears and questions about this new black assertiveness. As the speech is a response to violent white resistance to black voting rights, Carmichael's speech occurs a few months short of *two years* after Johnson's inaugural plea for political autonomy in the "Liberty and Change" subsection of the address.   Carmichael says,

> For racism to die, a totally different America must be born. White America will not face the problem of color, the reality of it. The well-intended say: "We're all human, everybody is really decent, we must forget color." But color cannot be "forgotten" . . . White America will not acknowledge that the ways in which this country sees itself are contradicted by being black-- . . . Whereas most people who settled this country came here for freedom or for economic opportunity, blacks were brought here to be slaves. . . . No one ever talked about "white power" be-

---

[5] Sellers says that Carmichael had "been released from jail" just minutes before the rally (Quoted in Carson, et al. 281).

cause power in this country *is* white. The fury over that black panther reveals the problems that white America has with color and sex; the furor over "black power" reveals how deep racism runs and the great fear which is attached to it. I have said that most liberal whites react to "black power" with the question, What about me?, rather than saying: Tell me what you want me to do and I'll see if I can do it. . . . [W]hite supporters of the movement . . . [should] go into their own communities—which is where the racism exists—and work to get rid of it. They want to run from Berkeley to tell us what to do in Mississippi: . . . They admonish blacks to be nonviolent; let them preach nonviolence in the white community. They come to teach Negro history; let them go to the suburbs and open up freedom schools for whites. . . . The main responsibility . . . falls upon whites. . . . The society we seek to build among black people . . . is not a capitalist one. (Quoted in Carson et al. 285-6).

Johnson's second inaugural address mentions the <u>Bill of Rights</u> as an American example for the required rights for every human. Yet, years into Johnson's "promising" administration, white America (Johnson and his white constituents) failed to make segue between the promise and actual fulfillment—especially on issues concerning African American human rights and abuse at the hands of whites. Though some deliberation is required to assume whether or not Johnson's appeal is strictly global or inclusive of blacks, or whether or not he makes a commitment to foreigners while making only pleas for blacks, African Americans decided to take matters into their own hands, thereby rejecting the previously ineffectual non-violent, puerile, dependent personae white America had come to expect and most favor. The Black Panther Party seized the moment, so to speak, and responded to the most pertinent of black grass-roots needs—self-defense from police physical abuse and self-government. Huey P. Newton's "The Founding of the Black Panther Party" and "Patrolling" (Carson 345-8) are two excerpts from his book, entitled *Revolutionary Suicide* (1973), that reflect a more focused and literal reaction to Johnson's global plea for "self government" which includes a "Bill of

151

Rights" and enough 'personal' political autonomy that "each man could be proud to be himself, rejoicing in his work, [and] important in the life of his neighbors and his nation." Newton discusses the program and platform of the Black Panther Party, and he begins by explaining why he felt the need for such an organization. "We had seen Watts rise up the previous year," Newton says. Newton continues by saying,

> We had seen how the police attacked the Watts community after causing the trouble in the first place. We had seen Martin Luther King come to Watts in an effort to calm the people, and we had seen his philosophy of nonviolence rejected. Black people had been taught nonviolence; it was deep in us. What good, however, was nonviolence when the police were determined to rule by force?. . . We had seen all this, and we recognized that the rising consciousness of Black people was almost at the point of explosion. Out of this need sprang the Black Panther Party. Bobby [Seale] and I finally had no choice but to form an organization that would involve the lower-class brothers. (Quoted in Carson et al. 345)

The Panther's reaction to Johnson's plea for global political "self-government" was to turn inward to the black community and educate citizens as to how best protect themselves from a government on a preoccupied "global" mission for political freedom and a "Bill of Rights" for everyone world wide—exclusive of minority citizens within its own borders. Most important is the Panther initiative to educate minorities as to how to survive within a society under which they were, literally, under siege. Newton points out how the axis of the Panther education platform included knowledge of the law and the Constitutional (Amendment II of the Bill of Rights) right to bear arms:

Wherever brothers gathered, we talked with them about their right to arm. . . . The way we finally won the brothers over was by patrolling the police with arms. . . . This is why the seventh point—police action—was the first program we emphasized. . . . This is a major issue in every Black community. The police have never been our protectors. Instead, they act as the military arm of our oppressors and continually brutalize us. Many communities have tried and failed to get civilian review boards to supervise the behavior of the police. We recognized that it was ridiculous to report the police to the police, but we hoped that by . . . patrolling the police with arms, we could see a change in their behavior. (Quoted in Carson et al. 345-7)

Newton revels in the effectiveness of the patrols by telling readers that the weapon-wielding Panther campaign against police brutality was a "total success," at first, because "with weapons in our hands, we were no longer their subjects but their equals" (347). However, as Newton points out, the situation began to deteriorate when the "shock" of the novelty of armed black men supporting its own people had worn off and the police began to react in "strange and unpredictable ways."

Yet, in spite of Newton's urge to foreground the demand for a cessation of "POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people," the other nine Panther demands included in his rhetoric were more conducive to the type of American society Johnson and the remainder of white America most feared—an entrophied American society, or the steady advance of a society toward chaos. The remaining nine demands were as follows:

1. *We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community.*

2. *We want full employment for our people.*

3. *We want an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our Black Community.*

4. *We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings.*

5. *We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in present-day society.*

6. *We want all Black men to be exempt from military service.*

7. *We want freedom for all Black men held in federal, state, county and city prisons and jails.*

8. *We want all Black people when brought to trial to be tried in court by a jury of their peer group or people from their Black communities, as defined by the Constitution of the United States.*

9. *We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, and peace. And as our major political objective, a United Nations-supervised plebiscite to be held throughout the Black colony in which only Black colonial subjects will be allowed to participate, for the purpose of determining the will of Black people as to their national destiny.*

Separation, total and complete, was the ultimate goal of the Panther Party. Moreover, the mere expression of most of the demands proposed by the Panthers were tantamount to charientism, as the demands served as a veiled insult to Johnson's citing of America's Bill of Rights as the model for global emancipation. The "demands" shed light upon the

fact that, more than a year after Johnson's second inaugural address, America's Bill of Rights did not include all Americans; the Panthers saw a need to demand for African Americans what Johnson had promised to those on foreign shores.

To juxtapose the Bill of Rights against the Panther demands is quite interesting; for doing so exposes disparities in the relationship between what America practices and what it preaches. For example, Amendment I of the Bill of Rights allows freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, and the right to "petition the government for a redress of grievances." Presidential reaction to most Panther rhetoric was to label them as "*extremists.*" Panther attempts at peaceful assembly morphed into confrontations with local police and National Guardsmen.[6] Panther attempts to address the California State Assembly and deliver a "mandate" led to incarceration. Amendment II gives the right to bear arms; Panther advocations of this very practice were met with open hostility. Bobby Seale's "Seize the Time," says, "some of them (whites) did look at us like we were a gun club. But a lot of them only had questions on their faces of, "What the hell are those damn niggers doing with these . . . rifles? One or two white people, they probably passed it off, "Oh this is just a gun club," and "this is where Bob Dylan gets down on Mr. Jones" (351). Amendment III disallows "quartering" of soldiers except by the consent of the owner; Panther and other Black Power militants who referred to themselves as "soldiers" were ferreted out of their households, in spite of the fact that they were either heads of these households or had the owners' consents. Coincidently, Panther philosophy included a demand for exemption of blacks from the U.S. armed forces. Amendment IV gives one the right to "be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against

---

[6] Bobby Seale's (chairman of the Black Panther Party) "Seize the Time" is an excellent example of one of many major confrontations between the police and the Panthers. Seale describes the May 1967 protest at the California State Capital and the repercussions of the event. (Carson 348-361).

unreasonable searches and seizures, . . . but upon probable cause . . ..''; black militant organizations, including the Panthers, repeatedly suffered violations of this search and seizure law, to the extent that it was used to obliterate nearly all black militant organizations or render them ineffective. Amendments V, VI, VII and VIII protect the rights of citizens in criminal and civil cases, excessive bail and the right to a fair trail; as mentioned in the ten "demands," the Panthers and other black militant groups felt blacks were never privilege to these rights.

Amendments IX and X discuss the boundaries of all rights given in the Constitution, whereas IX informs citizens that their rights end where another's begin and, Amendment X, informs states of their right to pass laws the Bill of Rights ignores. Perhaps all Panther grievances are predicated upon these two amendments, as IX is what white America most refuses to recognize and X is, perhaps, the most abused and overused amendment embedded within the Constitution. Amendment IX encourages all Americans to accept that a true democracy is a *shared* experience, where *all equally* enjoy the benefits and riches ("land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace" as the Panther demand says) of America. Amendment X is that which has historically served as a detriment to blacks, as it is the very amendment that privileged slavery and post- Reconstruction apartheid and segregation in the southern states of America. Most ironic is the fact that Johnson's first *and* second inaugural proposals, and successive Civil Rights legislative proposals, seize the powers bestowed upon states by Amendment X, deciding to place into federal government hands, instead of state hands, the responsibilities for African American rights.

Panther Eldridge Cleaver gives the most cogent analysis of Panther philosophy concerning the police, the armed forces and the law, in relation to African Americans, by explaining the complicit relationship between these three institutions and their prohibitive modes of operating against the welfare of blacks, in America and abroad, for the sake of American capitalist interests. Cleaver's *Soul On Ice* (1968) contains a chapter entitled "Domestic Law and International Order," whereas he argues that the police department and armed forces "are the two arms of the power structure." These two "arms," Cleaver explains, are as enforcement 'tools' of the legal system, a system that, in turn, is used to create and enforce laws that support and perpetuate the capitalist structure. Cleaver further explains:

> The police do on the domestic level what the armed forces do on the
>
> international level: protect the way of life of those in power. The police
>
> patrol the city, cordon off communities, blockade neighborhoods, invade
>
> home, search for that which is hidden. The armed forces patrol the world,
>
> invade countries and continents, cordon off nations, blockade islands and
>
> whole peoples; they will also overrun villages, neighborhoods, enter
>
> homes, huts, caves, searching for that which is hidden. The policeman
>
> and the soldier will violate your person, smoke you out . . ., shoot you,
>
> beat your head and body . . ., run you through . . ., shoot holes in your
>
> flesh, kill you. They each have unlimited power. (Quoted in Cleaver 129-
>
> 30)

As those of a 'democratic' ilk would refer to them, the so-called "people," especially black people, are entrapped within the teeth of these martial forces.

The Black Panthers turned revolutionary rhetoric and theory into praxis. They not only "talked the talk" they "walked the walk." Fred Hampton, a Chicago Panther leader who was murdered during the 4 December, 1969 raid on their headquarters, elaborates upon the "dialectical materialist" philosophy of the Panthers:

> Any theory you got, practice it. . . . A lot of us read and read and read, but we don't get any practice. We have a lot of knowledge in our heads, but we've never practiced it; . . . The only way that anybody can tell you the taste of a pear is if he himself has tasted it. . . . That's objective reality. That's what the Black Panther Party deals with. We're not into metaphysics, we're not idealists, we're dialectical materialists. And we can deal with what reality is, whether we like it or not. You look and see how things are, and then you deal with that. (Quoted in Carson et al. 506)

The Panther "walked" themselves head-on into a state of national detrition—that is erosion by constant friction from the U.S. government. Akua Njere (formerly Debra Johnson), survivor of the same Black Panther raid that killed her former fiancé, Panther leader Fred Hampton, discusses the demise of the Panthers at the hands of the government: "They had destroyed our movement, not just in Illinois, in Chicago with the murder of Fred Hampton. Just like this, . . . starting from mid-'69, the government constantly had raids on our offices, and constantly incarcerated brothers and sisters. They were constantly in our offices piling up our breakfast donations and our medical supplies and setting them on fire in the office. They were raiding our offices all over the country. There was a series of arrests. . . . It was just like this, the government went through and

destroyed the Black Panther Party (Quoted in Carson et al. 517). The group that J. Edgar

Hoover once referred to as "the greatest threat to the internal security of the country"

(Quoted in Carson et al. 529) was no more.

The attack upon the Panthers was so preemptive and proreptive that independent

investigations were conducted, one of which went as high as former NAACP secretary

Roy Wilkins and former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark, whose investigation

concludes that "the raid of December 4, 1969, was not executed in compliance with the

Fourth Amendment guarantees against unreasonable search and seizures; that there is

probable cause to believe that the Civil Rights Statutes . . . of the United States Code,

were violated in the raid by the imposition of summary punishment on the Panthers with

the intent to deny them their constitutionally protected rights to due process; and that the

federal grand jury, in failing to return indictments against certain Chicago and Cook

County police and other officials for their raid-related conduct, failed in its duty to

proceed against violations of civil liberties" (Quoted in Carson et al. 527). The apriori

assumption was that the Panthers' self-help and assistance programs and other Black

Power groups' national apostasy would, to use the common Civil War phrase, "split the

nation asunder"; and Johnson began to posit himself as a 20th century Abe Lincoln, faced

with the formidable task of gluing together an increasingly torn nation. He felt the need

to use the occasion of his second inaugural speech to plead for maintaining the *union* of

these United States, since separatist rumblings had actually begun during Johnson's first

successive term (replacing the assassinated Kennedy) in office. Moreover, Johnson's

second inaugural address procedes the time when blacks first began building political,

cultural and psychological bridges between Africans and African Americans (as in, for

example, Malcolm X's 31st December, 1964 speech "To Mississippi Youth"), as they began to realize the slow, ineffectual progress of Civil Rights and the rapidly precipitating white fears and assumptions about their place in the scheme of things if blacks actually obtained equal rights. However, like rocket science, the more Johnson addressed the "union" or "separatist" issue, the more African American leadership embraced separatist ideology.

Chapter Five: Union and Change

Johnson's "Union and Change"

Recollection of Martin Luther King's 16 April, 1963 "Letter from Birmingham City Jail" (Carson 153-8) forces one to question why Johnson was so oblivious to the clime of the psyche of African American leaders during his first full term. Today, King's classic "speech" is part of the canon of nearly every high school and college freshman literature, rhetoric and composition class. More exactly, the entire situation, at the time, was a call and response farce, whereas King's letter was written in response to a letter written by "eight liberal white clergymen" (Quoted in Carson et al. 153) who, in turn, were writing in response to staged demonstrations led by King and the SCLC in Birmingham, Alabama. According to Carson's *Eyes On The Prize*, the eight Birmingham clergymen who wrote the Birmingham News "open letter" to King "characterized the demonstrations as "unwise and untimely." This fact, coupled with the fact that in spite of the SCLC agreement to halt the demonstrations in exchange for a "modest set of particulars" that were enacted "after several years" (as opposed to the promised several months) in regards to nondiscriminatory hiring practices for blacks, proves that King's tactics and demands were premature for many whites to accept (Carson 153-4). In response to these labels, King gave this sagacious response:

Seldom, if ever, do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. . . .

But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will . . . I would like to

answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable

terms. . . . You may well ask, "Why direct action?" "Why sit-ins,

marches, etc? Isn't negotiation a better path? . . . [A] community that has

constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. "Wait"

has almost always meant "never." [A] Negro, living constantly at tip-toe

stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and plagued with inner

fear and outer resentments; . . . fighting a degenerating sense of

"nobodiness" . . . You spoke of our activity in Birmingham as extreme. . .

. I was rather disappointed that fellow clergymen would see my nonviolent

efforts as those of the extremist. (Quoted in Carson et al. 153-157)

King explicates why the term "extremist" is a superfluous description for one such as him

by using pharmacological, psychological, and biological terms and allusions as

metaphors to reiterate the sickly mental and physical state of white American delusions

concerning racism, and to explain the current and future psyche of the Negro. At one

point he says, "It has been a tranquilizing Thalidomide, relieving the emotional stress for

a moment, only to give birth to an ill-formed infant of frustration" (Quoted in Carson et

al. 155). At another point he tells how a young girl develops "bitterness" towards whites

because of segregated public facilities, situations that precipitate "tears welling up in her

little eyes, see(ing) depressing clouds of inferiority begin to form in her little mental sky,

and . . . distort her personality" (156). Most vivid is the "Scylla and Charybdis" type

imagery he gives to portray his precarious place as the meridian of the desegregation

movement, navigating between the whirlpool of the black apathetic and the multi-headed radical. He tells of two forces of African Americans, one of "complacency made up of Negroes who, as a result of long years of oppression, have been so completely drained of self-respect and a sense of "sombodiness" that they have adjusted to segregation," and a few middle class (Negroes) who, because at points they profit by segregation, have unconsciously become insensitive to the problems of the masses" (157).

The other more ominous force is "one of bitterness and hatred and comes perilously close to advocating violence," "expressed in the black nationalist groups that are springing up over the nation, the largest and best known being Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement" (157). King cites frustration and loss of faith in "America" and "Christianity," and the conclusion that whites are "incurable devil(s)" as the complex concoction upon which this group feeds. Written before Kennedy's assassination, before King's "March on Washington" speech, and long before both of Johnson's inaugural speeches, King's "Letter" has "augury" undertones (much like the ancient Greek term for what an "augury" or "inauguration" type speech should be), as though the epistle itself is as an inauguration speech with predictions and warnings, which could have been heeded. This King speech is discussed here because Johnson addresses "extremism" from both global and domestic perspectives. He does this by focusing on global extremists, in the previously mentioned "Justice and Change" section, by defining foreign extremist threats as "(t)errific dangers and troubles that we once called 'foreign' as "now living constantly among us"; by excusing extremist actions as reactions to a world of momentous "change" and "growth" that "seem[s] to tower beyond the control and even the judgment of men"; and by defining domestic "extremists" as those who "seek to reopen old wounds and to

163

rekindle old hatreds;" [Those who] "stand in the way of a seeking nation." Johnson, again, exhibits a sense of kairos, whereas he rhetorically attempts to convince Americans that we should seize the moment, "[f]or the hour and the day and the time are here to achieve progress without strife, to achieve change without hatred . . . without the deep and abiding divisions which scar the union for generations." Johnson caps off his acknowledgment and criticism of extremism and extremists with a sort of Delphic monition. "So let us reject," he says, "any among us who seek to reopen old wounds and to rekindle old hatreds."

Perhaps one can accuse Johnson of not heeding King's "Letter From a Birmingham Jail" speech, but one cannot certainly say that Johnson was ignorant of Malcolm X's "Ballot or the Bullet" speech given on Easter Sunday, 29 March, 1964, nine months before Johnson's second inaugural address; for this speech helps validate speculation that Johnson's concern about "extremism" in his second inaugural address is a response to black militants. Moreover, he seems to refer to Malcolm X's "Ballot or the Bullet" speech in particular. In this speech Malcolm X calls for militant action, Black Nationalism, and an espousal of sobriety and self-respect. Yet, most obvious is Malcolm X's charientism, an elegantly veiled insult, intended for Civil Rights leaders, such as King, whose philosophy of leadership was embedded within the edicts of Christianity. While rhetorically fustigating Christianity and Civil Rights' passive posturing, Malcolm X manages to criticize and totally *divorce* blacks from the entire colonial history and philosophy upon which this country was founded, thereby seemingly refuting Johnson's "covenant" plea before it is carried out:

We have a gospel! If it has not something to do with blacks to hell with that Gospel! The Gospel only benefits those who preach it! We are African; we are not American, we are a people kidnapped and brought to America. Our forefathers were not the Pilgrims. We did not land on Plymouth Rock; the rock was landed on us. We were not brought here to be made citizens. We were not brought to enjoy the Constitutional gifts that they speak so beautifully about today. Due to our awakening, they look upon us with hostility and resentfulness. If you're interested in freedom, you need some judo, karate; you need all the things that will help you fight for freedom. . . . The Africans didn't get it by sitting in, by wading in, by singing "We shall overcome; they got it through nationalism! Why is nationalism so difficult to spread among black people in America? Number one, they think they have a stake in America; they think they have an investment in this country. Which we do! We have an investment in 310 years, everyday of which your and my mother and father worked for nothing. . . . They worked from sun up to sun down. Never had a day off. They can give us back pay! That's 310 years of slave labor that went into this economy and political system. . . . We want to make them pass the strongest Civil Rights Bill they ever passed. Because we know that even after they pass it, they can't enforce it. We are starting a voter registration drive. . . It's going to be the Ballot or the Bullet.[1]

---

[1] This speech can be found on Google.

Less than nine months after Malcolm X's "Ballot or the Bullet" speech, a benevolent and paternalistic President Johnson explains and pleads with white America for a more racially inclusive interpretation of American colonial philosophy and history (his "covenant" motif). As previously mentioned, Johnson did not hesitate to respond to King's "I Have a Dream" speech (given on 16 April, 1963) in his first inaugural address, appropriating and using the phrase "the dream" as a sort of metaphysical conceit in response, little more than eight months later (27 November, 1963). Johnson seems to use the occasion of his second inaugural address to respond to the other half of the black leadership doppleganger, Malcolm X, in an attempt to reconcile blacks back into the fold of colonial American history.

To Johnson, and to many white Americans, the black response to Johnson's plea for "union and change" was erroneously decoded as a *threat*—to whites individually, collectively and officially (referring to the government). White America conjured phantasmagoric visions of black revolt, lynching, killing, rape, plunder and pillage. To be exact, it was believed that blacks would hand whites the same sort of treatment historically dished out to blacks by white hands—a kind of historical "quid quo pro"—or, to borrow Colin G. Calloway's phrase, "The World Turned Upside Down."[2] Moreover, Johnson, in all his wisdom as the nation's President, was not exempt from this psychological flux of an imagined threat, so much so that even *he* seems confused. His rhetoric seems to say that he is uncertain whether or not the threat is internal or external, whether the "dangers" or "troubles" are from "strangers," "foreigners," or from those within:

---

[2] This is a reference to Colin G. Calloway's collection of essays on Native Americans, entitled *The World Turned Upside Down: Indian Voices from Early America* (1994).

The American covenant called on us to help show the way for the liberation of man. And that is today our goal. Thus, if as a nation there is much outside our control, as a people no stranger is outside our hope. Change has brought new meaning to that old mission. We can never again stand aside, prideful in isolation. Terrific dangers and troubles that we once called "foreign" now constantly live among us. If American lives must end, and American treasure be spilled, in countries we barely know, that is the price that change has demanded of conviction and of our enduring convenant.

Who is responsible for that which is "outside our control?" Who is the stranger that is not "outside our hope?" Is the "isolation" Johnson speaks of international isolation due to our involvement in the Vietnam War? Or is he referring to the "isolation" of white America, as that which is separate from the America in which blacks are forced to abide? Most puzzling is his reference to the "terrific dangers" and "troubles" that "live among us," especially if one considers that his next statement is that, if Americans must die and "American treasures must be spilled" in unfamiliar foreign lands this is the "price that change has demanded of conviction and of our enduring covenant." One could surmise that Johnson is, psychologically speaking, seeing "enemies" of the American state in every nook and cranny, foreign and domestic, black, white (those who were anti-Viet Nam and pro-black radicalism), and Asian (Viet Cong). Exactly to what and to whom is Johnson referring?

Hindsight always excels in accuracy or understanding; and political scholars seem to have come quite close to figuring out Johnson's presidency and policies. On 31

December, 2003 William Leuchtenburg and David Gergen discussed Johnson's

presidency on Dick Gordon's National Public Radio show, The Connection. The

scholars made many conclusions about Johnson's administration, some of which most

Americans are already aware: There was a conflict of character within the president

himself; Johnson was preoccupied with the Vietnam War and there was a gap between

his expectations and reality concerning the war; Johnson wanted a "Guns and Butter"

administration which, in turn caused inflation; Johnson's "Great Society" was never fully

funded; Johnson failed in Vietnam because he did not understand it. That's why he could

not retreat from Kennedy's commitment in Viet Nam. This was all part of Johnson's

insecurity and ego in regards to the Kennedy administration, an era exuding with

"glamour" and some of the savviest advisors of any presidency; Johnson had no real

strategy for winning in Viet Nam, failed to level with the people and failed to adapt to the

changing circumstances.

On the other hand, hindsight encourages these same scholars to wax nostalgic

when analyzing Johnson's legacy concerning his domestic policies. To begin, they make

comparisons between Johnson, Franklin Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, pointing out

how all three presidents, a generation apart, had major wars that helped shape their

administration's global and domestic policies. They also theorized that there is a "revival

of respect" for Johnson's domestic policies, pointing out how Johnson helped restore

confidence among the people in American government, in that the "government could

solve our social problems." However, another point that deserves mentioning is that

Johnson's "Great Society" had more than an economic agenda. The "Great Society" was,

for the most part, predicated upon the same underlying motives and desires upon which

his entire second inaugural address is based—a total *reconstruction* of the original

American *covenant* to include African Americans, and a reconstruction of white

America's psyche in regards to blacks and minorities. To, for the first time in American

history, move towards equality—economically, socially and culturally. Comparing

Johnson to other socially progressive presidents, such as Roosevelt and Wilson,

Americans may realize that Roosevelt was a president that failed to directly address racial

issues. His wife, Eleanore, salvaged him from going down in history as a "blue stocking,"

with no interest in race issues. And our "intellectual" president, Princeton alumnus

Woodrow Wilson, chose to do little for African American human rights. Of course,

Johnson was aware that a huge part of this "reconstruction" necessitated the type of

economic changes and social programs that resembled those of the Roosevelt

administration; but Johnson's original second inaugural intent was to propose the idea

that, after nearly 400 years, America could become a 'beacon' of total equality for

everyone, regardless of race. It was a plea for a change of consciousness and heart. In

this case, he most resembles Abraham Lincoln[3] at that very moment when Lincoln

proposed total emancipation for slaves, and delivered the "Gettysburg Address," as he

began plans for black inclusion into the American societal mainstream and promised

blacks "forty acres and a mule"—the so-called "Reconstruction." There is a distinct

resemblance in the rhetoric Johnson uses, in the subsection "Union and Change," to

Lincoln's rhetoric in the "Gettysburg Address," a rhetoric that seeks to help white

Americans transcend the deep racial divisions that had permeated America since its

conception:

---

[3] Both men, by the time they came to their 'visions' had suffered to the point of exhaustion at the hands of extreme destruction—Lincoln, the Civil War and Johnson, Civil Rights, Kennedy's assassination and Vietnam.

> For the hour and the day and the time are here to achieve
>
> progress without strife, to achieve change without hatred—
>
> not without difference of opinions, but without the deep
>
> and abiding divisions which scar the union for generations.

Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" opens with these lines:

> Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth
>
> on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and
>
> dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.
>
> Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether
>
> that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated
>
> can long endure.

Both Presidents call upon early American history, whereas they evoke the memories of the nation's forefathers and the democratic ideals upon which America is supposedly based. In addition, both presidents seek to heal their own versions of a strife-inflicted society with words that challenge Americans to peacefully live up to America's idealistic standards. Most important, is the fact that both presidents portray a sense of rhetorical urgency, or opportune moment (*kairos*) for American citizens to live up to those ideal standards. Yet, the difference between the two presidents, besides the temporal difference, is that Lincoln is addressing white Americans; Johnson seems to be addressing separatist oriented whites *and* Black Power or black militant leaders. It is most ironic that the *order* that each president pleads for, almost to the day and one-hundred years apart, is an identical plea for order between blacks and whites; yet it is the

black race who Johnson perceives to be among the antagonists, among those with power that is to be feared.

In spite of all the comparisons and contrasts, both presidents seemed to have realized a moral obligation and acted as, if one is allowed, "instruments of God" in an attempt to do what is morally right. Yet, what both the "Reconstruction" and the "Great Society" originally planned to be never reached actuality or ever took off from their visionary stages. They were, literally, *deferred dreams*, or proposed designs to placate a large population of disheveled and angry blacks. Just as Lincoln's "Reconstruction" failed because of white incapacity to accept a large population of newly liberated ex-slaves walking alongside whites in an equally free capacity, competing with them for jobs and everyday existence, Johnson's "Great Society" suffered the same bigoted reticence on behalf of whites who felt that realization of Johnson's plans were too much too soon—for *their* tolerance.

African American Response to Union and Change

Many African Americans, both the leadership and the general populace, had lost faith in Johnson's social programs almost as those programs were being simultaneously implemented. Perhaps the reason for this is that both black leaders and black people knew that most whites where of a, to refer to Julius Lester's comic acronym, from his previously quoted 1966 speech entitled "The Angry Children of Malcolm X," "SPONGE" nature; that is, most whites' reaction had, figuratively speaking, bought into the "Society for the Prevention of Negroes Getting Everything" (Quoted in Meier et al.

476). This greedy paranoia not only pervaded the South but, too, the North, and it became obvious to blacks that white Americans both North and South[4] were not yet ready to hand out equality but in gradual increments—and at *their* own pace. Lester further explains the black psychoses in regards to white reaction concerning increasing black economic and social progress:

> America's reaction to what the Negro considered just demands was a disillusioning experience. Where whites could try to attain the American Dream, Negroes always had had to dream themselves attaining The Dream. But the dream was beginning to look like a nightmare and Negroes didn't have to dream themselves a nightmare. They had been living one a long time. They had hoped that America would respond to their needs and America had equivocated. Integration had once been an unquestioned goal that would be the proudest moment for Negro America. Now it was beginning to be questioned. (Quoted in Meier et al. 478)

Lester admonishes the word "dream" in this passage if only for the simple reasons that King made it a call-word for black progress in his "I Have a Dream" speech and Johnson stole the Civil Rights thunder by appropriating the word in his first inaugural address. Lester brings the word "dream" down to earth, back to the word's original reference as it is used in Langston Hughes's poem, "A Dream Deferred," whereas its meaning has identical overtones to the hopelessness and frustration felt in the face of persistent racism. In addition, Lester claims that the word "integration" sheds its innocuous over tones and becomes an odious moniker to describe the "sell-out," "Uncle Tom," or "boot licker"—

---

[4] Lester quotes Malcolm X, whereas he says, "As Malcolm X once said, that everything south of the Canadian border was South. There was only up South and down South now, and you found "cracker" both places.

especially if one is black. And one need not pontificate any further about the reversal of the black psyche from "integrationist" to "separatist"; except to say that separatist solutions proposed by African American leaders were so radical as to sound as oneiric to white Americans as did their black integrationist counterparts—except the dreams were literal *nightmares*.

African American separatists retaliated against Johnson's inaugural plea for a more perfect "union" in both theory and praxis. For example, Lester's previously mentioned piece, "The Angry Children of Malcolm X" (1966), is a theoretical attempt to explain the existence of Black Power and the reasoning behind Black Power's aversion against integration and the embracement of separation. In many respects, he validates the very positions Malcolm X takes as he, like Malcolm X, "says aloud those things which Negroes had been saying among themselves" or "were afraid to say to each other" (Quoted in Meier et al. 479)—two attributes to which he credits Malcolm X. Besides Lester's previously cited lashings against the Civil Rights movement and white racism, he renders harsh criticism towards middle class black "sycophants" recruited to placate other lower-class belligerent blacks; the white controlled press who ignored most of the activities of and violence against black Civil Rights workers—until white presence increased and they, themselves, began to lose their own lives in the struggle; white backlash due to "whites . . . getting a little tired of picking up the papers and seeing niggers all over the front page"; and white fears of the current reversal of Civil Rights fortunes—separation. Most importantly, he predicates the black separatist movement on black identity, which, in turn, necessitates self-determination for physical, cultural and psychological survival. Integrationist motives, he says, fail to aliquot, and encourages

black simulation of whites while, simultaneously, perpetuating the myth that it is the *black* who lacks instead of whites. Like Malcolm X, Lester uses the explosive and confusing atmosphere surrounding the entire history of black progress to aver to the dearth of white morality. He points out an African American *uniqueness* that in many respects makes integration, for the most part, impossible, or, at the very least, debasing for blacks:

> When it became . . . apparent that integration was only designed to uplift Negroes and improve their lot, Negroes began wondering whose lot actually needed improving. . . . Thus Negroes began cutting a path toward learning who they are. Of the minority groups in this country, the Negro is the only one lacking a language of his own. This . . . has made it difficult for him to have a clear concept of himself as a Negro. It has made him more susceptible to the American lie of assimilation than the Puerto Rican, Italian or Jew who can remove himself from America with one sentence in his native language. . . . The Negro has two native lands: America and Africa. Both have always been denied him. Identity has always been the key problem for Negroes. They remove all traces of blackness from their lives [,] become as American Dream as possible. . . . A small minority avoid the crux of their blackness by going another extreme. They identify completely with Africa[,] . . . go[ing] to the extent of wearing African clothes and speaking Swahili. They . . . are only unconsciously admitting that the white man is right when he says, Negroes don't have a thing of their own. (Quoted in Meier et al. 480)

Lester establishes the significance of African American cultural "beingness" by pointing out that blacks *do* have their own language (a type of English imbued with a unique rhythm, semantics and syntax), music, way of cooking, and way of dressing. The word that encapsulates all these attributes is, Lester says, "Soul." The black race was part African *and* part of what the legacy of slavery and segregation had handed to blacks; and the result was a newly racialized being that whites would never totally accept. The consequences are that the "Love" blacks were supposed to show for their white oppressors has depleted. Lester says, "Love? That's always been better done in bed than on the picket line and marches. Love is fragile and gentle and seeks a like response" (Quoted in Meier et al. 483). Moreover, Lester adds, the desire to abide in the "Beloved Community" is now "irrelevant," and that the "old order passes away" (483-4). Lester's new African American ontology *seems* to be in the arena of the black psyche as his separatist venue is to encourage blacks to "live within the framework of [their] own blackness" . . . "link[ed] with the Indians of Peru, the miner of Bolivia, the African and freedom fighters of Vietnam" (Meier 483). Lester is careful to attempt to put white fears at ease with this relatively comic consolation:

> Does all of this mean that every American white is now a potential victim for some young Nat Turner? Does it mean the time is imminent when the red blood of blue eyed, blonde haired beauties will glisten on black arms and hands? (Quoted in Meier et al. 483)

Lester's rhetorical question is answered with an ambiguously vague response—or a seemingly veiled threat—as he says, "For many black people, the time is imminent. For others it simply means the white man no longer exists. He is not to be lived with and he

is not to be destroyed. He is simply to be ignored, because the time has come for the black man to control the things which effect his life. Like the Irish control Boston, the black man will control Harlem" (Quoted in Meier et al. 483). Lester believes that the differences between black and white Americans are irreconcilable, to the extent that pleas, such as those in Johnson's second inaugural address, for "unity" are hopeless.

The Black Panthers' 1966 official program, "We Must Destroy Both Racism and Capitalism" (Carson 345-8), though an excerpt from Newton's previously mentioned *Revolutionary Suicide*, is a repetition of their previously mentioned speech, "The Founding of the Black Panther Party: What We Want."[5] However, on this occasion, it is supplemented by a subsection that elaborates upon the Panther philosophy. Entitled "What we believe," the speech's rhetorical power relies, as does the "Founding" speech, upon the use of anaphora; that is, the phrase "What we believe" is the leading phrase of each of the ten "beliefs." However, it is the tenth belief that diverges from the use of anaphora, creating emphasis, and that is of interest as the most outstanding to this thesis. For it can be interpreted as a blatant and confrontational "in your face" address to Johnson's second inaugural address's use of American colonial history and the American covenant philosophy motif. Johnson evokes the memory of the "exile and stranger" who "made a covenant with this land." Johnson recalls the edicts of the Bill of Rights, a document written and signed by Founding Fathers Jefferson et al. Yet, The Panthers use the rhetorical device of *imitation* to convey *their* belief that *maintaining the so-called Union, as it is, is not in the African American's advantage*:

> When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another,

---

[5] See pages 345-8 in Carson et al.

and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal
station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent
respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the
causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-
evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their
Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty
and the pursuit of happiness. . . . --*that whenever any form of government
becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of people to alter or to
abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such
principles and organizing its powers in such from, as to them shall seem
most likely to effect their safety and happiness.* Prudence, indeed, will
dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light
and transient causes; . . . *But when a long train of abuses and usurpations,
pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them,
under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such
government, and to provide new guards for their future security.* (Quoted
in Meier et al. 494-5)

The Panthers cleverly repudiate Johnson's second inaugural address by using the tenth

edict of their founding philosophy for foregrounding (or standing behind, however one

may want to look at it) one of the most prominent philosophers on liberty and human

rights during America's colonial period—Thomas Jefferson—and his "Declaration of

Independence." This is the utmost temporal and racial irony, especially when one

considers that, as African Americans, the Panthers, nearly three hundred years after the

original document, felt the need to use Jefferson's very words to demand a separation for,

figuratively, the same reasons the colonists demanded separation from England; and,

most ironic, that the original document was never intended to include African Americans.

The Panthers' use of the "*Declaration of Independence*," literally and figuratively,

identifies with the hypocritical nature of Johnson's speech. Johnson uses the *Bill of*

Rights and the covenant motif for black inclusion, whereas the Black Panthers strip

Johnson of the legitimate use of these historical devices for blacks by using the

"*Declaration of Independence*" and revealing that both documents were written for black

exclusion. The *Bill of Rights* allowed privileges that blacks did not enjoy. In the covenant

between the colonials and God, blacks were the furthest people from their minds—even

excluded from the "Half Way Covenant," a watered-down version of the covenant

formulated to glean from the masses all those the original covenant did not include. It is

as though the two historical documents of American history are forced into a standoff

with each other. Though Johnson may not have intended this, he literally and figuratively

erases African Americans in his second inaugural address with the mere use of these

early American historical motifs. The Panthers literally and figuratively retaliate against

Johnson's naïve erasure by deflecting back to Johnson what he dished out. The Panthers,

as did many other black leaders of the separatist ilk, were seeking separate nationhood, or

the recognition that if the American house, as it is, is not soon divided it *will not stand*.

The Panthers' philosophical agenda was a global venue current among colonized peoples

of color. The Panthers' plea is no different from that of Kwame Nkrumah's (one of the

Panthers' many "svengalis") plea in *I Speak of Freedom* (1961), where he states, "The

first is our desire to see Africa free and independent" (Nkrumah 142). Readers of

Nkrumah's book realize his plea for independence is as a result of Nkrumah and other

African leaders' increased sense of African identity, as he logically argues against illogic

assumptions inherent in the psyches of leaders of colonizer nations. Moreover, no less

than African philosopher and scholar Paulin J. Hountondji makes a parallel between the

inevitable manifestation of African identity and its teleology towards the quest for

validation of Africa's intellectual and philosophical place among other cultures, white

and non-white. In *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (1976), Hountondji says that

African philosophy, like all other philosophies, are "locat[ed] [upon] a solid bedrock

which might provide a foundation of certitudes: in other words, a system of beliefs. In this quest, we find the same preoccupation as in the negritude movement-a passionate search for the identity that was denied by the colonizer- . . . ." (Hountondji 59). As the Black Panther agenda pre-eminently sought an independent African identity that reflected the historically racist perspectives of American whites, a natural career towards independent "nationhood" for Americans of African origin was inevitable.

By Johnson's second inaugural address that calls for a "union" between America's contentious factions, the Students for Non-violence Co-ordinating Committee had forged a reputation for standing in opposition to the integrationist policies of King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In 1967, SNCC's Chicago office issued a leaflet entitled "We Must Fill Ourselves With Hatred For All White Things" (Meier 484-90), a treatise that is both anti-union *and* anti-white in theory *and* practice. The pamphlet contains theories concerning the state of blacks in America and African Americans' compulsion to rid themselves of this nefarious plight by total separation (as it points out the "perpetual state of slavery" in which blacks, particularly black men, live— within the "camp" of white American leadership); points out who among African Americans will lead the Black Power movement;[6] exalts the edicts of Malcolm X (touting him as the "icon" or "Ur-father" of black power thinking, teaching blacks to rid themselves of the "shackles" of psychological slavery); and gives blacks erudition as to *how* they must think black (it calls for a rhetorical, internationally geographical, racial, spiritual, and psychological "fanaticism" of black thought, behavior, and perspective).

---

[6] The "black brother" of the "ghetto," with his disadvantaged or marginalized position outside America's superficial value system, while omitting the "bourgeois Negro" with his "superior education," purgatorial existence between white America and "phony black bourgeois society," and his insatiable acquiescence to white America's "creature comforts" to the point of "numbness" to the "tricks" America plays to maintain modern slavery of blacks."

Johnson's second inaugural address pleads with the white power structure to live up to its ideals and allow blacks into the mainstream; the SNCC Chicago office's leaflet shows total disregard for white leadership, espouses Malcolm X as the "forefather" for blacks, and retaliates by thumbing its nose at any mention of integration or "union" with white America.

However, this is only the theoretical bent of this document. The remaining half is caustic instruction as to how one must implement certain plans and strategies to successfully achieve separatist black power status within American borders. Perhaps, the humor in this half of SNCC's leaflet lies in the fact that Johnson, in his second address, carefully lays out his plan for black integration with a separating (early American history) device; however, it backfires and black leaders and groups, such as SNCC, respond by laying, as carefully, plans to disassemble the very things Johnson tries to assemble. Moreover, strategically, SNCC's tactics involved recruiting people and disassembling organizations at local and national levels of the government. While Johnson's second inaugural address initiates union between workers on every level in every area, including government workers, SNCC's document says, "We must infiltrate all government agencies," and goes on to point out that the facility of this goal lies in the fact that "black clerks work in all agencies in poor paying jobs and have a natural resentment of the white men who run these jobs" (Quoted in Meier et al. 488). SNCC touts itself as a grass roots organization, and it is the grass roots worker ("Any man in overalls, carrying a tool box, can enter a building if he looks like he knows what he is doing.") that they plan to rely upon for subversive maneuvering. It is modern technology and its subsequent "creature

comforts" that, according to SNCC, were to prove to be the weapons in grass roots workers' hands:

> Modern America depends on many complex systems such as electricity, water, gas, sewerage and transportation and all are vulnerable. Much of the government is run by computers that must operate in air conditioning. Cut off the air conditioning and they cannot function. We must . . . investigate and learn all of these things so that we can use them if it becomes necessary. We cannot train an army in the local park but we can be ready for the final confrontation with the white man's system. (Quoted in Meier et al. 488)

Perhaps the most interesting irony is SNCC's plan for breaking asunder, or disassembling, any union, within other black organizations. SNCC plans to rely upon tried and true methods of diversion and exclusion—among other blacks. For example, the pamphlet indicates a plan to "infiltrate" all civil rights groups, to "keep them in confusion so they will be neutralized and cannot be used as a tool of the white power structure" (488). Moreover, SNCC's plan to deal with fellow African Americans who are "not with the program" ("traitors, Uncle Toms, quislings, collaborators, sell-outs, white Negroes") is both a psychological and physical reckoning, as the pamphlet points out how they are to be categorized as white "oppressors," deserving nothing better than "ostracization," "extermination," "elimination," or "rendering ineffective." These "white Negroes," according to SNCC, are as the Old Testament's Esau, because "they sold out their birthright for a mess of white society pottage. Let them choke on it" (Meier 489). SNCC's leaflet sets a precedent in the praxis section calling for the dissolution of all

black/white relationships in America. In addition, Johnson and his administration (including other agencies such as the CIA and the FBI) simultaneously sought to neutralize the influence of powerful black organizations. The differences in the two speeches is that Johnson's second inaugural speech attempts to form a more perfect union, but naively possessed a profound, yet subtle, erasure of blacks by mentioning a baneful colonial past when blacks were not considered citizens or even human. The SNCC pamphlet refers back to America's entire past to argue for separation of blacks from the white mainstream. Another, more ironic, difference is that Johnson's expressed plans in his second inaugural address that, if carried out as planned, would have tripled the number of so-called "white Negroes" SNCC proposes should be wiped out, making SNCC's task of wiping out such Negroes a more difficult job.

Besides SNCC's fustigating attack upon bewraying African Americans, Russia and its brand of communism are added to this list. However, despite SNCC's rejection of every thing white, Russian, and communist, they embrace the ideas and methods of propaganda. They propose to "disrupt the white man's system to create [their] own" by imitating J. Rupert Murdoch. "We must publish newspapers and get radio stations," SNCC says, and whereas the eventual success of SNCC's propaganda agenda may be debated, there can be no debate as to whether or not SNCC's daring pamphlet fell upon someone's listening ears.

To quote a common cliché, it is very often that "art imitates life," or that the stories writers fictionalize have their origins in real life occurrences. Sam Greenlee's 1969 novel, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, is an example, as the novel's narrative concerns a black man, Dan Freeman, who becomes a CIA agent in order to learn certain

subversive tactics, only to go underground and undercover to recruit gang members for

an encroaching black revolution. As SNCC's pamphlet advocates, Greenlee's novel

portrays Freeman's character as having suffered his demise at the hands of untrustworthy

black middle-class Civil Rights and government program workers, and, ultimately, a

black doctor who was committed, but fails, to come to Freeman's aid when he is mortally

wounded. The African American "PMC" (professional managerial class) lets Freeman

down. SNCC's pamphlet had some influence, or, on the other hand, the dismissal of the

African American professional class was a standard position for hard-core separatist

black leaders.

Yet, there were intellectuals who, like other more grass-roots separatists leaders

and organizations such as SNCC, sought the disintegration of black/white co-existence.

Farleigh-Dickinson University economics professor Robert S. Browne's 1968 speech,

"A Formal Partitioning of the United States Into Two Totally Separate and Independent

Nations" (Meier 516-28) is as sober reasoning as one could put forth in this theoretical

attempt to explicate what blacks want, why and how concerning the probability of

separation. Browne begins with an even-handed two-sided argument identifying the

differentiation between "integrationist" and "separatists" blacks; that is, black leaders

who say that what the Negro wants is "exactly what whites want" (integrationists) and

those who say that blacks have neither the will nor inclination to spiritually and

physically enmesh themselves within white American society. Basically, the exordium

of Browne's speech is one that resembles a coolly argued version of the jeremiad

concerning the battle between the spirit and the flesh—or the spiritual and the material.

Johnson's second inaugural address points out how "No longer need capitalist and

worker, farmer and clerk, city and countryside, struggle to divide our bounty," and that "By working shoulder to shoulder, together we can increase the bounty of all." Johnson's lofty, esoteric words, simply put, mean that he intends to foreground policies that help "spread the wealth." However, Browne points out how the separatist argues "that the Negro's foremost grievance is not solvable by giving him access to more gadgets, although this is certainly part of the solution, but that his greatest thirst is in the realm of the spirit," the need to change and the lack of an avenue for which to express his cultural individuality. As for the integrationist, Johnson's words offer more comfort as Browne points out that it is "employment, income, housing, and education comparable to that of whites" upon which the eradication of Negro inferiority depends. Browne's reasoning is as though the dichotomized African American quagmire has the gut wrenching choice between God and mammon, with the "adopted mother" country (America) posited as the bedrock of Babylon.

However, Browne makes *his own* case for separation by way of *difference*, to use the word in Edward Said's sense, a cultural, psychological, physically racial, and historical difference that no amount of integration can, according to Browne, erase. For example, Browne points out the "agony" and difficulty of raising black children with a sense of self esteem in a culture where "milk-white skin and long, straight hair" are standards of beauty, regardless as to whether or not the black child is rich or poor (Meier 519). Browne compares the black plight concerning this dilemma to that of the Jewish child during Christmas holidays or to the "immigrant with an accent"; however, he points out that black children's problems are exacerbated by the imposed, yet, more derogatory classification of being "ugly" in the eyes of all whites who behold them. The Jew has an

avenue to help ride the tide of ostracization during Christmas; the immigrant can rid him or herself of the accent. The black cannot shed its skin; and any attempt to literally or figuratively do so is, to Browne, tantamount to "painless genocide"—a cultural absorption or assimilation that dissipates black culture, black economics and black intellect—notwithstanding the fact that it perpetuates a segue for white control over blacks (Meier 521-2).

As Browne's speech occurs three years hence Johnson's second inaugural speech, it seems to be positioned at that pivotal moment to allow Browne to refute every promise and agenda Johnson advocates (especially "shar[ing] in the fruits of the land" and "unity of interest" and "purpose") in his second inaugural address. For Browne, perusal of the American experience in regards to blacks deserves no consideration as to a solution except for this: nationhood. The reasons, beside those already mentioned, refer to the most basic of human instincts: Blacks do not and cannot trust white America because it has proven to be a nation with a propensity towards and appetite for violence, evidenced by its violent genocidal past regarding the Native Americans, internment past with the Japanese, and its current "zeal" in the destruction of the peasantry of Vietnam. Browne would like to see Johnson and the rest of America (to borrow a phrase from Johnson's second inaugural address) "struggle to divide [America's] bounty" for the sake of the welfare of blacks.

Perhaps one of the more interesting direct responses Browne makes in this speech is his mentioning of Johnson's "veiled threat" during the 1966 riots, whereas Browne says, Johnson "suggested riots might beget pograms and pointed out that Negroes are only ten percent of the population." A threat, Browne says, that "was not lost on blacks"

(Meier et al. 522). Browne failed to notice or mention the veiled, though relatively milder, threat in Johnson's second inaugural address, where he says, "So let us reject any among us who seek to reopen old wounds and to rekindle old hatreds. They stand in the way of a seeking nation."

Moreover, in regards to Johnson's repeated references to God and the covenant, Browne seems to respond by saying that all this indicates is that the "Prince of Peace" (Jesus Christ) gets much rhetorical airplay but little imitation or practice in America (Meier et al. 522). To prove that, Browne makes a comparison with Jewish history, pointing out that nationhood is necessary for psychological self-assurance, a geographical place of refuge, and a cultural and physical place of identity. These cannot, Browne says, be achieved in Africa because we are too long away from Africa and literally estranged from their language, culture, food, and customs to feel "at home." Therefore, the very land which blacks were forcibly brought to in chains and made to flourish should be the locale of black nationhood—the deep South of the United States. Browne's plea for a separate southern homeland for blacks stands in stark juxtaposition to Johnson's second inaugural address plea for a commonly enjoined "union," encouraging, once again, comparisons to Lincoln's plea for a reunited nation composed of the North and South.

Eldridge Cleaver, Minister of Communications for the Black Panther Party, is another proponent for black nationhood or separation. His speech, entitled "Political Struggle in America," (16 March, 1968) is a razor sharp treatise that gives a cold analysis of the African American political situation *and* a logical argument as to the whys and hows of the necessity of black separate nationhood. Cleaver's speech is a politically concrete solution for African Americans living within a country that hinders even their

right to vote, let alone grant full and equal participation in the political process. Cleaver's reasoning is synonymous to the "taxation without representation—therefore revolution" logic and "cry" of the American colonists. As to why blacks are proposing separate nationhood, he says, "I think the first thing we have to realize, . . . is that it is a reality when you hear people say that there's a 'black colony' and a 'white mother country.' I think you really have to get that distinction clear in your minds in order to understand that there are two different sets of political dynamics functioning in this country. [I]f there's a homogenous country and everyone here is a citizen of that country, . . . it makes a lot of sense to insist that black people participate in electoral politics and all other forms of politics as we have known them. But if you accept the analysis that the black colony is separate and distinct from the mother country, then a lot of other forms of political struggle are indicated" (Quoted in Smith 166). Cleaver bases his separatist argument on the current tumultuous climate surrounding black Civil Rights political progress and the perpetually failed myth, in regards to blacks, of the American "melting pot." That is, he (and other "black revolutionaries or militants") points out how, in spite of what we have been taught in school (and, one might add, what has been repeatedly embedded in the rhetoric of American presidents from the very beginning), "that people have come from all over the world and they've been put into this big pot and . . . melted into American citizens. In terms of the white immigrants who came to this country, this is more or less true." On the other hand, he says, "this stew that's been produced by these years and years of stirring the pot, you'll find that the black elements, the black components have not blended well with the rest of the ingredients. . . . [B]lack people have been blocked out of this, . . . and that, . . . not allowed to participate in this, and

excluded from that. This has created a psychology in black people where they have now turned all the negative exclusion to their advantage" (Quoted in Smith 166-7).

Unlike many revolutionaries armed with guns and theory, sans a scheme for practical political application, Cleaver displays the thorough political acumen of a white American Founding Father, pointing out the past failures of black leaders who proposed black nationalist separatism *and* the necessary tools blacks already have and must work with in order to gain nationhood status. Basically, the weapons are rhetorical and geographical—the word "*black*" and the African American "place" as *separate* from that of whites. Cleaver elaborates upon the strategies for black national liberation by pointing out how blacks, literally, *riposted* these weapons historically used against them and turned them to their advantage. The word "black" once used as a negative term against blacks is now a symbol of black separatist pride and, as he puts it, " a focal point of the struggle for national liberation" (Quoted in Smith 167). In addition, blacks deflected their historically separated situation to *plea* for a completely detached nation. Cleaver explains black separatist reasoning in this manner:

> For example, people are talking these days about going to the United
> Nations and seeking membership in the United Nations for Afro-America.
> And when you look at the criteria for nationhood, you'll find that the only
> place that black people fall short in terms of this standard is the one where
> the land question comes up. They say that a nation is defined as a people
> sharing a common culture, a common language, a common history, and
> a common land situation. (Quoted in Smith 168)

Cleaver resurrects the edicts of Kwame Nkrumah to help muddle through the "land" question. Nkrumah says, "Seek ye first the political kingdom, and other things will be added unto you." Cleaver interprets Nkrumah's statement to mean that the land question should be given a "back-burner" status (held in "abeyance") while actively organizing the millions of blacks required and *then* asking for land. His organizational plan includes a "union" or coalition of all other radical organizations outside the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, such as the white radical "Peace and Freedom Party" (he says both white and black radicals need each other), "SNCC," and a coalition to include the black professional and educated class. (Smith 170-4)

Perhaps the most saturnine aspect of Cleaver's proposal is his repeated efforts to solicit the assistance of the United Nations, a relatively foreign organization, as segue to black nationhood—instead of the U.S. government. This displays a sense of complete mistrust and hopelessness towards the government. However, Cleaver's motives are aposterioristic; that is, his reactions are predicated upon hundreds of years of past experience in regards to America and its relations with African Americans, and American relations with foreign countries. Cleaver reveals that America only kids itself if it believes foreign countries are unaware of the plight of millions within its own borders— especially with America's appetence to position itself as world-leader or the epitome of democracy. He recounts the foreign experiences of leaders such as Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael to justify his reasoning that foreign countries "are hip enough to the political realities of our situation to recognize and to accept our representatives in every sense of the word" (Quoted in Smith 169). Moreover, Cleaver realizes, as did powerful

colonials such as Benjamin Franklin, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson, that "international relations" would be of prime importance and necessity:

> I think it's very important to realize that there is a way to move., . . . asking the United Nations for a UN supervised plebiscite throughout the colony. Black people have never been able through any mechanism to express what their will is. . . . [D]o you want to be a part of America, do you want to be integrated into America, do you want to be separate from America, do you want to be a nation, do you want to have your ambassadors, your representatives seated in the United Nation, . . .? I think it would be very hard for the black people to say no, particularly when the argument of the government is going to be that black people don't need those things because they are already American citizens. (Quoted in Smith 170)

Cleaver continues by pointing to history to prove that "great empires" have often needed change, and, having based his decolonization plan for blacks "from the point of view of international relations," cites several leaders who could be counted upon (such as Mao Tse-Tung, Fidel Castro, and Charles De Gaulle) to vote for African American separatism and "international leverage" against the United States. According to Cleaver, the sole parting gift African Americans need from "the white mother country" is its technology.

The importance of technology is one area of agreement between Johnson and Cleaver. Johnson's second inaugural address points out that as "A rocket moves towards Mars," how, through the "rapid and fantastic change bearing the secrets of nature," technology will render a world "different from our own" that "will not be the same for

our children." Yet, there is an amusing irony concerning the potential power of technology about which the two leaders agree. Johnson's second inaugural address points out how technology will have the potential to "multiply the nations, plac[e] in uncertain hands new weapons for mastery and destruction," "shak[e] old values," "uproot old ways," and provide "healing miracles." The ultimate irony here is that one can suspect that Johnson, knowing the latent destructiveness of technology, would never provide a newly founded black separatist nation, or radical group such as the Panthers, with the technology or means to subvert his own efforts to maintain the "union" of the United States. Considering all this, Cleaver's request for American technological assistance in the case of separate black nationhood would have, perhaps, fallen on deaf ears. To Johnson, technology is the culprit that has made the protection of the world's "liberty," "self-government," and our "Bill of Rights" "*more* (italics mine) difficult," to the point of spinning out of our capabilities to "control" and even judge. To Cleaver, technology helps galvanize and forge a strong African American nationhood, which, finally, guarantees those same rights and advantages Johnson mentions—but apart from the United States. Johnson, at one point, says, "We must work to provide the knowledge and the surroundings which can enlarge the possibilities of every citizen." Cleaver agrees, but with a different aim.

Cleaver and the Panthers were not alone in their radical request for change of the American government as it was, though the suggestions for how these changes should be made varied considerably. James Forman, executive secretary of SNCC, in his 1964 "Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Report on Guinea," tells of the trip he and other key members of SNCC made to Guinea in order to consult with Diallo Alpha, the

Guinean leader, about African American knowledge of Africa and to establish an emotional and psychological union between Africans and African Americans. Five years later, Forman,[7] is armed with a more incendiary rhetoric than that which he exhibits earlier. Forman's 26 April, 1969 speech, "We Have A Chance to Help Bring This Government Down" (Meier 535-551) combines black nationalism and revolutionary Marxism as he makes a "money, guns, and lawyers" appeal at the Economic Development Conference held in Detroit, a "conclave," as Meier et al. put it, sponsored by Interreligious Foundation for Community Organizations (IFCO), an interfaith group composed of major Protestant and Jewish Organizations (in 1967) to fund militant local community action groups. The 1969 EDC Detroit version of this "manifesto" was a repeat of the same speech he had proposed a few years earlier. In addition, a second document, entitled "Instructions for radical delegates at the conference" was distributed as a leaflet to the conference's "radical delegates." Forman threatens sabotage, armed revolution, and guerilla warfare as he gives as broad an outline for dismantling the American religious and governmental "Fathers" house as any speech. Forman's proposal all but resembles those of other black revolutionaries, except for his proposal that blacks remain within the confines of American borders, "for [blacks] are located in a strategic position," in direct opposition to Johnson. Forman says, "We live inside the U.S. which is the most barbaric country in the world and we have a chance to help bring this government down" (Quoted in Meier et al. 538). Moreover, he literally enacts his own "revolution" as he usurps the conference and its proposed agenda for an agenda of his own. Forman executes his coups de etat in this manner:

---

[7] Neither of the sources indicates Forman's current position within SNCC during the occasion of this speech and conference.

First of all, this conference is called by a set of religious people,

Christians, who have been involved in the exploitation and rape of black

people since the country was founded. The missionary goes hand

in hand with the power of the states. We must begin seizing power

wherever we are and we must say to the planners of this conference that

you are no longer in charge. We the people who have assembled here

thank you for getting us here, but we are going to assume power over the

conference and determine from this moment on the direction in which we

want it to go. . . . The conference is now the property of the people who

are assembled here. This we proclaim as fact and not rhetoric and there

are demands that we are going to make and we insist that the planners of

this conference help us implement them. (Quoted in Meier et al. 541)

Forman positions himself among those black leaders who reject the black and white

church as a basis for his revolutionary plans; moreover, he rejects the notion that blacks

construct a nation as a separate entity within the confines of the U.S. Forman's proposal

is to wrestle the entire government from the hands of "white racists" and place it into the

hands of a "revolutionary black vanguard," a faction whose leadership whites must learn

to accept.

Part A of the speech, entitled "Manifesto of the National Black Economic

Development Conference"[8] encourages readers to drift six or seven centuries into the

past, to a time and place when the Church ruled and controlled every nook and cranny of

---

[8] The subtitle of this section is "MANIFESTO TO THE WHITE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AND THE
JEWISH SYNAGOGUES IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND ALL OTHER RACIST
INSTITUTIONS," with another subtitle following the "Introduction" that declares "TOTAL CONTROL
AS THE ONLY SOLUTION TO THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF BLACK PEOPLE."

European existence—Medieval and Renaissance Europe. For it is, according to Forman, the *Church* upon which Western (in general) or American (in particular) racism is predicated. Section "A" of Forman's speech is anti-Church, anti-capitalism, anti-U.S. government, anti-wealth, anti-white privilege, and overall, anti-Western. It is the combination of all these "oppositions" that construct a cumulative riposte to Johnson's misguided "Covenant" motif clad plan for "Union and Change." Forman constructs a direct retaliation that is thematically rooted in history, religion, and civic responsibility; and, ironically, like Johnson's, it is rhetorically situated within the jeremiad tradition, it is written in plain-style, organized in a rigid format (there is an introduction, subheadings, and two sections) but outlines the construction of an economically free and equal black America while formulating the destruction of an economically biased and discriminating *racist* white America. To Forman, black progress is predicated upon absolute black economic self-control, to alleviate African American status as the most obolarious of America's citizens within a system, a society and a culture whose sole motivation is money, profit and capital. Most ironic is Forman's attempt to ferret out the true *source* or origin of black economic disparity—the Church—while early Civil Rights leaders based rhetoric heavily on Christian moral and religious ideals.

To Forman, the Church is a force rivaling that of the papist church during the reign of the Medici, the difference being that contemporary Church influence is more surreptitious (yet, just as powerful) than that of Europe's past. To begin, Forman points out that the "conference is called by a set of religious people, Christians, who have been involved in the exploitation and rape of black people since the country was founded" (Quoted in Meier et al. 541). "The missionary," he continues, "goes hand in hand with

the power of the states. Believing the Church responsible for stealing and transplanting

Africans into the "hostile and alien environment" of America, Forman's logic demands

white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, "part and parcel of the system of

capitalism," pay "reparations" to blacks, in the sum "$500,000,000." He arrives at this

figure by assessing African American worth as "$15 per nigger," a relatively paltry sum

(even for this time) that he says is only the beginning of what African Americans are due.

Forman would allocate the spending of this finite sum for a "Southern Land Bank,"

$200,000,000, to help blacks who already own or wish to own farmland; $10,000,000 for

the establishment of four "major black publishing and printing industries"; a $40,000,000

sum for "four of the most advanced scientific and futuristic audio-visual networks" to be

located in Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland and Washington, D.C.; a minimum of $30,000,000

sum for a "research skills center which will provide research on the problems of black

people"; a minimum of $10, 000, 000 for the "teaching of skills in community

organization, photography, movie making, television making and repair, radio building

and repair and all other skills needed in communication"; $10,000,000 to "assist in the

organization of welfare recipients" so as to enable them to demand more government

money and better "administration of the welfare system of this country"; $20,000,000 for

a "National Black Labor Strike and Defense Fund" to protect black workers and families

who must "fight racist working conditions in this country"; a minimum of $20,000,000

for the establishment of the International Black Appeal (IBA), an organization that will

be responsible for the "establishment of cooperative businesses in the United States and

Africa"; $130,000,000 for the establishment of a "Black University . . . located in the

South"; and, finally, a demand that all IFCO allocate all "unused funds in the planning

budget to implement the demands of this conference." Though Forman's monetary

allocations sound as though they should have been discussed under the subsection of

"Justice and Change" in Johnson's second inaugural address, they are discuss here

because the purpose of Forman's economic deliberations are to establish a solid

economic base for the black community to function as a separate or alternate entity apart

from mainstream U.S. government. It is as though blacks would have a major, self-

sufficient and vibrant reservation—as do the Native Americans—operating within the

geographic borders of the U.S. but outside U.S. jurisdiction.[9]

Yet, this is a lengthy speech. And Forman shapes the details of this proposed

"hallowed and bloody ground" of a "Renaissanced" or re-born America in relative detail,

as he tells the who, what, where, and how his American political "Reconstruction" is to

manifest. Who shall lead? Of course, blacks, as the most oppressed group, he says, are

the "Vanguard Force" to lead and liberate all oppressed groups within and without

America, and all people of color. Forman's insight has a global perspective as he

declares that past revolutionary "rhetoric" merely applies the label of "capitalism" to the

U.S., instead of the words "imperial power" while it "sends money, missionaries, and the

army throughout the world" to protect the interests of the government and a "few rich

whites." "General Motors," says Forman, "and all the major auto industries are operating

in South Africa, yet the white dominated leadership of the United Auto Workers sees no

relationship to the exploitation of black people in South Africa and the exploitation of

black people in the U.S." (Quoted in Meier et al. 539).

---

[9] Readers may notice that Forman's plans for black liberation seem to change midstream in this speech. Perhaps an explanation for this is Forman's assumption that a total and broad revolution that puts total power into the hands of blacks would take some time, or is a future ultimate aim. Forman's monetary demands in the "Black Manifesto" are more short-term reparations for blacks.

What shall the African American-lead revolution fight for? Forman says blacks should, in general, fight for a total breach of all relations with capitalism, including "those Negroes who go around the country promoting all types of schemes for Black Capitalism." Forman adds, "We must commit ourselves to a society where the total means of production are taken from the rich and placed into the hands of the state for the welfare of all the people. . . . Our fight is against racism, capitalism and imperialism and we are dedicated to building a socialist society inside the United States where the total means of production and distribution are in the hands of the State and that must be led by black people, by revolutionary blacks who are concerned about the total humanity of this world" (Quoted in Meier et al. 539). Johnson's second inaugural address argues, "In a land of great wealth, families must not live in hopeless poverty. In a land rich in harvest, children just must not go hungry. In a land of healing miracles, neighbors must not suffer and die unattended. In a great land of learning and scholars, young people must be taught to read and write." Forman and Johnson believe in sharing the wealth; however, Forman has given up on the capitalist capacity to aliquot America's resources to African Americans.

As previously stated, the loci of the revolution is grounded in, to Forman, the hypocritical morality of the Church. As a result, he chooses to subvert the authority of church or religious rhetoric in order to replace it with a more secular and militaristic rhetoric. Moreover, Forman gives clear instructions to blacks as to how they should go about the disarmament of Church authority. He calls for total black participation in the National Black Economic Development Conference, to form a unifying force against the "white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues" to implement the previously listed

197

demands; he calls on black workers, black women, black students and the black unemployed, community groups, welfare organizations, teachers organizations, church leaders and organizations to explain the importance of his demands to the black community while, simultaneously, "confronting" the white power Church structure to meet these demands—"Pressure by whatever means necessary"; he calls for blacks to maintain the elevated tensions of his demands by "the quick use of the press," in order to win gains within a short time span; he calls for "the total disruption of selected church sponsored agencies operating anywhere in the U.S. and the world, until all demands are met;" he calls for staged demonstrations and sit-ins at selected white churches (though they are not to be confused with the type of sit-ins of the sixties)—"active confrontation inside white churches." Forman instructs his emboldened followers to "read the 'Black Manifesto' instead of allowing a sermon," or "passing it out to church members," as a method of preempting Church rhetoric with a more politicized and secular rhetoric. Forman adds that "[t]he principle of self-defense should be applied if attacked." May 4, 1969 ("or a date thereafter") is the day to commence these disruptions. He calls for the IFCO to serve as public relations manager; he calls for whites to shed their love for "white privilege," "white supremacy," and "racism" by assisting blacks in their struggle; he calls for a true test of Christian and Jewish faith, whereas their members will "practice patience, tolerance, understanding and non-violence as they have encouraged, advised and demanded that we as black people should do throughout our entire enforced slavery in the United States." Patience is a virtue that has placed blacks on the giving and receiving ends in the quest for full equality in America. King's 16 April, 1963 speech, "Letter from Birmingham Jail," responded to "liberal white clergyman" who pleaded

with King to halt all demonstrations, referring to them as "untimely and unwise."

Addressed as "My Dear Fellow Clergymen," King says he was "gravely disappointed" at

the religious leaders (who were both Christian and Jewish) plea to "wait."

Forman's requests continue by calling for the creation of a "Black Anti-

Defamation League to be funded by money raised from the International Black Appeal";

a call for the assistance of the black professional and technologically trained middle-

class;[10] a call for a declaration of war on all white Christians and Jews who "are not

willing to meet our demands," and that blacks should be prepared to fight by whatever

means necessary. Forman ends this section of the speech by proposing a "Steering

Committee"[11] and by halting long enough to explain and seek an understanding from

Christian and Jewish Churches for his proposals and philosophical reasoning. Forman

says:

> We are not threatening the churches. We are saying that we know the
>
> churches came with the military might of the colonizers and have been
>
> sustained by the military might of the colonizers. Hence, if the churches in
>
> colonial territories were established by military might, we know deep
>
> within our hearts that we must be prepared to use force to get our
>
> demands. We are not saying that this is the road we want to take. . . .

---

[10] This is a diversion from SNCC's (and other Black Power leaders' opinions) position towards black middle and upper-middle classes in the 1967 speech, "We Must Fill Ourselves With Hatred For All Things White." Moreover, the title of Forman's speech seems to suggest his use of hyperbolic reasoning, as it is relatively extreme, in order to erase centuries of psychological indoctrination of the black psyche to embrace and elevate all things white. A pertinent question would be whether or not Forman, at this point, splinters from SNCC's position on this matter, or SNCC, itself, has made a 180 degree turn concerning this issue.

[11] A quick glance at this list reveals a couple of members who later went on to participate in more mainstream avenues of government—Julian Bond and Fannie Lou Hammer, for instance.

We were captured in Africa by violence. We were kept in bondage and

political servitude and forced to work as slaves by the military machinery

and the Christian church working hand in hand. (Quoted in Meier et al.

548)

Church and State, according to Forman, are dubious doppelgangers or "partners in

crime." Section "B" of Forman's speech is mere reiteration of Section "A". However,

the speech's ending is most ironic, as it reflects the youthful exuberance and

philosophical naiveté (though necessary positioning) of the proposed actions embedded

within Forman's pamphlet. At the end of this pamphlet, distributed at a major conference,

that directly threatens American capitalism, rhetorically extorts money (albeit for a good

purpose), harshly criticizes and threatens the Christian and Jewish churches, renders

direct attacks to all the major automotive corporations, and proposes violence as a

retaliatory weapon to be used in necessary instances, Forman pleads, "Do not reveal this

paper to any suspicious cat, but spread the word among your friends that there is a

revolutionary line for this conference which cannot be stopped" (Quoted in Meier et al.

551). Forman's use of periphrasis to denote "suspicious cat" encourages some

speculation. Exactly, who falls under the moniker of "suspicious cat?" Forman's

"suspicious cats" sound suspiciously similar to those who, in Johnson's second inaugural

address, are responsible for the un-named and indirectly referred to "Terrific danger and

troubles that we once called "foreign" [who] now live among us." Both Johnson *and*

Forman exhibit distrust in discerning those who can and cannot be trusted.

Perhaps any mainstream black leader who responded to Forman's (and other

Black Power leaders') radical platforms and posturing would fall under the category of

"suspicious cat." These more mainstream black leaders sought a "union" similar to the type of unionism Johnson refers to in his inaugural address. Yet, they not so much agree with Johnson's address as they *disagree* with Forman et al.'s methods, solutions and aims—and rhetorical style. Charles V. Hamilton's 14 April, 1968 *New York Times Magazine* article, entitled "Building A New Sense of Community Among Black People" (Meier et al. 551-557) attempts to redefine Black Power as efforts to organize blacks in community efforts for economic, political and education endeavors. Hamilton's Black Power positioning, according to the editors of the book from which this speech was taken, resembles "advocates of race solidarity and self-help at the turn of century." Hamilton says,

> To some people, it is synonymous with premeditated acts of violence to
> destroy the political and economic institutions of this country. Others
> equate Black Power with plans to rid the civil-rights movement of whites
> who have been in it for years. The concept is understood by many to mean
> hatred of and separation from whites; it is associated with calling whites
> "honkies" and with shouts of "Burn, baby, burn!" . . . And still others say
> that Black Power must be seen first of all as an attempt to instill a sense of
> identity and public pride in black people. (Quoted in Meier et al. 552)

Hamilton warns blacks that advocates of violence among black leadership encourages a retaliatory violence at the hands of bigoted and paranoid whites, invites infiltration for surveillance while ignoring African American rights to privacy and, most amusingly, truly reveals the pervasive "bombastic" personas of some black power military leaders. For, Hamilton points out, "he who shouts revolution the loudest is one of the first to run

when the action starts." Yet, Hamilton also warns whites about their complacency

towards black progress and their persistent racist attitudes. Hamilton's is a lengthy

speech that has as its main theme a necessary gradation towards black political,

educational, economic, cultural and psychological solidarity and organization—along

with "the help of whites at many places along the line." This, Hamilton says, is the

"reality" that "clashes" with the Black Power "rhetoric."

Dr. King and the SCLC, in spite of the influence of Black Power philosophy

towards the twilight of King's career, remained ever true to the philosophy of non-

violence and integration. In an article written just before his 4 April, 1968 assassination,

"We Still Believe In Black And White Together" (Meier et al. 584-595), King reiterates

his and the SCLC's philosophy, by pointing out the merits of non-violence philosophy in

the gradual, but solid, progress of blacks and by focusing on the economic depletion

caused by the Viet Nam war on behalf of blacks and whites. King says, "We need this

movement. We need it to bring about a new kind of togetherness between blacks and

whites. We need it to bring allies together and to bring the coalition of conscience

together. A good number of white people have given up on integration too. There are a

lot of "White Power" advocates, and I find that people do tend to despair and engage in

debates when nothing is going on. But when action is taking place, when there are

demonstrations, they have a quality about them that leads to a unity you don't achieve at

other times" (Quoted in Meier et al. 591).

In addition, many black scholars and spokespersons for African Americans

attacked the Black Power movement in a more caustic way than King. Respected

African American scholar Kenneth Clark wrote an article in the January 1968 issue of

Journal of Negro History, "Black Power Is A Sour Grapes Phenomenon" (Meier et al. 610-621), squelching the movement with an accusation of invidiousness on the part of blacks. To Clark, the black-nationalist psyche parallels that of the frustrated "Fox" in Aesop's fable "The Fox and the Grapes," as it is merely an "anguished cry" from a race that has fought so hard for so long, only to have achieved so little. Clark says he believes blacks are being duped into handing bigoted whites the separate world they have historically wanted; for the "cry" of "Black Power" is but the "outbursts of hysterical bitterness . . . random hostility" as a "response" to "recognition . . . that the civil rights movement had moved to the Northern urban racial ghettos where it was now immobilized by ambiguous intensified white resistance to any meaningful change in the predicament of Negroes" (Quoted in Meier et al. 617). Moreover, Clark points out several other recognitions, among these being that, in spite of "strong pronouncements on the part of the President, governors or mayors . . . the overriding fact [is that] the masses of Negroes were still confined to poverty and . . . dehumanizing conditions of the ghetto," *and* the recognition that, in spite of the "promises of the Great Society and . . .[and] the war on poverty, the Negro's children were still doomed to criminally inferior schools . . . youth and males the victims of unemployment, underemployment and stagnation" (Meier et al. 617). To Clark, African Americans are just bellowing at the "hoax" of it all.

Whether Black Power was an anguished cry of frustration against perpetual inequality or the result of other psychological phantasms has yet to be answered. However, one certainty is that any house divided stands on precarious footing. Perhaps, a fitting final analysis of the whys and wherefores of the Black Power movement is Scott and Brockriede's explanation that "the roots of Negro division are of African origin"—

that is, the causes are *atavistic* (Scott and Brockriede 12). Yet, it is an atavism whose

latent potential for a destructive divisiveness was aroused by the odious institution of

slavery. The two authors explain that, from the beginning, slaves brought from Africa

were from different ethnic groups with different cultures. They point out, as example,

contemporary tribal animosities to support their reasoning. Compounding this

disadvantage are other, more debilitating, problems that dissolved any potential for

African American cohesion. These problems are predicated upon the entire institution of

slavery. African settlement into America as slaves (as opposed to free peoples),

geographical and social isolation during slavery, small numbers and mixed origins of

some slaves, racist control of all facets of black life during and after slavery, high

visibility, racist assigned economic and political powerless positions of blacks during and

after slavery, an obliterated family structure, stiff competition with the immigrant

population as freed-persons, and, finally, perpetual societal and economic alienation are

all factors that combine to make up the primordial soup of African American

divisiveness, and should be considered when discerning how to solve black problems and

black needs.

Regardless as to causes, origins or advantages of the Black Power movement, the

movement's misunderstood and allegedly alienating, violent and threatening rhetoric

encouraged negative reactions from whites *and* blacks. Moreover, the Black Power

movement acted as a conduit to the destruction of all movements concerning minority

rights; for after the demise of the Civil Rights movement whites sought and found a

reason to see blacks as an over privileged class of whiners, people who, no matter how

much money one throws at them, never seem to pull themselves together enough to join

mainstream America. These whites refused to see that, in spite of the minimal Civil

Rights progress, blacks still had light-years (as it had taken nearly four hundred years to

get to this point) to go in order to obtain full equality. Moreover, these same whites,

along with the federal government, were reluctant to admit that most of their time,

attention and money had been allocated to the Vietnam War. These same whites, who, by

the way, were in a majority, chose to psychologically, rhetorically and politically *respond*

or react to Black Power with a fear that matched and rivaled the incendiary rhetoric of the

movement—with a psyche identical to that of the 'gorilla complex' fear that permeated

the white mentality during slavery, Reconstruction and the period up unto the Civil

Rights movement. This 'fear' mutated into, or was expressed as, a rhetoric of "law and

order," a rhetoric born out of media exposure to Black Power's rhetorically threatening

violence, the haunting and menacing glances of frustrated and angry black visages and

the stark reality of volatile racial uprisings in a few major American cities. A picture is

worth thousands of words, and the weight of one's recorded words share a valorization in

compliance with gold. Mass Media, according to Scott and Brockriede, and its "media

specialists . . . conveyed only part of the man [referring, in particular, to Stokely

Carmichael as an example of all Black Power rhetoricians] and his message to the mass

audience."[12] Scott and Brockriede accuse journalists and Black Power leaders of failing

to explain to "white liberals . . . how they could become involved in a new coalition

dedicated to new goals which were compatible with their own values and motives," and

"white liberals" who should have been smart enough to avoid acting so "quickly and so

---

[12] For example, Scott and Brockriede juxtapose a speech given by Carmichael to an all-black audience and, the same speech, given to an all-white audience. The authors point out how Carmichael, as with any good rhetorician, toned down or changed his rhetoric to suit the makeup of the audience, his ideology and "mode of identification" (Scott and Brockriede 130). The media, of course, ignored Carmichael's intelligently nuanced strategies and, instead, focused upon the more radical of Carmichael's speeches and actions.

thoughtlessly to the distorted image and partial message . . . fail[ing] to have caught the total thrust of the rhetoric of . . . Black Power" (Scott and Brockriede 130-1). However, most pertinent is, according to Scott and Brockriede's analyses, mass media's destructive role, as they point the most blaming finger to journalists and judge them as being "active agent[s] who make rhetorical decisions of [their] own which may or may not be compatible with those of the rhetorician he reports." "Press power," say the two authors, "seems to have defeated Black Power in a battle of unequals" (Scott and Brockriede 130-131).

Jesus weeps. Unless one has the psyche of Jean Dixon, access to a hotline from God or attends meetings in the Oval Office of the White House (and even this advantage has its moments of extreme blindsided ignorance), the average citizen only knows what newspapers, radio, television, etc. has discretion to reveal. Moreover, just as mass media has the power to destroy, it has the power to construct. It used its power to construct a presidential candidate (who, nearly a decade before, had been defeated by a more media savvy and attractive presidential candidate) who spoke for what he believed were the majority opinions and viewpoints of the American populace. The presidential candidate was born a pacifist, anti-racist Quaker, but chose to use pacifism and anti-racist sentiments as means to alleviate his people from the burdens of the Vietnam War and African American progress. In addition, he managed to rhetorically reconfigure and reduce both the Civil Rights and Black Power movements to synonyms for disorder, threatened violence and societal entropy or chaos. He weaved tropes of a society hunkered down behind closed doors, living daily in quiet desperation, anxiety and fear—

too frightened to speak out against the tumultuousness of the time. Therefore, he chose

to speak out for this muzzled and mute of America—the "silent majority."

Conclusion

The Silent(cing) Authority With A Rage For Order: President Richard Milhous

Nixon

> And then came '68, the year that somehow
> managed to confirm almost *everybody's* worst
> fears about the future of the Republic . . . and
> then, to wrap it all up *another* cheapjack hustler
> moved into the White House. . . . .
> When the Great Scorer comes to list the main
> downers of our time, the Nixon Inauguration will
> have to be ranked Number One. Altamont was a
> nightmare, Chicago was worse, Kent State was so
> bad that it's still hard to find the right words for it
> . . . but there was at least a brief flash of hope in
> those scenes . . . . . The Nixon Inauguration is the
> only public spectacle I've ever dealt with that was
> a king-hell bummer from start to finish. There was
> a stench of bedrock finality about it. . . . [W]atching
> our New President roll by in his black armored
> hearse, surrounded by a trotting phalanx of Secret
> Service men with their hands in the air, batting
> away the garbage thrown out by the crowd. (Hunter
> S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing On The
> Campaign Trial '72)*

You're solid with the Jews, Senator. Where you're in trouble is with the Negroes. . . . You can't change whitey. He needs things just the way they are, like a junkie needs shit. Whitey's hooked on messing with niggers . . . and you want him to go cold turkey. (Sam Greenlee's *The Spook Who Sat By The Door*)

Because Black people have always had to do with so little, the relative abundance of one's own words is . . . all we have to use in fighting . . . a corrupt and vicious society. (Boyd's *The New H.N.I.C.*)

On 20 January, 1969, Richard Nixon stepped up to the podium with these opening

lines: "I ask you to share with me today the majesty of this moment. In the orderly

transfer of power, we celebrate the unity that keeps us free." Nixon made it clear to all

listeners that his agenda was to strive for peace—peace for the embattled American

forces in Viet Nam and the "peace" achieved by squelching the topsy-turvy radicalism,

both black and white, that had pervaded the Sixties. Moreover, Nixon's inaugural

address made it obvious that he aimed to silence the rhetoric of those who sought

systematic change. Nixon, the man famous for his "raucous voice,"[1] by the time he

finally became president demonstrated a distaste for the clamant protest that had

prevailed during the past decade; his first inaugural speech begged for placated voices,

especially for those suffering in "quiet anguish," as he spoke for the "silent majority."[2]

In reality, his nod towards this unheard segment of society heralded the beginning of the

end of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. Nixon's first inaugural address

erases the rhetorical voices that were prevalent during the 60's.

Nixon's first inaugural made it clear that his presidential mission involved both

global and domestic efforts. This address draws upon themes of peace, "spirit,"[3] and

unification.[4] However, all three of these themes sought to heal the nation, globally and

domestically. Nixon's first inaugural address encourages global "peace" as an end to the

Viet Nam war and domestic peace between black and white Americans in regards to

racial strife. Nixon encourages the "spirit" of global cooperative ventures and the

domestic "spirit" of racially cooperative ventures. Finally, Nixon seeks unification of a

deeply divided world torn apart over the Indochina war, and an America deeply divided

---

[1] Hal Bochin, quoting some of the responses to Nixon's first inaugural address, says that Nixon "displayed little of the raucous voice [he was known for]" (Quoted in Ryan 215). Coincedently, Nixon, himself, uses the word "raucous," in the phrase "raucous discord on earth," to refer to the turbulent nature of the Sixties.
[2] Nixon's commonly used campaign phrase.
[3] He uses the word "spirit" eight times.
[4] He uses the word "we," according to Bochin, sixty-six times.

over race and war issues, not to mention the fact that Nixon's preoccupation with domestic peace is coded in such a way that places the burden of domestic peace upon black shoulders. From Nixon's perspective, blacks should make concessions for domestic peace while whites continue as they were. However, it is the phrase "simple trappings" that proves most treacherous to African Americans, as Nixon uses this phrase as an umbrella to shroud several "codes" that, in all actuality, respond to Civil Rights and Black Power leaders in particular and overall black progress, in general. Nixon seems to *talk back* or respond to blacks, leaders and the general black populace alike. Moreover, in response to the Sixties, he asks that African Americans shut up, put up and go on with their lives in more orderly fashion.

Nixon says, "Greatness comes in simple trappings." Under the rubric "simple trappings" is couched the suggestion "To lower our voices." Nixon continues,

> In these difficult years, America has suffered from a fever of words; from inflated rhetoric that promises more than it can deliver; from angry rhetoric that fans discontent into hatreds; from bombastic rhetoric that postures instead of persuading. We cannot learn from one another until we stop shouting at one another—until we speak quietly so that our words can be heard as well as our voices. For its part, government will listen. We will strive to listen in new ways—to the voices of quiet anguish, the voices that speak without words, the voices of the heart—to the injured voices, the anxious voices, the voices that have despaired of being heard.

Under the rubric of "simple trappings" is couched a warning for Nixon's preoccupation for law and order. The newly elected president says,

> Those who have been left out, we will try to bring in. Those left behind, we will help to catch up. For all of our people, we will set as our goal the decent order that makes progress possible and our lives secure. As we reach toward our hopes, our task is to build on what has gone before—not turning away from the old, but turning toward the new.

Bochin points out that "this is the only mention of law and order" in Nixon's first inaugural address (Quoted in Ryan 214). However, in the very first line, after the greeting, Nixon says, "I ask you to share with me today the majesty of this moment. In the *orderly* (italics mine) transfer of power, we celebrate the unity that keeps us free." Nixon uses the word "orderly" to describe a habitually orderly ritual that has been going on in America every four years for the past two hundred years, and during his campaign he made it clear that "law and order," above all else, was a campaign promise he intended to keep, making the word's position first and foremost in his inaugural address a "reiteration" by default of *position*.

Finally, under the rubric of "simple trappings" is couched Nixon's intent to reallocate federal government responsibility for Johnson's Great Society and its progressive social programs, *and* the privatization of black progress:

> In this past third century, government has passed more laws, spent more money, initiated more programs, than in all our previous history. In pursuing our goal of full employment, better housing, excellence in education; . . . we will and must press urgently forward. . . . The

American dream does not come to those who fall asleep. But we are

approaching the limits of what government alone can do. Our greatest

need is to reach beyond government, and to enlist the legions of

the concerned and committed.

In one respect, one can hardly disagree with Nixon's appeal to America's citizens. If the

rate and quality of African American employment is to improve, it requires the

cooperation of America's businesses and corporations—down to the lowest level human

resource worker. If better housing is on the agenda for blacks, a prerequisite would be

cooperative banking ventures—down to the lowest teller at the bank counter. If improved

African American education were a sincere goal, each state would be required to rectify

the abysmal education standards historically allocated to blacks—a job that would rest

upon the shoulders of even those who work as teachers' aides, or the office worker

assembling an admissions portfolio for a black student seeking admission to college. In

short, Nixon, like his former mentor, Eisenhower, believed that the government can pass

all the laws it wants, but it takes the heart of the everyday Americans to want to change

the plight of black people. When Nixon says, "What has to be done, has to be done by

government and people together or it will not be done at all. The lesson of past agony is

that without the people we can do nothing; with the people we can do everything," he is

appealing to white Americans for a cooperative change of heart, for a realization that a

more equitable distribution of America's bounties is a necessity. Nixon's was a new kind

of civil rights rhetoric. Pauley discusses this changed civil rights rhetoric:

The 1968 election introduced a new kind of civil rights rhetoric—or

perhaps more accurately, the campaign amplified and extended a

traditional southern rhetoric embodied in the locution "states' rights." The
political vocabularies of Wallace and Nixon contained phrases like "law
and order," "property rights," "neighborhood schools," "welfare cheats,"
and "hard-core unemployed," which were code words for ideas that many
would find objectionable if stated in plain language: police repress-
sion of black urban dwellers, maintenance of all white neighborhoods and
all-white schools, and neglect of the poor, black underclass. (Pauley 201-
2)

Kennedy's and Johnson's efforts espoused a civil rights rhetoric that primed white
America's consciousness to a point where it could begin to accept the necessary changes
prerequisite for black equality. Nixon, as both presidential candidate and as President,
began to rhetorically "marinade" white American rhetoric and consciousness concerning
African American equality to a numbing and vindicating state of accusatory diatribe that
blamed blacks for their own problems, simultaneously making socio/political equality
rhetoric more palatable for white Americans. At one point in his first inaugural address
Nixon says, "The American dream does not come to those who fall asleep." Sleeping,
perhaps, blacks were. If blacks were encouraged to pack their bags, "brush(ing) up on
their Spanish" and head for Mexico, as Julius Lester once quipped, when they heard
Johnson's southern "cracker drawl,"[5] they should have proceeded to buy a ticket the very
moment they picked up on non-Southern Nixon's coded rhetoric. If anyone was playing
the "sandman," that is, handing out sleep, it was Richard Nixon, for he managed to water

---

[5] Pauley responds to Lester's quip be saying, "Dick Gregory claimed that after the speech, [Johnson's first
inaugural speech] twenty million of us unpacked" (Pauley 170).

down or placate white support for Civil Rights and Black Power agendas and rhetoric to a point of apathy.

Nixon's first inaugural address, in increments or gradations of one-and two-sentence phrases, slowly dampens the entire spirit of the nation's agenda for African American advancement:

> To match the magnitude of our tasks, we need the energies of our people—enlisted not only in grand enterprises, but more importantly in those small, splendid efforts that make headlines in the neighborhood newspaper instead of the national journal. With these, we can build a great cathedral of the spirit—each of us raising it one stone at a time, as he reaches out to his neighbor, helping, caring, doing. I do not offer a life of uninspiring ease. I do not call for a life of grim sacrifice. I ask you to join in a high adventure--one as rich as humanity itself, and as exciting as the times we live in. The essence of freedom is that each of us shares in the shaping of his own destiny. . . . The way to fulfillment is in the use of our talents; we achieve nobility in the spirit that inspires that use. As we measure what can be done, we shall promise only what we know we can produce, but as we chart our goals we shall be lifted by our dreams.
> No man can be fully free while his neighbor is not. To go forward at all is to go forward together. This means black and white together, as one nation, not two.

Nixon's first inaugural address seeks to decentralize and privatize the race issue by putting it in the moral consciousness of the private individual citizen. Most important is

the fact that he helped to destroy the very thing blacks had fought to establish—federal government responsibility for black equality.

What better way to diffuse and confuse a racial rhetorical agenda than to speak in racial codes, a practice both Nixon and Wallace were accused of during the presidential campaign. Pauley quotes Condit and Lucaites to further explain the debilitating effects of coding:

> These racial code words functioned as what Celest Condit and John Lucaites call ideographs: culturally-biased, abstract words or phrases that serve a constitutional value for a group of people and serve as motivations or justifications for public action. Part of the rhetorical effectiveness of such code words reside in their flexibility as cultural signifiers; that is, they can take on multiple cultural meanings, depending on the context. (Pauley 202)

According to Pauley, terms like "neighborhood schools" morph into two meanings: "segregation" for those hearers who oppose the term, and "the positive value of children attending school in the areas in which they live" for those racists who insist upon using the term. Pauley goes on to say that Nixon's "code-word civil rights rhetoric" was a mainstay during his presidency, with words such as "forced integration" and "bloc vote" rearing their heads quite often. Yet, Nixon's administration reiterated that racial discrimination was, "morally and socially wrong and must be eliminated," while, on the other hand, the President was prone to make private comments to White House aides such as this: "The NAACP would say my rhetoric was poor even if I gave the Sermon on the Mount" (Quoted in Pauley 203). Nixon took a Janus-faced position on race rhetoric,

with the two faces canceling out each other to the point of blankness, simultaneously erasing black leadership rhetoric.

Perhaps, the reason for Nixon's duplicitous rhetoric is that Nixon, psychologically, was a duplicitous leader, for both his inaugural/administrative rhetoric and behavior resembled that of a leader leading a democratic country *and* a kingdom. Bochin's analysis comes extremely close to describing Nixon as a man who would be king, as he gives clues that make connections between Nixon's first inaugural and his demise during his second administration. Bochin specifically points out Nixon's special request to add the phrase "majesty of the moment" to the introduction of his first inaugural speech—after the speech had been written and approved. Bochin recalls, "Not until Saturday were Nixon and Price satisfied that the speech was ready. On Sunday morning, however, Nixon telephoned Price to discuss an introduction that would invite the public to share the "majesty of the moment" with him. He wanted it done gracefully, without his appearing "self celebrating" (Quoted in Ryan 213). Later in his essay, Bochin makes this analysis:

> The honeymoon period following the inaugural did not last long. Nixon's failure to end quickly American involvment in Vietnam brought steadily increasing criticism from Congress, the media, and vocal elements of the citizenry. Stung by the criticism and by what he considered to be disloyalty from some members of his administration, who leaked classified material to the press, he began to act out the presidential role he had implied in his inaugural address. Nixon became the president who was the government, acting without regard for constitutional limitations.

In the words of Theodore White, Nixon came to believe he was "the sole

custodian of America's power," and under the guise of protecting national

security he authorized the wiretaps and surveillances that eventually

culminated in Watergate and his resignation. (Quoted in Ryan 220)

Bochin's analysis of Nixon's psyche and behavior as a leader can be applied to his

attitude and behavior towards African American leadership and rhetoric. More important

is the fact that Nixon's notion about the nature and function of a democracy has a parallel

in ancient Greece. Nixon's assertive agenda to silence all radical rhetoric, and especially

black leadership rhetoric, is reminiscent of the ancient Greek period following the

Athenian model of Protagoras' concept of political deliberation for the common good of

citizenship and the community. Immediately following Protagoras' ideal Athenian

practice of political deliberation was the profane practice of using, as Poulakos's

Classical Rhetorical Theory puts it, "sheer force" (Poulakos 41), whereas antaean, though

the ancient Greek character Antaeus, whose name is that from which this word is derived,

achieved his power from the earth, Athenian naval power encouraged its leaders to view

political deliberation as an obstacle to growth and ambition. Under this new

development, the ideal notion of citizenship and community were shoved aside to make

way for unchecked Athenian growth. Poulakos explains, "Equality and compromise, once

the requisites for the city's self-determination, became burdens the weak imposed on the

strong. Justice and respect, once the essential conditions for communal coexistence,

became obstacles to Athens' pursuit of power. In this new climate, political deliberation

stopped concerning itself with the problem of collective representation. Now the

problem was how to subjugate the will of the many to the will of the few" (Poulakos 41).

African American leaders were as concerned about "law and order," "bootstrap

advancement," and immediate disengagement from Vietnam as Nixon in his first

inaugural address. All African American leadership rhetoric during Nixon's first

administration deals with these issues. Muhammad Ali's 1975 autobiography,[6] *The*

Greatest, tells of his fight for exemption from the armed forces. Ali, the icon of black

and white anti-war dissent, and America's first quintessential socio/political rapper, cites

a poem to express his discontent with the transformation of his draft status from 1-Y to 1-

A:

> Keep asking me, no matter how long/On the war in Viet Nam, I sing this
>
> song/I ain't got no quarrel with the Viet Cong . . . (Quoted in Carson et al.
>
> 445)

Ali had been globally notorious for his penchant for "waxing poetic," but, on this

occasion, his response to the draft board and America about becoming another black

victim in one of America's foreign shore exhibitions drew scathing criticism and

panegyric praise from around the nation and the globe.

Nixon, in his first inaugural address, claims that "The American dream does not

come to those who fall asleep," thereby suggesting that hard work and diligence are the

keys to success. Whether Nixon pointedly addresses blacks with this phrase is debatable;

---

[6] Though Ali's autobiography was released a few years after Nixon first takes office and the fact that Ali focuses on the year 1966-7 in this poem, his struggle against military induction and his focus upon anti-war issues occurred throughout Nixon's tenure in the White House. The Boxing Commission took Ali's license in 1967. It took more than seven years to get it back. Therefore, Ali's struggle with the federal government and the boxing commission occurred during most of Nixon's term in office. Considering all this, the poem quoted here is a more of a "representative" response to Nixon's war policies.

however, the phrase comes right *after* his promise for better employment, education, and rural/urban situations, *before* his reallocation of government economic and fiscal responsibility for social programs, and, most obviously, is embedded *within* the section of his speech that literally dismantles Johnson's Great Society platform. Therefore, one might surmise that Nixon targets blacks *and* poor whites with this unjustifiable and accusatory "sentence."

Yet, in spite of black preemptive response to Nixon's call for African Americans to forgo any sort of lassitude in pursuit of the American dream, minority progress, as usual, had its underside—that is, "white backlash" was an encroaching sentiment that dampered the spirit of rapid black progress. Nixon's first inaugural address, at one point, says this on behalf of America's current racial situation:

> No man can be fully free while his neighbor is not. To go forward at all is to go forward together. This means black and white together, as one nation, not two. The laws have caught up with our conscience. What remains is to give life to what is in the law: To ensure at last that as all are born equal in dignity before God, all are equal in dignity before man.

Nixon's assertion that "the laws have caught up with our conscience" deserves interpretation. Is one to assume that the phrase means that the federal government had finally passed civil rights laws that reflected an *already* egalitarian mindset of the nation? Gerald Gill, in an introduction to a chapter entitled "A Nation of Law?," in *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader*, lays bare the true sentiments and mindset of the America Nixon "knows." Gill says,

The years from 1968-71 were marked by growing polarization among American citizens. The demands for racial equality and voting rights that had characterized earlier freedom movement campaigns and the ongoing calls for racial solidarity and community empowerment of the late 1960's had made a growing number of white Americans, both inside and outside of government, fearful about the forms and prospects of future developments in race relations. Thus a radical backlash began to develop, partially manifested in the Goldwater presidential campaign in 1964 and nurtured more fully in the Wallace and Nixon campaigns of 1968. Exploiting code words such as "law and order," Richard Nixon sought to gain support from those who wished to see more radical forms of dissent and dissatisfaction . . . quelled. (Quoted in Carson et al. 500).

At one point in Nixon's first inaugural speech he says, "I know America's youth. . . . I have come to know the leaders of the world, . . . I know that peace does not come through wishing for it . . . I also know the people of the world. . . . I know America. I know the heart of America is good." According to Mayer, Nixon's private feelings regarding race were that "federal programs to aid blacks were of marginal use because of the genetic inferiority of blacks" (Mayer 99).[7] Nixon could have assumed that the majority of white American conscience was similar to his.

---

[7] Nixon seems to have seeded his administration with those of a like mind. According to Mayer, Daniel Moynihan, Nixon's most prominent and liberal appointee, made his share of political snafus in regards to blacks. At one point Moynihan wrote a memo calling for the benign neglect of black problems by the administration, causing a "firestorm" of criticism that required his having to explain that he was only referring to "black militants," not "blacks generally." Mayer points out how Moynihan brought up the issue of the controversial research concerning the "genetic inferiority" of blacks in a meeting with Nixon's top black aide, James Farmer. Mayer says, "according to Farmer, Moynihan said, 'Well, Jim, what your people need are some of our genes,' greatly offending Farmer."

In the face of the, according to Gill, "changing mood" of whites, or white

backlash, black activists persisted in their struggle for black progress. Black leadership

began to shift and focus more upon holding office in order to change and influence laws

within the system while implementing black political power. Black leadership began to

take on issues such as political autonomy and prison rights, claiming that the horrendous

conditions under which most blacks are born and forced to struggle for survival qualifies

any black prisoner the legal right to be referred to as a "political prisoner." Black *and*

white Americans reacted to Nixon's proposed reversal of social fortunes. White

Americans joined forces with blacks and exhibited support for black political progress,

expressing their sentiments by using the ballot box to respond to Nixon's abandonment of

Johnson's Great Society agenda. African Americans utilized their empowering voting

rights, gained during the Johnson administration, to practice more assertiveness in the

political arena, as black politicians ran, and won, seats as mayor and in Congress. Mayor

Richard Hatcher's 1972 keynote address, entitled "We must Pave the Way: An

Independent Black Political Thrust," reflects the urgent attitudes many blacks felt, as, for

the first time in American political history, blacks managed to gain a foothold in some of

the most politically powerful slots. Hatcher aptly portrays the jubilatory spirit of the

moment when he makes these biblical comparisons to the contemporary state of black

emancipatory politics:

> As we look out over this vast and expectant assemblage, we can imagine
>
> how Moses and the people of Israel thrilled when they witnessed the
>
> parting of the Red Sea. . . . We picture the jubilation of Joshua and his
>
> soldiers at that last trumpet blast. We experience the exaltation of Noah

when he gazed at Mount Ararat as the clouds parted and the sun shone

down. We know the spirit of triumph and the determination that infuse

Dr. Du Bois and his fellow warriors at the first gathering of the Niagara

movement. . . . (Quoted in Carson et al. 482-3)

Imagination, too, is everything. Hatcher constructs allusions, metaphors and similes that run the gamut from biblical times to traditional African American fighters for black political emancipation. Moreover, in spite of the fact that Hatcher represents the mainstream political platform as mayor, his plea for a strong, black political agenda refuses to discriminate, unlike the polarized radical and non-radical pleas by some past black leaders, offering an "embrace" to radical black leaders such as Angela Davis and Bobby Seale. Poulakos says, "At the heart of the Isocratean theory of political deliberation, then, lies the orator's ability to translate the good of the polis into specific action" (Poulakos 47). Hatcher's speech that espouses an all-inclusive agenda for black political participation and progress is a giant step forward towards the specific action of increasing African American political power.

Simultaneously, politically supported federal agencies began to wage a war of open hostility towards more radical activists, subjecting them and their organizations to increased surveillance and harassment. Under the Johnson administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation had begun a counterintelligence program, referred to under the moniker, COINTELPRO, to investigate, disrupt and neutralize any and all coalitions among black militant groups. The Black Panther Party and the American criminal justice system bore the brunt as victims of these federal government sanctioned insurgencies. And, despite these crack downs on black activists and the criminal justice system, black

activists refused to be silenced and increasingly spoke out about the Panthers and the

justice system. Chicago Black Panther leader Fred Hampton's "Fred Speaks" calls for

armed revolutionary struggle as he points out the symbiotic relationship between

America's capitalist economy and racism. "I'm telling you that we're living in a sick

society," Hampton declares. "We're involved in a society that produces ADC victims.

We're involved in a society that produces criminals, thieves and robbers and rapers.

Whenever you are in a society like that, that is a sick society" (Quoted in Carson et al.

504). Nixon's "law and order" agenda, along with the FBI, the Chicago police and an

informant named William O'Neal responded to Hampton's societal admonitions. On 4

December, 1969, fourteen Chicago police officers staged a raid on Hampton's apartment,

killing him and another Panther member and wounding four others.

Other activists, such as Angela Davis, fought against overt and covert moves by

the government to obliterate all activism within and without America's prisons, thereby

pointing out the abusive harassment that placed blacks into prison and the abusive tactics

that kept them there, if they managed to stay alive. Davis, diva of "consciousness " and a

legendary prisoners' rights activist, responds to the odious atmosphere surrounding

Nixon's "law and order" mission in her autobiography, where she reveals numerous

accounts of unjustifiable homicide at the hands of police and prison officials and her

relationship with Soledad prisoner, George Jackson.[8] Davis tells of Leonard Deadwilder,

who was stopped and shot to death for speeding as he rushed his pregnant wife to the

hospital in Los Angeles. Davis recounts an event where Gregory Clark, an unarmed

eighteen-year-old, was profiled, stopped and shot to death by a policeman because "he

didn't look like he fit the Mustang he was driving." Somehow, the policeman claimed to

---

[8] *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* (1974).

have acted in self-defense when he shot the youth in the back of the head. In spite of the

fact that the young man laid face down and hand cuffed (from the back) on the sidewalk

for the duration of this incident, the courts ruled "justifiable homicide" (Quoted in Carson

et al. 541). More interesting is the fact that Davis reveals that black activist harassment

was as heavy handedly applied to black intellectuals as to other more grass roots radical

figures. Davis tells the story of the confusingly complex ordeal George Jackson faced in

the courts, her struggle to maintain her academic freedom (due to her communist

leanings) to teach at UCLA, and the sacrifices she made to organize the Soledad Brothers

Defense Committee on behalf of Jackson and other black prisoners.

The ramifications of Nixon's first inaugural address and his administration's

agenda for "law and order" displayed its effects in New York's Attica Prison, as well.

And, in a rash of prison uprisings, Attica revealed that Nixon's first inaugural agenda

encouraged a boomerang effect. It helped land many radical activists behind bars—bars

that, instead of squelching their revolutionary drives, only precipitated stronger radical

leanings. Nixon helped concretize and exacerbate the already pathetic plight of radicals

who, relatively speaking, outside prison walls were, likely, less harmful to America's

justice system. Incarcerating a radical fails to rehabilitate the radical's extremist

philosophy and behavior. The Attica ordeal included an actual takeover by the inmates, a

formally issued set of prisoner demands, intervention by none other than Eldridge

Cleaver and Governor Nelson Rockefeller and, finally, a "storming of the prison" to re-

take control by the National Guard and para-military prison officials.[9]

---

[9] All articles relating to the Attica uprising can be found in Carson et al. *Eyes On The Prize*, in the section entitled "A Nation of Law?"

Nixon's first term in office was as psychologically confusing and turbulent an era for blacks as the 60's were for whites, due, for the most part, to Nixon's determined agenda to put every thing and everyone back where they once were before the Civil Rights movement. To be exact, the atmosphere of Nixon's first term in office is reflected in his first inaugural address. At one point Nixon says, "We have endured a long night of the American spirit. But as our eyes catch the dimness of the first rays of dawn, let us not curse the remaining dark. Let us gather the light." These few lines are saturated with surreptitiously odious metaphors referring to "darkness" and "light." Upon reflection of Nixon's first term in office, his "reigning in" of the rapid momentum of black progress after the racially infused social/cultural/political era of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements during the 60's, his agenda for incarcerating any black *and* white (moderate or radical) dissident bold enough to speak out against persistent minority injustice, and his code riddled rhetoric concerning blacks and black issues suggest that Nixon, in these three lines of his first inaugural, is telling America, especially white America, that the "day" of his reign in the White House will be the day when white supremacy returns—or as close an approximation to it as possible.

Considering all this, it can be said that Nixon forewarns Americans, as does Kennedy and Johnson, about the direction in which his administration will go. This "augury" aspect of the inaugural speech is inherent in its nature. However, many rhetorical scholars are ambiguous as to the functions of the presidential inaugural address. Ryan opens the introduction of his book with this observation:

[T]he president delivers persuasive speeches to move Congress and the people and to move the people to stir the Congress if it is intransigent. Hence, even on Inauguration Day, a largely ceremonial occasion, a presidential persuader still seeks acquiescence and action from the Congress and the people in his first rhetorical deed as the nation's new chief executive. . . .'Conventional wisdom,' hold Karyln Campbell and Kathleen Jamieson, 'and ordinary language treat rhetorical type, but generalizing about them has been difficult.' Despite the difficulty, Campbell and Jamieson determined that presidential inaugurals are a genre distinct from other forms of presidential discourse, that inaugurals are an instance of epideictic or ceremonial rhetoric, and that all inaugurals contain(s) four generic elements, which are oriented toward contemplation rather than action (Ryan xv-xvi).

Yet, on the other hand, Ryan warns against an assumptive "sameness" of inaugural addresses, suggesting that readers pay close attention to the "ever-changing nexus between a president, an inaugural text, and a historical context" (Ryan xvi). Ryan quotes Kenneth Thompson who says, "it is the times in part that shape the President's outlook, and what he feels called on to say. Moreover, each historical era brings with it social and intellectual tendencies that influence contemporary thought" (Quoted in Ryan xvii). Kennedy's first inaugural Cold War concerns reflected the contemporary mindset, as a Communist threat was the current pervasive fear. Johnson's first and second inaugural addresses were born and nurtured in the clime of civil rights.

Aside from other scholars' proposed criteria concerning inaugural addresses, Ryan has several of his own propositions concerning this type of address: (1) that genre theory is more of a hindrance than a help for inaugurals, encouraging readers to miss or ignore certain key rhetorical elements of the address; (2) all inaugural addresses do not contain all generic elements and are not all alike; (3) inaugural addresses are not epideictic, according to Aristotle's definition of the epideictic address, but, instead are more *deliberative* (italics mine).

This dissertation agrees with Thompson and Ryan's theories concerning the inaugural address. Moreover, there are certain rhetorical criteria that can be added in support of Ryan's theories. Further advancing Thompson's and Ryan's theories, one can say that not only are presidential inaugural addresses deliberative and should be considered "*in situ*" or within the historical context of the time, but, moreover, the deliberative aspects of the speech are foregrounded, or they tend to become more deliberative when situated within an historical context or time when pervasive, divisive and controversial issues permeate the mindset of the president and voters during the campaigns. Perhaps Poulakos best explains the reason for this, whereas they point out the nature of political deliberation, itself, and the psyche of the political deliberator. Poulakos says, "Whether it refers to an individual dilemma, a communal problem, or a national issue, deliberation is the process of making decisions in the face of uncertainty and in the absence of established criteria. While the motives of deliberation are ambiguity and doubt, its goals are decision and action" (Poulakos 34).

Poulakos further explains the nature of a deliberative speech by pointing out three main principles of deliberation: (1) "Deliberation provides responses to urgent

situations" (36). When Johnson assumed office after Kennedy's assassination, the nation's most urgent situation was the highly charged racial issue, especially in the South. Johnson says, "First, no memorial oration or eulogy could more eloquently honor President Kennedy's memory than the earliest possible passage of the civil rights bill for which he fought so long. We have talked long enough in this country about equal rights. We have talked for one hundred years or more. It is time now to write the next chapter, and to write it in the books of law." A sense of urgency in the face of great tragedy surfaces in this speech.

Similarly, the arms race, the potential for nuclear destruction, communist aggression, and the Iron Curtain were Kennedy's urgent concerns, as he gives an inaugural address that expresses the urgent need for America's place as a center stage "player" in the global arena. His very first words are, "The world is very different now. For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life."

Poulakos's second principle of deliberation is that it "begins with some form of doubt and uncertainty. It takes place because humans have only partial and incomplete knowledge" (Poulakos 36). President Kennedy's "New Frontier" theme surrounding his inaugural is tantamount to Star Trek's motto to "Go where no man has gone before," as he says, "Let the word go forth from this time and . . . that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans," as he speaks with uncertainty about a world divided between two great powers, with two diametrically opposed political doctrines. Johnson's first inaugural address, expectantly, expresses the sadness and fear of assuming power as the result of a horrendous murder. That he repeatedly refers to Kennedy's name and

every agenda Kennedy espoused while promising to continue Kennedy's programs reflects Johnson's uncertainty concerning his new and unexpected role as America's leader. Moreover, Johnson, more than Kennedy, anticipated with some skepticism the reaction of white America, especially southern whites, to the eradication of hundreds of years of discrimination.

The third principle Poulakos points out in regards to deliberative addresses is that "(g)iven the limits of available knowledge, political deliberation looks to consensus as the next best thing . . . it seeks the kinds of decisions that most citizens will find most satisfactory under the circumstances" (Poulakos 37). More than Kennedy, Johnson's first and second inaugural addresses have a sense of appealing to citizens. At one point in the first inaugural, Johnson says, "I urge you again, as I did in 1957 and again in 1960, to enact a civil rights law so that we can move forward to eliminate from this Nation every trace of discrimination and oppression that is based upon race and color." The fact that Johnson structures his second inaugural around the American Jeremiad and the Covenant motif is a subtle message to remind Americans about the principles for which America originally stands—and that he seeks the consensus or approval of America's citizens for his second inaugural proposals.

Moreover, when presidents give these more deliberative inaugural addresses, Americans, especially American leaders, *listen*—and they *respond* or talk back about the issues or points of the speech or policies that concern them at some point during the president's tenure in office. This habit, practice or privilege, whatever one may call it, is inherent in the nature of America's political system, a supposedly democratic process, and, as such, is, figuratively, the citizen's, especially America's leading citizens, right to

contribute in democracy's decision-making process. Poulakos points out how, in ancient Greek times, every council meeting began with the question "Who wishes to speak?" (Poulakos 34), and how this privilege is one of the mainstays of democracy's claim that, ultimately, power rests in the hands of the people. Though response may not be behind the cloistered doors of a council meeting, the public arena serves as a "council" of community for which speakers may respond or deliberate. Moreover, as Poulakos points out, Protagoras says he believes that public deliberation is an avenue for which minority (meaning number) views have an opportunity to be discussed, thereby juxtaposing their views against majority views for consideration.

However, *who* and *how* Americans respond to change over time is significant. Since this dissertation focuses upon African American responses to presidential inaugural speeches and the social context from which these addresses derive, it is imperative to pose the question as to whom, four decades hence the Civil Rights and Black Power movement, responds today. Perhaps the best answer is that contemporary response to any presidential speech comes from all avenues of black leadership. That is, since the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, blacks have garnered enough gains in avenues such as education, politics, sports and entertainment to have those that are considered leaders and spokespersons who willingly respond to black issues in careers such as college professors/intellectuals, mayors/governors/senators, or TV/radio/cinema/media personalities. Be they issues that are generated by presidents and their speeches (inaugural or otherwise) or other key figures in federal government, African American responders have a plethora of platforms from which to deliberate in response to presidential agendas. For example, Nation Public Radio's "Tavis Smiley Show" is an

excellent forum for black response to presidential rhetoric, as nationally known figures

such as professor Cornell West, civil rights attorney Connie Rice and professor Michael

Eric Dyson are weekly scheduled commentators responding to pertinent black social and

political issues, alongside black spokespersons from a myriad of other venues. Todd

Boyd's *The New H.N.I.C. (Head Niggas in Charge): The Death of Civil Rights and*

Reign of Hip Hop (2002) argues on behalf of "hip-hop" entertainment figures as current

responders or spokespersons for post-Civil Rights/Black Power African Americans.

Boyd explains his analysis in this fashion:

> In the same way that civil rights leaders spoke to the conditions back in
>
> the day, hip hop artists now speak to a populace often disillusioned by
>
> those considered overtly political in a traditional sense. When a noted
>
> civil rights figure like Jesse Jackson, who has often sat on moral and
>
> religious high ground, is revealed to have fathered a child out of wedlock,
>
> his overall political message tends to carry much less weight. Jack-
>
> son's "baby mama drama" is, then, no different from that of numerous
>
> rappers or Black athletes whose exploits are often used to indicate the
>
> supposed immorality of this present generation. When Jackson appears
>
> at the 2001 Source Awards and shouts the hip hop phrase "fo shizzle my
>
> nizzle" (for sure, my nigga) to the audience before giving a special award
>
> to Baltimore Ravens football star Ray Lewis—who himself was on trial
>
> for murder only a year before—it is obvious that hip hop has not only
>
> overtaken civil rights as the dominate sentiment in modern Black life, it
>
> has consumed it. (Boyd 10)

Boyd seems to rationalize that the demystification of African American Civil Rights leadership has managed to topple many Civil Rights leaders and replace them with more "real" or less perfect leaders who are no longer subject to the perfectionist standards of past leaders. Boyd goes on to cite such groups as Outkasts' and their misunderstood song, "Rose Parks" (whereas Boyd says the hook for the song was [A]h ha/huss that fuss/everybody move to the back of the bus/do you want to bump and slump wit us?/we the type of people make the club get crunk" (Quoted in Boyd 6), or Master P's "Dear Mr. President" (the rapper "drops" a song dedicated to President Bill Clinton, Master P says Clinton is "the realest nigga I know, the President. . . . we want you to know, we feel your pain down here in the ghetto") (Quoted in Boyd 111).

Boyd says that the reason for this change of spokespersons within African American leadership is that hip hop, as opposed to the hard core political arena of Civil Rights and Black Power, is where many post-civil rights generational "anxieties" are being worked out. Boyd goes on to point out the different climates between the "then" and "now" by saying, "Many people are immediately taken aback because civil rights is assumed to be political and hip hop is thought to be cultural, . . . Yet, in many cases, what was once considered politics has been supplanted by what is now often about cultural politics" (Boyd 10).[10]

This is no new phenomenon. Political, culturally political or otherwise, those of the Civil Rights and Black Power generation may remember Curtis Mayfield's series of hit songs that were so politically charged that they became anthems for the Civil Rights and Black Power movements; James Brown's compositions that were, perhaps, the first

---

[10] However, Boyd points out the symbiotic relationship between hip hop and Black Power ideology. Boyd says, "hip hop was packaged by the sentiments of Black nationalism, and codified in the logo of the hip hop fashion line FUBU, which means, "for us, by us"" (Boyd 17).

to declare a brazen and open embrace of "blackness"; and Stevie Wonder's popular but relevant Civil Rights/Black Power compositions. One could go on forever. The difference between the then and the now is, perhaps, that popular music and the entertainment industry never held the ubiquitous center stage cultural presence that it currently holds. That is, there were no twice or thrice daily doses of "Entertainment Tonight" or endless "MTV" style media bombardments to reinforce and program our mindsets to foreground what previously had been only a facet of American life. Americans have always loved black music (conscientious or otherwise) and black popular culture; however, it was backgrounded in relation to more serious black political/cultural mediums. And, as Boyd points out, in the case of black culture (especially music and sports), there is an unprecedented urgency to use black cultural venues as "cultural sites" for an "uncompromised" sense of "Blackness," thereby subjecting these two black cultural arenas to "profitable" commodification (Boyd 16).

Yet, in any case, black leaders (whatever their venue) are still responding or talking back, and, hopefully, in a manner from which all Americans can benefit.

References

Anderson, Perry. *The Origins of Postmodernity*. London: Verso, 1998.

Bell, Derrick. *And We Are Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice.*

New York: Basic Books, 1989.

Bell, Derrick A. *Race, Racism and American Law*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1980.

Black, Edwin. *War Against The Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to*

Create a Master Race. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003.

Boyd, Todd. *The New H.N.I.C.: The Death of Civil Rights and the Reign of Hip Hop.*

New York: New York University Press, 2002.

Burns, Stewart. *To the Mountaintop: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Sacred Mission to Save*

America: 1955-1968. San Francisco: Harper, 2004.

Calloway, Colin G. *The World Turned Upside Down: Indian Voices from Early*

America. The Bedford Series in History and Culture. Boston: Bedford Books of

St. Martin's Press, 1994.

Caro, Robert A. *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Master of the Senate*. New York:

Alfred A. Knopf, 2002.

Carson, Clayborn, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, Darlene Clark Hine,

eds. *The Eyes On the Prize Civil Rights Reader*. New York: Penguin Press, 1991.

Cleaver, Eldridge. *Soul On Ice*. New York: A Ramparts Book, 1968.

"Citizen King." *The American Experience*. PBS. January 19, 2004.

Condit, Celeste Michelle and John Louis Lucaites. *Crafting Equality: America's Anglo-African Word*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Cose, Ellis. *The Envy of the World*. New York: Washington Square Press, 2002.

Davis, Angela. *An Autobiography*. New York, Random House, 1974.

Davis, David Brion. *In the Image of God: Religion, Moral Values, and Our Heritage Of Slavery*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

Delgado, Richard. *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995.

Dallek, Robert. *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy 1917-1963*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2003.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man*. New York: Random House, 1947.

Fanon, Franze. *Black Skin/White Masks*. New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1967.

_____. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

Foucault, Michel. *Archaeology of Knowledge*. Translated form the French by A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.

Frazer, James. *The Golden Bough: The Roots of Religion and Folklore*. New York: Gramercy Books, 1993.

Gates, Henry Louis. Kentucky Author Forum. January 20, 2004.

Greenlee, Sam. *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969.

Guiner, Lani, and Gerald Torres. *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy*. Cambridge: Harvard University

Press, 2002.

Gutierrez-Jones, Carl. *Critical Race Narratives: A Study of Race, Rhetoric, and Inquiry*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.

Hacker, Andrew. *The End of the American Era*. New York: Atheneum, 1970.

_____. *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1993.

Harrell, Camara Jules P. *Manichean Psychology: Racism and the Minds of People of African Descent*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1999.

Halberstam, David. *The Fifties*. New York: Villard Books, 1993.

hooks, bell. *Talking Back: thinking feminist, thinking black*. Boston: South End Press, 1989.

Hountondji, Pauline J. *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976.

Jensen, Richard and John C. Hammerback. "Your Tools are Really the Audience: The Rhetoric of Robert Parris Moses." *Communications Monographs* 65:2 (1998): 126-140.

Levine-Rasky, Cynthia. *Working Through Whiteness: International Perspectives*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Lewis, John L. *Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998.

Loury, Glenn C. *The Anantomy of Racial Inequality*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Lowell, Robert. *Life Studies and For The Union Dead*. New York: The Noonday

Press, 1956.

Mailer, Norman. *The Armies of the Night.* New York: Penguin Books, 1968.

_____. *The White Negro.* San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1957.

Mathis, Deborah. *Yet A Stranger: Why Black Americans Still Don't Feel At Home.*
New York: Warner Books, 2002.

Matt, Daniel C. *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism.*
San Francisco: Harper, 1994.

Mayer, Jeremy D. *Running On Race: Racial Politics in Presidential Campaigns,
1960-2000.* New York: Random House, 2002.

Meier, August, Elliot Rudwick, Francis Broderick. *Black Protest Thought in the
Twentieth Century.* Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc, 1971.

Miller, Perry. *Errand Into The Wilderness.* Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard
University Press, 1956.

Nakayama, Thomas, Judith N. Martin, eds. *Whiteness: The Communication of Social
Identity.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999.

Pauley, Garth E. *The Modern Presidency & Civil Rights: Rhetoric on Race from
Roosevelt to Nixon.* College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001.

Platt, Tony and Susan Chandler. "Constant Struggle: E. Franklin Frazier and
Black Social Work in the 1920's. *Social Work.* July-August 1988.

Poulakos, John and Takis. *Classical Rhetorical Theory.* Boston: Houghton
Mifflin, 1999.

Rasky, Cynthia-Levine, ed. *Working Through Whiteness: International Perspectives.*
Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.

Rothengerg, Paula S. *White Privilege: essential readings on the other side of racism.* New York: Worth Publishers, 2002.

Riddlesperger, James and Donald W. Jackson, eds. *Presidential Leadership and Civil Rights Policy.* Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995.

Ryan, Halford. *The Inaugural Addresses of Twentieth-Century American Presidents.* Praeger Series in Political Communication. Connecticut: Praiger, 1993.

Scott, Robert L., and Wayne Brockriede. *The Rhetoric of Black Power.* New York: Harper and Row, 1969.

Smith, Arthur T. *Rhetoric of Black Revolution.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1969.

Stull, Bradford T. *Amid the Fall, Dreaming of Eden: Dubois, King, Malcolm X, and Emancipatory Composition.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999.

The Connections. Dick Gordon. National Public Radio. 31 December, 2003.

Thompson, Dr. Hunter S. *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail '72.* San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1973.

Wiesel, Elie. *Night.* New York: MacGibbon & Kee, 1960

Wildman, Stephanie, et al. *Privilege Revealed: How Invisible Preference Undermines America.* New York: New York University Press, 1996.

Winthrop, John. *A Modell of Christian Charity. The Heath Anthology of American Literature.* Paul Lauter. Vol.1. Lexington, MA: Heath, 1994.

Witmer, Peter O., and Bruce VanWyngarden. *Aquarius Revisted.* New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987.

Wright, Bobby E. *The Psychopathic Racial Personality.* Chicago: Third World Press,

1984.

Wright, Richard. *Native Son.* New York: Harper and brothers, 1940.

All presidential speeches acquired from Google:
http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/li36/speeches/lbi.htm

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME: Jacqueline Elaine Brown

ADDRESS: 1157 S. First St., Apt #1
          Louisville, KY 40203

DOB: Louisville, Kentucky – December 25, 1951

EDUCATION
& TRAINING: B.A., Humanities
                 University of Louisville
                 1975

                 M.A., English
                 University of Louisville
                 1991

                 Ph.D. English
                 University of Louisville
                  2004

AWARDS: SREB Dissertation Year Fellow
          2003-2004

          Scholars For The Dream Award
          2003

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES: Modern Language Association; National Council
                         of Teachers of English, Philip Roth Scoiety

NATIONAL MEETING PRESENTATIONS: 4C's Conference-New York, 2003