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## INSTRUMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: THE INTERSECTIONS OF BLACK POWER AND ANTI-VIETNAM WAR ACTIVISM IN THE UNITED STATES, 1964-1972

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INSTRUMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: THE INTERSECTIONS OF BLACK  
POWER AND ANTI-VIETNAM WAR ACTIVISM IN THE UNITED STATES, 1964-  
1972

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DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the  
College of Arts and Sciences  
at the University of Kentucky

By  
Amanda L. Higgins

Lexington, KY

Director: Dr. Tracy Campbell, Professor of History

Lexington, KY

2013

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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### INSTRUMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS: THE INTERSECTIONS OF BLACK POWER AND ANTI-VIETNAM WAR ACTIVISM IN THE UNITED STATES, 1964- 1972

Instruments of Righteousness investigates the class-, race-, and gender-based identities and intersections of women and men in the Black Power movement and their various organizing activities to gain certain and defined concessions from federal, state, and local governments. It argues that the intersections of Black Power and anti-Vietnam War activism created changing definitions of black masculinity and femininity, expressed through anti-draft and anti-war work. Black Power and anti-war activism cannot and should not be investigated separate from one another. The experiences of Black Power soldiers, antiwar members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panther Party, and the Third World Women's Alliance, and exiled black Americans highlight the ways the anti-Vietnam War and Black Power activism depended on each other for rhetorical, theoretical, and personnel needs. Additionally, it explores the ways that Black Power organizations articulated "Third World" mentalities in their anti-war battles. By espousing a shared identity with people of color throughout the world, Black Power organizations placed themselves in a transnational conversation among radical, decolonizing nation-states. Black Power's advocates' roles as non-governmental actors in the Third World strengthened ties with and presented new images of United States citizens throughout the decolonizing world.



KEYWORDS: Black Power, Vietnam, Anti-war, Masculinity, Oppression

Amanda Leigh Higgins

Student Signature

November 27, 2013

Date

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POWER AND ANTI-VIETNAM WAR ACTIVISM IN THE UNITED STATES, 1964-  
1972

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November 27, 2013  
Date

*For Cooper and Lily with the hope that they grow up in a more peaceful and just world*

*AND*

*For all those who have and continue to fight to make that world possible*

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Tracy Campbell pushed me to be better with every word I wrote. He inspired me to be a better teacher and modeled that life outside of academia was both possible and necessary, because there are important things beyond Patterson Office Tower like the latest episode of *Mad Men* and Kentucky athletic victories. His steadfast support and belief in my ability made graduate school just a little bit more bearable. Being a student of TC's was a privilege and I will always cherish his quick email responses and willingness to listen to my righteous indignation. Professors Hang Nguyen, Joanne Melish, Karen Petrone, and Karen Tice all provided excellent feedback and encouragement throughout the writing and editing process. Their keen eyes, discerning questions, and belief in my project improved this dissertation.

This project was greatly aided by the generosity of a number of people. Thank you to Ericka Huggins, Gwen Patton, and Cleveland Sellers for taking time out of their busy schedules to talk with me. Thank you to Harry Miller at the Wisconsin State Historical Society, the staff of the Avery Center at the College of Charleston, and the staff at Trenholm State's library for sending me hundreds of copies of documents I would otherwise not have had access to. Thank you to the New York Public Library for their Short-term Fellowship and the staff of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture for all their work. My research trips were aided by the History Department's Charles P. Roland and Dorothy Leathers Fellowship awards, as well as the Gender and Women's Studies Department's Bonnie Cox award. I am indebted to their belief in higher education and the importance of humanities research.

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My parents, Dave and Paula Duncan, deserve special thanks for all they've done to make my life better. Through basketball games, SEC tournaments, and hundreds of meals, they provided escape, nourishment, and encouragement every step of the way. My mom traveled with me to San Francisco and New York while I researched this project. And though those trips served as the basis for much of my dissertation, they mattered so much more to me because she was there. She never imposed on my time or schedule, but always had a plan when I returned. The lights of Broadway and the smell of the Wharf would have been much less enchanting without her. My dad's questions and his desire to pick fights with his "black sheep" daughter made me a strong debater at an early age. I would not be the confident person I am today without his constant ribbing. Though I never took up golf, I am my father's child, his oldest and loudest daughter—the one most like him.

A decade ago, I met a young man on the intramural fields behind the Johnson Center at UK. His love for life, unkempt hair, and sweet smile quickly melted my initial desire to remain single during my freshman year of college. Now, after six years of marriage, I can honestly say that meeting Matt Higgins that cool fall night in 2003 was

the luckiest I may ever be. Matt is nothing short of amazing. A Southern gentleman, a talented cook and baker, and a handy man, he makes life fun. He's my biggest supporter, my most loyal ally, and my favorite Keeneland companion. So to Matt: Thank you for the million little ways you just make the days move easy. Thank you for listening, for having excellent taste in music and enjoying concerts, for always believing I could do this, and for constantly being proud of me. It hasn't always been perfect, but it's always been us, and that will always be enough. I love you.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION: A CHANGE IS GONNA COME

On August 28, 1963, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) Chairman John Lewis stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial facing tens of thousands of people crammed onto the Washington Mall. They were there for the now famous “March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom,” and dozens of speeches addressed a range of issues. Lewis’ defiant speech about the shortcomings of President John F. Kennedy’s Civil Rights Bill has been overshadowed by the elegance of his mentor, Dr. Martin Luther King’s, “I Have a Dream” speech. However, it was Lewis and SNCC’s short speech that paved the truer road map to the 1960s and beyond. Though tempered to appease conservative leaders within the movement and the Kennedy administration, Lewis’ original speech linked jobs, economic mobility, respect, and voting rights to a worldwide struggle for democratic participation and freedom. In his edited speech, Lewis told the crowd that SNCC came to Washington “with a great deal of misgiving,” because:

In its present form, this bill [Civil Rights Act] will not protect the citizens of Danville, Virginia, who must live in constant fear of the police state. It will not protect the hundreds and thousands of people that have been arrested on trumped up charges. What about the three young men, SNCC field secretaries in Americus, Georgia, who face the death penalty for engaging in peaceful protest?... We must have legislation that will protect the Mississippi sharecroppers, who have been forced to leave their homes because they dared to exercise their right to register to vote. We need a bill that will provide for the homeless and starving people of this nation. We need a bill that will ensure the equality of a maid who earns five dollars a week in the home of a family whose total income is 100,000 dollars a year. We must have a good FEPC bill.

My friends let us not forget that we are involved in a serious social revolution. By and large, politicians who build their career on immoral

compromise and allow themselves an open forum of political, economic and social exploitation dominate American politics.<sup>1</sup>

Three years before Stokely Carmichael proclaimed “Black Power” from the hood of a car during the Meredith March Against Fear, three years before Huey Newton and Bobby Seale wrote the Black Panther Ten Point Program, and three years before Julian Bond was denied a seat in the Georgia House of Representatives for standing with SNCC’s anti-Vietnam War announcement, John Lewis’ words excited a crowd of onlookers to embrace structural changes to the American way of life, beyond the Civil Rights Act introduced by the Kennedy administration, beyond Dr. King’s dream, and beyond the bounds of the traditionally venerated movement. Although the Vietnam War was not explicitly mentioned or alluded to in Lewis’ short speech, he declared allegiance with Third World decolonization efforts, exclaiming “We are tired. We are tired of being beat by policemen. We are tired of seeing our people locked up in jail over and over again, and then you holler ‘Be patient.’ How long can we be patient? We want our freedom and we want it now.”<sup>2</sup> The War, quietly expanding to include support troops and military trainers, would soon become front page news, as the Johnson Administration ramped up troop deployment and committed the United States to full-fledged, though never declared, war in Southeast Asia.<sup>3</sup> Black Americans, many of whom were on the Mall that day—including John Lewis and Julian Bond—would highlight the shared oppression of American imperial desires.

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<sup>1</sup> John Lewis, “The March on Washington, Original Draft of SNCC Chairman John Lewis’ Speech to March,” <<http://www.crmvet.org/info/mowjl.htm>>, Accessed July 1, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> George Herring, *America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York, McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2002), 89-129.

War was the backdrop upon which Black Power wrote its story. The use of black soldiers to fight the Vietnam War, the government's insistence that the United States was fighting a war for freedom—another war for democracy outside the United States, and billions of dollars that war took from antipoverty and community redevelopment funds--led Black Power advocates to vociferously protest American involvement in Vietnam. Black Power cannot be separated from the 1960s and the 1960s cannot be understood without a frank discussion of American involvement in Vietnam. Thus, Black Power and anti-Vietnam war activism are inextricably intertwined. For too long, scholars have sought to explain Black Power in a vacuum of domestic issues and in-fighting between new organizers like the Black Panther Party and US and the well-established Civil Rights groups such as SNCC, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Pushed to the footnotes or explicitly overlooked as a determining factor, the War in Vietnam and Black Americans' work to end it are the phantoms of Black Power scholarship.<sup>4</sup>

The Vietnam War has a ubiquitous place in the American psyche of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It dominated international headlines as a comparison to the Iraq invasion and subsequent drawn out War on Terror, a war many Americans felt could not be won. The war and its era (1964-1972, for this study's purpose) are romantically remembered in

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<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Peniel E. Joseph's narrative history of Black Power: *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), provides no sustained discussion of Black Power and Vietnam. Instead, short discussions, usually involving Stokely Carmichael's personal beliefs against the war, are all the evidence Joseph investigates (pgs. 156-159, 165-167, 179-181). Joseph's review essay of Black Power scholarship ("Rethinking the Black Power Era," *Journal of Southern History* 75, no. 3 (August 2009): 707-716) spends no time discussing the war or scholarship associated with Black Power's antiwar activism. Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr's *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), discusses antiwar protest, but provides a general, top-down overview (focusing on President Johnson's reactions to protest, not the protesters themselves); though the book is about the Black Panther Party, it fails to connect Black Panther anti-imperial rhetoric with anti-draft and anti-war protesters in the United States (pgs. 204-206).

some circles as a time of expanding personal freedoms, while for others, the 1960s and 1970s were the end of “traditional America.” Yet, for all its contradictions, the Vietnam era United States remains in the forefront of our cultural ethos drawing comparisons, lustful wishes for the past, and ire at the idealism of a bygone time. And still, the Vietnam era, like most, is misunderstood and manipulated to serve the needs of whatever pundit is inciting it at the time.

This dissertation grew out of an absence within the popular memory of the war and particularly its detractors. The Vietnam anti-war and anti-draft protests that engulfed college campuses and major cities in the summers and falls of the latter half of the 1960s and early 1970s are signposts in American liberal history. The students, almost always white, male, and middle or upper-class, are the heroes of modern liberalism or the enemies of modern conservatism. Coming on the heels of the Civil Rights Movement and at the same time as Black Power emerged into the mainstream, anti-Vietnam protest has been constructed as a white issue. Notwithstanding the work of Simon Hall, few scholars of either Civil Rights or Vietnam have connected the movements, resulting in an eraser in the history of progressive protest and a denial of African American agency in the movement.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Vietnam antiwar historiography is dominated by participants, participant-observers, and those who came of age at the time. The leading synthesis, Charles de Benedetti with Charles Chatfield’s *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), spends fewer than 10 pages on African American involvement, and only focuses on the Black Panther Party. Joseph A. Fry’s “Unpopular Messengers: Student Opposition to the Vietnam War” (219-244) and Terry H. Anderson’s “Vietnam is Here: The Antiwar Movement,” (245-264) both in *The War Never Ends: New Perspectives on the Vietnam War* ed. by David L. Anderson and John Ernst (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), construct the antiwar movement as white, middle class, humanities and social sciences majors on the campuses of leading white institutions. Each author briefly mentions black Americans contributions to antiwar activism (Anderson touches on the Kings’ participation in anti-war activities in 1967, while Fry signposts the Jackson State University killings following Kent State), but neither considers black participants sustained involvement in ending the Vietnam War. Terry H. Anderson’s *The Movement and the 1960s: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) argued that the Movement (every bit of social activism in the sixties, according to Anderson) was

The eraser continues in popular memory, as anti-war protesters, now some of the leading intellectuals in the American academy “remember” no black protests or protesters. On more than one occasion during the research and writing of this project, I had conversations with white men and women who were college students or draft-eligible at the time. After informing them of my research, some version of the following soliloquy occurred. “I protested the war in college. It was such a tragedy. I lost friends who were drafted for no reason. We used to march on the student union and burn our draft cards. I knew a guy who failed his senior English class so he’d keep his deferment. But there weren’t any black people that did that. I never saw an African American at the protests. Are you sure black people protested the war?” More often than not, the scholars and participants I encountered sought to define the antiwar movement as their own, something separate from Civil Rights and Black Power. This eraser serves multiple purposes in the minds of white antiwar participants. First, middle class, middle aged white protesters sought to place themselves in the midst of the protest movement to legitimate their intellectual and political backgrounds. Trained as the cultural turn took root in American historiography, many middle aged, white intellectuals embraced the liberal educator label and continue to maintain active, progressive lives in various social and political organizations. Furthermore, white protesters forgot or ignored protesters of color as a way to lay claim to the antiwar movement as their own. While black men and women who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s can claim their activism as a badge of honor, many white liberals did not participate in desegregation efforts and voter

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“fluid and its participants diverse,” and attempted to bring together all facets of the 1960s into one, large synthesis. While this is admirable, the resulting monograph was a collection of generalizations and perpetuated the myth of a break between the pre-1968 Civil Rights protests and the later Black Power Movement (xvi).

registration campaigns, or were denied the ability to work within some groups because of their skin color.<sup>6</sup> Participation in antiwar activities served as white, middle class, liberal activists' markers of radical status. In short, by denying African American participation in antiwar activities, history has been whitewashed by the very people who helped create the cultural turn, bringing more diverse voices and stories to our understanding of the American past.<sup>7</sup>

The irony of the conversations with white protesters coupled with the lack of African American voices in most anti-war literature led to the questions that frame the following chapters: Were black Americans really not interested in the war or were their protests different from those currently celebrated? How did Black Power protest

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<sup>6</sup> Stokely Carmichael's "expulsion" of whites from SNCC is grossly misunderstood. While Carmichael did tell white members they could no longer serve in leadership roles and were unwelcome at some SNCC led affiliate groups, his more important message is often overlooked. Carmichael encouraged white members to work within their own communities to create change. This equally hard, but less rewarding work, was not embraced in mass by many white SNCC members, leading to the mass desertion of whites and some black members from SNCC after Carmichael's rise to Chairmanship. Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and The Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 236-242.

<sup>7</sup> Fry, "Unpopular Messengers" 219-244. Fry asserts, "antiwar students were more likely to have been from middle- or upper-middle-class than from working- or lower-middle-class households; to have been majoring in the humanities or social sciences than in business, engineering, or the sciences; and to have been political independents or Democrats than Republicans. Most antiwar students were liberal or moderate politically rather than conservative or radical, and they viewed U.S. intervention in Vietnam as a correctable foreign policy mistake rather than the result of a irreparably flawed capitalistic system that should be overthrown. Few protesters belonged to an official or national antiwar organization since most dissident activity was essentially local in its origins and organizations" (222-223); Terry H. Anderson, "Vietnam is Here: The Antiwar Movement," in *The War Never Ends: New Perspectives on the Vietnam War* ed. by David L. Anderson and John Ernst (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007):245-264; Joella Straley, "What Do we Forget when we Remember History?" *National Public Radio*, August 28, 2013 <[http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2013/08/28/216410432/what-do-we-forget-when-we-remember-history?ft=1&f=1001&sc=tw&utm\\_source=twitterfeed&utm\\_medium=twitter](http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2013/08/28/216410432/what-do-we-forget-when-we-remember-history?ft=1&f=1001&sc=tw&utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter)>. James V. Werstch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); George Lipsitz, *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Pierre Nora translated by Marc Roudebush, "Between History and Memory: *Les Liux de Memoire*," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7-24; Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (New York: Beacon Press, 1997); Jonathan Scott Holloway, *Jim Crow Wisdom: Memory and Identity in Black America since 1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Paul Ricoer, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kantleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Use of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

Vietnam in different ways than the mainstream, white movement? What about black soldiers and their anti-war organizing? How did the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee address the war and why? How did gendered notions of race and class affect Black Power's anti-draft and anti-war organizing? How did international travel, connections to decolonizing nations, and correspondence with revolutionary leaders abroad affect Black Power's antiwar protests?

In order to answer those questions engagement with antiwar, Civil Rights, and Black Power scholarship was necessary. The late twentieth and early twenty-first century has seen a proliferation of scholarship dealing with the social upheaval of the 1960s, as baby boomers and their children enter the academy and seek to understand the United States' place in an increasingly globalized world. While the diversity of these studies cannot be overstated, all seek to understand the political and social contexts of the 1960s that allowed for the rise, expansion, and eventual collapse of a myriad of social movements which challenged American political, economic, and social practices and reshaped our everyday interactions with fellow citizens.

Antiwar scholarship remains dominated by participant/observer accounts, focusing particularly on the experience of white, college student males and anti-draft organizing. Charles De Benedetti's *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* provides the most comprehensive overview of the movement, but spends little time exploring the ways African Americans organized separately from predominantly white organizations like the Students for a Democratic Society. Melvin Small's *Antiwarriors* and *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves* also take a holistic approach to American antiwar organizations, but fail to engage with other movements during the



1960s. Instead, his tunnel vision on antiwar protest creates a narrative dominated by popular media outlets and antiwar leaders' words, particularly the members of the National Mobilizing Committee Against the War (MOBE), SDS, and the reactions to protesters in the Johnson and Nixon White Houses. Other scholars focused on specific antiwar organizations like Vietnam Veterans Against the War, using memoirs, oral histories, and testimony before Senate and House investigative panels.

Simon Hall's *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s*, explores the connections between the antiwar and Civil Rights movements throughout the 1960s. Hall argues that sustained, combined antiwar organizing did not exist across racial lines because black and white organizers could not agree on platform, action, or message responses. While some groups, especially SNCC and SDS did collaborate on antiwar activities and members of Civil Rights and Black Power organizations also joined antiwar groups like MOBE, Hall found that most antiwar protests remained segregated. Because *Peace and Freedom* investigated cross organizational collaboration, Hall's analysis lacked a sustained discussion of black antiwar protests, instead highlighting movement infighting and the lack of a cohesive message from black and white New Left organizations. Additionally, Hall adds to the misconception that Black Power antiwar activists were only along for the ride and not committed to ending the war and that the coalitions were not actually working groups, but instead were created as fronts for claims to "legitimacy" on both sides.<sup>8</sup>

Taken together, these volumes reinforce the popularly held belief that the antiwar movement was populated almost entirely by white males on college campuses and in the

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<sup>8</sup> Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movement in the 1960s* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005).

military who sought to avoid service through anti-draft demonstrations or soldiers who returned from service disillusioned with the American military's actions in Southeast Asia. These men were vocal members of an antiwar movement, but they were not the only protesters of American imperial expansion in the 1960s. Literature on the antiwar movement also focuses heavily on the failures of organizations and the media campaigns against them. Again, like the Black Power scholarship, many who write about the antiwar movement were participants, observers, or sympathizers and use their scholarship to assuage guilt, explain shortcomings, or blame other sources (i.e. Melvin Small continually blames the media for the failure of the antiwar movement, because the media only focused on the negative aspects and did not accurately report the happenings).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Margot Alder, *Heretic's Heart: A Journey Through Spirit and Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997); Dean Albertson, ed., *Rebels or Revolutionaries? Student Movements of the 1960s* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975); K. Douglas Anderson, "Don't Rub Your Eyes: A Memoir of the Vietnam War and the Nineteen Sixties," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Connecticut, 2006); Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) and *The Sixties* (New York: Longman, 1999); John F. Bannan and Rosemary S. Bannan, *Law, Morality, and Vietnam: The Peace Militants and the Courts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974); Steven E. Barkan, *Protesters on Trial: Criminal Justice in the Southern Civil Rights and Vietnam Antiwar Movements* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985); Charles Chatfield, *The American Peace Movement: Ideals and Activism* (New York: Twayne, 1992); Brian K. Clardy, *The Management of Dissent: Responses to the Post Kent State Protests at Seven Public Universities in Illinois* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002); Bronson P. Clark, *Not By Might: A Viet Nam Memoir* (Blastonbury, CT: Chapel Rock Publishers, 1997); G. David Curry, *Sunshine Patriot: Punishment and the Vietnam Offender* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1985); James K. Davis, *Assault on the Left: The FBI and the Sixties Antiwar Movement* (Westport: Praeger, 1997); Charles de Benedetti with Charles Chatfield's *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990); David Dellinger, *From Yale to Jail: The Life Story of a Moral Dissenter* (New York: Pantheon, 1993); James Dickerson, *North to Canada: Men and Women Against the Vietnam War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999); Jerry Elmer, *Felon for Peace: The Memoir of a Vietnam-Era Draft Resister* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005); John Ernst and Yvonne Baldwin, "The Not So Silent Minority: Louisville's Antiwar Movement, 1966-1975," *Journal of Southern History* (February 2007): 105-142; Michael S. Foley, *Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance During the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Michael B. Friedland, *Lift Up Your Voice Like a Trumpet: White Clergy and the Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements, 1954-1973* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Adam Garfinkle, *Telltale Hearts: The Origins and Impact of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (New York: St. Martin's, 1995); Marc Jason Gilbert, ed., *The Vietnam War on Campus: Other Voices, More Distant Drums* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001); Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989); Sherry Gershon Gottlieb, *Hell No, We Won't Go: Resisting the Draft During the Vietnam War* (New York: Viking, 1991); Fred Halstead, *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1991); David Harris, *Our War: What We did in Vietnam and What it did to Us* (New York: Times Books, 1996); Kenneth J. Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace*

Most monograph length studies of the Black Power era have been completed by non-academic participants or academics with an activist agenda/connection to their subjects. As Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams argue in relation to the Black Panther Party, “the locus of that writing is not among professional historians at all, and correspondingly, it suffers from a lack of precisely that detachment that gives history its disciplinary power.”<sup>10</sup> This argument can be expanded to more than just the Black Panther Party, as a plethora of memoirs and scholarship written by former participants dominates the study of Black Power and the Vietnam antiwar movements. Even Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr.’s 2013 publication *Black Against Empire*, which sought “to uncover the history of the Black Panther Party...to analyze the Party’s *political*

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*Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1993) and *Put Your Bodies Upon the Wheels: Student Revolt in the 1960s* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001); Walter L. Hixson, ed., *The Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (New York: Garland, 2000); Abbie Hoffman, *Soon to Be a Major Motion Picture* (New York: Putnam, 1980); Ken Hurwitz, *Marching Nowhere* (New York: Norton, 1971); Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Peace Now! American Society and Ending the Vietnam War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Robbie Liberman, *Prairie Power: Voices of 1960s Midwestern Student Protest* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2004); William J. McGill, *The Year of the Monkey: Revolt on the Campus, 1968-1969* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982); Gregg Michel, “We’ll Take Our Stand: The Southern Student Organizing Committee and the Radicalization of White Southern Students, 1964-1969,” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1999); Caleb S. Rossiter, *The Chimes of Freedom Flashing: A Personal History of the Vietnam Anti-war Movement and the 1960s* (Washington, D.C.: TCA Press, 1996); Donald L. Simons, *I Refuse: Memories of a Vietnam War Objector* (Trenton: Broken Rifle Press, 1992); Melvin Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America’s Hearts and Minds* (Lanham: S.R. Books, 2002) and *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Melvin Small and William D. Hoover, eds., *Give Peace a Chance: Exploring the Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994); Edward K. Spann, *Democracy’s Children: The Young Rebels of the 1960s and the Power of Ideals* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Michael Uhl, *Vietnam Awakening: My Journey from Combat to the Citizens’ Commission of Inquiry on U.S. War Crimes in Vietnam* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007); Tom Wells, *The War Within: America’s Battle over Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam, 1963-1975* (New York: Doubleday, 1984).

<sup>10</sup> Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams, “Introduction” *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement*, ed. Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 1-14.

history,” was as much hagiography as a new interpretation of the politics of one of Black Power’s most prolific groups.<sup>11</sup>

Academic study of the Black Power era is beginning to proliferate with new works published since 2008. Many recent works, including Donna Murch’s *Living for the City* (Oakland) and Jakobi Williams’ *From the Bullet to the Ballot* (Chicago), are local studies modeled after John Dittmer’s *Local People* and William Chafe’s *Civilities and Civil Rights*, and attempt to understand Black Power’s manifestation in one area. Local studies of the Black Panthers and other cities’ experiences with radical black organizing add to our understanding of the variety of organizing, theory, and radicalism of the Black Power era in the United States. Articles, edited volumes, and shorter pieces organized around location or type of activism (i.e. the Panther’s Breakfast for Children Program or the Deacon’s of Defense in Alabama) also add to the depth of scholarship being produced by Black Power scholars. However, because much of this work remains focused on individuals or specific locations, a national perspective of Black Power remains missing in the historiography.<sup>12</sup>

While these recent works have added depth to historians’ understanding of the era, Black Power is still generally overlooked or misunderstood by both the academy and the general public. Black Power is still most often discussed as the antithesis of the Civil

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<sup>11</sup> Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 9.

<sup>12</sup> For other examples of local Black Power scholarship see Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama’s Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Judson L. Jefferies, ed. *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2006); Donna Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) and *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Jakobi Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Yohuru Williams *Black Politics/White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black Panthers in New Haven* (New York: Blackwell, 2006).

Rights Movement, a foil of the fair minded and peaceful demonstrations of black Americans for expanded rights between 1954 and 1965. For example, Charles Payne's *I've Got the Light of Freedom* focused almost entirely on the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's (SNCC) pre-1965 life in Mississippi. When Payne accounted for the post-1965 era of SNCC, he wrote dejectedly about the betrayal of the local community activities that made SNCC and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party so revolutionary. Payne wrote:

If the movement's formally radical phase achieved less than it might have, the erosion of community is at least partly responsible for that. However unwittingly, however compelling the reasons, the activist tradition in the Black community lost touch with the kinds of questions raised by the organizing experience in Mississippi, a loss that has certainly contributed to the impoverishment of political discussions in that community for the last two decades.<sup>13</sup>

In Payne's view, "Black Power was and is an unsettling idea," and cost the Movement more than it provided in rhetoric, organizing, or financial support.<sup>14</sup>

Most scholars date the emergence of Black Power to 1966 with the founding of the Black Panther Party (BPP) in Oakland and Stokely Carmichael's calls for Black Power in Greenwood, Mississippi during the Meredith March Against Fear. Yet, Peniel Joseph and Timothy B. Tyson astutely show that Black Power ran concurrent with the Civil Rights Movement and often influenced the direction the mainstream movement proceeded in. For example, Tyson's biography of Robert F. Williams, a NAACP chapter president in North Carolina, argues that Williams' activism in the late 1950s and early 1960s was the first sustained Black Power organizing in the country. Williams met with international leaders, lunched with Malcolm X, and was eventually expelled from the

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<sup>13</sup> Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 390.

<sup>14</sup> Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 389.

NAACP for his radical politics. Williams' early activism led to his exile in Cuba and China, though he eventually returned to the United States. According to the dominate narrative, Williams activism and exile is an aberration of the Civil Rights Movement, even though Joseph's more recent book, *Waiting til the Midnight Hour* shows that many Black Power or radical black organizers were active before 1966.<sup>15</sup>

The correlation between Black Power and masculinity is a particularly popular angle for many historians, and continues to be the main focus of much scholarly research on the era. Political Scientist Judson L. Jefferies, in the introduction to *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast* spends most of the essay focused on Black Power's inherent violence. Jefferies accepts at face value the popular notion that Black Power activists were not interested in bettering themselves or their communities, but were instead focused on gratuitous and often nonsensical violence in order to gain followers. The focus on violence goes hand-in-hand with the focus on men and masculinity that has dominated Black Power scholarship. These scholars seem to assume that women could not be violent and wield a gun in self-defense, or that men's violence was synonymous with violence against women, thus women were not involved in leadership positions or Black Power advocacy. While physical and verbal abuse of women did occur in Black Power groups and sexism was definitely an issue, these actions were not only perpetrated by Black Power advocates. Additionally, even though these incidents did occur, this does

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<sup>15</sup> Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2007); Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

not automatically mean that women did not have leadership roles or provide important backing in Black Power organizations and at Black power events.<sup>16</sup>

Kimberly Springer's *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* is a refreshing supplement to these masculine focused narratives. Springer traces the development of early Black Feminist organizations and argues that black feminist activism did not emerge after the white feminist movement, but actually happened alongside it. Moreover, Springer's work is a successful model of the use of intersectionality in understanding divergent movements. Springer connects black women's groups such as the Combahee River Collective and the Third World Women's Alliance through membership, organizational statements on agendas, and party platforms to complicate the idea of a single black womanhood or black feminism.<sup>17</sup>

Springer's book is joined by the 2009 anthology, *Want to Start a Revolution: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* as another example of powerful women's activism in the Black Power and Civil Rights era. The collection includes essays on women in the Black Panther Party, Shirley Chisholm, and Rosa Parks, and highlights the contributions of women in welfare politics, education, and revolutionary movements for societal change. While the anthology is excellent, no monograph length study is currently published that explores the ways these women's lives intersected across social

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<sup>16</sup> Judson L. Jefferies, "Introduction: A Retrospective Look at the Black Power Movement," in *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast* ed. by Judson L. Jefferies (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006): 1-11. See also: Muhammad Ahmed (Maxwell Stanford, Jr.), *We Will Return with the Whirlwind: Black Radical Organizations, 1960-1975* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 2007); Curtis J. Austin, *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* (Fayetteville, Ark: University of Arkansas Press, 2006); Scot Brown, *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York: NYU Press, 2003); David J. Garrow, "Picking Up the Books: The New Historiography of the Black Panther Party," *Reviews in American History* 35 (2007): 650-670; Lance Hill. *The Deacons of Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Kimberly Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

movement groups and agendas. Additionally, both Springer and the editors of *Want to Start a Revolution* ignore the role the Vietnam Antiwar Movement played in 1960s and 1970s activism.<sup>18</sup>

Just as discussions of the Vietnam War and antiwar activism are left out of most Black Power and Civil Rights historiography, periodization and categorization of the Black Freedom Struggle is also highly contested among historians. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," Tyson's and Joseph's monographs, as well as Manning Marable's *Malcolm X* have shown how Black Power and Civil Rights activism emerged in similar ways around the same time. Because history, especially the more recent past, is constructed through memory, Hall argues "remembrance is always a form of forgetting and the dominant narrative of the civil rights movement—distilled from history and memory, twisted by ideology and political contestation, and embedded in heritage tours, museums, public rituals, textbooks, and various artifacts of mass culture—distorts and suppresses as much as it reveals."<sup>19</sup> Instead of a master narrative, where the Civil Rights Movement only existed from 1954-1965 (or from the *Brown v. the Board* decision to the passage of the Voting Rights Act), Hall proposes a Long Civil Rights Movement, "that took root in the liberal and radical milieu of the late 1930s, was intimately tied to the 'rise and fall of the New Deal Order,' accelerated during World War II, stretched far beyond the South, was continuously and ferociously contested, and in the late 1960s and 1970s inspired a

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<sup>18</sup> Dayo Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91, No. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1263;



‘movement of movements’ that ‘def[ies] any narrative of collapse.’”<sup>20</sup> By expanding the Civil Rights Movement timeline from twelve short years to five decades of activism in the twentieth century, Hall’s Long Civil Rights Movement encompasses black economic, social, gendered, and political activism, instead of a narrow master narrative focused on male leaders and political victories.

While Hall’s reinterpretation of the Civil Rights timeline has been well received by many historians and has influenced a number of works, Sudiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang argue that the Long Civil Rights Movement is a “vampire,” “rootless and wandering,” and lacks periodization, clear definitions of Civil Rights and Black Power, and a discussion of distinct geographical differences. By collapsing the North and South into a larger movement and not identifying the ruptures in a “continuous movement” for black freedom in the United States, the Long Movement thesis actually further distorts our understanding of the dramatic changes the Civil Rights era brought to the United States.<sup>21</sup> Although Cha-Jua and Lang present a cogent argument, they are not convincing in describing the Long Movement thesis as a “vampire.” They assume that scholars who subscribe to the Long Movement thesis see Civil Rights and Black Power activism as a single, continuous movement with exactly the same participants, organizations, and tactics. Instead, the Long Movement illustrates the way the Civil Rights and Black Power movements changed over time, learning from the failures of previous activities to achieve change in their time. Moreover, the Long Movement’s interest in more than citizenship rights highlights the intersecting nature of Rights movements in the United States and the

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<sup>20</sup> Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” 1235.

<sup>21</sup> Sudiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, “The ‘Long Movement’ as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies,” *Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 265-288.

important work black activists undertook to expand economic, social, and gendered rights.<sup>22</sup>

Intersectionality is the guiding theoretical framework for this dissertation. A foundational angle in Feminist Theory, intersectionality seeks to understand the way individuals use their intersecting identities in strategic ways throughout their everyday lives. In the study of history, particularly the history of minority groups, intersectionality allows the historian to uncover various identities and motivations in the actors' lives to understand their life choices. Because these movements and the lives of those who participated in them did not occur in a vacuum, where only one motivating factor lead to activism, it is imperative to study the era of Black Power and Vietnam antiwar protest together. Looking at each movement individually only provides a slice of the story, one that is not fully understood nor sufficiently rich without the others.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Steven F. Lawson also finds the Long Movement concept troubling. He argues “the concept of the long civil rights movement, though useful in locating antecedents, blurs the lines of the historic changes within the black freedom struggle that gave the period from 1954 to 1968 distinct character.” Again, Lawson’s chronology discounts large swaths of activism, especially against the Vietnam War, and privileges the male, preacher led master narrative. Lawson, “Long Origins of the Short Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1968,” in *Freedom Rights: New Perspectives on the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. by Danielle L. McGuire and John Dittmer (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> Nikol G. Alexander-Floyd, “Disappearing Acts: Reclaiming Intersectionality in the Social Sciences in a Post-Black Feminist Era,” *Feminist Formations* 24, no. 1 (Spring 2012):1–25; Anna Carastathis, “Identity Categories as Potential Coalitions,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38, no. 4 (Summer 2013): 941–65; Devon W. Carbado, “Colorblind Intersectionality,” *Signs* 38, no.4 (Summer 2013): 811–45; Jennifer Jihye Chun, George Lipsitz, and Young Shin, “Intersectionality as a Social Movement Strategy: Asian Immigrant Women Advocates,” *Signs* 38 no. 4 (Summer 2013): 917–40; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2000); Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 139–67 and “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, no.6 (July 1991): 1241–99; Bonnie Thornton Dill, “Race, Class, and Gender: Prospects for an All-Inclusive Sisterhood,” *Feminist Studies* 9, no.1 (Spring 1983): 131–50; hooks, bell, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Cambridge, MA: South End, 1983); Gail Lewis, “Unsafe Travel: Experiencing Intersectionality and Feminist Displacements,” *Signs* 38, no.4 (Summer 2013): 869–92; Helma Lutz, Maria Teresa Herrera Vivar, and Linda Supik, eds. *Framing Intersectionality: Debates on a Multi-faceted Concept in Gender Studies* (Farnham, VT: Ashgate, 2011); Catharine A McKinnon, “Intersectionality as Method: A Note,” *Signs* 38, no.4 (Summer 2013): 1019–30; Leslie McCall, “The Complexity of Intersectionality,” *Signs* 30, no.3 (Summer, 2005): 1771–1800; Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and

As a work situated in the Long Movement scholarship, this dissertation uses a number of terms to address Black Power and Civil Rights organizing. Throughout, I use Black Power, the Black Freedom Struggle, and the Movement interchangeably. While this may appear problematic, it is my assertion that Black Power was part of the Civil Rights continuum and should not be viewed as inherently separate and different than earlier protest. Moreover, the Black Freedom Struggle encompasses African American activism from their encounter with the United States through today, thus the use of the term places this dissertation in a long line of scholarship that explores the experiences of black Americans in the United States. When discussing the master narrative of the Civil Rights Movement, I use the term Civil Rights. The movements are inter-related and intersecting. One cannot be divorced from the other, without seeing the ways that Civil Rights activism influenced Black Power advocates and vice versa—to do so, is to return to the master narrative that privileges certain men over others.

Black and white protesters, as Simon Hall has shown, worked together, though tenuously at times, to create a vibrant and powerful antiwar movement. I seek to understand how Black Power engaged with the Vietnam War, regardless of where or with whom those actions took place. Most importantly, this study does not concern itself with the accomplishments or failures of Black Power's antiwar activities. An inevitable criticism of all popular movements is to highlight the lack of change participants were

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Colonial Discourses," *Feminist Review* 30 (Autumn 1988): 61-88 and "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles," *Signs* 28, no.2 (Winter 2003): 499-535; Jennifer C. Nash, "Re-thinking Intersectionality," *Feminist Review* 89 (June 2008): 1-15; Vrushali Patil, "From Patriarchy to Intersectionality: A Transnational Feminist Assessment of How Far We've Really Come," *Signs* 38, no.4 (Summer 2013): 847-67; Gary Peller, "History, Identity, and Alienation," *Connecticut Law Review* 43, no.5 (July 2011): 1479-677; Barbara Thomlison, "To Tell the Truth and Not Get Trapped: Desire, Distance, and Intersectionality at the Scene of Argument," *Signs* 38, no. 4 (Summer 2013): 993-1017; Mieke Verloo, "Intersectional and Cross-Movement Politics and Policies: Reflections on Current Practices and Debates," *Signs* 38, no.4 (Summer, 2013): 893-915.

able to create in the society they sought to critique. A failure to end the war in an expedient manner or to reduce the number of soldiers sent to Vietnam in a given year does not undermine the legitimacy of the work antiwar protesters felt they were doing. Indeed, antiwar work, especially within Black Power organizations, focused as much on political education as on avoiding draft calls and increasing War on Poverty funding to black communities.

Instead, at the center of this study is the understanding that Black Power advocates were vital participants in anti-Vietnam War organizing, voiced opposition to the War early on, and presented race-based reasons against American involvement in Vietnam. Utilizing oral histories, Black Power newspapers, memoirs, and archival holdings from around the country, this dissertation explores Black Power's engagement with Vietnam through the experiences of black soldiers, SNCC members, women, and international travel.

Chapter two traces Black Power activism from the end of the World War I through the end of the master narrative of Civil Rights. The roots of Black Power can be found in the broken promises of the federal government to black soldiers following World War I and II, as well as the poverty many Black Power leaders experienced in their early lives. Poverty, either their own or seeing others, helped radicalize members of Black Power organizations to work to be able to afford the sandwich at a lunch counter, not just to be able to sit at it.

Building on the second chapter, the third chapter explores the experiences of black soldiers serving in Vietnam and on domestic bases in the post-integration American military. The military was traditionally a path to a middle class life and an acceptable

display of black manhood, but that changed during Vietnam. Instead, for some soldiers, service in Vietnam and at home served as radicalizing moments, where soldiers sought to redefine manhood and patriotism to include pacificism, protection of their own communities, and a desire to receive equal treatment inside and out of the military.

The draft led to a large increase in the number of African American males serving in the United States Army and it was a symbol of the government authority run amok in the black community for some individuals. Using the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee as a lens for understanding antiwar activism at home, chapter four argues that Black Power advocates also sought to include draft evasion and exemption in the definition of black manhood. Moreover, SNCC's draft resistance activities continued well into the late 1960s and show that the organization, though limited, remained active in the black freedom struggle after the passage of the Voting Rights Act and Stokely Carmichael's Black Power chant. Instead of ending after the Meredith March Against Fear, SNCC worked to connect poverty, corruption, and America's involvement in Vietnam and to end the use of black troops in a war they viewed as white, colonial aggression.

Antiwar activism and Black Power scholarship often focuses on the lives and work of males. Chapter five shows the dual nature of protest, as Black Power women were active in antiwar organizing and used the Vietnam War and the experiences of Vietnamese women to influence their own activism. Moreover, working on antiwar platforms gave black women a place to explore and help define black masculinity, as well as a new black femininity, separate from and unrelated to the Moynihan Report, which argued that black women were domineering matriarchs who emasculated black men.

Black women's participation in antiwar work underscored the importance of gender in Black Power's opposition to the Vietnam War and gave black women space to explore their own gendered, classed, and racialized questions. In fact, antiwar activism served as fertile recruiting ground for many new black feminist organizations that sprang up in the early 1970s.

Finally, in chapter six, I explore the ways international travel, exile, and interactions with revolutionary governments influenced the spread and development of Black Power antiwar activism. By interacting with other people of color from around the world, but especially in Latin America and Asia, Black Power advocates developed a shared, Third World mentality with other colonial subjects. Through an imagined community of colonial repression, Black Power antiwar activists came to see themselves as members of a Third World community in the United States and presented antiwar arguments based on the shared experience of oppression. A Third World mentality was evident in Black Power writings and speeches, and helped explain why black men should not serve in Vietnam or the American military in general.

Taken together, the following chapters provide a counter-story to the master narrative of Civil Rights and Black Power scholarship. The intersection of Black Power and anti-Vietnam activism shows the multi-faceted nature of activism in the 1960s and early 1970s. Additionally, the following chapters highlight the continuity of the Movement, even as organizations and their members shifted focus from citizenship rights to full participation in United States society. The decisions to speak out against the Vietnam War and to fight against the draft were not isolated events in the lives of a few

people. Instead, anti-Vietnam War activism was an important and overlooked part in Black Power's attempts to push the United States to be a more equal and just nation.

## CHAPTER TWO: BLACK POWER BEGINNINGS, 1919-1966

“So when we talked about Black Power it was in a political context of building political institutions and social institutions in the black community, where we worked.”—  
Cleveland Sellers<sup>1</sup>

Like so many nascent movements, the origins of Black Power are rooted in circumstances that are hidden in historical narratives which tell cleaner and more easily understood stories.<sup>2</sup> Without knowing the social and political developments that led to its emergence at the national level, Black Power’s beginnings are murky. In the mid-1960s, novelist John O. Killens was like many who had no clue about where the movement originated. Instead, he resorted to a meaningless cliché, believing Black Power was “an idea whose time has come.”<sup>3</sup> What Killens overlooked was that Black Power arose out of a long struggle for equality for black Americans. It developed over a half century, as Civil Rights organizations took halting steps toward integration, political power, and ultimately, the chance at full participation in the American capitalist system. The emotions and theories that became associated with Black Power in the 1960s were not new; instead, they were extended and developed into a new global arena.

The lineage of Black Power lies in the separatism of Marcus Garvey and the impassioned rhetoric of A. Philip Randolph in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and moved toward full realization as World War II ended. The War created a number of opportunities for black Americans—particularly black industrial workers. As soldiers were deployed in

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<sup>1</sup> Cheryl Lynn Greenburg, ed. *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 158.

<sup>2</sup> Historian Timothy B. Tyson describes this phenomenon as “selective memory and wishful thinking.” Marking himself as a reformed wishful thinker, Tyson’s *Blood Done Sign My Name* traces his own history with racial violence, Southern “forgetfulness,” and America’s enduring legacy of “wishful thinking.” Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name: A True Story* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2004), 249, 311-322.

<sup>3</sup> John O. Killens “Symposium: The Meaning and Measure of Black Power” *Negro Digest*, Vol. XVI, No. 1, Nov. 1966, pg. 32.



Asia, Northern Africa, and Europe, men and women at home were asked to fill their void on the factory floor. These openings, coupled with an earlier migration of black men and women out of the South, introduced migrants to America's urban centers in the North and West. They brought their former lives, their labor, and most importantly, their children into a new cultural milieu that held the promises of the American dream, but not the reality. Black men and women who served on the front lines or the industrial lines during the War saw their wealth increase during war time, but soon found that they remained the last hired and first fired, as more "deserving" (i.e. white) men returned to the shop floor at the end of the War. The angst felt by those newly migrated, as well as those who had served and went unrewarded for their sacrifice, imbued their children with a sense of urgency, uncertainty in post-war America, and militancy.

Twentieth-century articulations of Black Power originated in African Americans' anger beginning with World War I and the lack of jobs for black workers, trained by the Army and drafted at disproportionate numbers to fight segregated trench battles in France. W.E.B. Du Bois and other African American intellectual leaders closed ranks around the US government and encouraged black men to enlist and serve honorably in the military. Workers throughout the urban North were denied opportunities and forced into menial labor, because of closed shops and segregated hiring processes. The Great War, first seen as an opportunity for black American advancement, was an experience of radicalization for many veterans, who were denied military benefits and basic human rights in the country they fought to protect. Black veterans were spit upon, forced into segregated transportation cars, and some even lynched upon their arrival back home after the war. Racial unrest also resulted in riots throughout the country, most notoriously in

Chicago, Detroit, and St. Louis in 1919. Black soldiers were forced to serve in Jim Crow Army units, barred from the Marines, and only allowed to participate in the Navy as mess hands.<sup>4</sup> Sent to France as support staff, the soldiers returned to a country still deeply segregated, with few opportunities to use their military training to advance their economic and social positions. Black soldiers' time in France, working in a less racist culture and with colonized French soldiers, also heightened African American awareness to the United States' hypocritical democratic rhetoric.<sup>5</sup> This same story would repeat itself two decades later, as World War II came to a close, finally coalescing in the Black Power struggle of the 1960s and 1970s.

The successful recruitment and retention of Communist African Americans in the 1920s laid the groundwork for later radical protests, as Black Power assumed the mantle of American anti-imperialism. Lovett Fort-Whiteman, organizer of the American Negro Labor Congress, a Communist labor organization, linked American imperialism to race based segregation, poor housing conditions for black Americans, and lack of opportunities in the Capitalist marketplace. He and his organization hailed the Soviet Union as a model for racial equality and sought to remake the American economy on Communistic terms. The first Red Scare in the 1920s severely undermined the Communist Party of America's ability to recruit and retain African American members in

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<sup>4</sup> Gail Buckley, *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm* (New York: Random House, 2001), 163-223; Rawn James, Jr., *The Double V: How Wars, Protest, and Harry Truman Desegregated America's Military* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 52-80.

<sup>5</sup> Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: Defying Dixie: Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950*, (London; W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), 10-20; Nell Irving Painter, *Standing at Armageddon: The United States, 1877-1919* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 331-332, 355-356, 360.

the South and urban North. Yet, the party's ideological influence lasted longer than their physical organizing.<sup>6</sup>

Just as Communism was gaining a foothold in some parts of African American labor organizing, Marcus Garvey's Back to Africa movement provided another outlet for angry, displaced blacks. Garvey came to the United States in 1916, where he settled in Harlem and honed his public persona through fundraising for an industrial farm in Jamaica. Garvey's belief that equality could not be found in the United States gained support from a number of radical and moderate blacks displeased with Jim Crow and forced to live a life of second-class citizenship. He argued against black participation in World War I because black men were "relegated to segregated quarters, cooking, cleaning, transporting and burying their fallen white compatriots." He advocated fighting for democracy at home, instead of defending it abroad. Garvey's followers believed that salvation could be found in Africa, where all blacks could be free of race-based discrimination in their ancestral home. Though Garvey's movement never gained a large following, his radical organizing included the Little family of Chicago (parents of Malcolm Little, soon to be Malcolm X) and the founders of the Nation of Islam who sought to form a "Nation Within a Nation," seeking independent states in the American South. Garveyism's influence on the Nation of Islam cannot be overstated, as Garvey's belief in self-help, racial pride, and economic independence were the core foundations of the Nation. While Garvey's movement ultimately died out in the mid-1920s, and Garvey himself died penniless, his influence on the movements that followed was significant, as

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<sup>6</sup> August Meier, Elliot Rudwick, and Francis L. Broderick, eds., *Black Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971): xxxiv, 147-154, 166-168; Gerald Horne, *Black Revolutionary: William Patterson and the Globalization of the African American Freedom Struggle* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 15-54.

his rhetoric and organizing efforts informed the work of mid-century Black Power advocates.<sup>7</sup>

Garveyites and Communists gained national prominence at the same moment A. Philip Randolph began to organize the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) in 1925 Chicago. Randolph's powerful rhetoric and loquacious speaking style propelled him to national prominence, as the Great Depression rocked the American economy. In the 1920s, the nascent BSCP sought affiliation in the American Federation of Labor, recognition from the federal government as a viable union, and equal pay for black workers. Randolph was successful in getting some local chapters recognized by the AFL, however, his organization remained relatively ignored by the white labor movement, which maintained segregated locals and barred African Americans from skilled labor unions.<sup>8</sup> Randolph was more than an outspoken labor leader. His leadership within the BSCP, the most successful black labor union by the mid-1930s, boosted his standing nationally as he worked with the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) to secure admittance of black Americans into CIO sponsored unions. Randolph also helped initiate the "Don't Buy where You Can't Work" campaign in cities like Chicago and Detroit. Black Americans protested establishments such as Woolworth's (the site of later

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<sup>7</sup> Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 76-77, 98, 429-450; Manning Marable *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 26-45; Donna Murch *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 82-84, 131-133, 186.

<sup>8</sup> Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*, 52-55; Brailsford Reese Brazeal, *The Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters; its Origins and Development* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946); William H. Harris, *Keeping the Faith: A. Philip Randolph, Milton P. Webster, and the Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters, 1925-1937* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977); Jervis Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972); Cornelius L. Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

desegregation campaigns), asking fellow residents not to purchase products from white-owned and white-administered companies who barred employment of blacks. Randolph, as a steward of the National Negro Congress and later as the head of the March on Washington Committee and national agitator for black labor rights, consistently presented the desires of African Americans for inclusion in the workforce and the American economy and used his connections in the White House and the federal government to demand action on segregation through the draft, employment discrimination at federal job sites, and union activities.<sup>9</sup>

As the Depression deepened, the Brotherhood of the Sleeping Car Porters, along with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), fought for federal assistance to African Americans hard hit by the economy's dramatic decline. After the election of Franklin Roosevelt in 1932, Randolph repeatedly gained an audience with the administration, demanding that federal assistance be distributed equally, that African Americans be integrated into federal programs throughout the country, and the National Recovery Act have the teeth to enforce the desegregation of labor unions.<sup>10</sup> At the outset of the 1930s, most African Americans remained as agricultural workers in the South. The Depression and subsequent resurgence in industrial production with the outbreak of war in Europe changed these demographics dramatically. Depression era agricultural changes from the Roosevelt administration, particularly the Agricultural Adjustment Act's forty percent reduction in acreage and controversial payment of

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<sup>9</sup> Beth Tompkins Bates "A New Crowd Challenges the Agenda of the Old Guard in the NAACP, 1933-1941," *American Historical Review* 102, No. 2 (April 1997): 340-377.

<sup>10</sup> Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Merl Elwyn Reed, *Seedtime for the Modern Civil Rights Movement: The President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, 1941-1946* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1991).

farmers not to grow cotton (in hopes of bolstering prices) resulted in 67,000 (4.5%) fewer black farmers and sharecroppers in the 1940 census. Moreover, according to Harvard Sitkoff, “the rare black farmer who owned the land he tilled suffered most from the compulsory crop reduction policy agreed upon by the large landowners because it lowered drastically his already minimal income.”<sup>11</sup> This lack of access to the land they had farmed for years, led many rural southerners to seek employment in the urban North and West as industrial opportunities began to increase with the shifting focus of material production away from consumer products and toward military defense. In cities like Oakland, migrant workers sought employment in defense shipyards, while in Detroit newly transplanted and earlier urban migrants attempted to find work in the Ford and General Motors plants, building tanks, plane engines, and guns. However, industrial work remained heavily segregated in the late 1930s, because regardless of skill, blacks were believed only suited to work in entry-level, dirty, back-breaking work. The inability to fully participate in the American economy, even at a time of industrial rebirth, deepened the distrust many working class blacks held toward the federal government and capitalism.<sup>12</sup>

The beginning of World War II and increased armament production helped spur economic recovery in the United States as the federal government sought to aid its allies

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<sup>11</sup> James Cobb “‘Somebody Done Nailed us on the Cross’: Federal Farm and Welfare Policies and the Civil Rights Movement in the Mississippi Delta” *Journal of American History* 77, No. 3 (Dec. 1990): 916; Harvard Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue, Volume 1: The Depression Decade* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 54-56.

<sup>12</sup> Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010), 3-13; 35-37, 177-179; 216-221; Murch, *Living for the City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010): 10-11, 15-21; James N. Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Donald Holley, *The Second Great Emancipation: The Mechanical Cotton Picker, Black Migration, and How They Shaped the Modern South* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2000).

and prepare for possible American intervention into the brewing global conflict. American industry competed for federal contracts to build everything from bullets to battleships, yet it remained heavily segregated, as African Americans were forced into menial, unskilled positions and often barred from the training courses necessary to secure employment. By 1941, black Americans demanded a change in the awarding of defense contracts and the segregation of American industry. A letter to the Editor of the Minneapolis Spokesman, reprinted in *The Crisis*, summed up the feelings of many black Americans: “Our industrial tycoons who are getting huge contracts to build our defense, exclude our loyal workers and hire those who may any minute wreck our defense plans. It is the same with our government. They tax us to build battleships upon which we may serve only as mess attendants.”<sup>13</sup> Lack of employment in the defense industries was particularly pressing to students at the Hampton Institute, who were being trained in metal trades as potential defense workers, but the “great question in the minds of these boys, their parents, their school, and the Negro race: will they get jobs or will American industry continue to place color prejudice ahead of national defense?” remained.<sup>14</sup> In San Diego, California, the Consolidated Aircraft Corporation refused to hire black workers because they were not properly trained, yet the San Diego Board of Education would not train black workers unless they could produce a letter from Consolidated Aircraft stating that they would be employed after the completion of their training. This cycle of exclusion was repeated in industrial plants with federal contracts for defense throughout the nation.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Letter to the Editor, *The Crisis*, January 1941, pg. 19.

<sup>14</sup> “Hampton Students Learn Metal Trade,” *The Crisis*, Jan. 1941, 17.

<sup>15</sup> “Negroes Barred by Vicious Cycle in Aircraft Plants” *The Crisis*, Jan. 1941, 21; David M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in the Depression and War, 1929-1945* (New York: Oxford

The exclusion of African American labor in defense industries became a rallying point for A. Philip Randolph and the BSCP in 1941. On February 19, 1941 four Senators introduced Senate Bill 75, which demanded an end to racial discrimination in national defense industries. *The Crisis*, the monthly magazine of the NAACP, implored its readers to write the chairman of the Committee of Education and Labor, committee members, and Senators from the letter-writer's state to demand passage of the bill.<sup>16</sup> Randolph endorsed the Bill and lobbied for its passage. As the Bill stalled in the Senate committee, Randolph ramped up his organizing efforts. In March, he announced that on July 1, 1941 10,000 men would march on Washington, D.C. to demand desegregation of federal defense industries and the military. In April, the Office of Production Management issued a letter stating that it could not enforce desegregation plans, but only advise industries to desegregate defense industries.<sup>17</sup> Randolph met with President Roosevelt, campaigned in national newspapers, and recruited black workers to force the government into action. Randolph's threat of 10,000 men marching on Washington grew to 100,000 as the spring wore on, placing pressure on the Roosevelt administration to answer Randolph's call. Because Senate Bill 75 was stalled in committee, Randolph demanded that the administration to take a stand. In a meeting with the President and Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, Randolph told the men that "it would mean a great deal to the morale of the Negro people if you could make some pronouncement on the role the Negro people will play in the Armed Forces of the nation in dealing with national defense." Roosevelt and Knox spent much of their meeting lecturing Randolph on the "realities" of the American

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University Press, 1999), 378, 764-779; Nancy J. Weiss, *Farewell to the Party of Lincoln: Black Politics in the Age of FDR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 52-58, 274-278; Sitkoff, *A New Deal for Blacks*, 321-334; James, Jr., *Double V*, 182-186, 197-220.

<sup>16</sup> "How you Can Help Expose Jim Crow in National Defense" *The Crisis*, March 1941, 84.

<sup>17</sup> "A Word from OPM" *The Crisis*, May 1941.



military and racial policy in the United States, which made Randolph's demand unpractical for the President. However, the administration was concerned with Randolph's march. Roosevelt told Randolph "that he didn't want a march on Washington because it would end up in violence and bloodshed and no doubt some people would get killed." The President feared racialized violence and, notably, that if the event did take place, other groups would also begin to march on Washington and there "would be no end to it." Roosevelt feared that the march would influence groups of all kinds and lead to him losing control of the country. The President even sent Mrs. Roosevelt and New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia to dissuade Randolph from going forward with his march.<sup>18</sup>

On June 18, with the help of Eleanor Roosevelt and Mayor La Guardia, Randolph and NAACP Secretary Walter White had a half hour meeting with Roosevelt. In the meeting Randolph and White pressed the President for an executive order desegregating industries with federal defense contracts, ending discrimination in government agencies, desegregating the military, and denying labor unions that discriminated against black workers admittance and access to the National Labor Relations Board. Randolph told the President that he and White wanted concrete action from the federal government and noted that if the demands were not met, the March on Washington would go forward as planned. Randolph and White negotiated with the administration and on June 25, Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, creating the President's Committee on Fair

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<sup>18</sup> Reed, *Seedtime*, 12-14; Office Conversation with A. Philip Randolph—ca. Sept. 27, 1940, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Recordings, Miller Center for History, University of Virginia <<http://millercenter.org/presidentialrecordings/roosevelt>>, accessed July 23, 2013; Transcript, A. Philip Randolph Oral History Interview I, 10/29/69, by Thomas H. Baker, Internet Copy, LBJ Library <<http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/oralhistory.hom/RandolpA/RANDOLPH.PDF>>, accessed July 23, 2013.

Employment Practice, and “for the first time since Reconstruction, the nation had a federal agency devoted exclusively to minority problems.” The Committee was to assess defense industries’ compliance with the order, which stipulated that industries could not allow third party contractors to discriminate and had to insure that training and vocational programs did not bar admittance based on race, creed, or color. The March on Washington was cancelled, though around a 1,000 people showed up for an open air meeting, where Randolph and Mayor La Guardia addressed the crowd.<sup>19</sup>

While Executive Order 8802 was a step forward for African American labor, it did not meet all of Randolph’s demands. Segregation still existed in the military and many labor unions. Randolph, the NAACP, and other nascent civil rights organizations turned their attention to desegregating the military. The peacetime draft (established in 1940) excluded many able-bodied African American males because the military was not prepared for Jim Crow barracks and training in the South. Local boards were instructed to draft only white men for their January 1941 quotas. The New York City chapter of the NAACP protested the action and *The Crisis* charged the system with discriminating against both black and white draftees.<sup>20</sup>

The attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, pushed an already mobilizing United States into war in both the Pacific and Europe.<sup>21</sup> Fighting a two front war for all out freedom, the U.S. required a large army. African Americans served in every American war, each time believing that their support and loyalty to the U.S. would be

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<sup>19</sup> Reed, *Seedtime*, 15; Transcript, A. Philip Randolph Oral History Interview I, 10/29/69, by Thomas H. Baker, Internet Copy, LBJ Library <<http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/oralhistory.hom/RandolpA/RANDOLPH.PDF>>, accessed July 23, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> “Discrimination in the Draft” *The Crisis*, Jan. 1941, 7; “Protest Plan to Segregate in Army Plan” *Indianapolis Recorder*, Jan. 4, 1941, 7; Maury Klein, *A Call to Arms: Mobilizing America for World War II* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 81-82, 188-119, 343-344.

<sup>21</sup> Klein, *A Call to Arms*, 281-285.

rewarded with expanded equality. Yet, black soldiers remained segregated. They were drafted at lower rates, particularly in the South, as the segregated system of military jobs left few openings for black men. Black Americans were banned from serving in the Marines, could only serve in restricted, rear-division capacities like cooks in the Navy, and in segregated fighting units in the Army.<sup>22</sup> The restrictions on service led to ironic outbursts by Southern legislators. Representative Charles E. McKenzie of Louisiana lamented the slow and uneven draft rate of African Americans in the South, asking “Has it come to pass...that the color of a man’s skin is the basis for his being drafted even if he is single and has no dependents?” To shore up his argument, McKenzie cited the 267 black men listed as 1-A who were still undrafted because there had not been a “colored call” by the federal government. These men, according to McKenzie and his followers, were deemed inferior because of their skin color and this classification was racial discrimination.<sup>23</sup> McKenzie did not want to integrate the military; instead, he wanted a more equitable draft rate so fewer of his married, white constituents would be sent to war.

The continued segregation of the American military led Randolph and the *Pittsburgh Courier* to create the Double V campaign in February of 1942. It called for victory over enemies from without and victory over enemies within the United States.<sup>24</sup> The campaign focused on securing black participation in the armed services, something Randolph claimed black Americans had to do to “preserve democracy and liberty such as

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<sup>22</sup> “Now is the Time Not to Be Silent” *The Crisis*, Jan. 1942, 7; A. Philip Randolph, “The Negro has a Great Stake in this War,” *The Pittsburgh Courier*, December 20, 1941, 12; James, Jr., *The Double V*, 129-244; Lawrence P. Scott and William M. Womack, *Double V: The Civil Rights Struggle of the Tuskegee Airmen* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 1998), 10-20, 107-141, 159-163; Buckley, *American Patriots*, 254-264.

<sup>23</sup> “Negroes in the Army,” *The New Republic* Dec. 2, 1943, 904.

<sup>24</sup> “The Courier’s Double ‘V’ for a Double Victory Campaign Gets Countrywide Support” *Pittsburgh Courier*, Pg. 1, February 14, 1942; Patrick S. Washburn, “The Pittsburgh *Courier*’s Double V Campaign in 1942,” *American Journalism* 3, no. 2 (1986): 73-86.

we now have in the world so that we may make it sounder and better. And Negroes must demand the right to fight and work alongside their fellow white Americans as full and equal citizens, workers, soldiers, sailors, air men and marine men.”<sup>25</sup> Combining domestic integration with the battle for international democracy, the campaign demanded that black Americans fight two wars—to secure equal rights at home and democracy abroad--and to win both. The Double V campaign was the seed from which the Black Power movement grew—not because it was “radical” or “violent,” but because the failure of Double V and the legislative campaigns of the mainstream Civil Rights Movement did not address the structural (economic participation, food, shelter, and health care) needs of African Americans.

Double V used the rhetoric of American exceptionalism and black self-determination to gain support from a wide variety of black organizations. It demanded black men and women “fight against the poll tax, against lynch law, segregation, and Jim Crow...for economic, political, and social equality,” as part of a “global war for freedom.”<sup>26</sup> Endorsed by the NAACP, black newspapers across the country, and black owned businesses, the Double V campaign demanded full black participation in the war effort. As journalist Edgar T. Bouzeau argued, black Americans “must believe sufficiently in our cause at home if we are to contribute our utmost toward a successful war effort abroad.”<sup>27</sup> Black Americans were empowered by the rhetoric of the war campaigns in Europe and Asia and some sought “the revolutionary goal of toppling one of the pillars of the American state: the system of racial discrimination and segregation

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<sup>25</sup> A. Philip Randolph, “The Negro Has a Great Stake in this War,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, Dec. 20, 1941.

<sup>26</sup> A. Philip Randolph, “Why Should We March?” *Survey Graphic* XXXI, No. 11 (Nov. 1942): 488-489.

<sup>27</sup> Edgar T. Bouzeau, “Race had to make a Choice Between Conflicting Ideologies—Now its Destiny is Bound Up with the Protection of Democracy at Home and Abroad,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, Feb. 7, 1942; James, Jr., *The Double V*, 137-143.

known as Jim Crow.”<sup>28</sup> The War was seen as a watershed moment that would define the struggle for full political freedom for African Americans in the United States. By showing loyalty and willingness to participate in the American war effort, black leaders believed they were proving to white Americans that they deserved equal protection under the law. Roy Wilkins, editor of *The Crisis*, argued “the highest expression of patriotism in these war years will come in the critical analysis of our objectives in the refusal to ignore, now or later, these evils among us which are blood brothers of the evils against which we are warring.”<sup>29</sup> By tying American racism to Nazi and Fascist hatred, Wilkins laid bare the NAACP’s belief that the war could be beneficial to African Americans.

The Double V Campaign’s main focus was on black military service. Black soldiers remained in segregated, underfunded, and horribly treated units led by white officers in the Army. In the Navy, black seamen could only serve as mess hands, and black men were still barred from service in the Marine Corps. The NAACP and the March on Washington Movement fought for black men’s admittance in the newly formed Army Air Corps, to become officers in the Army, and to serve in desegregated units on the front lines. These battles were slow going, but did result in the formation of an Air Corps battalion out of Tuskegee.<sup>30</sup> The push to desegregate the military seemed logical as the war progressed, because black Americans were willing to serve and the United States needed manpower both in the Army and in industrial employment. However, the continued resistance by military officials to integrate the armed forces caused resentment

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<sup>28</sup> Robert A. Hill, ed., *The FBI’s RACON: Racial Conditions in the United States During World War II* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1995), 2.

<sup>29</sup> Roy Wilkins, “Now is the Time Not to be Silent” *The Crisis*, Jan. 1941, 7.

<sup>30</sup> Roy Wilkins, “The Negro in the United States Army” *The Crisis*, Feb. 1942, 47; “Open Letter to President Roosevelt,” *The Crisis*, Jan. 1943, 8; Walter White, “The Right to Fight for Democracy,” *Survey Graphic*, Nov. 1942, 472-473.

among some African American draftees and led some men to refuse their draft notices—an action that would become more commonplace during the Vietnam War. During World War II, Malcolm Little (Malcolm X) used the induction process as a site of protest and to cultivate an image for the government. Malcolm was found mentally unfit to serve and was “diagnosed” with split personality, a designation he worked to create through letter writing and his own induction exam. Little created a person who the Army could not accept—someone who wanted to kill other Americans, was blood thirsty for violence, and was sexually promiscuous. He was “mentally disqualified for military service for the following reasons: psychopathic personality inadequate, sexual perversion, psychiatric rejection.” These assertions, coupled with his growing arrest record, earned Little his 4-F status.<sup>31</sup> Because he was listed as 4-F he did not have to refuse service, but for two hundred men convicted for selective service violations under the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, this was not the case. Men were convicted for failure to register for the draft, refusing to submit to examinations, not appearing before draft boards and refusing to be inducted into the military. Malcolm’s subversion of the draft examination would be modeled and repeated by the Black Power generation faced with draft notices for Vietnam. Those men and women who did serve, some 920,000, were most often trained in segregated Southern states.<sup>32</sup>

Gary Reynolds, a black Chaplain in the Army during World War II, expressed the feelings of black soldiers in the pages of *The Crisis*. The black soldier was denied “food when he is hungry, dignified transportation when has to travel, a voice in choosing those who rule him, or just the most fundamental aspects of our proclaimed method of living,”

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<sup>31</sup> Marable, *Malcolm X*, 72-73.

<sup>32</sup> Hill, *The FBI's RACON*, 4.

while being inundated daily with the call to become a hero in the American military. According to Reynolds, Secretary of War Stimson needed to know that the black soldier “does not want to fight—unless a second front is opened in Mississippi, Texas, Georgia, South Carolina, Louisiana, or just *anywhere* below the Mason and Dixon line—that his heart is not in the war.”<sup>33</sup> By late 1944, as victory in Europe and Japan were close to realities, few African American victories had been realized. Forced into all black units and often denied respect or field promotions, black fighting men were obliged to support democracy without experiencing it.

Gordon Parks, a war correspondent dispatched to a black air squadron outside Detroit and originally assigned to go to combat in Europe with them, experienced the double standard government officials applied to black soldiers.<sup>34</sup> Parks spent time with the squadron, making friends with the pilots and enlisted men and writing a column on their heroism. He also had a number of encounters with blatant Army discrimination. In Detroit when the race riots of the summer of 1943 occurred, Parks dealt with the fear and uncertainty of living in an unwelcoming community. At the same time, his friend Tony was assigned to accompany bodies as they were transported back to families after their death. Tony wrote Parks a letter describing the treatment of the black soldiers’ bodies and the indignities the dead soldiers experienced. Tony had to transfer the body of Judy, a pilot, to Detroit because “there are no facilities for handling Negro dead” at the base. The trip from the base to Detroit was 300 miles and was undertaken in an Army ambulance.

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<sup>33</sup> Grant Reynolds, “What the Negro Soldier thinks about this War,” *The Crisis*, Sept. 1944, 289-290.

<sup>34</sup> During World War II, the Air Force had not been established as a separate military force, thus black men could serve in the Army Air Force, but in segregated units, like the famed Tuskegee Airmen attached to the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. The Tuskegee group was fought for in the African American press, through a letter writing campaign to the President and Joint Chiefs of Staff, and through public embarrassment of the administration. The Tuskegee Airmen remain a source of pride to many African Americans.

Tony wondered if the Army doctors even examined Judy, knowing the doctors on the base would not want to touch Judy's body. Tony described the trip as "the final indignity of all." Tony "felt shame and revulsion for having to wear the uniform I had on." He delivered Judy's body to his family, "but would [not] tell his folks about this trip because it will just hurt them more. At least to them he was a hero."<sup>35</sup> Tony's experience with Judy's body highlighted the mistreatment sanctioned by the federal government toward its black military personnel. Moreover, Tony's shame and revulsion in participating in such an exercise, when white soldiers' bodies were treated with the dignity and respect deserved by a hero, further strengthened his anti-government feelings.

Parks' own interactions with the military brass served as another example of the Army's contempt with black military personnel. When the squadron Parks was assigned to received orders to deploy to Europe, Parks was not cleared for the mission. Confused by being left off the cleared list, Parks was dispatched to Washington to meet with the Pentagon and straighten out the perceived mishap. His trip to the nation's capital included all the usual problems of traveling for African Americans in the 1940s American South. He was subjected to Jim Crow rail and public bus accommodations, as well as disrespect toward himself and other black military members, all in uniform, but none regarded with the same dignity as the white privates also traveling on the bus. When he finally met with a representative at the Pentagon, Parks was assured that his papers for deployment with his squadron were in order and was given directions to meet with the airmen at an undisclosed location outside Newport News, Virginia. His traveling experience was again compromised due to his skin color, as a bus driver refused his ticket order, because as a

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<sup>35</sup> Gordon Parks, "A Choice of Weapons," quoted in *The Black Soldier: From the American Revolution to Vietnam* Jay David and Elaine Crane, eds. (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1971), 153-154.



military officer, Parks could write his own government order. Eventually, Parks made it back to the point of embarkment with his group. However, the next morning Parks was told by his commanding officer that he had not been cleared to depart with the rest of the squadron. The Pentagon had rescinded his orders, choosing not to cover the first black group to fight overseas, because black soldiers did not deserve the coverage Parks was assigned to provide. The Pentagon had not only denied Parks his profession, but had also deemed the airmen they had trained unworthy of the attention they had earned. Parks was so devastated he could not face his friends and snuck out of the barracks as the men readied themselves for their journey.<sup>36</sup>

The treatment of black Army draftees and enlistees during their training at home underscored the importance of the Double V campaign for many participants. Those who served were expected to fight and protect democracy abroad, while they were treated as second class citizens within the American military structure. Soldiers were not afforded the protections of their uniforms or the honor of their service when they were on American soil, and often experienced the same indignities on the front lines. As the war wound down abroad, the chance for the Double V at home slipped further out of reach. Returning black soldiers were not greeted with ticker tape parades and honor banquets. Instead, black servicemen were spit on, called nigger, and subjected to racial violence. No black soldiers were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor (though in the years since, the Tuskegee Airmen have been honored), and many black Americans were targeted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for their involvement in the Double V campaign and other nascent Civil Rights organizations, another precursor to the Black Power movement. J. Edgar Hoover's fear of communist infiltration in the United States

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<sup>36</sup> Parks, "A Choice of Weapons," 155-166.

and distrust of what he deemed “radical” individuals led to heightened surveillance on potential “threats.”<sup>37</sup> Like their counterparts in World War I, black soldiers were left not with the glory of American victory, but the defeat of American racism.

The reality of failure in the Double V campaign hit hard. With the return of American GIs, many Americans worried that without massive defense spending, the nation would return to a depression economy. To deal with the large number of demobilizing veterans, Congress instituted a New Deal for veterans. The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the G.I. Bill, provided a number of domestic services for returning soldiers seeking reintegration into American society. More than 8.3 million, or some 52 percent, received unemployment payments provided by the bill as ‘readjustment allowances’; about 7.8 million, a little less than half of the cohort, received graduate, college, or subcollege-level education and training benefits; and 4 million, or 25 percent, were granted a VA-guaranteed loan to finance a home, farm, or business.<sup>38</sup> These service rewards dramatically changed the American cultural landscape, as millions of veterans stepped permanently into the middle and upper classes because of their G.I. benefits. However, the Bill disproportionally benefited white male veterans, as colleges remained segregated, home ownership was restricted by predatory lenders and restrictive covenants, and job acquisition continued to be challenging for African Americans.<sup>39</sup> Discrimination by Veterans Administration officials and no anti-racism provisions meant that although the G.I. Bill was written as a color-blind document, it operated in a racist society and was administered by racist white officials. Moreover, the Bill, like all

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<sup>37</sup> Hill, *The FBI’s RANCON*, 1995; “Not one out of a Million” *The Crisis*, Dec. 1945, 345.

<sup>38</sup> Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, *The GI Bill: A New Deal for Veterans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7-9.

<sup>39</sup> Altschuler and Blumin, *The GI Bill*, 129; Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage, 2003), 161-173.

government public services, required the action of black veterans to demand their benefits.

The struggles to secure government ensured benefits, while also attempting to maintain full time employment and find a foothold in new communities meant that black veterans were often on the outside of the early Cold War economic boom. Complicating matters further, the continued segregation of the Armed Forces and the denial of African American draftees the chance to participate in World War II service kept millions of black men and women from receiving benefits. The G.I. Bill, for African American veterans, was another instance of second-class citizenship in a nation that required their patriotism, but did not reward them along the same lines as whites. The Bill, according to historian Lizabeth Cohen, “rewarded sixteen million servicemen and –women who had served their country in wartime by helping them restart their lives after an average of two and half years away,” but “...by its very structure, the bill favored some Americans over others, and even some veterans over others, spawning consequences not necessarily anticipated by its framers and supporters.”<sup>40</sup> While the U.S. economy recovered from the Depression through industrial war time production and white American wealth soared with access to G.I. benefits and secure employment, black Americans still remained well below the national average in wealth. Only 20,000 black veterans gained access to college education, 53% of all married black veterans lived with relatives, and in the summer of 1947 only two black veterans received Federal Housing Authority loans of the 3,229 issued in Texas.<sup>41</sup> In 1950, median income for white families in the United States was \$3,100, while nonwhite families in the United States only made, on average, \$1,569

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<sup>40</sup> Cohen, *Consumer's Republic*, 138.

<sup>41</sup> Cohen, *Consumer's Republic*, 167-171; “GI Benefits, 1945-June 1946,” *Ebony* 2 (August 1947).

annually. According to the Department of Commerce, these figures reflected “the concentration of nonwhites in low-paying jobs and in some which do not permit continuous full-time employment.” The new, post-war economy was no friendlier than pre-war manufacturing and agriculture to black workers.<sup>42</sup>

War time labor shortages allowed some African Americans to move up in wages and to take jobs with more responsibility, particularly in civil defense industries, but those gains did not last. The men and women, often with their families in tow, migrated out of the deep South and to industrial hubs like Detroit, San Francisco, and New York—continuing a tradition of seeking higher wages and better employment opportunities. Family movement was slow and disjointed, as one member would often move first, and then send for the remaining family later. Thus, the efforts to relocate outside of the South happened over a number of years, often culminating after peace was declared.

The families who followed war time production out of the South, believing that freedom from Jim Crow was possible in the urban North and West, were faced with the harsh realities of a de facto segregated society, similar to the Jim Crow world they sought to escape, waiting for them. Many times, the jobs promised by recruiters were not available for the unskilled labors who migrated to the coasts, or were reserved only for white workers. This dissatisfaction with the war time industry was somewhat assuaged by the President’s Committee on Fair Employment Practices; however, the Committee was slow and often could not break through the barriers of individual factories, line managers, or hiring officials. Additionally, as the war wound down and white men began to return to the economy, black men and women who moved for wartime manufacturing

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<sup>42</sup> “Current Population Reports: Consumer Income,” U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, March 25, 1952, 3.

employment were faced with “last hired, first fired” mantra that generations before them had endured. Yet, unlike earlier migrations, migrants during World War II often moved with their families, taking control over their family’s destinies and believing that real opportunity awaited them. This full upheaval meant that war time migrants remained in the cities they had moved to, unlike some earlier emigrants who had sought employment when times were good and returned home during lean moments.<sup>43</sup>

The uprooting of millions from the rural South to the urban North and West did not mean that the Southern culture was left behind. Instead, these shifts in black population meant that the desirable and less than desirable aspects of Southern life spread through the diaspora as well. Importantly for the battles of Black Power, the internal diaspora meant the mingling of seemingly disparate cultures into a strong sense of the Black community throughout the nation. While local problems in Oakland, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. existed, they were all part of larger structural issues heightened by the inequality of post-war economic boom times.<sup>44</sup>

In smaller cities and towns in the South, similar dynamics played out as well. Robert F. Williams’ radicalization melded the experiences of industrial workers and soldiers. Sixteen at the time of the Pearl Harbor bombing, Williams post-war work with the Monroe, North Carolina chapter of the NAACP was motivated by his times, first in National Youth Administration (NYA) camp where he experience racial discrimination

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<sup>43</sup> Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, 136-139, 154, 187, 289-290; Daniel M. Johnson and Rex R. Campbell, *Black Migration in America: A Social Demographic History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1981); James Gregory, *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migration of Black and White Southerners Transformed America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Nicholas Lehmann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992); Joe Trotter, *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1991).

<sup>44</sup> Annelise Orleck, *Storming Caesar’s Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty* (Boston: Beacon Hill Press, 2005), 7-36.

and his employment by Detroit manufactures with war contracts. After a successful protest of the treatment of black men at the NYA site, Williams moved to Detroit to seek his fortune with his brother. Williams secured employment at the Ford Motor Plant, joined the local chapter of the United Auto Workers, and worked there until a Navy recruiter convinced him to move to Port Chicago, California in 1943. Williams continued to work in the war industries until he reported for duty in July of 1945. Like Gordon Parks, Williams' military service proved to be the transformative experience that pushed him toward a lifetime fighting for civil rights. Taught to handle weapons and indoctrinated with the importance of democracy, Williams' service coupled with his experiences in wartime Detroit and California, "instilled in [him] what a virtue it was to fight for democracy and that we were fighting for democracy and upholding the Constitution. But most of all they taught [him] to use arms."<sup>45</sup> The war experience was transformative for Williams and others who served and worked in war time industries because it brought into stark focus that the federal government was responsible for reinforcing unequal status of African Americans while it demanded those same men and women to fight and possibly die for democracy outside the United States. The internal migration of black men and women also highlighted the national nature of white supremacy, as Southern migrants experienced the same discrimination and job insecurity in the urban West and North that they believed they were escaping by leaving the South.

The migration for jobs and subsequent lay-off of war time labor had a transformative effect on African American organizers for civil rights and the children of the migrants themselves. According to James Baldwin, "What happened in defense plants

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<sup>45</sup> Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 1999), 26-48.

and army camps had repercussions, naturally, in every Negro ghetto. The treatment accorded the Negro during the Second World War, marks, for me, a turning point in the Negro's relation to America. To put it briefly, and somewhat too simply, a certain hope died, a certain respect for white Americans faded."<sup>46</sup> The failure to integrate the military coupled with the loss of secure work in the industrial sector led to the entrenchment of urban ghettos in American manufacturing cities, often populated by ex-pat Southerners who had sought their fortunes through the promises of the American defense industry. The children of these replanted Southerners went on to populate the Black Power organizations of the 1960s. The disappointment and resentment of their parents influenced and informed the Black Power generation's interactions with and distrust of the federal government, while also feeding their sense of change and the importance of local organizations in the Black Power struggle.<sup>47</sup> The challenges of the internal African American diaspora can be delineated from the early lives and survival processes experienced by a number of Black Power's most vocal leaders.

Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, founders of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, were both the children of migrant Southern black Americans who resettled in Oakland during the war. Newton, the youngest of seven children, born on February 17, 1942, in Monroe, Louisiana, was the son of a preacher and a farmer's daughter. Newton's parents had met and married in Arkansas, and moved to Louisiana during the Depression in search of greater opportunity. In 1945, Huey and his family moved with his father to Oakland, "when he came West to look for work in the wartime industries," but "like countless other Black families in the forties and fifties, we fell victim to this indifference

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<sup>46</sup> James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 99.

<sup>47</sup> Orleck, *Storming Caesar's Palace*, 196-222; Murch, *Living for the City*, 3-40.

and corruption when we moved to Oakland.”<sup>48</sup> Newton’s family experienced a series of setbacks which mired them in poverty in Oakland’s ghetto. Though Huey’s father was educated and a preacher, his family struggled to remain out of poverty and moved frequently as rumors of jobs on Oakland’s docks and shipyards circulated through the community. Huey’s frequent movements and the dissatisfaction with the opportunities in Oakland had a profound impact on his radicalization. The failure of the Oakland schools to support black students and the hard life the Newton family experienced in Oakland left Huey “constantly feeling uncomfortable and ashamed of being Black.”<sup>49</sup>

Bobby Seale also came to the west coast from the South during the war. Five years older than Huey, Seale’s journey from Texas occurred at the end of World War II. Before the war, Seale’s father built the family a home in Port Arthur, Texas. As a skilled carpenter, Mr. Seale used his skills to provide for his family, but was forced to follow war time employment opportunities, and moved the family to San Antonio. The Port Arthur home was rented out for additional income, but the Seale family was forced to move into a house in San Antonio that lacked indoor plumbing. Mr. Seale was increasingly absent from home and when he did return to the San Antonio house, he was violent toward his wife and children. Bobby heard stories of California from his aunts and cousins, and asked his mother if they would also move. The answer came soon enough, as his father first went to Berkeley to secure a job and housing, and when enough money was saved, the rest of the family joined him. Having already owned a single family home, Bobby and his mother expected to own property in California, but were forced to come to terms with reality of cramped urban living. Bobby and his siblings

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<sup>48</sup> Huey P. Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, Inc., 1973), 11-15.

<sup>49</sup> Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 19; Murch, *Living for the City*, 46-48.



grew up in government housing, always a pay check away from having enough money to get out. Like his compatriot, Seale also experienced racism in Oakland's education system and from the Bay Area's police force. In time, Seale and Newton's experiences in Oakland lead them to create the Black Panther Party.<sup>50</sup>

Another leader in the Oakland Black Panther Party, David Hilliard, was also a member of the Southern exodus during the Great Depression. The last son of farmers from Rockville, Alabama, Hilliard's family moved from their family plot to Mobile, following Bud, David's oldest brother, to work on Mobile's docks. After a few years of working on the docks, the family again moved for more opportunity. Hilliard, his mother, and Bud's children, left Mobile for Oakland, as Bud had secured work in the post-war economy delivering Buicks. California had been a dream of David's, after seeing movies about the state from the segregated balconies of Mobile's movie theaters. Unlike Newton and Seale, Hilliard did not travel with his entire family, but his family was mired in the same situations in Oakland as his future friends. Eventually, Hilliard's father and another sister joined them in Oakland, after Budd convinced the family that opportunities would always be better in Oakland than in Mobile. Unlike Hilliard's dreams, Oakland's streets were not paved with gold and his father was unable to secure employment when he arrived. "Every day he goes out, dapper and dignified, looking for work, returning home frustrated and silent," Hilliard recalled, as his father refused Social Security (believing it was a government handout, not a retirement policy) and found Oakland not to be the promised land, but a behemoth city, unwelcoming and harsh to migrants.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Murch, *Living for the City*, 233; Bobby Seale, *A Lonely Rage: The Autobiography of Bobby Seale* (New York: New York Times Press, 1978), 7-28.

<sup>51</sup> David Hilliard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 32-76.

Seale's and Newton's fathers also experienced problems securing work and spent much of their children's lives moving from one job to another. George Seale opened a cabinet shop with the family's savings. He convinced his wife and children that the shop would lead to middle class security, with a home of their own and money to spare, but Mr. Seale was full-hardy with his money. He convinced his son to lie for him and would not bring money home to his wife when she needed food, clothing, or to pay the rent. Seale's business continued and he picked up side jobs including working in the California fields. He forced his children to work throughout the summer to earn money for their mother and still the Seale's barely survived. In the end, Bobby and his siblings took to panhandling flowers or robbing local grocery stores and downtown department stores to get the basic necessities they required, as well as to provide small gifts for themselves and their friends at Christmas.<sup>52</sup>

While leaving the South for the industrial centers of post-War America was transformative, the influence of South did not leave the migrants. The sons and daughters who moved with their families, seeking economic opportunity and racial inclusivity, remained tied to the culture of the South. As Hilliard argued, many of Black Power's most persuasive leaders "were imbued with the moral and spiritual values of their parents; and...our dignity as an independent people, the communal ideal and practice that informed our programs, all stem in part from the civilization" of the black South.<sup>53</sup> The experiences of urban racism, along with watching their fathers and important male figures, like Hilliard's brother Budd, struggle to find a place in the post-war west coast economy served as moments of radicalization for the future Black Power leaders.

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<sup>52</sup> Seale, *A Lonely Rage*, 32-36.

<sup>53</sup> Hilliard, *This Side of Glory*, 25-27.

Although migrant experiences were common among Black Power leaders, the closed doors experienced by black families trying to find a place in the post-war industrial economy were not unique to Southern ex-patriots. Stokely Carmichael's diasporic traveling was in and of itself a moment of radicalization. His mother, separated from her parents throughout her early life because of a misplaced birth certificate, had tried repeatedly to immigrate to the United States from Trinidad. For many years her efforts proved pointless. She eventually married Carmichael's father, had three children (Stokely was the middle and only boy), and fled the family in 1944 for New York City. Unlike the families moving to Oakland from the South, Carmichael's mother was not seeking the American dream when she left Trinidad. The comparisons become closer to internal migration experiences after Mrs. Carmichael's unceremonious departure. In June 1946, Carmichael's father abandoned his children in Trinidad, signed on as a worker on a northbound freighter, and sought to reunite with his wife in New York. Stokely and his siblings remained in Trinidad and did not see their parents for seven years.<sup>54</sup>

Raised by his paternal grandmother and aunts, Carmichael and his siblings remained in Trinidad until the death of his grandmother when Stokely was 11. After the funeral and the commencement of the summer holiday from school, Stokely and his sisters flew to New York City and were reunited with their parents, and two American born sisters, in the Bronx. Here, at 861 Stebbins Avenue, Carmichael experienced "the confluence of two volatile streams of recent arrivals: the 'foreigners' coming from the cane fields of the islands; the 'Americans' coming from the cotton fields and small holdings of the rural South. Nearly all of them were first-generation immigrants valiantly

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<sup>54</sup> Stokely Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 18-20.

trying to come to terms with a concrete urban vastness equally alien to both.”<sup>55</sup> Surviving the initial move and acclimating himself to America, Carmichael’s family scrapped money together and purchased a run-down house in a Jewish enclave near Pelham Parkway in the Bronx. Carmichael’s father worked tirelessly to transform the house, and though often without a job as a construction laborer because of racial bias among union members, the house moved from eyesore to the beauty of the block. Carmichael’s life was, on the surface, easier than some of his Black Power compatriots—he was well educated, integrated into an immigrant, Italian community that accepted him, and provided the trappings of a middle class American life: piano lessons, Christian services, and a family owned home. Yet, his father struggled to find and secure a job, often working days as a construction worker and driving a cab in the evenings. Sheltered from the harsher realities faced by his diasporic brothers and sisters in the urban ghettos of America’s industrialized cities, Carmichael was radicalized later, at Howard University and through his experiences organizing Southern blacks with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). However, Carmichael’s childhood in the Bronx shaped his view of American capitalist society, as he saw his father shut out of union membership at first, and once accepted, passed over for jobs because of his race. Carmichael’s parents’ determination and precarious grasp on the American dream led him to SNCC and Black Power.<sup>56</sup>

While family situations and migration played a dominant role in radicalizing the future participants of the Black Power movement, they were not the only influences. Coming of age in Cold War America, where racial integration was occurring slowly and

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<sup>55</sup> Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*, 51.

<sup>56</sup> Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*, 60-82.

unevenly, Black Power advocates were forced to come to terms with the disconnect between American rhetoric and reality on a daily basis. Black baby boomers came of age in a world drastically different, and yet remarkably the same as their parents' childhoods. Steeped in the Cold War notions of democracy and the moral superiority of America, Black Power's participants were confronted daily with the recurring ironies of American international dreams and domestic reality. Violence and intimidation carried out by whites against African Americans served as reminders of their unequal status and as lessons for survival. Passed through word of mouth, black children learned the Southern code by listening to their parents talk and worry. Cleveland Sellers, a founding member of SNCC, recalled: "We learned things from a number of sources, the most important one being the grapevine: an informal black communications network connecting state to state, town to town, group to group and person to person." The network recounted atrocities, passed on survival techniques, and created an imagined community of oppressed individuals, where news travelled easily and black Americans around the country had insight into the similarities of their positions.<sup>57</sup> For many Black Power youth, their own grapevine of gossip and worry provided the first and lasting lesson on transgressing the color line.

While Black Power advocates parents struggled with the failure of the Double V and the economic repercussions from the shift to peace-time labor, the brutal murder of a fourteen-year-old in Mississippi caught the attention of many young African Americans. Emmett Till's murder, funeral, and subsequent place in the minds of Black Power leaders like Stokely Carmichael and Cleveland Sellers highlights the powerful mark Till's short

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<sup>57</sup> Cleveland Sellers, *The River of No Return: The Autobiography of a Black Militant and the Life and Death of SNCC* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1973), 13.

life and violent death left on the United States. Emmett Till's death, more than *Brown*, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, or Dr. King's "I have a Dream Speech," was the defining moment in many young activists lives. Till's bloated body on the cover of *Jet* magazine, badly beaten, disfigured, with an eye gouged out, opened a conversation amongst young, activist minded people that eventually led to the monumental actions of the Civil Rights and Black Power struggles.

The lynching of Emmett Till on August 28, 1955 was cited by many Black Power advocates as the moment they realized they were not equal. Till, a black child from Chicago, visited family in Mississippi in the summer of 1955. A year after the Supreme Court's historic *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision, America was at the precipice of radical changes in its societal caste system. Yet, the South remained strictly segregated in public facilities and white minds. Till, as a young outsider (because of his mother's own migration to Chicago during World War II), was warned by his mother to mind the Southern racial customs, and was sent on his way for a late summer visit with family.

Till arrived in Mississippi on August 21, 1955. On August 24, Till and his family shopped at Bryant's Grocery in Money, Mississippi, where the proprietor's wife accused Till of accosting her, by grabbing her arm and asking for a date over the candy counter of the store (sexually charged accusations were common weapons employed against black men by white women), and followed Till out of the store to retrieve a shotgun. As Carolyn Bryant-Donham walked out of the store, she alleged that Till whistled at her—a bold and grievous break with Southern racial order. Till and his family quickly exited the property. Till was abducted from his family's home around 2:30 am August 28, and was

tortured and killed before being submerged in the Tallahatchie River, where he was discovered on August 31, 1955. His killers were arrested, charged, and tried for his murder, but were found innocent.<sup>58</sup>

The lynching of Till and the subsequent acquittal of his murderers was a rallying point for civil rights activists. Till's mother left his casket open so the thousands of mourners who filed by could see the atrocities committed against her son, while Till himself became a symbol of Southern white aggression and the need to direct, swift action to end racial discrimination and hatred. Pictures of Till's bloated and deformed body, as well as his long funeral procession, were featured in *Life*, *Jet*, and *Ebony* magazines and provided tangible evidence of the white South's racial hatred and differing views of justice. Satisfied that an all-white jury, with little deliberation, acquitted the accused murderers, the state of Mississippi deemed justice served in the Till lynching and moved on.

For young black Americans, justice in Till's death was not served and was especially troubling. Muhammad Ali recalled that Till's murder planted the seed for his own radical awakenings, while Stokely Carmichael used Till as motivation while he

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<sup>58</sup> FBI Case 44A-JN-30112; 62D-JN-30045, filed February 9, 2006. Till's murder was initially investigated by the FBI in August of 1955, but was closed when arrests were made. The investigation remained closed until a Mississippi District Attorney requested that the FBI reopen the case on May 7, 2004. Most of the individuals involved in the Till case were dead at the time of the new investigation, and while the FBI report sheds fresh light on the tragedy, Till's mother died with the injustice of her son's death unresolved. See also: Rebecca de Schweinitz, *If we could Change the World: Young People and America's Long Struggle for Racial Equality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 102; Cleveland Sellers, "Black Power and the Freedom Movement in Retrospect," in *Rebellion in Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s* ed. by Robert Cohen and David J. Snyder (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 280-305; Mamie Till-Mobley and Chris Benson, *Death of Innocence: The Hate Crime that Changed America* (New York: Random House, 2003); Stephen J. Whitfield, *A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

organized Mississippi for SNCC.<sup>59</sup> Till's proximity in age to Cleveland Sellers made identifying with Till easy. "I tried to put myself in his place and imagine what he was thinking when those white men took him from his home that night," Sellers recalled. "I read and reread the newspapers and magazine accounts. I couldn't get over the fact that the men who were accused of killing him had not been punished at all." The Till murder remained in the forefront of Seller's mind throughout the 1955 school year, where in a segregated school house, he and his classmates discussed the lynching.<sup>60</sup>

Julian Bond, future SNCC organizer and Georgia State Senator, was the son of a black academic, and grew up in interracial communities. However, "seeing the corpse of this young, innocent boy, tortured and savagely beaten almost beyond recognition before being killed—all on account of some minor, perceived transgression of southern racial etiquette—we all thought: it could easily have been me." Till's murder forced Bond to grapple with the reality of white hatred and its manifestation in violence. Bond cited Till's murder as an event that heightened his awareness of the dangers of being black in the United States, and he often returned to that insight as he became more involved in the Movement.<sup>61</sup>

Anne Moody, a SNCC organizer and native Mississippian, learned about the Till murder from classmates and was deeply embarrassed about her ignorance. "It was then that I realized I really didn't know what was going on around me," she recalled. Moody spent most of her days in school or working as a domestic for a local, wealthy white

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<sup>59</sup> Muhammad Ali, *The Greatest: My Own Story* (New York: Random House, 1975), 34-35; Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*, 375, 385; Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 39.

<sup>60</sup> Sellers, *The River of No Return*, 14-15.

<sup>61</sup> Julian Bond, "The Media and the Movement: Looking Back from the Southern Front," in Brian Ward, ed. *Media, Culture, and the Modern African American Freedom Struggle* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2001), 26-27.



woman. Shielded from upsetting news by her mother, Till's murder had a profound effect on Moody: "Before Emmett Till's murder I had known the fear of hunger, hell, and the Devil. But now there was a new fear known to me—the fear of being killed just because I was black..."<sup>62</sup> Till's murder showcased to his peers that the color of their skin was the greatest factor in determining their moral character and that little could be done to change the way white America viewed them. Though the murder occurred when they were young (many not even teenagers), movement members were aware that it was a transitional event, one they could recount years later and returned too often, when asked about their motivations for doing anti-racism work.

Till's murder was the first of many moments of violence, some locally and others that gained national attention, that radicalized the Black Power generation. While Till's murder was cited by Civil Rights leaders from Martin Luther King to Malcolm X, the influence it had on Black Power leaders was significant. The use of violence against people of color and the direct, non-violent stance encouraged by Dr. King's SCLC, the NAACP, and the National Urban League in response served as further impetus for defensive action.

The manipulation of violence was a hallmark of the Black Power movement, only strengthened by the responses of King and the moderate movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s to violent attacks. As Timothy B. Tyson has argued, violence, or at least the threat of violence, was necessary for the Civil Rights Movement to force action on racial inequality.<sup>63</sup> When white vigilantes attacked peaceful black marchers throughout the

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<sup>62</sup> Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 127-132.

<sup>63</sup> Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie* 307-308; Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name*, 68-71. Tyson argues, "King and his organizers were committed to nonviolence, but their strategy depended on provoking violence against demonstrators. And though the SCLC taught nonviolence and begged those who could not accept

South, when four girls were murdered as they worshipped, or when SNCC workers were kidnapped, raped, and lynched by white mobs, the Civil Rights Movement gained moral ground. As the media began to follow the violent reactions of white Americans more closely and liberal members of the federal government gained power, leaders were able to manipulate the message. Dr. King's advice to turn the other cheek and not react to white violence with violence directly influenced the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, as it was easier for whites to accept and reward anti-self-defense rhetoric than the more militant advice of Malcolm X and others.<sup>64</sup> Yet, as Tyson and Peniel Joseph astutely remind readers, this manipulation of violent acts did not come without repercussions. It is important to remember that nonviolent direct action did not mean being unprotected. Dr. King and his entourage traveled with guns, while safe houses that provided beds and food for SNCC, SCLC and the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) workers all were equipped with weapons for protection. If they did not carry weapons themselves, by 1965 in the South, mainstream nonviolent protesters accepted protection from armed self-defense groups like the Deacons of Defense.<sup>65</sup> The difference in these actions and the Black Power's use of violence was in its deployment. Dr. King and his followers used violence against black bodies as a foundation on which to build their movement, while Black Power supporters believed white violence against

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nonviolent discipline to stay home, black bystanders often pelted police with 'nonviolent' rocks, bricks, and bottles, which helped prod [Birmingham Public Safety Commissioner Bull] Connor's cops into stupid overreactions that played to King's advantage in the media" (70). Tyson continues, "...violence and nonviolence were both more ethically complicated and more tightly intertwined than they appeared in most media accounts and history books" (71).

<sup>64</sup> Ogbar, *Black Power*, 42; Joseph, *Waiting Til the Midnight Hour*, 101-102; Curtis J. Austin, *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* (Fayetteville, Ark: University of Arkansas Press, 2006).

<sup>65</sup> Christopher B. Strain, "The Deacons of Defense and Justice," in *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast* ed. Judson L. Jefferies (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 13-42; Lance Hill, *The Deacons of Defense: Armed Resistance and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name*, 70-71.

people of color should be met with violence. Black Power organizers did not seek out violence, as some nonviolent organizations had been accused of doing, but instead met threats of violence with promises of retaliation.

Black Power advocates did not need to experience white beatings in Montgomery or racist attacks in Little Rock to understand the power of violence. The violence experienced by Black Power advocates was local and personal. While it can be argued that Dr. King's movement sought out physical violence to shame the United States into political, government-backed action, Black Power followers came of age with violence as a part of their daily lives. Although the mainstream movement believed in the power of federal legislation to ameliorate centuries of racial hatred, Black Power advocates knew that the federal government and its representatives in local communities were some of the greatest perpetrators of violence against black Americans.

The repression of G.I. benefits, the indignity of welfare, and the uncertainty of individual jobs all played into the distrust of the federal government by lower income African Americans during the Cold War. The Newton family, "like countless other Black families in the forties and fifties...fell victim to this indifference and corruption when we moved to Oakland."<sup>66</sup> Oakland's ghettos taught Newton to distrust the police, who targeted young African Americans and used excessive force in their arrests and then sent their victims to the Alameda County system for unfair trials. Newton had a number of run-ins with Oakland's finest prior to meeting Seale and forming the Black Panther Party. Seale's experiences with Berkeley police and government housing officials only reinforced Newton's distrust. Seale witnessed an episode of domestic violence near his home. A white man pistol whipped a woman and killed her brother, and walked away

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<sup>66</sup> Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 15.

without witnesses stopping them. People were calling for the police, but when they arrived, everyone claimed not to have seen anything. Bobby attempted to speak up, but a friend's mother yelled, "Shut your mouth, Bobby boy, you ain't saw nothing, and you ain't got no business saying nothing to no policeman." The deep seeded distrust of law enforcement was embedded in Bobby after that experience, and only strengthened by the continual profiling of him and his friends as he got older.<sup>67</sup> The Panthers coined the term "pig" to describe white policemen, because it "conveys the idea of someone who is brutal, gross and uncaring."<sup>68</sup> The Panthers recognized the police as men who were supposed to uphold the law, but who actually reinforced the violent nature of life as a black American during the Cold War.

The educational system of the inner cities and rural communities was another place where the violent nature of society was reified for Black Power advocates. Newton described the Oakland school system as a "violent assault on Black people," while David Hilliard recalled school yard fights with bullies who targeted him because he was a black migrant.<sup>69</sup> The educational system was violent for so many black Americans because it reinforced a belief in the inferiority of black Americans. Although the Supreme Court had ruled against de jure segregation in the *Brown* decision, de facto segregation remained prevalent throughout the United States and manifested itself most clearly in the education system. Teachers and administrators brought their own racial animus into classrooms, while segregated housing patterns, postwar suburbanization, and the decisions of parents to remove their white children from integrated schools led to school funding issues and the evaporation of tax bases in some communities. Louisville, Kentucky's attempts to

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<sup>67</sup> Seale, *A Lonely Rage*, 38.

<sup>68</sup> Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 167.

<sup>69</sup> Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, 19; Hilliard, *This Side of Glory*, 65-75.

follow the *Brown* decision resulted in a nearly forty year legal battle against forced busing and Boston erupted in anti-busing disputes in the 1970s.<sup>70</sup> Elaine Brown, future Black Panther leader, attended a prep school in Philadelphia where she was one of a few black students. Clearly a bright student, Brown had to balance the rigors of Girls High with finding food when her father refused to pay child support and her mother's pay checks ran out. When a light-skinned friend was passed over for academic prizes at graduation that she had clearly earned, Brown viewed it "as an outrageous display of racial prejudice—a concept, a reality that was so profound it was not missed even by me, who wanted to be white."<sup>71</sup> Her white, upper-class high school had taught her that black people were inferior and instilled in her the hope of one day achieving whiteness. The school and its mistreatment of Brown and her friend denigrated their academic achievement and reinforced the shameful nature of blackness.

The problems black children faced at school were connected "with the struggles their families they faced in their homes and neighborhoods."<sup>72</sup> The inferiority of blackness was visible in the distribution and neglect of welfare recipients by government officials in the 1950s and early 1960s. Welfare played a dominant role in a number of Black Power advocates lives. Most often collected by single mothers, though two parent families also required assistance from time to time, life on welfare was degrading and damaging. Denied political and economic rights and basics of human dignities, black mothers struggled to maintain a modicum of privacy and pride. Because "poor black

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<sup>70</sup> Michael J. Klarman, "How Brown Changed Race Relations: The Backlash Thesis" *Journal of American History* 81, no. 1 (June 1994): 81-118; Tracy K Meyer, *From Brown to Meredith: The Long Struggle for School Desegregation in Louisville, Kentucky, 1954-2007* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Ronald P. Formisano, *Boston Against Busing: Race, Class, and Ethnicity in the 1960s and 1970s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

<sup>71</sup> Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 65.

<sup>72</sup> Lisa Levenstein, *A Movement without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 123.

women faced distinct challenges in postwar cities. They suffered not only from racial discrimination in housing and employment but also from sex discrimination....” their children grew up with the shame of poverty and blackness over their head.<sup>73</sup> Being on welfare required recipients to drain their bank accounts and remain on subsistence, because any money earned at a job would be deducted from the welfare benefits. Families could not enjoy the basic comforts of a small television or a new refrigerator because these were seen as privileges. Forced to live in substandard housing, the children of welfare recipients experienced the violence and shame of hunger daily.

The lack of suitable housing and the denial of a living wage for welfare recipients, as well as the shame associated with being on the dole, would at times manifest itself in violent outbursts. David Hilliard described the abuse rained on his family members by husbands and cousins seeking a release from their hard lives.<sup>74</sup> Newton, Seale, Hilliard, and Brown were all taught to defend themselves in the event of an attack, because as Hilliard’s father explained to Newton, a brother would not “continue to offend you.” If he does, “then he’s not your brother...you strike him down.”<sup>75</sup> Turning the other cheek had no place in the life of the Newtons, Hilliards, and Browns because they had to fight the institutional violence of poverty each day.

Family life was an escape for the institutional violence perpetuated against poor, migrant families throughout the country. The importance of family and particularly the influence of male figures—whether fathers, brothers, or uncles, present in the lives of Black Power leaders or not—was especially important. Elaine Brown’s father was a wealthy doctor who was absent for much of her life. He would not pay child support on a

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<sup>73</sup> Levenstein, *A Movement without Marches*, 5.

<sup>74</sup> Hilliard, *This Side of Glory*, 96-98.

<sup>75</sup> Hilliard, *This Side of Glory*, 71.

regular basis and Brown was used as a tool by her mother to gain payments when possible. Brown's mother was also forced to use the legal system to force her father into paying support, while also suffering the indignity of going hungry. Brown and her mother moved more than once, staying ahead of the rent man, as money was always a problem.

Yet, Newton, Hilliard, Carmichael, and Sellers fathers' work ethics and desire for success instilled in them a sense of pride. They were also constantly reminded that they were to be the breadwinners in their families and that their worth as black men required that they protect their families. Hilliard's mother insisted that her son would never be on welfare, because he was better than her "dead-beat" nieces and nephews who could not make it in Oakland. This focus on the male head of household highlighted the unfair nature of American capitalism. While their fathers or male breadwinners worked day and night to keep their families off the dole and in proper housing, other families who did not have a male provider worked just as hard and could not remain afloat. Although Bobby Seale's parents remained married, his father withheld large sums of money from the family coffers and refused to pay Bobby or his brother for their work at his business. Bobby attempted to get part-time work as a handyman, but George Seale undermined his son and cost him the job, calling Bobby's employer and telling him that Bobby only worked for his father. The older Seale thus denied his family his own wages and the wage earning ability of his sons, and forced them to remain impoverished, even as he promised social mobility.<sup>76</sup>

While a number of Black Power's vocal advocates came from impoverished families, not all directly experienced poverty in their own homes. Cleveland Sellers learned about poverty when he began working in his father's restaurant. Watching the

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<sup>76</sup> Seale, *A Lonely Rage*, 51-60.

poor of Denmark, South Carolina eat meager meals and wash down the frustrations of poverty with alcohol opened Sellers worldview to his own middle class status. Sellers also saw hungry classmates fish half eaten sandwiches out of garbage bins during the lunch hour at his school.<sup>77</sup> Working in his father's restaurant made him attuned to the needs of economic as well as social change in the United States. Stokely Carmichael was also shielded from poverty for the majority of his young life in the Bronx. While his family worked long hours to retain their middle class status, he only experienced the pain of hunger once, when his father was recovering from an injury and could not work.<sup>78</sup>

By the time Sellers and Carmichael reached early adulthood, the mainstream Civil Rights movement had succeeded in integrating lunch counters (often times with the help of these young advocates) and pushing for voting rights, but the problems of poverty still persisted. As SNCC workers, the men were sent into some of the poorest areas of South to register voters and run freedom schools. Carmichael was a particularly good organizer and successfully created the Lowndes County Alabama Freedom Party in 1965, recognizing that having the right to vote was not enough. Black people needed their own independent political parties to administer to the needs of the local population.<sup>79</sup> The importance of the local and the familial influenced SNCC and Carmichael's organizing, while also highlighting the need for more direct interaction with the problems of the local communities. As the mainstream movement continued to push for further political participation, the nascent Black Power advocates began connecting the need for social reform with a reevaluation of the economic principles of the United States. Witnessing

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<sup>77</sup> Sellers, *The River of No Return*, 5-7.

<sup>78</sup> Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*, 76-82.

<sup>79</sup> Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).



and living among the impoverished throughout the country sparked the memories of economic inequality the organizers had seen or experienced in their childhood.

Black Power was the perception among young, black students that the mainstream movement was progressing too slowly in terms of improvement in the lived experiences of lower and middle class African Americans throughout the country. The modern Civil Rights movement, like Black Power, had its origins in the interwar years and the Great Depression. Spurred forward by small advancements in the court system and Executive Orders like Roosevelt's 8802, the mainstream movement was dominated by tactics aimed at gaining concessions toward accommodation and integration, through legislation and Supreme Court decisions. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People worked tirelessly through the courts, believing that real change would only occur after it was codified by court decisions. The NAACP's victory in the *Brown* decision was a watershed moment, but the lack of movement toward integration of public schools and the remaining segregation in all other public facilities across the South by 1960 created a backlash among the baby boomers. For Cleveland Sellers, the NAACP's "practice of pursuing 'test cases' through the courts, using laws and the Constitution to fight racial discrimination was suited for their [parents] temperaments. We needed something more. As far as we were concerned, the NAACP's approach was too slow, too courteous, too deferential and too ineffectual."<sup>80</sup> After the Greensboro sit-ins in 1960, young activists formed new groups like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee or worked

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<sup>80</sup> Sellers, *River of No Return*, 19.

within already formed organizations to push for an escalation of tactics and actions that better suited their own revolutionary feelings.<sup>81</sup>

It is common in Black Power literature to discount the work of Dr. King and the SCLC. However, the connections to older, more established and more conservative organizations was an important catalyst for Black Power thinking. The interplay between organizations was never stronger than the connections between SCLC, the NAACP, and SNCC. Organized in 1960 by the student wing of SCLC and with the support and guidance of the NAACP's Ella Baker, SNCC was often considered the radical wing of the mainstream movement.<sup>82</sup> SNCC worked in the early 1960s to desegregate the South and register voters. At the same time, SCLC, the NAACP, and CORE supported desegregation campaigns and lobbied federal officials to pass sweeping legislative changes. The movement gained a great deal of momentum after the March on Washington in late August 1963, site of Dr. King's famous "I Have a Dream" Speech. But the March on Washington was also the beginning of the end for cooperative action between SNCC and the more conservative organizations. The tension between government backed integration and community sovereignty was encapsulated in John Lewis's speech that August afternoon.

Lewis--the son of Alabama farmers, a stalwart supporter of nonviolence, and chairman of SNCC--was chosen to represent SNCC on the grandstand during the March. Asked to speak to the crowd, Lewis and SNCC had drawn up a fiery speech, demanding

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<sup>81</sup> Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past" *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1263.

<sup>82</sup> Clayborn Carson *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Ella Baker Papers, 1926-1986, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York.

“jobs and freedom,” while speaking out against the Kennedy administration’s Civil Rights bill. Lewis claimed the bill was “too little too late. There’s not one thing in that bill that will protect our people from police brutality.” Calling the Civil Rights Movement a “serious revolution,” Lewis’s speech dismantled the administration’s bill and demanded more action by the movement.<sup>83</sup> The speech Lewis delivered was dramatically different than the one SNCC had prepared. Bowing to the demands of the more conservative leaders, like Dr. King and Whitney Young of the National Urban League, Lewis was forced to temper his rhetoric. Dr. King and others believed the support of the Democratic Party in Washington, and the Kennedy administration in particular, was the keystone holding legislative change together. For Julian Bond, press secretary of SNCC, Lewis was the victim of conservative leaders: “When I found out about it later, quite shortly later, it just seemed to be typical of the desire of these older and more conservative civil rights organizations to sugarcoat the messages that were being delivered from the platform.”<sup>84</sup> While individual leaders like Dr. King tempered their public disagreements with the federal government (to keep access to the President and other Washington power brokers), the couching of the revolutionary demands of the younger generation was not tolerated by Bond and other members of SNCC.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> John Lewis, “Speech Prepared for the March on Washington, August 1963,” *The Militant*, September 9, 1963.

<sup>84</sup> Interview #4007, Julian Bond, Nov. 1/22, 1999, Southern Oral History Program, University of North Carolina. 25.

<sup>85</sup> Several books recount the development and decline of SNCC in the 1960s. See Carson, *In Struggle*; William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Struggle for Black Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); David Halberstam, *The Children* (New York: Random House, 1998); Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds One Heart: SNCC’s Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes*; Charles M. Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Judy Richardson, Martha Norman, Betty Garman Robinson, and Dottie Zellner, *Hands on the Freedom Plow: The Untold Story of Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Barbara Ramsey, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Emily Stoper, *The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee: The Growth of*

All of this combined in the realization--either organically, through contact with the revolutionary philosophies of Frantz Fanon, whose *The Wretched of the Earth* became required reading for many Black Power organizations, or the lived experience of Black Power participants--that African Americans were a colonized people within the United States. Fanon argued that decolonization was always a violent occurrence and it would always be successful because it disrupted power balances. Decolonization also required the oppressed to reject the conditions of the oppressor, meaning that colonized subjects could not seek to replace the colonizer in the same capitalist system. Instead, Fanon called for emerging nations to embrace socialism. He critiqued nationalism and imperialism as forces of oppression. In order to overthrow colonial aggression, Fanon encouraged revolutionaries to organize the Lumpen-proletariat (peasants) and to focus on economic issues, because revolution would disrupt black/white binaries. *The Wretched of the Earth* became the theoretical underpinning for much of Black Power's anti-colonial, anti-war, and anti-government views.<sup>86</sup>

Forced to live as second-class citizens in the most prosperous nation of the world, some black Americans came to the conclusion that federal legislation for equality would not lead to the leveling of playing fields. Espousing a shared identification with other decolonizing movements throughout the Third World, Black Power gained national attention in the summer of 1966, as the mainstream Civil Rights movement came to terms with the changing nature of protest and the assertion that political rights were necessary but could not be beneficial until full economic participation was earned. Viewed in

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*Radicalism in a Civil Rights Organization* (New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1989); Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1964).

<sup>86</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, reprint 2005).

connection with earlier movements before and during World War II, Black Power was much more than a movement “whose time had come.”

The treatment of black World War II veterans, coupled with deindustrialization at the war’s end, created mental, physical, and emotional space for a radical movement to develop. In stark contrast to the middle class led, Southern-based, mainstream Civil Rights movement celebrated in American classrooms and popular memory, the radical movement, which existed alongside and within the more celebrated, Dr. King led movement, found its voice in the lack of advancements for poor people and the failed promises of post-World War II America.

The African American Cold War diaspora—Southern migrants, Caribbean immigrants, and urban dwellers—was the school yard for Black Power. Having experienced promise and disappointment, the diasporic spread allowed geographical differences to meld into a shared community of struggle, bringing the children of post-war deindustrialization together in the mid-1960s. Though their individual experiences were unique, these young men and women shared the experiences of their parents’ struggles for economic security, their baptisms into the dangers being young and black in the United States with the lynching of Emmett Till, and the daily degradation of Jim Crow. Helped along by the philosophies of Frantz Fanon, Mao Tse-Tung, and Karl Marx, as well as the leadership and death of Malcolm X, the Black Power generation was forced to come to terms with the broken promises of the federal government, the iron curtain of the racial divide both within and outside the South, and the lack of opportunities for blacks in the United States. When Stokely Carmichael called for Black Power during the Meredith March Against Fear, he gave voice to the disappointments and struggles of his

peers.<sup>87</sup> The chant that June evening in 1966 came from the long history of African Americans experiences in the United States. Black Power was not an idea whose time had come, but was instead the manifestation of disappointment, desire, and determinism embodied in the black men and women of the Vietnam generation, who came of age as decolonization and American Cold War anti-communism intersected in the fields and jungles of Vietnam.

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<sup>87</sup> The Meredith March Against fear began on June 5, 1966, as James Meredith (the first black student at the University of Mississippi) sought to walk, solo, 220 miles from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson, Mississippi to protest racism. Meredith was shot shortly after he began his march, and SNCC, SCLC, and CORE decided to continue the march under the auspices of their organizations. Carmichael's Black Power speech came in Greenwood, Mississippi, after he was arrested for defying a police order. The march ended in Jackson, Mississippi with approximately 15,000 marchers and a recovering James Meredith convening on the capitol. Carson, *In Struggle*, 207-210.

### CHAPTER THREE: SOUL BROTHERS: BLACK POWER, SOLDIERS, AND VIETNAM SERVICE

“You are good at dying gallant black brother. Too good.”—Vincent Harding, “To the Gallant Black Men Now Dead”<sup>1</sup>

Twenty-five years after the Double V campaign failed at integrating military or civilian life, Lyndon Johnson’s decision to send troops to Vietnam fully integrated the military. Black soldiers in the Vietnam War served alongside their white counterparts, but were not always equal. Empowered by their experiences in war and the perceived and real racial threats they endured “in country” (deployed to Vietnam) and at home, Black Power enlistees fostered a relationship with civilian, domestic organizations while building their own groups within the military structure or through veteran organizations, to demand equal treatment and proper fulfillment of benefits.

President Johnson’s racially desegregated military resulted from President Truman’s decision to force integration in all the branches, a decision motivated by the treatment black veterans received when they returned home from World War II. For example, on February 12, 1946, Isaac Woodard, a 27-year-old veteran of the South Pacific and recipient of the battle star for bravery, was pulled off a bus traveling from Camp Gorton through South Carolina. At a stop about an hour outside Atlanta, Woodard asked if he had time to visit the restroom and was verbally cursed by the white bus driver, but was given permission to leave the bus. At a stop in Aiken, South Carolina, Woodard dismounted the bus and was greeted by two Aiken police officers. The bus driver told the officers that Woodard had created a disturbance on the bus and needed to be removed.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Span Browne Papers, Box 20, Folder 14, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library

The Aiken police officers proceeded to beat him and gouge his eyes with the butts of their service pistols. Woodard was sent to jail with his untreated injuries, was called before a judge the next morning, was sentenced to pay a \$50.00 fine or serve 30 days on a chain gang, and then, finally, was allowed to see a doctor at the veteran's hospital in Columbia. The time between assault and treatment cost the Army veteran his sight.<sup>2</sup>

In July 1946, two Army veterans and their wives were taken from their homes in Monroe, Georgia and murdered. The lynchings occurred after the election of white supremacy candidate Eugene Talmadge as Georgia governor. Mr. Malcolm, a veteran of the North African campaign, had stabbed his white employer during a domestic dispute, while he was also accused of being "biggity" because he was able to remain outside the debt-peonage system of share cropping due to savings from his time in the military.<sup>3</sup> The lynchings in Monroe and Woodard's maiming were only two of the many recorded incidents of violence against returning black veterans in the South. The treatment of discharged and active duty soldiers in the United States after World War II reinvigorated the campaign for desegregation of American society, starting with the American Armed Services.

Pressured by Civil Rights leaders, President Truman ordered the federal government to investigate the viability of desegregating the military and in December 1946 established the Presidential Committee on Civil Rights. The Committee's report, *To Secure These Rights*, condemned segregation and recommended that Truman and the

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<sup>2</sup> "Eyes are Gouged Out by Savage Policeman" *Baltimore Afro-American*, July 20, 1946, 1-2; "Woodard Statement to the FBI" and "Sworn Testimony of Issac Woodard, Jr." National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Papers, Microfilm Edition, Reel 28.

<sup>3</sup> "Georgia Massacre Arouses Nation; Action Demanded" *Baltimore Afro-American*, Aug. 3, 1946 1, 11; Cardell W. M'Vickers "\$10,000 Reward by Arnall Spurs Statewide Manhunt" *Baltimore Afro-American*, Aug. 3, 1946, 1, 11.



United States government “end immediately all discrimination and segregation based on race, color, creed, or national origin in...all branches of the Armed Services.”

Furthermore, the Commission recommended that “legislation and regulations should expressly ban discrimination and segregation in the recruitment, assignment, and training of all personnel in all types of military duty.” Reacting to the treatment of World War I and II veterans after they returned to the United States, the Commission also asked for “legislation providing that no member of the armed forces be subject to discrimination of any kind by any public authority or place of public accommodation, recreation, transportation, or other service or business.”<sup>4</sup> The Commission believed that the government had a duty to uphold the dignity of the men who served their country and that segregation was inherently undignified. Moreover, if the government allowed segregation to continue, particularly in the American military, the President risked forfeiting the moral high ground Americans believed they possessed in times of war.

Truman did not immediately act on the recommendations of the Committee, which led to renewed efforts by Civil Rights organizations to push the President and legislature to take up desegregation issues. A. Philip Randolph and Grant Reynolds organized the Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training, focusing specifically on demanding that the 1948 draft law be color-blind. Since 1948 was an election year, Truman faced a great deal of pressure from Civil Rights organizations and the black public to address the needs of African American voters. On March 27, 1948, twenty-two Civil Rights organizations released the “Declaration of Negro Voters,” which called for the immediate abolishment of “every vestige of segregation and discrimination

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<sup>4</sup> *To Secure These Rights: The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 162-163.

in the armed services...” including the National Guard. If any legislature or armed services personnel refused to work to end segregation, the Declaration demanded the removal of the person through voter action.<sup>5</sup> Randolph and the committee also declared that African American young men would refuse to serve if the 1948 Selective Service Act did not include a provision for desegregation. As the spring turned to summer and the 1948 Democratic Convention for President approached, Truman was forced to make a decision on desegregating the military. A strong Civil Rights plank was passed at the convention, garnering the support of Randolph, the NAACP, and other leading Civil Rights organizations and activists. However, the platform was not action and Truman still faced the pressure of his African American constituents. Finally, on July 26, 1948, Truman signed Executive Order 9981, declaring “there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services with regard to race, color, religion, or national origin.”<sup>6</sup>

Because the order did not require the immediate desegregation of military units, instead insisting that the military proceed in the quickest manner possible, Randolph did not believe it did enough to address segregation in the military. Randolph wrote to the President demanding an explicit statement on desegregation of the draft, but received no return correspondence.<sup>7</sup> The Editorial staff of the *Baltimore Afro-American* also harbored doubts that Executive Order 9981 had gone far enough to address military segregation, publishing a cartoon featuring President Truman firing a double barreled rifle at a black

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<sup>5</sup> “Declaration of Negro Voters,” National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, March 27, 1948. Official File, Harry S. Truman Papers. Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO. Pg. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Executive Order 9981, July 26, 1948; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives and Records Administration [online version--<http://www.archives.gov/historical-docs/todays-doc/index.html?dod-date=726>, National Archives and Records Administration, August 27, 2013].

<sup>7</sup> “Randolph Continues Fight Against Army Segregation” *Baltimore Afro-American*, Aug. 3, 1948, 1-2.

bird labeled Jim Crow with the caption “Scorched him, but the old bird’s still there.” The cartoon emphasized that Truman’s order would not kill Jim Crow as Civil Rights organizations wanted, but instead only managed to move it further down the line.<sup>8</sup> There was reluctance among some Civil Rights leaders and black media, including A. Philip Randolph and editors at the *Pittsburgh Courier*, to believe that Truman’s order would effectively desegregate the military structure. The leaders remembered President Roosevelt’s order banning segregation in defense industries during the War, which was enforced haphazardly. How was Truman’s order any different, particularly if it did not include desegregation of the draft system? Randolph went so far as to again threaten a picketing of the Selective Service office in Washington in August 1948.<sup>9</sup>

The Selective Service Act of 1948 established the second peace-time draft in United States history. Justified because of the growing Cold War, the Act required all men ages 18-26 to register for the draft. Men could be conscripted to serve 21 month active duty terms and 5 years reserve if called upon by their government. The 1948 law also established the passage number for the General Classification Test (the exam each draftee must complete before service) at 70. It specifically addressed A. Philip Randolph’s concern about discrimination, stating “the selection of persons...shall be made in an impartial manner...there shall be no discrimination against any person on account of race or color.” The determination of draft status was left to the local draft boards, a decision that would have damaging effects on many black neighborhoods during the Vietnam conflict. Furthermore, the 1948 Act created the deferment system that overwhelmingly benefitted middle and upper-class white Americans in the 1960s, while

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<sup>8</sup> Cartoon. *Baltimore Afro-American*. Aug. 3, 1948, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Venice Spraggs, “Must ‘Blot Out’ Jim Crow in Army: Race Won’t OK Segregation,” *Chicago Defender*, May 8, 1948, 1-2.

also establishing the quota system and investing power in the local draft boards. The President had the final say in Selective Service requirements, troop increases, and eligibility and deferment requirements.<sup>10</sup>

Though written to deny any racial, religious, or nationality discrimination, Executive Order 9981 and the Selective Service Act of 1948 were in effect examples of institutional racism. According to historian James Westheider, institutional racism, “is most often unintentional, subtle, and accidental and is often hard to detect for these reasons. The battery of tests given to every new inductee, the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) tests, are a good example of institutional racism.” The integration of the military relied on the peace-time draft and the Korean War to do its work, while the Selective Service Act and the commission of draftees allowed local draft boards to make decisions for all registered men ages 18-26. Moreover, registrants were required to take draft examinations, categorizing each inductee into a I-VI system. As Westheider notes, “once categorized, it was virtually impossible to escape one’s classification,” because the categorization determined the level of training and the type of work each soldier would perform in the field.<sup>11</sup>

Executive Order 9981 opened all branches of the military to black Americans for the first time. However, implementation of the Order was slow and a fully desegregated military structure did not exist until after the Korean War. The Army resisted desegregation, but local commanders took the issue into their own hands. Faced with a swelling Army (it doubled in size in the first five months of 1951, as the US began sending troops to aid the South Koreans), and too few segregated barracks to train the

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<sup>10</sup> Selective Service Act of 1948. S. 604, June 24, 1948.

<sup>11</sup> James E. Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts: African Americans and the Vietnam War* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 4.

new draftees, Fort Jackson, South Carolina's commander decided to train all their men together. The same pattern continued throughout basic training sites across the country. However, the stereotype of the unequipped or cowardly black soldier persisted, particularly tied to the record of the last segregated unit which served without distinction in Korea. To address this notion, Major General William B. Kean suggested closing the all black units. Reappropriating arguments first presented by Randolph and other integration activists, Kean argued "the problem was not that black soldiers could not fight effectively, it was that they could fight more effectively if they were not restricted to all black units where half the soldiers scored in Classes IV and V of the army's aptitude test." In November 1954, the 94 Engineer Battalion, the last segregated unit, disbanded. Black and white men would serve together, in integrated units in all branches of the United States military going forward.<sup>12</sup>

Truman's decision to integrate the military had a profound and lasting effect on African Americans. First viewed as a step forward in race relations, the integration of the military would lead to greater dissatisfaction and uncertainty for black men as the United States dove deeper into the Vietnam War, relying ever more on poorer, less educated men to fill the quotas demanded by larger draft rolls. According to scholars Lawrence Baskir and William Strauss, non-white, less educated men were more likely to be inducted and to serve in Vietnam than white, well-educated men. Baskir and Strauss believed minority troops bore a much higher burden than their white counterparts in the war. Integrating the

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<sup>12</sup> Rawn James, Jr. *The Double V: How Wars, Protest, and Harry Truman Desegregated America's Military* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 236-239.

military, then, lead to more opportunities for African Americans in the service, but also came with a larger burden of the fighting.<sup>13</sup>

Where once black men were demanding a chance to serve their country equally to whites, by the end of the 1960s, black men were categorically demanding that white men be drafted at an equally proportionate number to blacks. The American military was forced to accept desegregation, but had successfully inscribed institutional racism into the new system through the draft and military hierarchy. Some draft age black men refused service or found deferments, but many more were drafted or signed up for service hoping to avoid action in Vietnam. Much like their experiences in America's ghettos and rural backwoods, the military served as a radicalizing experience for many Black Power soldiers. While only a minority of black soldiers claimed they would join a militant group when they returned from service, by 1970 black soldiers in Vietnam were unlikely to support the War or American foreign policy. A survey conducted by *Time* correspondent Wallace Terry found that 64% of black officers did not believe that black people should fight in Vietnam, because "they have problems back home."<sup>14</sup> Terry had conducted a similar survey in 1967 and did not find such a dramatic disgust with the military or the War itself. While early on in American involvement in Vietnam black men overwhelmingly saw the military as a place for economic advancement and a proving ground for manhood, by 1970 many black soldiers had become disillusioned with

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<sup>13</sup> Lawrence Baskir and William Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War, and the Vietnam Generation* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 5-9; Eliot A. Cohen, *Citizens and Soldiers: The Dilemmas of Military Service* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); D. Michael Shafer, "The Vietnam-Era Draft: Who Went, Who Didn't, and Why it Matters," in *The Legacy: The Vietnam War in the American Imagination*, ed. by D. Michael Shafer (Boston: Beacon Hill, 1992), 57-79; Yvonne Honeycutt Baldwin and John Ernst, "In the Valley: The Combat Infantryman and the Vietnam War," in *The War that Never Ends: New Perspectives on the Vietnam War*, ed. by David L. Anderson and John Ernst (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 311-334; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 8-17; Kyle Longley, *Grunts: The American Combat Soldier in Vietnam* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2008), 28-30.

<sup>14</sup> Wallace Terry, "Bringing the War Home," *Black Scholar* 2, No. 3 (1970): 18.

military life, and like their civilian counterparts, sought new forms of expression and respect.

The exponential growth of black soldiers in the American military can be attributed to a number of factors. Once the military system was fully desegregated and the last of the all black units was closed, armed service participation was again an acceptable form of economic and social mobility for many African Americans. No longer forced to serve in Jim Crow units, black men gained respect, economic security, and a marker of manhood by enlisting or accepting a draft call. Although the military, like civilian society, was still home to personal racism and institutional biases, peace time enlistment was still a viable option for many black men. Prior to his own radicalization, Bobby Seale enlisted in the Air Force as an adventure and a way to outwardly show his internal definitions of masculinity.<sup>15</sup> Seale was not the only Black Power advocate to enlist and receive a discharge, whether honorable or dishonorable, before they joined the Freedom Movement.<sup>16</sup> The expansion of the G.I. Bill to include peace time service also drew a number of African American enlistees, as 21 months of active duty military service was a small price to pay for the advantage of a college education upon completion of service. However, the institutional barriers to full military service hindered recruitment of a large number of black men. The perceived lack of black aptitude on the military test and the belief that the black ghetto was handicapping black men from full participation in society prompted a reevaluation of draft policy. Thus, the largest increase came from

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<sup>15</sup> Bobby Seale, *A Lonely Rage: The Autobiography of Bobby Seale* (New York: New York Times Books, 1978), 70-80.

<sup>16</sup> Former service members tended to be older than the typical Black Power advocates and to have been radicalized through their experience in the Armed Services. Their ranks included Robert F. Williams, Eldridge Cleaver, and Bobby Seale.

Daniel P. Moynihan's 1965 report "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," commissioned by the Labor Department.

The Moynihan Report found that poverty in America's ghettos was cyclical. This "cycle of poverty" could be attributed to the matriarchal structure of the black community "which, because it is so out of line with the rest of American society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes the crushing burden on the Negro male and, in consequence, on a great many Negro women as well." Moynihan found that black men were emasculated by the ghetto experience, particularly the nature of a single parent, female-led household. Because "the majority" (actually 44% according to Moynihan's own figures) of black families were dominated by wives or mothers, black males were in danger of "being caught up in the tangle of pathology that affects their world." Basically, Moynihan attributed the institutional and structural issues of the ghetto—lack of educational and job opportunities for men, racism, and social and economic instability—to black women. Because black women "established a strong position for themselves in white collar and professional employment," they took jobs from able-bodied and able-minded black men. This action then inscribed on their sons a feeling of inadequacy, and according to Moynihan, a belief that black men did not have a chance to earn a position of respectable manhood in the larger society.<sup>17</sup>

But what did Moynihan's report have to do with military service? According to Moynihan, black men's "ultimate mark of inadequate preparation for life" was "the failure rate on the Armed Forces mental test."<sup>18</sup> Reinforcing the notion that black men

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<sup>17</sup> Daniel P. Moynihan, *The Negro Family: A Case For National Action* Office of Planning and Research, Department of Labor (March 1965), 29-31, 33; Steve Estes, *I am a Man!: Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 107-129.

<sup>18</sup> Moynihan, *The Negro Family*, 40.



were emasculated and had a failure of nerves in attaining employment, Moynihan believed that black men had to be better represented in the American military system. In 1964, only 8% of the Armed Forces were black, while black Americans were 11.8% of the population. This underrepresentation was the result of missed opportunities by the military and could easily be resolved, according to Moynihan. By expanding military service to include more African Americans, the United States would lower black unemployment rates by two percentage points and would allow black men to experience “an utterly masculine world... The Armed Forces are a dramatic and desperately needed change: a world away from women, a world run by strong men of unquestioned authority, where discipline, if harsh, is nonetheless orderly and predictable, and where rewards, if limited, are granted on the basis of performance.” Because Moynihan believed males living in the ghetto lacked role models, were forced to subsist under dominate women, and had little opportunity or will to find jobs outside the ghetto, he also believed the regimented lifestyle of the American military would create better citizens and offer black men the chance to finally be fully actualized men. He had a clear view of what constituted an American male—a man with economic and social stability, some form of authority over his own life, and the power to make his own decisions. Because the ghetto lifestyle hindered black men from garnering authority, the other attributes of manhood were also denied to him, according to *The Negro Family*. In order to correct the abuse inflicted on black men by strong females, Moynihan recommended that the United States government lower the admissions standards for military service and, in effect, solve two problems with a single solution. By lowering the passage score on the test, the military would provide a means for employment for black males and would, hopefully, allow

more ghetto residents to escape Moynihan's cycle of poverty, thus defusing the volatility of the ghetto's economically depressed population.<sup>19</sup>

The Moynihan Report was well received by the Johnson Administration, particularly Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. Shortly after publication of *The Negro Family*, McNamara introduced "Project 100,000," a revision of the military entrance standards to open military service to men who had been disqualified mentally or medically in the past.<sup>20</sup> Announcing the new program, McNamara posited "What these men badly need is a sense of personal achievement—a sense of succeeding at some task—a sense of their own intrinsic potential."<sup>21</sup> McNamara believed the easiest way to achieve this goal and help the federal government was to begin drafting men who had previously failed their Selective Service examinations. Project 100,000 rested on the reclassification of the passage score for the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT). The AFQT was used to divide soldiers into categories for training, job skills, and service areas. The highest scores were Category I and the Lowest scores (those below 31<sup>st</sup> percentile) were Categories IV and V. Those men who scored in the 0-9 percentile remained ineligible to serve, but Category IV men, those scoring between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> percentile were now draftable or able to volunteer, without further testing, if they had a high school diploma. Men who scored in Category IV, but were without a high school degree, would have to pass supplementary aptitude tests. This decrease in the passage

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<sup>19</sup> Moynihan, *The Negro Family*, 40-44.

<sup>20</sup> "Project One Hundred Thousand: Characteristics and Performance of 'New Standards' Men," Department of Defense (1969), vi; Estes, *I am a Man!*, 124-125.

<sup>21</sup> Robert McNamara, "Social Inequalities: Urban Racial Ills," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 34, no. 4 (1967): 101.

percentile increased the number of able-bodied soldiers and in the first three years of Project 100,000 resulted in over 240,000 “New Standards” men in the armed services.<sup>22</sup>

Project 100,000 was particularly unfair to African Americans, because, according to historian Lisa Hsiao, “It exploited black Americans, using them as cannon fodder while cloaking their betrayal in the rhetoric of advancement. America had turned liability into opportunity—but not for the black man.”<sup>23</sup> Through Project 100,000, McNamara attempted to strengthen the military and work within President Johnson’s War on Poverty model to empower poor Americans by teaching them a skill that after their military service was complete they could use to better their economic status within the United States. In tandem with this seemingly positive ideal, McNamara also saw an untapped resource, which he believed could minimize national unrest. However, McNamara’s Project 100,000 failed. It disproportionately drafted soldiers from southern states, many of whom were black. The number of black soldiers conscripted under Project 100,000 was large, but hard to pinpoint because race was not supposed to be identified. However, sociologist Paul Starr asserted, “between 1965 and 1970, blacks comprised 9.3% of total active duty personnel in Vietnam, yet they suffered 12.6% of the deaths. Black death rates exceeded by 35.5% the rates for all servicemen, and exceeded by 30% those in Indochina.” Of those numbers, at least half were brought in under McNamara’s plan, because prior to Project 100,000 only 5.5% of U.S. blacks age 18-21 qualified for military service.<sup>24</sup> The Project attempted to recruit men who were eager to participate in

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<sup>22</sup> “Project One Hundred Thousand,” Department of Defense, vi-vii, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Lisa Hsiao, “Project 100,000: The Great Society’s Answer to Military Manpower Needs in Vietnam” *Vietnam Generation* 1, no. 2 (1989): 16.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Starr, *The Discarded Army—Veterans after Vietnam: The Nader Report on Vietnam Veterans and the Veterans Administration* (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Responsive Law, 1973), 187; Hsiao, “Project 100,000,” 24.

the military but who did not qualify, previously. However, it also reclassified American men who had failed their Selective Service exams without notification, and made them eligible to be drafted. They were often the first to be called to fill the draft roles, because of class disparities on the draft boards and the belief that poor men would be more willing to serve, to advance their class status. In effect, the Moynihan Report dramatically changed the course of Selective Service, providing the military with more “grunts”—classified III or IV on the induction roles, men who were only suited for basic soldiering and were deployed to Vietnam in forward units (those in the field, doing most of the fighting). It was in these ranks of the newly drafted grunts that Black Power took root and the militant culture flourished.

Prior to 1968, the majority of in country (those serving in Vietnam) black soldiers were enlisted men and career military personnel, including many newly minted officers who earned their status through field promotion. These men tended to be in integrated forces and, for the most part, supported President Johnson’s war policy. The enlisted men sometimes came from the ranks of what historian Herman Graham III has labeled “marginal men,” who sought military service as an expression of manhood. These men worked within a heteronormative notion of manhood defined by gainful employment and warrior mentality. Black men who enlisted in the Army and Marines were part of a warrior class, seeking out danger to assert a positive notion of manhood. Even those men who chose less dangerous positions in the Air Force or the Navy could still be included amongst the brave because of the status that military service gave them.<sup>25</sup> However, with the increased number of black men dying in Vietnam, because their rank did not protect

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<sup>25</sup> Herman Graham III, *The Brothers’ Vietnam War: Black Power, Manhood, and the Military Experience* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 21.

them from forward service, a number of men enlisted in the Armed Forces not only to prove their masculinity, but also to avoid service on the front lines—believing that enlisted men were less likely to be sent to Vietnam as grunts.<sup>26</sup>

As early as 1966, some black Americans were worried about the disproportionately high number of black men who were killed in battle in Vietnam. While draft numbers were proportionate to the population of black Americans (about 12% each), the number of black men serving in Vietnam was 16%.<sup>27</sup> Department of Defense officials attempted to assuage the situation, arguing that “perhaps the high Negro casualty rate is a measure of Negro valor in combat,” while others claimed the high mortality rate was due to the lucrative pay of dangerous units like the paratroopers and that young black men concentrated their military training in combat arms where career advancement was more likely.<sup>28</sup> A black captain believed that there were so many black combat soldiers because “we can excel in them, even if our education hasn’t been as good as it should have been. We can excel in airborne units for instance, because it’s physical, athletic.”<sup>29</sup> The focus of the men in country at the time was to find the best way possible to fulfill their duty to their country, earn the most money, and best prove their abilities. They sought out opportunities for advancement and to show their manhood.

Yet, not all enlisted men in 1966 were sold on fighting in Vietnam, even if they were soldiers. Pfc. James Johnson, Pvt. Dennis Mora, and Pvt. Davis Sanas refused a transfer to the Second Armored Division at Fort Hood, Texas before a deployment to Vietnam. The soldiers, Hispanic, African American, and white, were held for

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<sup>26</sup> “Why Do More Negroes Die in Vietnam?” *Sepia* 15, No. 10 (Oct. 1966): 9-14.

<sup>27</sup> “Vietnam Ratio Reported High for Negroes,” *Chicago Defender* Jan. 11, 1967, 28.

<sup>28</sup> “Why do More Negroes Die in Vietnam?” *Sepia*. 15, No. 10 (Oct. 1966): 10; “Vietnam Ratio Reported High for Negroes,” *Chicago Defender* Jan. 11, 1967, 28.

<sup>29</sup> “Why do More Negroes Die in Vietnam?” *Sepia* 15, No. 10 (Oct. 1966): 13.

investigation at Fort Dix, New Jersey, where they told reporters that they did not see any sense in fighting for freedom in Vietnam when they and other people of color did not have true freedom in the United States.<sup>30</sup> The “Fort Hood Three” were an anomaly for 1966, but their antiwar stance would become more popular among black troops as the war progressed.

Having heard of some disruption, but also the overall positive experiences of black soldiers, Wallace Terry, one of the first black correspondents for *Time*, went to Vietnam in 1967 to see black and white troops working together first hand and to better understand the motivations behind black enlistment. Upon his return to the United States, he was asked to brief President Johnson on what he found. Terry reported:

How the armed forces were fully integrated and that blacks were serving in a distinguished capacity—bravely and heroically—and that they were demonstrating their patriotism...and at that point it was true that not only were the forces integrated, not only were blacks serving as officers over everybody, black and white, but most of the troops were supporting the president’s policy.<sup>31</sup>

Terry’s observations were supported by the correspondence soldiers in country sent back to “the real world.” The black officers were fair and most enlisted men did not complain about personal experiences of racism. Some of the positive attitudes may have been out of the fear of reprisal for speaking out against their commanding officers or the military establishment in general, and because they were published accounts through black popular media, they could have been sanitized or picked for their positive messages. Overwhelmingly, soldiers supported the war effort. They believed they were fighting to

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<sup>30</sup> “They Refused to Fight” *Sepia* 15, No. 9 (Sept. 1966): 10; “The Fort Hood Three: The Case of the Three GIs who said ‘No’ to the War in Vietnam” University of Santa Barbara Social Movements Collection. Box 1, Folder 2, Santa Barbara, CA.

<sup>31</sup> Wallace Terry Oral History. Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library. October 8, 1999. Interviewed by Ted Gittinger, 15.

stop communist aggression and did not appreciate the antiwar movements marches, “while the protesters are marching, men are dying,” one Lieutenant Corporal wrote.<sup>32</sup>

However, dissent existed and was published in a number of media outlets. In July 1966 *Sepia*, a monthly black entertainment and news magazine, began publishing letters from soldiers in a column titled, “Our Men in Vietnam” and in their Letters to the Editor feature. While Terry may not have seen discrimination and reported overwhelmingly positive attitudes from the front, the complaints from black soldiers were beginning to fill the pages of *Sepia*, the *Chicago Defender*, and other black media outlets. Three soldiers, all using aliases, wrote to the editor of *Sepia* expressing their experiences with racism within the military. A Marine at Camp Pendleton, California was sent back to Vietnam for a second tour, even though there were troops in his division who had not seen combat. Another, in the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade could not understand why Americans were fighting in Vietnam when the Vietnamese were racist toward black soldiers, while the last letter came from a Marine in the First Division who felt that black soldiers were passed over for field promotions and that only “a few ‘token’ Negro soldiers have been placed in administrative jobs.”<sup>33</sup> In all, the façade of a happily integrated American military was pierced, just as the number of in country, drafted troop rose.

While Johnson increased the draft quotas in the summer of 1965 and again in 1966, soldiers were not sent directly to Vietnam when they were inducted. First, inductees and recruits had to complete three months of initial boot camp. From boot camp, those that graduated were sent to further training (ranging from a couple of months to a year depending on difficulty of assignment) for the various units. These assignments

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<sup>32</sup> L/Cpl. Monroe Henderson, “Our Men in Vietnam” *Sepia* 15, No. 11 (Sept. 1966): 65.

<sup>33</sup> Letters to the Editor, *Sepia* 16 No. 1 (Jan. 1967): 6.

were based on aptitude testing, skills testing, and to a lesser degree, volunteerism.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, forward deployed troops would be given their assignments and then sent to a holding base where they would practice maneuvers and prepare for in country expeditions for at least a month before boarding their flights to Vietnam. Once in country, troops were either replacements to already deployed units or kept in less dangerous positions in the rear until they were needed for missions.<sup>35</sup> Thus, integrating Johnson's drafted soldiers and McNamara's Project 100,000 men was a task that took months, but once completed, dramatically changed the face of American military operations in Vietnam. The average grunt became dramatically younger (19, as opposed to 21 in 1965), less educated, and was more likely to be serving because he had to, rather than because he chose to.<sup>36</sup> The new soldiers also brought with them the experiences of their lives at home, in the ghettos or in rural parts of the American South and West. Their upbringing and class status informed their views on military life, their notions of racism and classism, and most importantly, their courage to speak out against the wrongs they saw and experienced.<sup>37</sup>

Black men who were drafted had two choices: enlist or go to jail. Some soldiers did not want to go to jail, while others expressed patriotism. Racism withstanding, Private First Class Abraham Brown, was "proud of [his] country and what it stands for. The flag that flies our country is most beautiful and stands for freedom."<sup>38</sup> Another reason for accepting draft orders was to protect the soldier's family and status. Going to jail, even

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<sup>34</sup> David Parks, *GI Diary* (Washington, D. C.: Howard University Press, 1984).

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Martin Brady, No Date, Martin Brady Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University; Parks, *GI Diary*, 1-43.

<sup>36</sup> Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars: 1945-1990* (New York: Harper, 1991), 319.

<sup>37</sup> Graham, *The Brothers' Vietnam War*, 15.

<sup>38</sup> Pfc. Abraham Brown, "Our Men in Vietnam" *Sepia* 17, No. 9 (Sept. 1968): 77.



for a noble cause like draft resistance, was shameful to many. Moreover, if a soldier went to jail he was unable to remain active in the Freedom Movement. One black soldier enlisted because he “believe[d] one has to avoid and try to stay out of prison for as long as he possibly can so he can contribute to the masses.”<sup>39</sup> Others, especially prior to 1968, believed that fighting communism was the right thing and that North Vietnam needed to be contained. HM2 Luther C. Benton III accepted his orders to report to Vietnam because he wanted “to see what the war was all about. And...we have to stop Communism before it gets to America. I was just like all the other dummies.”<sup>40</sup> Some men chose to enlist, in hopes of avoiding service in Vietnam. Instead, they joined draftees in the trenches as replacement soldiers.

While the military was officially desegregated, black soldiers complained about the racism they experience in training, particularly at southern bases, such as Fort Hood (Texas), Fort Bragg (North Carolina), and Fort Jackson (South Carolina). When they were deployed to Vietnam, soldiers did not expect poor treatment to abate. Indeed, they found that, like in civilian life, blacks were concentrated in dangerous and low paying occupations, barred or kept from advancement in rank or earnings, and treated like second class citizens. Soldiers wrote home about the bias they felt from individual officers and the culture of contempt that often permeated the rear.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> “Our Men in Vietnam” *Sepia* 16, no. 3 (Mach 1967): 70; “Letter from a Black Soldier” *The Black Panther*, Sept. 14, 1968, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Wallace Terry. *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War by Black Veterans* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984), 63.

<sup>41</sup> Ethel L. Payne, “Negro Soldiers Still Face Discrimination” *Chicago Defender*, March 20, 1967, 1; John H. Sengstacke, “Military Racism” *Chicago Defender*, August 21, 1969, 19; James Russell, “Racism Rising in US Army” *Chicago Defender*, December 2, 1969, 4; Interview with Gary Noller, 16 August 2005, Gary L. Noller Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University; Interview with Frank Gutierrez, 24 January 2001, Frank Gutierrez Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University.

Rank and number of years of service were key factors in black soldiers' feelings about the antiwar movements at home and the actions of black soldiers in the field. Career soldiers, like Air Force Sgt. Donald Jackson of Detroit, a 13-year veteran who flew combat missions from Bien Hoa, Vietnam, was unimpressed with the trajectory of the Freedom Movement and tried not to think about "the demonstrations at home because I've got a job to do. I'm a professional soldier. It lowers the morale when you read about these things." He, along with a number of other "lifers,"<sup>42</sup> found the replacement troops to be less proud of their work and less engaged in the soldiering. Major Charles E. Smith of Covert, Michigan, told *Chicago Defender* columnist Ethel Payne, "Over here, the Negro is a leader. He is known to have guts and is respected for it."<sup>43</sup> The "lifers" were more positive about their experiences in the Vietnam, believing that they, as black men, were more respected in the military and could assert their masculinity more freely through the military hierarchy than in their civilian lives.

Officers often faced harsh criticism from the troops they commanded. "Uncle Tom" was a common insult directed at the officers, who Black Power GIs believed had capitulated to the government and abandoned their fellow black soldiers. While GIs complained that black soldiers were overlooked for promotion, those officers who earned higher ranks were often viewed with derision, as black grunts believed that officers had gotten their new positions by subterfuge against other soldiers of color. Earning an officer's title was akin to moving into the middle class, and like civilian life, the military structure came with the same divisions. Thus, enlisted men and non-officers were more

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<sup>42</sup> Draftees often called officers and enlisted men who toed the government line "lifers," a derogatory remark aimed at their job security and inability or unwillingness to rock the boat in any way. Many officers adopted the term as a positive marker. They were proud of their lifetime of service.

<sup>43</sup> Ethel Payne, "Negro Air Fighters Think about Home," *Chicago Defender*, February 28, 1967, 6.

likely to espouse Black Power beliefs (like their lower class, civilian counterparts), while officers, non-commissioned or commissioned, were more likely to espouse the politics of respectability and to denounce Black Power and even Dr. King after his antiwar statements in 1967 (like their middle class, civilian counterparts).<sup>44</sup>

Much like military distinction, soldiers' geographical position in Vietnam also played a role in the development and expression of their antiwar feelings. To a man, soldiers in forward deployed positions (soldiers actually doing the fighting) talked about the racial inclusivity and the lack of discriminatory language or actions. Because of the danger that combat imposed and the guerilla tactics employed by the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army, soldiers of all races had to rely on each other and had no time for petty racism. In fact, both black and white soldiers reminisced fondly of their cross-racial friendships formed in the field. As Specialist 4 Richard J. Ford III recalled, "in the field, we had the utmost respect for each other, because when a fire fight is going on and everybody is facing north, you don't want to see nobody looking around south. If you was a member of the Ku Klux Klan, you didn't tell nobody."<sup>45</sup> Racial distinction did not exist because, according to one Marine fighting outside Da Nang, "up here on the line, you gotta be together. Charlie doesn't know the difference between black and white.

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<sup>44</sup> King did speak out against American involvement in Vietnam at a 1965 SCLC rally in Virginia and pledged to write letters urging President Johnson to seek peace that fall. However, he faced mounting criticism from President Johnson and SCLC members, and did not complete the letter writing campaign, in order to insure the President's full support for the Voting Rights Act of 1965. 18 months later, in April 1967, King officially broke with the President, condemning US foreign policy in Vietnam in his "A Time to Break the Silence" speech at Riverside Baptist Church in New York City. See Simon Hall *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005): 34-35; 80-81; Richard Boyle, *GI Revolts: The Breakdown of the US Army in Vietnam* (San Francisco: United Front Press, 1971).

<sup>45</sup> Terry, *Bloods*, 39.

Either you kill him or he kills you.”<sup>46</sup> Survival was of the utmost concern in the field and anything that placed the unit or the individual in danger was not tolerated.

The experience of fighting and dying alongside people of color helped some white soldiers to realize their own prejudice. Specialist 4 Donald L. Dietrich wrote to *Sepia* to apologize for believing that all black people were “niggers...Now that I’ve fought side by side with them, lived with them, slept with them, and understood them, I have changed my mind.”<sup>47</sup> Many other white soldiers also wrote to *Sepia*’s “Our Men in Vietnam” column expressing similar respect for their fellow soldiers of color. The war provided a cross cultural dialogue that created spaces where black and white men could form strong bonds through shared fear and bravery. Moreover, because soldiering was a shared definition of manhood, the soldiers came together on common ground in the field. They had received the same training, were serving in the same units, and were faced with the same daily struggles.<sup>48</sup>

Yet without the jungle and the bullets, the friendships and respect found in the field did not often translate to the rear. The racial incidents described in the correspondence and memories of black soldiers took place in rear units, when soldiers were on Rest and Relaxation passes, or were pulled out of the field to wait for redeployment, to be sent home, or to guard administrative or hospital positions. The down time, easy availability of alcohol, and lack of constant danger in the rear allowed soldiers time to relax, but also created an atmosphere where racism and bigotry could

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<sup>46</sup> Ethel L. Payne, “GIs Tell How They Stand On The Viet War: Their Main Concern: To Stay Alive,” *Chicago Defender* April 11, 1967, 1.

<sup>47</sup> Specialist 4 Donald L. Dietrich, “Our Men in Vietnam” *Sepia* 17, No. 5 (1968): 73.

<sup>48</sup> Herring, 301; Letter to the Editor, *Sepia* 17, no. 5 (1968): 6; “Black Soldiers Fight Two Enemies in Vietnam,” *Sepia* 18, no. 2 (1969): 61-63; E-4 John Allan Wycarver, “Voices from Vietnam,” *Sepia* 20, No. 10 (1971): 80.

flourish. The rear was often self-segregated, with white and black soldiers frequenting separate bars that catered to their differing preferences. The bars of black soldiers played soul, R&B, and jazz music, while white establishments focused on country and pop music. The hooches were not segregated by law, as was the style of earlier wars, but the de facto rules were clear: while soldiers were friendly in the field, but once you returned to the rear you fraternized with “your own.”<sup>49</sup> The readily available alcohol lowered inhibitions and led to nasty fights between soldiers. The slightest provocation could turn a peaceful evening into a melee, as soldiers defended their honor or were drug into fights protecting their friends’ or their own manhood. As the war progressed and soldiers sought marijuana and harder drugs to turn their minds off, the bar violence grew. The Pentagon became so worried about racialized violence in Vietnam that they commissioned a study, which found that the rising drug culture and the disgust soldiers felt toward fighting a never ending battle led to the frayed nerves and outburst of violence in the rear. Moreover, the report found “that blacks and whites were moving farther and farther away from each other, resegregating through accelerated racial polarization.”<sup>50</sup>

After the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in April 1968 a number of ugly racial incidents occurred in Vietnam. White soldiers in Da Nang and Hoi An raised Confederate flags and openly celebrated the murder. Other white soldiers were insensitive to the loss and shouted racial slurs toward black soldiers. Violence erupted at

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<sup>49</sup> Terry, *Bloods*; Westheider. *Fighting on Two Fronts*; Ethel Payne, “GIs Tell of Viet Discrimination,” *Chicago Defender* March 20, 1967, 4; Private R. H. Scott, “Our Men in Vietnam” *Sepia* 18, No. 8 (August 1969): 73.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with John Hargesheimer, 03 May 2003, John Hargesheimer Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University; Interview with David Crawley, 27 February 2001, David Crawley Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University; Interview with Robert Scott Dawson, 14 September 2001, Robert Scott Dawson Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University; Interview with Timothy Lockley, No Date, Timothy Lockley Collection, The Vietnam Center and Archive, Texas Tech University. “Blacks in the Military: Progress Slow, Discontent High,” *Congressional Quarterly* 29, no. 38 (Sept. 18, 1971): 1941-1944.

a number of the bases in Vietnam, as well as between American fighting men stationed on Okinawa, as black soldiers expressed their dismay at the actions of the white soldiers and at the loss of Dr. King.<sup>51</sup> Race-based violence forced the U.S. Navy to prohibit the sale of alcohol on all Navy bases near Da Nang and restricted access to China Beach for most personnel in October 1968 after two nights of disturbances.<sup>52</sup>

One common complaint among African American soldiers was the belief that black soldiers were passed over for in country promotions and honors. Vietnam provided a fertile ground for the increase of black officers, but promotion was slow and uneven. Although black men were often praised for their heroism under fire, many felt that promotions were not given fairly or expediently. L. J. Moore, serving with the First Calvary Division, believed that men were moved around platoons to avoid promotion.<sup>53</sup> Private Joe Kelley of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division claimed that he had to fight the brass for the Bronze Star he received after pulling three white soldiers out of an alley during an ambush by the Viet Cong, while the other soldiers (all were wounded) were awarded their Bronze Stars without a second thought. Kelley recalled, “they didn’t want to give it to me, but I made a stink and they gave it to me.”<sup>54</sup> Because recommendations for honors and promotions were made by superior or commanding officers, many lower level black GIs felt they had no recourse for addressing being overlooked. The bureaucracy of the military hierarchy required that soldiers follow a specific chain of command to file complaints. Complaints or disputes were made to the Inspector General of each unit or the battery commander. These positions were often filled by a white officer who listened

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<sup>51</sup> Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 97-98.

<sup>52</sup> Perry Young, “Viet Flare Up Lead to Liquor Ban,” *The Chicago Defender* Oct. 21, 1968, 2.

<sup>53</sup> L. J. Moore, “Our Men in Vietnam,” *Sepia* 16, no. 12 (December 1967): 65.

<sup>54</sup> Donald Mosby, “Black Soldiers in Vietnam Getting Bad Deal, Says GI,” *Chicago Defender* May 25, 1968, 2.

to the complaints but did not pursue actions to remedy situations. When Specialist 4 Kenneth A. Haley lodged a complaint with his battery commander, he only received a lecture in return. His commander told him, “Haley, I am going to tell you of a few things I don’t like. I don’t like Black Power. I don’t like African haircuts.”<sup>55</sup> Black soldiers believed that most black officers were promoted on a token basis and that racial antagonism with regard to promotion and battlefield honors would persist throughout the war.<sup>56</sup>

In country soldiers also believed that blacks were punished for indiscretions by being sent out on dangerous missions or were kept in forward positions longer than their white counterparts. Soldiers lamented the choices of white officers when assigning scouting roles. Many men felt that they were being unfairly punished for speaking their minds or for simply espousing a Black Power or Soul Brother—the term Black Power soldiers used to address other soldiers who shared their beliefs--mentality. Black soldiers who were believed to be “trouble” were sent back out on missions. Specialist 4 Haywood T. Kirkland knew “a lot of brothers who had supply clerk or cook MOS when they came over ended up in the field.”<sup>57</sup> One man wrote to *Sepia* and recounted the exploits of his white captain. The captain chose to send men back into the bush with only 20 days left on their deployment, would only choose black soldiers to run point or to be forward scouts, and expected black men to take up the most dangerous jobs on any mission. While this was one example of personal racism on the part of a single captain, the number of soldiers writing to *Sepia*, and interviewed for other sources showed a pervasive use of

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<sup>55</sup> Specialist 4 Kenneth A. Haley, “Our Men in Vietnam,” *Sepia* 17, No. 12 (December 1968): 61.

<sup>56</sup> “Blacks in the Military: Progress Slow, Discontent High,” *Congressional Quarterly* 29, no. 38 (Sept. 18, 1971): 1941-1944; Shelby L. Stanton, *The Rise and Fall of an American Army: U.S Ground Forces in Vietnam, 1965-1973* (New York: Dell, 1985); Westheider, *Fighting On Two Fronts*, 94-130.

<sup>57</sup> Terry, *Bloods*, 99.

black soldiers in fighting the war. These anecdotes coupled with the large number of African American deaths in Vietnam helped persuade many black soldiers that they were only cannon fodder for a white military structure that did not value them as soldiers or as men.<sup>58</sup>

The poor treatment, racial violence, and harassment that black soldiers experienced was not only inflicted by their white American counterparts. Black men were targets of Vietnamese discrimination too. At least one soldier claimed that the Vietnamese learned to hate black men from white soldiers who taught their prejudice to those who aided American GIs or lived near American camps. Lt. Cpl. Charles Smith of the Marine Corps wrote that he was repeatedly called “‘blackie’ by the Vietnamese after coming off patrol protecting their lives. This term was put into their heads by something with feelings against our color—guess who?”<sup>59</sup> Because U.S. troops employed Vietnamese civilians on bases as interpreters, launderers, and other menial laborers, the Vietnamese learned American colloquialisms and employed them as best they could. Vietnamese civilians would call black soldiers “nigger” or spend time “reminding” them that they were number 10 in the United States and in Vietnam and that the white men were number one (a way to degrade black soldiers, by placing white men above them—number one—while, they were at the bottom—number 10). It was evident to many black Americans that their white peers were poisoning the Vietnamese who served alongside them.

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<sup>58</sup> Specialist 4 Lawrence Harrell, “Our Men in Vietnam,” *Sepia* 18, No. 2 (Feb. 1969): 65; Lyle Quasim Oral History interviewed by Jesse Kindig and Steve Beda, Sept. 5, 2008. Antiwar and Radical History Project-Pacific Northwest. Retrieved July 24, 2013 from [http://depts.washington.edu/antiwar/interview\\_quasim.shtml](http://depts.washington.edu/antiwar/interview_quasim.shtml).

<sup>59</sup> Lt. Col. Charles Smith, “Our Men in Vietnam,” *Sepia* 17, No. 1 (Jan. 1968): 79.



Another soldier complained that the Viet Cong were using racist propaganda to turn Vietnamese civilians against black soldiers. Specialist 4 King wrote, “The women with babies wouldn’t let colored soldiers touch them because the VC told them Negroes are cannibals that are hired from Africa to eat babies as their reward for fighting in Viet Nam. They also have been told Negroes grow tails like monkeys at night...” Men who experienced racism at the hands of the Vietnamese felt betrayed not only by their country but also by the men, women, and children they were fighting to protect. “How can you win a war when the people you are fighting for are against you?” Specialist David M. King asked.<sup>60</sup> This question was repeated often by soldiers serving throughout the combat zones of South Vietnam. The lack of a sufficient answer pushed some soldiers closer to open rebellion, while making others rethink the role of black men in uniform.<sup>61</sup>

The most segregated places in Vietnam were the brothels and bars in the rear and in locations that soldiers would travel to on Rest and Relaxation passes (particularly Saigon). Vietnamese “Mama Sans” (Vietnamese women of child bearing age) would not accept black visitors in the field or in local brothels because they would lose business from their white clients. The segregated brothel situations sometimes led to violence, as patrons of the brothels and bars would come to fisticuffs after nights of drinking or because of lack of access to specific women or locations. Some of the establishments were self-segregated by African American soldiers. For instance, an area of Saigon was exclusively reserved for black men seeking sexual relations with Vietnamese prostitutes. However, groups of black soldiers together were targets for white Military Police officers and were often broken up, because, according to Pfc. Ronald E. McDaniel, “they don’t

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<sup>60</sup> Specialist 4 David M. King. “Our Men in Vietnam,” *Sepia* 17 No. 3 (March 1968): 77.

<sup>61</sup> Donald Mosby, “What’s this? Jim Crow Brothels Found in Vietnam,” *Chicago Defender* May 13, 1968, 1.

think we're supposed to relax and sit around in groups listening to our music, or talk about our women and families back home or about our problems."<sup>62</sup> Such privileges were designated solely for white soldiers.<sup>63</sup>

The perceived and real slights, including being overlooked for promotion, having segregated rest and relaxation facilities, and being sent on dangerous missions, experienced by some black soldiers throughout their combat tours of Vietnam led them to rethink their status in the United States. After only a few months in country some soldiers' latent anti-war and anti-United States feelings developed or boiled over. Black soldiers spoke of feeling used and betrayed by the United States. They complained bitterly about fighting another people of color in a colonial war of aggression. By late 1968 and early 1969 men were writing on a monthly basis to *Sepia* that black soldiers should not be fighting in Vietnam. The letter writers believed that if they had to fight a civil war, they wanted to be at home, fighting for the rights of their own people. Often, soldiers did not expressly condemn the war, but felt that black men should not be used in the fighting. Private First Class Ron Matlock was representative of the *Sepia* letter writers. He did not believe black men should be fighting in Vietnam "because we don't have freedom ourselves... Instead of spending \$30 billion a year to kill a Viet Cong, they can spend half of that and put it into Negro slum areas."<sup>64</sup> The perceived waste, along with the lived experiences of the racist attitudes of some Vietnamese civilians, soured many black soldiers on fighting.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Pfc. Ronald E. McDaniel, "Our Men in Vietnam," *Sepia* 19, No. 3 (March 1970): 24; Gail Buckley, *American Patriots: The Story of Blacks in the Military from the Revolution to Desert Storm* (New York: Random House, 2001), 390-398, 402-410, 414-425.

<sup>63</sup> Horace A. Reed, Jr. "Soldiers Look at Race Relations," *Army Digest* 25, No. 4 (April 1970): 4-13; Westhieder, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 37-65.

<sup>64</sup> Pfc. Ron Matlock. "Our Men in Vietnam," *Sepia* 18, No.9 (Aug. 1969): 72.

<sup>65</sup> Longley, *Grunts*, 129.

Reports of Civil Rights unrest at home also had a psychological effect on in country soldiers. Many wondered what they were fighting for and how they would be received when they returned home. Some saw their time in the military as preparing them from returning home to the United States. Earlier in the course of the war, soldiers wrote dismissively of protestors, rioters, and rabble-rousers at home, believing they were taking away from the war effort and their energies were misplaced. However, as the war drug on and different types of soldiers spent their tours in Vietnam, the thinking changed. By 1968, men saw their time in Vietnam not as a freedom mission or to protect communism, but as fertile training ground for skills that could be used in fighting their own battles at home, in urban America. The riots in urban America following Dr. King's assassination and during the hot, long summers of the late 1960s affected the thinking of black fighting men. Soldiers were concerned about what these riots meant for them and their families. Specialist 4 Robert J. Baldwin lamented, "Why should the blacks fight in Vietnam only to go back to combat the white aggressors in America?"<sup>66</sup> Other soldiers felt that they were captives in the Army and that black soldiers should not be fighting the war, "because its fascism for blacks to gain for others that which we do not have ourselves."<sup>67</sup>

Soul Brothers believed they should be fighting their battles at home, to earn the rights and freedoms of American citizenship for themselves. Specialist 3 Gene Roberts was worried that his time in Vietnam would not matter when he returned home: "how will I be treated when I get home? Will I still be discriminated against? Will I still be a second-class citizen?" he asked.<sup>68</sup> Roberts and others believed that their talents were

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<sup>66</sup> Specialist 4 Robert J. Baldwin, "Our Men in Vietnam," *Sepia* 18, No. 11 (Nov. 1969): 26.

<sup>67</sup> Specialist 5 John C. W. Byrd, "Our Men in Vietnam," *Sepia* 18, No. 11 (Nov. 1969): 26; Longley, *Grunts*, 128-130.

<sup>68</sup> Specialist 3 Gene Roberts, "Our Men in Vietnam," *Sepia* 17, No. 7 (July, 1968): 74.

being used incorrectly and the United States military should reassign them to domestic duty. A 1970 survey conducted by Wallace Terry found that 45% of black enlisted men and 15% of black officers would “join a riot at home.” A smaller percentage of enlisted men (31%) and officers (6%) said they would join a militant group when they returned home, but significantly, over 60% of black officers did not believe that black soldiers should be fighting in Vietnam because “they had problems back home.”<sup>69</sup> The Black Panther Party openly recruited black soldiers and believed that the soldiers’ proper place was in the vanguard organization, fighting American imperialism, not perpetuating it. The Panthers and other organizations wanted black soldiers in their ranks to help train their members in guerrilla warfare and military discipline, and to provide the needed leadership in the revolution.<sup>70</sup>

The popularity of Black Power at home and the disconnect that black soldiers felt to the large American war machine was further heightened when the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese regular army used race and racial issues to target black soldiers. After the assassination of Dr. King, a Vietnamese woman called Hanoi Helen addressed black soldiers over the radio, “Soul Brothers, go home. Whitey raping your mothers and your daughters, burning down your homes. What you over here for? This is not your war,” she told listeners. The radio broadcast had the desired effect on Specialist 4 Richard J. Ford III. After hearing Hanoi Helen, he “really started believing it, because it was too many blacks than there should be in [the] infantry.”<sup>71</sup> Hanoi Helen played to a number of concerns that black soldiers harbored, as they served their required tours: shared identity

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<sup>69</sup> Wallace Terry. “Bringing the War Home,” *Black Scholar* 2, No. 3: 17-18.

<sup>70</sup> “The Black People in the U.S. and the Vietnam War,” *Black Panther* March 9, 1969, 9; David Cortright, “Black GI Resistance During the Vietnam War,” *Vietnam Generation*, 2, No. 1, 51-64; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 94-130.

<sup>71</sup> Terry, *Bloods*, 39.

as Third World subjects, manhood, and fear of white racism. Because soldiers were cut off from news networks and mail service was slow, Hanoi Helen and the “enemy” actually served to strengthen the militant feelings of some soldiers. The belief in a shared identity as oppressed people helped some black men to justify being friendly with Vietnamese civilians, while other soldiers claimed that the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army would purposefully aim away from black soldiers, if given the chance. Again, the enemy was able to cultivate a respectful space to water the seeds of doubt that many black soldiers brought to Vietnam. Their propaganda was effective because it spoke a truth the soldiers wanted or needed to hear and because it played to their developing Black Power sentiment. By questioning why the soldiers were in Vietnam, while white men were supposedly raping their women at home, Hanoi Helen laid bare the reason men joined the military: to protect their families and their country. Black men in Vietnam were doing neither, according to Helen and many Black Power soldiers. They were biding time until they could hop the next plane back to the “real world” and become involved in something worthwhile again.

Soldiers captured by the North Vietnamese were also inundated with anti-white messages. One prisoner of war was brought into interrogation after Dr. King’s murder, where he was told that the United States was rioting and black men and women were being killed in the streets. While this was only a half truth, the North Vietnamese believed they could play on the racial fears of the captured soldier. They expected the soldier to make a statement against the United States that they could use for further propaganda pieces. However, this showed the belief of the North Vietnamese that black soldiers were unhappy in the American military and that they were exploitable. The

message worked and many soldiers wrote home about deserting their bases and joining the Viet Cong or the North Vietnamese regular army.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, Black Power organizations at home, particularly the Black Panther Party, pledged to send members to North and South Vietnam to join the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) and the regular North Vietnamese army in their fight against the Americans. Huey P. Newton offered “troops to the Vietnamese people in the spirit of revolutionary solidarity and internationalism.” The act was political, but also “a friendship gesture” to the Vietnamese and Newton believed that “it will be very decisive thing on the battlefield, because many of our buddies will come over and fight with us against the cowardly American aggressors...”<sup>73</sup> Party member Ericka Huggins “would have gone,” if Huey had asked her to fight in Vietnam, because she “believed the Vietnamese were her brothers and they should be waging revolutionary war together.”<sup>74</sup> While these “soldiers” were never used, their willingness to serve against the Americans further strengthened the North Vietnamese propaganda and forced Soul Brothers to come to terms with their own feelings about the United States military and their role in Vietnam as soldiers serving United States interests.

Vietnam proved to be fertile space for gaining a “better understanding of ‘blackness’” and “the ‘thought ground’ of the black revolution.” Soul Brothers taught each other about displaying blackness proudly and having an identity within the military, based on race, self-pride, and black solidarity.<sup>75</sup> Solidarity was an important means to survival, as black soldiers protected each other in rear stationed divisions from aggressive

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<sup>72</sup> Terry, *Bloods*; Tyson, 294.

<sup>73</sup>“The Whole World Revolution will be Kicked off...An Interview with Huey P. Newton,” New Haven, Conn. Aug. 21, 1970. Huey P. Newton Foundation Files, Stanford University, Series 1, Box 57, Folder 8.

<sup>74</sup> Ericka Huggins, interview with author, Aug. 2011.

<sup>75</sup> L/Cpl. Brooks, “Our Men in Vietnam,” *Sepia* 19, No. 9 (Sept. 1970): 30-31.

whites. Further, the togetherness of black soldiers was a point of pride, a trait that needed to be transferred home to secure freedom in the United States. Two soldiers went so far as to suggest that “if life was assured for every black man that came over here, we could truthfully say that all black people should have the opportunity to witness the togetherness of the black people here.”<sup>76</sup> The solidarity ensured that black soldiers survived their tours and could return to the United States. Other soldiers reported that Vietnam was an “eye-opening experience,” that exposed the true nature of the United States military and white Americans or “rabbits.” Soldiers felt they were forced to join the military because of the structurally racist nature of American society, which provided them with limited options for economic advancement. When they arrived in country, they believed they would be treated equally by their fellow fighting men, but were forced to realize that the military structure, whether at home or in battle was racist and that they were fighting against their own best interests. This realization helped lead to the calls for racial solidarity and the cultural expressions that became associated with Soul Brother soldiers.

Soul Brothers began expressing their attitudes about the War, race relations, and their own blackness and manhood more openly as the war continued and more and more draftees and replacements made their way into the armed services. In hair, dress, and decorum, black soldiers attempted to separate and celebrate their status within the military, demanding more respect for their personhood and their own cultural expressions within the rigid hierarchy of military. The rise of the “black is beautiful” campaign at home quickly caught on in Vietnam, with black soldiers grew out their hair into large and well-maintained Afros. These troops were targeted by their leaders as disobeying the

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<sup>76</sup> Sgt. Willie H. Stancil & Sgt. David Cowan, “Our Men in Vietnam,” *Sepia* 20, No. 4 (April 1971): 80.

cropped hair style required by military brass. Soldiers also began to wear African beads as signs of peace and solidarity with their Third World brothers. The beads were an outward symbol of Soul Brother status and marked the soldiers for others to see. Another prevalent outward marker of solidarity was the black wristband, “constructed by braiding two GI-type shoe laces together.”<sup>77</sup> The Air Force quickly banned the wristbands because they were not proper uniform attire. While white soldiers also violated uniform codes while in country (by adding peace signs to their helmets or stitching confederate flags to their uniforms), black soldiers felt they were unfairly targeted for their expressions by the officers in many units.<sup>78</sup>

In 1969, the Marine Corps officially recognized the Afro as an acceptable haircut, if it was “not bushy.” The decision to loosen restrictions on hair and dress came after a number of complaints were filed by black Corpsmen.<sup>79</sup> The Army, at least at Ft. Bragg, also allowed the wearing of Afros, but they “still forbid novel and bizzare [sic] styles.” This was a tacit decision that allowed Soul Brothers to express their burgeoning race pride and manhood, while remaining inside the authority of the Marine Corps and Army. Soldiers could still be reprimanded for having unkempt Afros or for not being able to wear their gear properly.<sup>80</sup> The change in dress and hair codes was not accepted across the board in all military units and still fell to the commanding officer, meaning soldiers in one unit could wear their hair in Afros, while soldiers in another had to maintain crew cuts.

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<sup>77</sup> James A. White, “Voices from Vietnam,” *Sepia* 20, No. 7 (July 1971): 80.

<sup>78</sup> Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 88; A brother, “Our Men in Vietnam,” *Sepia* 19, No. 6 (June, 1970): 54; James T. Wooten, “Marines Divided by Order Allowing Afro Hair Styles,” *New York Times*, Sept. 15, 1969.

<sup>79</sup> Stephen Morris “How Blacks Upset the Marine Corps,” *Ebony* (December, 1969): 57.

<sup>80</sup> “More on AR,” *Do It Loud* 1, No. 1 (Jan. 1970): 3.



This same haphazard enforcement of military protocol applied to the use of the Black Power salute and the dap. Some contemporary reporters argued that the Black Power salute originated with soldiers in Vietnam and was brought back to the States after Soul Brothers' tours of duty. The Black Power fist was popularized by Tommie Smith and John Carlos on the medal stand at the 1968 Olympics and by domestic Black Power organizations, particularly the Black Panthers, during the latter half of the 1960s. An expression of pride and solidarity, it may have been brought home by Vietnam veterans, but what seems more likely is that Soul Brothers and Black Power civilian advocates both adopted the clinched fist as a symbol of their resistance to authority. The Black Power salute was used by black servicemen in place of the traditional salute soldiers used to greet each other. It was an outward sign that each saluting person was a Soul Brother and a believer in black solidarity and pride. The salute was not exclusively for black soldiers, as Soul Brothers would raise the clinched fist toward white soldiers who shared a bond or were considered friends.<sup>81</sup>

The Black Power salute was a quick gesture to signify a person's solidarity with other soldiers of color. Unlike the salute, the dap was a complicated handshake developed between two or more Soul Brothers and performed any time the soldiers met. The dap, like the salute, was used to express solidarity and revolutionary love, but each movement had its own ritualized meaning. The meanings and movements were not standardized and soldiers would develop their own daps for specific units or areas. The dap was performed in Vietnam and stateside. While the performance did not hurt anyone, it did back up chow lines and cause a great deal of disruption in rear positions. White soldiers resented

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<sup>81</sup> Morris, "How Blacks Upset the Marine Corps," 55-62; Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 88.

the length of daps and some of the more sinister gestures (for example, the slashing of a throat or shaping the forefinger and thumb into a makeshift gun).<sup>82</sup>

Not all black service personnel performed the salute or the dap. Some “lifers” found the dap to be nothing more than “street clowning,” or accused Soul Brothers of being racist against whites. Representative John R. Rarick, a Democrat from Louisiana, felt the dap and other Black Power expressions by military members were expressions of solidarity with socialism. He claimed, “For by their handshakes, their salutes and flag, these dupes openly identify themselves as members of an international movement whose allegiance is ultimately to Moscow.” In order to fix the situation and thus quell racial tension among the troops, Rarick suggested, “a simple, immediate solution to the problem would be to reassign the troops to unite according to race.” The dap and other Black Power symbols were such a problem, according to Rarick, that resending Executive Order 8891 and resegregating the military was the best idea.<sup>83</sup>

Representative Rarick’s suggestion was not taken seriously, but a letter published in *Sepia* in the fall of 1971 set off a back and forth between soldiers about the meaning and use of daps. Cpl. Terry E. Harrow, a white soldier serving his second tour in Vietnam, complained that the men he currently served with were of lower caliber than those he served with earlier. Harrow singled out the Black Power salute and dap as reasons why black soldiers were treated poorly, because the soldiers themselves created a difference based on race. Harrow believed the men he was currently serving with “dress differently, talk differently (try to speak their own brand of corrupted English) and whenever two of them meet, they go through this ritual of ‘giving each other Black

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<sup>82</sup> Westheider, *Fighting on Two Fronts*, 88-90; Sgt. Harry L. Norwood, “Voices from Vietnam,” *Sepia* 20, No. 6 (June 1971): 80.

<sup>83</sup> “Blacks in the Military: Progress Slow, Discontent High,” *Congressional Quarterly*, 1942.

Power' by slapping their hands and such." He claimed to respect men who were proud of their race, but "when I see those people showing their pride in such a manner as to border on the ridiculous, I begin to understand why some people are prejudice towards the black people." Harrow presented himself as colorblind and lamented his early years in the Marine Corps, when he felt friendless because he did not care about a man's color. Yet, his rambling letter was fueled by racism and white social insecurity. He did not like the way Black Power soldiers expressed themselves and felt threatened by the length and exclusivity of the daps. His letter provided an insight into how many non-Soul Brothers viewed the dap—as intrusive and hateful.<sup>84</sup> Harrow's feelings about the dap were echoed by a few black soldiers as well, who felt that they were required to give the gesture to every black person they encountered, whether they knew them or not. This expression of racial solidarity was actually restrictive according to Specialist 4 Charles Andrew, who saw the giving of the dap or the salute as akin to being a "mindless slave" doing "things because every black man does them and because I don't want to be considered an Uncle Tom."<sup>85</sup> The push for racial inclusivity was empowering for Soul Brothers who believed it was "a symbol of love between bloods," or "a means of relating to other blacks who have been through the same or nearly the same situations."<sup>86</sup> The dap was an expression of black pride and those servicemen who did not understand it or did not feel it was necessary were not Soul Brothers. Moreover, according to AB Woodrow Hunter, the dap was a symbol of inclusivity, because through "those few hand motions that brother has

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<sup>84</sup> Cpl. Terry E. Harrow, "Voices from Vietnam," *Sepia* 20, No. 6 (June 1971): 80.

<sup>85</sup> Specialist 4 Charles Andrew, "Voices from Vietnam," *Sepia* 20, No. 12 (Dec. 1971): 80.

<sup>86</sup> Specialist 4 R.J. Swann, "Voices from Vietnam," *Sepia* 21, No. 2 (Feb. 1972): 80; Sgt. Ric Leatherwood, "Voices from Vietnam," *Sepia* 21, No. 3 (March, 1972): 80.

told me that I'm not alone in the struggle."<sup>87</sup> The failure to show the dap was not only disrespectful to those brothers who initiated contact, but also to the soldier who refused to give it back, because it showed a lack of self-pride. The back and forth that spilled out onto *Sepia*'s pages for the next year indicated the divisiveness of the dap and its cultural significance to Soul Brothers. The dap was more than just an act of solidarity. It came home with veterans and became a symbol of black manhood and of Soul Brothers' willingness to protect one another and to work for a more inclusive world both inside the military establishment and in civilian society.<sup>88</sup>

While soldiers in Vietnam fought with military leadership and their comrades about their personal adornments and greetings, soldiers that were transferred back to the United States or had not yet been deployed to Vietnam fought their own battles. Troops refused deployment orders to Southeast Asia, as more and more servicemen sought ways to avoid service in Vietnam from within the military structure. Henry Mills, a black G.I stationed at Fort Dix, refused to be fight in Vietnam because "he could no sooner kill the people of Vietnam than he could kill his own Black brothers and sisters." Mills was sentenced to 30 days confinement in Fort Dix's stockade, while he waited for his next assignment. He vowed to continue to refuse to fight in Vietnam, until he was discharged.<sup>89</sup> Mills was not the only soldier to refuse his orders. Many black men sought discharges or fought their deployment orders, serving time in base stockades. Pvt. Isaac Barr was physically forced onto a plane departing Washington's Ft. Lewis for Vietnam, after he filed a Conscientious Objector status request to avoid deployment. Barr petitioned the American Serviceman's Union (ASU, a national organization created in

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<sup>87</sup> AB Woodrow Hunter, "Voices from Vietnam," *Sepia* 21, No. 4 (April 1972): 80.

<sup>88</sup> "Blacks in the Military: Progress Slow, Discontent High," *Congressional Quarterly*, 1941-42.

<sup>89</sup> "Black G.I. Refused to Fight in Racist War," *The Black Panther* May 11, 1969, 14.

1967 to support low ranking soldiers) for legal support. The ASU spokesman, Bob LeMay, considered “this a kidnapping by the US Army Brass.” However, ASU was unable to return Lewis to the United States. Instead, once in Vietnam, Lewis served in the 90<sup>th</sup> Replacement Company at Bien Hoa.<sup>90</sup> While the fight was often futile, it was more than symbolic. By standing up to their orders, anti-war soldiers expressed their own moral consciousness. They also asserted their freedom of choice, something many soldiers felt they had been denied when they were ordered to Vietnam. A number of soldiers were not against serving in the military, but they felt they should be serving in the United States, helping their own people gain rights and freedoms, instead of fighting the Vietnamese. Thus, the refusal to be sent to fight another man’s war was an expression of revolutionary solidarity, while also serving to reassert their independence and manhood.

As some men at Fort Dix and other bases refused to be sent to Vietnam, other soldiers went AWOL (Away without Leave). A popular destination for AWOL troops was Sweden. While some men went to Canada to avoid being drafted, the already inducted soldier had fewer options. Troops destined for Vietnam could try to escape to Canada, but the underground network that worked to find safe passage for troops seeking asylum often sent them through Moscow to Stockholm, where they were supported by a group of pacifists. The 80 soldiers (14 African American) who deserted to Sweden felt that the war was a race war which pitted two peoples of color against one another, at the beckoning of the white power structure. Don Williams, a 24-year-old defector, left for Sweden because he did not like the way black people were treated in the United States and he would not return to the United States until the awful conditions were fixed. As co-

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<sup>90</sup> “Brass Force Black G.I. to Vietnam,” *The Black Panther* April 27, 1969, 6.

chair of the Afro-American Deserters Committee (AADC) in Stockholm, Williams asserted that black deserters were focused on more than just peace in Vietnam. He told *Ebony*, “The main reason—and I cannot stress this enough—for my own defection is the injustices committed against my people in the U.S.” Black deserters, according to Williams, were disillusioned with the United States and would remain abroad until conditions in the United States improved. The soldiers were free to stay in Sweden and could not be prosecuted, but when they returned to the United States they were brought before military courts and sentenced. One soldier was given four months in the stockade and a dishonorable discharge for desertion, when he returned home in 1968.<sup>91</sup>

Wishing to avoid orders to Vietnam was not the only reason soldiers went AWOL. In January 1971, two soldiers stationed in Berlin went AWOL because they “were forced to give up our culture and our beliefs and to suffer the intolerable conditions of racism and discrimination,” and were “no longer prepared to be part of this imperialist Army, which uses violent measures to suppress its own personnel who assert their rights and at the same time uses us as tools of the genocide in Vietnam and forces us to live and work under inhuman conditions.”<sup>92</sup> Sgt. Ronald Bolden, one of the AWOL soldiers, was a Vietnam veteran who had been reassigned to Berlin to finish his time in the military. The soldiers returned to Berlin to undergo court martial proceedings, not because they believed they would receive a just trial, but to expose the racism, corruption, and violence that black soldiers were forced to live under as members of the United States military. Bolden argued that the Army, particularly in Vietnam, forced soldiers to harbor racist

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<sup>91</sup> Ulf Nilson, “Deserters in Sweden,” *Ebony* (August, 1968): 120-122; Werner Zwick, “Black GI who Fled to Sweden Gets 4 Months,” *Chicago Defender* April 6 1968, 3.

<sup>92</sup> “Now’s the Time,” *Forward: Justice on Trial* (July 1971): 3-4. University of Santa Barbara Social Movements Collection. Box 1, Folder 2; “US Soldiers Face Charges in Berlin,” *Baltimore Afro-American* July 10, 1971, 9.

ideas against the Vietnamese, because the Army dehumanized the Vietnamese, calling them gooks. Bolden told *Der Spiegel*, “This racism is shoved down your throat so long until you begin to automatically regard the Vietnamese as bastards,” and the Army effectively created a Third World “nigger” for all Americans to hate. Then, Bolden continued, “When you come back from Viet Nam you are confronted with the daily tyranny of your superiors in Berlin, then you just don’t play that game any longer. If you put your life on the line out there you’re not gonna come back here and be ordered around...and get punished for some petty bullshit.”<sup>93</sup> The Army had created a mentality of superiority in black troops in the field, but was unwilling to accept that black troops were heroic and deserved to express themselves as men in the rear or in peacefully deployed missions. In recognizing that the military had dehumanized and racialized the Vietnamese enemy, black soldiers were able to better see their own mistreatment in the military and to begin to speak out against it. Again, combat served as moments of radicalization and soldiers were unwilling to accept poor treatment and the denigration of culture when they returned from the battle field. Going AWOL was the only way some soldiers could think of to bring this to the attention of the public and to get a hearing before a military tribunal, where they could express their grievances in open court, without having to rely on their superior officers to lodge a complaint or to remedy a situation. While going AWOL was not ideal, because it led to time in the stockade and the possibility of a dishonorable discharge which would follow the soldier back into civilian life, it was one way to draw attention to the inequity of treatment.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> “The Army Creates it’s Own Niggers,” *Forward: Justice on Trial* (July 1971): 7, University of Santa Barbara Social Movements Collection, Box 1, Folder 2.

<sup>94</sup> “Black WAC Convicted of being AWOL” newspaper clipping, Thomas Doran Papers, Box 3, Folder 36. Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI.

The use of black troops at home was also a point of contention for many returning veterans and active duty members. The 1968 Democratic Convention was held in Chicago in August and the military predicted that violence would erupt. In doing so, federal authorities mobilized a number of units that included veterans of Vietnam and put them on alert that they could be deployed to help quell riots in Chicago if needed. Seventy-five black soldiers from Ft. Hood refused to participate in the riot control mission. At a rally held to protest the orders, 43 soldiers were arrested and quarantined in the stockade at Ft. Hood. Pfc. Jerome Laughton of Chicago explained that he did not want to use his weapon against a brother or sister who was expressing their Constitutional rights to free speech; he continued, "...we don't want to go home and destroy the freedom we fought in Vietnam for." Though over 100 black soldiers were present, only 43 were arrested and charged with insubordination.<sup>95</sup> Eight of the men (those Fort Hood authorities deemed the leaders of the insurrection) were given general Courts Martial for willfully disobeying an order and the other 35 were given special Courts Martial hearings beginning in September, 1968. Through a series of trials, the majority of the men served from three to six months of hard labor or confinement in the stockades and received bad conduct discharges. Four of the leaders were dishonorably discharged following their time in the stockades. The refusal to serve as riot police was another continuity with revolutionaries and "militants." More than that, the soldiers who refused duty during the Convention were also employing United States democratic rhetoric in their defense. By refusing to take away freedoms, the soldiers were forcing the United States military to accept their stand as moral. While the military did not view the soldiers as supporting a moral cause, the symbolic gesture helped troops and the civilian population to see that

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<sup>95</sup> "Blacks Say No to Demo Parlay Duty," *Chicago Defender*, Aug. 26, 1968, 4.



not all soldiers were cold blooded killers or had been brainwashed to do the bidding of their commanding officers.<sup>96</sup>

The treatment of soldiers on domestic bases was often no better than the reports black soldier sent home from Vietnam. Black men and women served on bases throughout the United States and faced with many of the same challenges that their brethren deployed abroad and their civilian counterparts lived under. Unlike grunts in Vietnam though, domestically stationed military personnel were privy to the developments of Black Power groups and the myriad of struggles that black Americans continued to face in American society. Because military life was simply a microcosm of the larger society, black members of the Armed Forces dealt with similar struggles on US bases. The racism that soldiers faced in rear positions in Vietnam were heightened at home. A group of fifty black soldiers met at Fort Bragg on November 22, 1969 to form a group “to combat racism.” The soldiers originally met at Service Club Six, but were asked to leave by the staff and moved to a nearby park to continue their informal gathering. Eventually, a team of all white MPs broke up the meeting and took the names of all those present.<sup>97</sup> The military leadership at home, like those deployed in Vietnam, was uneasy with large groups of minority soldiers congregating and sought to discipline leaders and break up the meetings, as a way to maintain “law and order,” but also as a way to harass and punish those who stepped out of line.

Like their civilian counterparts, black GIs formed Black Power organizations at domestic bases to address the violence, racism, and class struggles within the military structure. Through underground papers they advanced their positions and sought to

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<sup>96</sup> “Fort Hood 43 Revisited!” *FTA* 1, no. 6 (Dec. 1968); “Fort Hood 43,” *Flag-in-Action*, 2, nd; “Fort Hood: Development of a Movement,” *The Ally*, 12, nd.

<sup>97</sup> “Black Organize, 50 Meet,” *Bragg Briefs* 2, No. 4 (December 1969): 1-2.

expose the problems of military life to both soldiers and the wider public. Of note, the mastheads of the publications often reminded readers that the papers were their private property and could not be legally removed from the reader's possession. This banner was also placed over a number of Black Power and radical organizations newspapers as police and government authorities (like the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Counter Intelligence Program) would take newspapers and revolutionary materials into possession as proof of insubordination or crimes against the state. By reminding soldiers that the publications were legal, the writers exposed one counter-measure and associated themselves with the civilian society. They also educated their readers on their rights as citizens and as servicemen.<sup>98</sup>

Many bases had underground newspapers that reported military news, analysis of the War, and letters from soldiers in combat in Vietnam. Many of the newspapers also reprinted civilian Black Power newsletter stories. The Black Brigade at Ft. Bragg became a model for Black Power underground organizing. The group formed in late 1969, as a reaction to the contentious harassment its members felt at the hands of their peers and superiors. The Brigade believed that black military personnel had been complacent for too long and needed to be challenged in the language they understood—by questioning black soldiers' manhood. The Brigade believed that military men had been brainwashed and were controlled in body and mind by the military system. They called on black soldiers to free their minds and to use their moral integrity to demand better treatment for

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<sup>98</sup> *The Black Panther* and *Muhammad Speaks* both carried similar banners. Members of the Panthers and the Nation of Islam complained about police harassment while they sold their newspapers. Soldiers were clearly also experiencing harassment for possessing such material. *FTA* 3, No. 4 (Dec, 1970): 1. "Black Demands," *Do It Loud* 1, No. 1 (Jan., 1970): 4; *Bragg Briefs* 2, No. 4 (Dec., 1969): 1.

black soldiers.<sup>99</sup> The Black Brigade was established to rid the military of racism which stood “disloyal to the Constitution of the United States of America,” so “demands against racism that may be posed by the Black Brigade must be considered as being in accordance with, and in advocacy [sic] of the Constitution.”<sup>100</sup> By using the Constitution as their guiding document, the men of the Black Brigade were asserting their citizenship rights and the perceived moral failings of the military establishment. They cloaked themselves in the rhetoric of the United States’ guiding document to protect themselves from being considered a communist front in the military. Moreover, using the Constitution as the foundation of their argument gave the Brigade a patriotic underpinning, in line with the teaching of the military. The Brigade worried that black soldiers had been brainwashed by military leaders, so adjusting the rhetoric of the establishment to suit their goals served the purpose of both protecting themselves and coding their message in the language the indoctrinated soldier could grasp and reevaluate.

The Black Brigade, like civilian Black Power organizations created a list of demands that they felt would help alleviate the racial tension at Ft. Bragg and other military bases throughout the country. They wanted more representation of blacks in the military police, as clerks, and as officers. The Black Brigade also requested black counselors, black lawyers, and racially balanced promotion boards and investigative committees. Because the military was deployed domestically to control riots throughout the late 1960s, the Brigade requested that “black soldiers sent with a unit to contain a civil disorder involving black people should be on a volunteer basis.” Instead of demanding completely separate military tribunals and a self-segregated system, the Black

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<sup>99</sup> “The Birth of the Black Brigade,” *Bragg Briefs* 2, No. 5. (Feb., 1970): 1.

<sup>100</sup> *Do it Loud* 1, No. 1 (Jan, 1970): 1.

Brigade wanted to fully integrate the military structure, and to provide more opportunities for black members in the service. The demands were not an overthrow of the military structure, but an attempt to work within the system to provide advancement opportunities and equal treatment for all members of the military. The list incorporated some of the same principles of civilian organizations, including a request that off-base businesses be barred from use if they had discriminatory practices and an increased availability of black literature and revolutionary publications.<sup>101</sup>

The demands highlighted the repressive nature of some military posts, as black soldiers felt they did not have fair hearings and were cut off from learning about their own history and contemporary society. The demands were practical and fell in line with the civilian organizations' programs. Their concerns were focused mainly on military discipline and access, a conservative approach of working within the system to achieve specific and attainable concessions. The Brigade was as concerned with providing a means to advancement for black servicemen as with eradicating discrimination. Like their fellow soldiers in the field, they were not necessarily against serving in the military or performing their duties; instead, they sought ways to alleviate the most egregious of assignments and to enjoy the same honors and respect that their white peers achieved.

At Fort Lewis in Washington the GI Alliance was a group of servicemen and women "dedicated to the principles of freedom and resistance to illegitimate authority, thrust not only on us in the military, but on all oppressed people in the world." It went further than the Black Brigade, as it hoped to integrate military personnel with the civilian organizations. The GI Alliance sought to build coalitions, but focused solely on troops of color ("blacks, browns, Indians and Asians") and communities. They felt they

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<sup>101</sup> "Black Demands," *Do it Loud* 1, No. 1 (Jan. 1970): 1, 4.

were pawns in an imperial game that they could no longer participate in. In order to assuage the situation of black soldiers, the GI Alliance, through the Fed Up Program, made a list of demands modeled off the Black Panther Party's 10 Point Program. Freedom from harassment and the ability to control the course of a serviceperson's duty were the guiding principles of the demands. To achieve the goals of the Fed Up Program, the GI Alliance pledged to create individual organizations in each unit to address issues raised by personnel, create a legal defense fund and staff it with GI Alliance troops to protect soldiers from harassment, and demand, through the Chain of Command or in public, an immediate improvement in housing and care for active duty and veteran servicemen and their families.<sup>102</sup> Like their civilian brothers and sisters, the members of Fort Lewis's GI Alliance were seeking basic human rights and equal treatment. Having experienced military life, many of them serving in Vietnam and returning to a bigoted society that remained separate long after de jure segregation was banned, the Black Power military organizations used their status as military personnel to achieve full citizenship rights and equality wherever and whenever they could.

At Fort Knox, Kentucky, black and white soldiers used their underground newspaper, *Fun, Travel, Adventure*, (*FTA* or, as some servicemen called it *Fuck the Army*) to recruit and educate members. In December, 1970 *FTA* sought to end riot training and to avoid forced riot control in Louisville. The soldiers did not want to participate in the riot control training and felt it necessary to educate white soldiers on the reasons that Louisvillians may riot. *FTA* implored, "It is important for white GI's to understand that blacks in these riots are not directing their anger at the majority of white working people, but against a few wealthy white men who are forcing blacks to live as

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<sup>102</sup> "Fed Up Program," *Fed Up!* (March, 1971): 2.

they do.” *FTA* connected the black rioters to the working class whites, hoping the GIs would understand that in reality, the rioters were focused not on the soldiers or the soldiers’ families, but on the white men who controlled and exploited poor blacks and whites. By focusing their attention on the shared struggle of working class Americans, who, according to *FTA*, were making 10% less than a decade earlier, the soldiers sought to build a coalition of blacks and whites. Additionally, the focus on the income gap between working class and upper class whites also served as a violence deterrence mechanism. While *FTA* admitted that rioters in Louisville could be destructive, they hoped that white soldiers would not see their destruction of property as a reason to become violent against the individual.<sup>103</sup>

Veterans also formed organizations to secure rights and benefits from the military upon their return to civilian society. Like veterans of earlier wars, Vietnam veterans were guaranteed certain programs to help them reintegrate into civilian life and to prosper there. However, unlike their white predecessors, Vietnam veterans, both black and white, were not viewed as heroes by a thankful nation. Vietnam veterans were harassed, spit upon, and called “baby killers” by anti-war protesters and were often unprepared for returning to civilian society.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, Vietnam veterans faced a plethora of new and challenging issues, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Agent Orange poisoning. Most pressing, Vietnam veterans comprised the largest number of homeless veterans in the United States.<sup>105</sup> The warning signs came earlier for Soul Brothers, as they

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<sup>103</sup> “Rioters Riot in 54<sup>th</sup> Infantry,” *FTA!* 3, No. 6 (Dec. 1970): 1-3.

<sup>104</sup> Bob Greene, *Homecoming: When the Soldiers Returned from Vietnam* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1989). Greene collected letters from a number of soldiers about their experiences returning home. He started with a simple question: “were you spit on at home?” and was flooded with personal, detailed stories of physical and verbal assaults of veterans, in and out of uniform.

<sup>105</sup> “Black Vietnam Vets Despair our Current Status in US,” *Jet* 70, No. 15 (June 30, 1986): 6-7.

returned home and found, like the men who served in America's wars before them, their opportunities were limited. In 1973, 15% of black Vietnam veterans were unemployed, and those who did have jobs earned \$11 less a week than white Vietnam veterans.<sup>106</sup>

Black Vietnam veterans returned home to a society that was undergoing dramatic changes. Many of the veterans were dishonorably discharged because of their willingness to speak out against armed forces bigotry. Moreover, a dishonorable discharge had to be filed on job applications and many times employers would disqualify an applicant because of it.<sup>107</sup> A dishonorable discharge is a punitive discharge given only through court martial proceedings and follow serious infractions, including desertion, sexual assault and murder. Unlike dishonorable discharges, "Bad Paper," or other than honorable discharges, are administrative decisions. An other than honorable discharge is typically given to service members convicted of civilian crimes that bring dishonor to a military unit, including adultery. Other than honorable discharges were issued to 500,000-750,000 Vietnam veterans. Both dishonorable discharges and "Bad Paper" discharges resulted in the forfeiture of military benefits, including the GI Bill and VA healthcare.<sup>108</sup> 80,000 troops brought into the military under Project 100,000 left the military without benefits or job skills and Project 100,000 troops were twice as likely to be court martialed as other men drafted.<sup>109</sup> The failure of Project 100,000 and the Moynihan Report's recommendations was also evident in the number of unemployed and homeless black veterans. Because black troops were concentrated in grunt positions and

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<sup>106</sup> Ted Steward, "What now for Black Vietnam Veterans?" *Sepia* 22, No. 4 (April, 1973): 18.

<sup>107</sup> Stewart, "What Now for Black Vietnam Veterans," 20.

<sup>108</sup> Cpt. Bill Wicks, Trial Counsel, 13<sup>th</sup> ESC, "Leaving on Good Terms: Types of Discharges, Their Consequences," *Ft. Hood Sentinel*, Feb. 16, 2012.

<sup>109</sup> Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, 319-320; Hsiao, "Project 100:000," 30; Paul Starr, *The Discarded Army—Veterans After Vietnam: The Nader Report on Vietnam Veterans and the Veterans Administration* (Washington, D.C.: Center for the Study of Responsive Law, 1973), 194.

unskilled or semi-skilled jobs while serving, they could not use their military training to secure better jobs when they returned home.<sup>110</sup> The influx of black troops, in reality, did little to stem the problems of the economically disadvantaged, as those troops returned home with few advanced skills, some suffering mental and physical disabilities.

To address these systemic problems, the Department of Defense created Project Transition for returning veterans, optionally available to all U.S. military bases beginning on January 1, 1968.<sup>111</sup> A three-pronged program, Project Transition sought to reintegrate veterans through job training, educational opportunities, and counseling services.

However, Project Transition was not required and many black veterans chose not to use the military's program.<sup>112</sup> Instead, black veterans created their own agencies which lobbied on behalf of veterans rights and served as social welfare networks for veterans who struggled to readjust or find a place in the civilian world. Some groups worked in tandem with a peace platform, demanding an end to the war in Vietnam and a shift in funds to help veterans. United Veterans for Freedom worked to rebuild ghetto communities and lobbied for convalescent homes to be built in inner cities for injured veterans.<sup>113</sup> More established Civil Rights groups, like the National Urban League, added veterans affairs personnel and developed programs specially coordinated for dealing with the issues of returning black veterans. The Urban League's program worked to find

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<sup>110</sup> As of March 31, 1971, "blacks comprise 11.2 percent of those stationed in Vietnam (12.3 percent of enlisted men; 2.7 percent of officers)." The number of enlisted black men serving in each branch were: 140,625 Army, 29,660 Navy, 22,296 Marines, 74,745 Air Force, for a total of 267,326 or 11.1% of the total enlisted men in Vietnam. Black officers only made up 2.2% (8,501) of the total number of officers in Vietnam in 1971. "Blacks in the Military: Progress Slow, Discontent High," *Congressional Quarterly*, 1944.

<sup>111</sup> The Department of Defense originally launched "Project Transition" as a pilot program on five unspecified bases in June, 1967. "Project Transition Helps Disadvantaged Vets," *Sarasota Journal*, June 28, 1968.

<sup>112</sup> Ponchitta Pierce and Peter Berry, "The Returning Vet," *Ebony* (August 1968): 146-147.

<sup>113</sup> "Vietnam Veteran Heads new Peace Organization: Ex-Sergeant Pushes for End to War," *Chicago Defender* Aug. 30, 1967, 2.



civilian jobs, housing, and educational opportunities for minority veterans who were not being served by the Veteran Affairs Administrations in their cities.<sup>114</sup> The returning vet had to navigate a confusing stream of government bureaucracy and the crumbling infrastructure of their home communities to even begin to profit from the Cold War GI Bill, which promised education, job, and housing assistance. The dissatisfaction with benefits and the continued belief that the system was racially stacked against black veterans pushed some to join urban revolts and Black Power organizations, while others took to petty crimes to get by. Programs were created to aid arrested and jailed veterans. Having been denied respect in the military and unwilling or unable to become lifers, black Vietnam veterans returned to the States as victims of American imperialism.<sup>115</sup>

The experience of black soldiers in Vietnam and as veterans at home in the United States was one of conflict. Black soldiers entered the military as enlistees or draftees and were sent to fight and die in the jungles of Vietnam with little education on the conflict or their rights. After nine to 12 month tours in country, many soldiers stopped being U.S. fighting men and became Soul Brothers, radicalized by the racism and violence in the rear, by the verbal attacks and segregated facilities established by Vietnamese civilians, and by the perceived and real lack of promotions and honors given to black soldiers by white officers. The military, instead of alleviating racial disparity actually reinforced many of the same structural and systemic barriers to advancement as civilian society.

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<sup>114</sup> “Assistance Program Aids Ex-GI’s: Urban League Helps Negro Veterans in Eight Cities,” *Chicago Defender* Feb. 8, 1968, 27; Theresa Booker, “Urban League Helps Viet War Vets find Decent Jobs,” *Jet* 39, No. 1 (October 8, 1970): 24-27.

<sup>115</sup> Terry, *Bloods*, 54, 105-112; “Program to Aid Jailed Vietnam Veterans Begins,” *Jet* 48, No. 14 (June 26, 1975): 19; Jon Nordheimer, “From Dakto to Detroit: Death of a Troubled Hero,” *New York Times*, May 26, 1971.

## CHAPTER FOUR: HELL NO, WE WON'T GO EITHER: BLACK POWER AND THE DRAFT

“We, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, have been involved in the black peoples' struggle for liberation and self-determination in this country for the past five years. Our work, particularly in the South, has taught us that the United States government has never guaranteed the freedom of oppressed citizens, and is not yet truly determined to end the rule of terror and oppression within its own borders.—“On Vietnam: SNCC’s Antiwar Statement”<sup>1</sup>

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), an outgrowth of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the late 1950s and early 1960 sit-in movement, has gained a venerated place within the Civil Rights Movement. A group of politically active and non-violent students, formed with the help of Ella Baker, changed the course of American history, helping millions of black southerners to register to vote, creating Freedom Schools, and enduring physical and mental violence to secure the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. SNCC’s formidable achievements have garnered a great deal of historical attention, but the organization’s contribution to the Vietnam anti-war struggle has been grossly overlooked.<sup>2</sup> SNCC members, working within and outside the organization, brought the

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<sup>1</sup> Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, “Statement on Vietnam,” January 6, 1966. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1954-1972. University Microfilm International. Reel 56.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the history of SNCC and its significant contributions to American history see: William Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Freedom Struggle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Wesley C. Hogan, *Many Minds One Heart: SNCC’s Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama’s Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Judy Richardson, Martha Norman, Betty Garman Robinson, and Dottie Zellner, *Hands on the Freedom Plow: The Untold Story of Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Charles M. Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Emily Stoper, *The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee: The Growth of Radicalism in a Civil Rights Organization* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publications, 1989); Andrew B. Lewis, *The Shadows of Youth: The Remarkable Journey of the Civil Rights Generation* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009); David Halberstam,

struggle against the Vietnam War to black communities throughout the country and paid the consequences for their continued activism. Many were drafted, jailed or under government surveillance. One member was even denied a seat in the Georgia State legislature. They highlighted the racist and classist nature of the Vietnam War, counseled men on how to circumvent the draft, and explored the disconnect between American international rhetoric and the lived experiences of black Americans at home. In the end, their experiences brought the anti-war struggle into the Civil Rights and Black Power mainstream. SNCC's arguments and community based tactics made the anti-war movement a personal struggle for many black Americans and provided the intellectual underpinning for Black Power's response to the war in Southeast Asia.

SNCC began as the student wing of Dr. King's SCLC. In the fall of 1960, SNCC had distanced itself from SCLC and begun independent campaigns to desegregate dining facilities and public transportation throughout the South. Led by young ministers and deeply committed students, SNCC realized the importance of creating local movements to bring about real change. Developing local people's activism was a hallmark of SNCC's organizing tradition and required SNCC field workers to move into the Deep South and begin recruiting. Throughout the early 1960s, SNCC focused on desegregation and voter registration, gaining support from Northerners, and begrudgingly, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. While SNCC was a non-violent organization in the mold of Dr. King's vision for civil disobedience, the students and staff of SNCC were not beholden to King or the Civil Rights mainstream leadership. Instead, they worked to push

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*The Children* (New York: Fawcett Books, 1998) , Vanessa Murphree, *The Selling of Civil Rights: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Use of Public Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

Civil Rights organizing beyond legislative victories and to make a real and meaningful impact on the communities in which they worked.<sup>3</sup>

By 1965, after successfully desegregating public transportation, holding a freedom vote, and helping to organize the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, as well as securing passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, SNCC, according to many historians, was at a crossroads. Should SNCC exclude white organizers? What kinds of organizing should SNCC focus on at the local level? How could non-violence work in an ever more violent decade? What should SNCC do about the war in Vietnam and how did it relate to Civil Rights organizing at home? Through a series of position papers, workshops, and staff meetings, SNCC's internal debates spilled out. Although historian Wesley Hogan argues "by the end of 1966 SNCC ceased, in any programmatic sense, to exist," in reality SNCC's leadership changed and their focus broadened to include the parts of SNCC's organizing that has so often been ignored in the historical record: economic, social, and political equality through community empowerment and racial justice. While Clayborne Carson, Charles Payne, and Wesley Hogan felt that Stokely Carmichael's exhortation of Black Power during the Meredith March Against Fear was the final step in the decline of SNCC, it was, instead, only another chapter in the organizing tradition—pushing SNCC forward and reaffirming their vanguard position in the Civil Rights Movement.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 19-55; Wesley Hogan, *Many Minds One Heart*, 35, 41, 70-72, 88-91; Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 96, 176-179; John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, and Nate Powell, *March, Book One* (Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Carson *In Struggle*, 296-301; Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart*, 4; Payne, *I've got the Light of Freedom*, 376-390; Simon Hall, *Peace and Freedom: The Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements in the 1960s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 41-42.

The United States' role in Vietnam occupied a large part of SNCC's internal thinking beginning in the summer of 1964. SNCC leaders discussed connections between the struggle for freedom in the South and American imperial action in Vietnam at staff meetings, through memos, and at public speeches throughout 1965, but remained focused on domestic voter registration and political party organizing. By the fall of that year, serious debate raged within SNCC about the war. According to John Lewis, 85 percent of SNCC's male members were draft eligible and several field secretaries and local organizers had already received their draft notices. Most SNCC members believed the organization had to take a stand against the war to highlight the unfairness of draft policy. The debate ended on January 4, 1966 when the inequity of the war and its relationship to the black freedom struggle was made plain to SNCC by a senseless murder.<sup>5</sup>

Death at the hands of whites seeking vigilante justice was not unknown to SNCC's young organizers. However, the death of a SNCC volunteer, Tuskegee Institute student, and veteran, according to historian Clayborne Carson, "symbolized for the staff the racism and hypocrisy that infected the nation."<sup>6</sup> Twenty-one-year-old Sammy Younge, a student and Navy veteran, was shot for asking to use the white's only bathroom at the Standard Oil station in Tuskegee. Younge was active in Tuskegee's voter registration program and was threatened the day of his death in the court house for

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<sup>5</sup> Howard Zinn, "Should Civil Rights Workers Take a Stand on Vietnam?" *The Voice*, August 30, 1965, 3; James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), 444-445; John Lewis with Michael D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1998), 370-372; James Forman, *Sammy Younge, Jr: The First Black College Student to Die in the Black Liberation Movement* (New York: Grove Press, Inc, 1968); Gene Roberts, "A Negro Student Slain in Alabama," *New York Times*, Jan. 5, 1966; "1500 Protest Slaying" *Washington Post*, Jan. 5, 1966; "Gas Attendant Admits Killing at Tuskegee," *Chicago Defender*, Jan. 8, 1966; Julia Erin Wood, "Freedom is Indivisible: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Cold War Politics, and International Liberation Movements," (Dissertation, Yale, 2011), 261-273.

<sup>6</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 188; Cleveland Sellers, "The Freedom Movement in Retrospect," in *Rebellion in Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the 1960s* ed. by Robert Cohen and David J. Snyder (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013): 280-306.

organizing Tuskegee's black citizens. On the evening of January 4, he left a party on Tuskegee's campus to pick up mayonnaise for tuna fish sandwiches. When he did not return in a timely manner, friends assumed Younge had decided to call it an early night. Instead, he was told to use a bathroom outside the Standard Oil station, and when he refused, was chased by a shotgun-wielding clerk. Younge tried to fight back, taking a golf club from a bag waiting to be loaded on a Greyhound bus across the street to protect himself. He was shot at twice and hit in the middle of his back, as he ran for protection.<sup>7</sup> Younge's murder, after the passage of Civil Rights legislation, coupled with his status as a veteran of the American Navy, infuriated SNCC and caused John Lewis, the organization's chairman, to release a tersely worded warning to President Johnson and the federal government:

If the federal government cannot provide protection for people seeking civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution, then people have no protection but themselves. We find it increasingly difficult to ask the people of the Black Belt to remain non-violent. We have asked the President for Federal marshalls [sic] for over three years. If our plea is not answered, we have no choice.<sup>8</sup>

SNCC's words to the President were evocative, for sure. Here was John Lewis, a man of great faith in the non-violent tactics of Civil Disobedience, endorsing the notion that personal protection may be necessary. SNCC's letter to Johnson cannot be separated from Younge's veteran status. Younge had served his country, with honor, and was killed like a nuisance animal, by a citizen he vowed to protect.

Two days later, on January 6, SNCC further clarified their stance on American violence, correlating the murder of Younge and other Civil Rights workers and

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<sup>7</sup> Forman, *Sammy Younge, Jr.*, 19-27; FBI Memo, "Selected Racial Developments Racial Matters," January 7, 1966. Office of Mildred Stewall. Box 71B Folder "Race Relations and Race Matters, January to July 1966 [4 of 4]." Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library. Austin, TX, 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Younge, Jr. Press Release, January 4, 1966, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 58.

supporters, with the deaths of Vietnamese civilians. SNCC was “in sympathy with, and support[ed], the men in this country who are unwilling to respond to a military draft which would compel them to contribute their lives to United States aggression in Vietnam in the name of the ‘freedom’ we find so false in this country.”<sup>9</sup> By defining their position and breaking with the Johnson Administration, SNCC opened the door for further and more consistent scrutiny from the federal government and local authorities. Always on guard against saboteurs, SNCC now had to contend with the growing desire of J. Edgar Hoover, President Johnson, and state and local governments to, according to SNCC member and Tuskegee Student Body President Gwen Patton, “silence the struggle.”<sup>10</sup>

SNCC’s former Press Secretary, Julian Bond, was the first to confront state government’s desire to silence the struggle. The Georgia State legislature found SNCC’s stance to be treasonous and held newly elected state Representative Bond accountable for his endorsement of Lewis’s words. Bond was elected to the Georgia House by an overwhelming majority in 1965, along with ten other African American Representatives. The other ten members were sworn into their seats on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1966 as planned. Bond, however, was asked to remain seated during the swearing in ceremony. Bond was 20, intellectually sound and appearing physically able, but had been classified 4-F or “physically, mentally, or otherwise unfit to serve” when he reported to his draft board in 1960. When questioned about his position, Bond defended himself, stating “because of convictions that I have arrived at through examination of my conscience, I have decided that I personally cannot participate in war.” His draft status was not at issue for the

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<sup>9</sup>“Editorial,” *SoulBook* 4 (Winter 1965-1966): 230-231; “Statement on Vietnam,” *Freedomways* 6 No. 1 (Winter 1966): 6-7.

<sup>10</sup> Gwen Patton, telephone interview with author, 1/15/2013.

Georgia House, but the idea that he could have a conscientious objection to the war was extremely troubling for the white legislators. The Georgia House voted 184-12 to vacate Bond's election and declared that he was a "traitor."<sup>11</sup>

By daring to speak out against American involvement in Vietnam, Bond's elected position was denied. White Republicans in the Georgia House and Senate were heard talking about "getting" Bond prior to the convening of the legislative term and tied his race to his antiwar stance. The Georgia legislature viewed Bond as a child. Bond was 25 at the time of his election, and as a Civil Rights organizer, many whites in power saw his age and race as threats. Additionally, because the white Representatives knew they had to work within the framework of the law--meaning they could not deny Bond his seat because of his race, Bond's endorsement of the SNCC's antiwar platform provided a site for uncomfortable legislators to make a stand. His antiwar stance was the ramblings of a confused young man, who had not come fully into adulthood and who did not respect the state or nation that he now served.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>"Protest, Legal Battle Loom in Seat Fight" *Baltimore Afro-American*, Jan. 11, 1966, 1-2; "Bond's House Seat Declared Vacant" *Chicago Daily Defender*, Jan. 15, 1966, 3.

<sup>12</sup>"Bond's House Seat Declared Vacant" *Chicago Daily Defender*, Jan. 15, 1966, 3; Bond was eventually seated in January 1967, after a re-election campaign and a Supreme Court decision ruling in his favor (*Bond v. Floyd*, 385 U.S. 116 (1966)). See also: George Moneyhun, "Harmony Forecast in Georgia," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 13, 1966, 16; Ralph McGill, "The Julian Bond Case," *Hartford Courant*, December 13, 1966; Jack Nelson, "Bond Takes his Seat After Long Fight," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 10, 1967; John Neary, *Julian Bond: Black Rebel* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1971).

Georgia state politics are clouded with oversized personalities and racial ambiguities. The state elected racist governor Eugene Talmadge four times in the 1930s and 1940s, though he fought vehemently with the Roosevelt administration. After Talmadge, the state house waivered back and forth between centrist governors seeking to avoid being lumped in with other deep South states on race relations and members of the White Citizen's Council. In 1966, Georgia elected Lester Maddox governor. Maddox had famously threatened that any black person entering his Atlanta restaurant would be met with an ax-handle to the skull. Thus, Georgia was not a welcoming place for many African Americans, but following the passage of the Voting Rights Act, twenty percent of the Georgia electorate was black and created a new political atmosphere, where statewide candidates had to appeal to white segregationists and black voters. Indeed, it was possible to have mild-mannered and race neutral Jimmy Carter run in the same election as Maddox (he finished third) and learn some of Maddox's techniques to win the 1970 gubernatorial election. Randy Sanders, "'The Sad Duty of Politics': Jimmy Carter and the issue of Race in his 1970 Gubernatorial



While Sammy Younge Jr.'s death served as the catalyst to launch SNCC's public antiwar stance, the continued drafting of black men and the investigation of SNCC member's draft statuses spurred antiwar activism among SNCC members. Prior to his statement against the war, SNCC Chairman John Lewis had been granted a conscientious objector draft status, assuring his freedom from being drafted. After Lewis delivered SNCC's statement against the war, his local draft board reinvestigated his status and "almost overnight I received a notice from my draft board informing me that my status... had now been changed from 1-O to 4-F. I was 'morally unfit' for service, they explained, because of my long record of arrests."<sup>13</sup> A 4-F status still meant Lewis would not be drafted, but it came with a stigma that denied Lewis his morality, where the conscientious objector status had given him a respected position of moral authority.

Shortly after Bond's endorsement of the SNCC statement, Muhammad Ali famously quipped to reporters "I ain't got no quarrel with the Vietcong," and threw the opening punch of the fight that would define Ali's character in the minds of millions of Americans.<sup>14</sup> The reclassification of Ali under the auspices of Project 100,000 spoke to the transient nature of army classification services and the paternalistic nature of government policy. While Ali was a wealthy, established boxer at this point, his experience with Project 100,000 and the draft was typical of many poorer, black and white men who were suddenly eligible to be drafted.

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Campaign," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 612-638; James F. Cook, "The Eugene Talmadage-Walter Cocking Controversy," *Phylon* 35, no. 2 (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, 1974): 181-192.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, 370; "Move to Draft Rights Leader" *Baltimore Afro-American* Jan. 15, 1966, C-3.

<sup>14</sup> Muhammad Ali with Richard Durham, *The Greatest: My Own Story* (New York: Random House, 1975), 124, 138.

On February 17, 1966, as a direct result of Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara's "Project 100,000," Ali was notified he had been reclassified 1-A from 1-Y (mentally unfit to serve), though he had twice failed his draft board exam.<sup>15</sup> From February 18, 1966 to April 27, 1967, Ali and his lawyers explored every means possible to avoid being drafted. He petitioned the Draft Board of Louisville, Kentucky claiming there were no African Americans on the Board, thus violating the 1964 Civil Rights Act. When that petition failed, a request was placed to transfer Ali to the Houston, Texas Draft Board, where he was residing. After a change of venue, Ali's legal team filed a conscientious objector claim, but again Ali was denied, as the Draft Board did not honor Ali's claim to be a Muslim minister. He was also approached by leaders of the Army to enroll in the National Guard or the reserves of any branch, and to seek deferment as an entertainer, as many famous men had done in World War II and Korea. The deal would allow Ali to fight exhibitions for military troops throughout the world and thus avoid combat. Ali refused the deal, and was summoned for induction in early April, 1967. Ali refused induction, claiming conscientious objector status, and spent the next four years fighting charges of draft evasion.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Lisa Hsiao, "Project 100,000: The Great Society's Answer to Military Manpower Needs in Vietnam" *Vietnam Generation* 1, No. 2 (1989): 14-37; See previous chapter for more details of Project 100,000.

<sup>16</sup> Plenty has been written on Muhammad Ali as a boxer, cultural icon, and dynamic figure. A WorldCat subject search produces 1421 items including 703 books (search last conducted August 23, 2013). However, by and large, his anti-Vietnam War stance and time away from boxing is scantily covered or is mentioned in passing, as focus remains on his athleticism and boisterous nature. David Remnick, *King of the World: Muhammad Ali and the rise of an American Hero* (New York: Random House, 1998); Thomas Hauser, *Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991); Mark Kram, *Ghosts of Manila: The Fateful Blood Feud between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazer* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001); Michael Ezra, *Muhammad Ali: The Making of an Icon* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009); John Cashill, *Sucker Punch: The Hard Left Hook that Dazed Ali and Killed King's Dream* (Nashville: Nelson Current, 2006). Two notable exceptions to the common treatment of Ali are Mike Marqusee, *Redemption Song: Muhammad Ali and the Spirit of the Sixties* (London: Verso Books, 1999) and Howard L. Bingham and Max Wallace, *Muhammad Ali's Greatest Fight: Cassius Clay vs. the United States of America* (New York: M. Evans, 2000).

Muhammad Ali's draft battle caught the attention of the nation, particularly black leaders and sports stars, as they tried to come to terms with his stance. His refusal set off a firestorm of reactions and pulled Jackie Robinson back into the Vietnam debate. Robinson, integrator of baseball and supporter of Republicans such as Nelson Rockefeller, supported Julian Bond's freedom of speech, but not his actions. Robinson said Bond's stance was wrong, but respected Bond's convictions. Robinson supported the war effort because in 1966 Jackie Robinson, Jr. was stationed in South Vietnam. Robinson believed "one of the things we were fighting for, I deeply hope, is the right for men to have freedom of opinion, freedom of thought, and freedom of speech. Julian Bond ought to have that right..." Again, Bond had the right to his opinion, but for Robinson, Bond voiced his opinion at the wrong time and in the wrong forum. Moreover, Bond was not refusing induction. While Bond supported SNCC's antiwar stance, he was not forced to make a draft choice, and so could speak freely.<sup>17</sup> Unlike Bond, Robinson felt Ali had been led astray by the leaders of the Nation of Islam:

I admire this man as a fighting champion and a man who speaks his mind. I can't help feeling he wants to have his cake and eat it too. I can't help wondering how he can expect to make millions of dollars in this country and then refuse to fight for it. What values do you have in mind when you praise him and say he has given up so much? I think all he has given up is his citizenship. I think his advisors have given him a bum steer.<sup>18</sup>

Robinson's unwillingness to respect Ali's conscientious objector opinion stood in stark contrast to his support of Julian Bond's freedom of speech. While Ali's actions went further than Bond's, because Ali actually refused to enter military service, the principles

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<sup>17</sup> Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "My Dream: Bond and the Constitution" *The Chicago Daily Defender*, Jan. 29, 1966, 10; Jackie Robinson, "Jackie Robinson says: The Bond Issue" *The Chicago Daily Defender*, Jan. 29, 1966, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Jackie Robinson, "An Open Letter to Dr. Martin L. King" *The Chicago Defender*, May 13, 1967, 10.

were the same—American involvement in Vietnam was an incorrect course of action and African American men should not be sent to fight against other people of color.

Although Robinson did not support Ali's stance, other athletes quickly came to his defense. Boston Celtics star Bill Russell and Cleveland Browns running back Jim Brown met with Ali in Cleveland. Falsely reported as a meeting to convince Ali to enter the draft on more friendly terms, it was actually an expression of solidarity with Ali's stance and a chance for his peers to understand his reasoning. Russell left the meeting with a deeper respect for Ali's faith, and felt that "If I had Ali's firm belief I would do what he is doing, obviously." But for Russell, "the war in Vietnam is not the big problem in this country today. The biggest problem is the country itself. Too many issues are being decided on the basis of hate and violence." The war and Ali's stance against it were prime examples of what Russell saw as a communication problem in the United States. The division of reactions, the inability of the government or some areas of the public to accept Ali's religion and conscientious objector request were symptoms of a racist, morally bankrupt society. Russell was "not worried about Muhammad Ali...I'm worried about the rest of us." He respectfully sided with Ali and supported his decision, without questioning the reasons behind it or worrying about lost revenue or leadership principles. Instead, Ali was a stronger leader in his faith and his community for his antiwar stance, according to Russell.<sup>19</sup>

Brown acted as the facilitator of the group discussion and expressed the same sentiment as Russell. "We heard his views and know he is sincere in his belief...his position is completely in accord with his religious beliefs," Brown said at a press

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<sup>19</sup> Bill Russell with Tex Maule, "I am not Worried about Ali" *Sports Illustrated*, June 19, 1967; "Athletes Fail to talk Ali into the Army" *Chicago Daily Defender*, June 5, 1967, 1.

conference. Focusing on Ali's religious convictions allowed the athletes to distance themselves from their older peers like Jackie Robinson, while not tackling the issues of manhood and patriotism which underwrote much of the criticism of Ali.<sup>20</sup>

Russell, Brown, and their compatriots were not the only supporters of Ali based on his religious conviction and perception that Ali had received a "bad deal" because of his beliefs and status. One Ali supporter, writing in the *Chicago Defender*, claimed Ali had received a "bad rap" and was "being used to make an example of, not because of his refusal to go into the Armed Forces, but for being so bold to defy the white man. So if he couldn't be used to benefit Mr. Charlie, they'll use him as an example to all who dare to defy the white man."<sup>21</sup> His boldness was connected to his faith, according to the article, and the Nation of Islam clearly threatened white hegemony. A black soldier serving in Vietnam also believed that fear of Muslims and the Nation of Islam influenced Ali's draft claims. Billy Holloway, of Chicago, told *Jet*, "The draft board is making a big thing out of this. If the man (Ali) professes to be a Muslim minister then he shouldn't have to enter the service. He should be deferred."<sup>22</sup>

Draft deferments were a popular way to avoid service in Vietnam. Deferments were attainable for a variety of reasons, including being a college student, being the only male child, being married, or having children. However, to obtain a deferment, one had to know that they were eligible. Draft boards did not hand out deferment notices, nor did they work with individuals to see if they could earn one. Deferments were often only given to privileged draft-aged men who had researched ways to avoid the draft or found sanctuary at a local antiwar coffee house which provided deferment counseling. The

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> "Raps Ali Snub" *Chicago Daily Defender*, August 17, 1968, pg. 10.

<sup>22</sup> "What GIs Think About Ali's Draft Dispute" *Jet*, June 15, 1967, 44.

deferment process was controversial, as many men would get college educations or continue on to graduate school to avoid being drafted. Ali's conscientious objector claim was a deferment principle. If a person was a member of a religious organization that was pacifistic like the Quakers or Muslims, they could earn a military deferment. Yet, Ali did not file for a deferment; instead, he took his fight to the courts."<sup>23</sup> Many even equated his boxing talent with raw manhood and aggression, something that did not gel with his religious convictions.

*Ramparts* contributor Gene Marine argued that Ali was more than a victim of the government or religious insensitivity. Instead, Ali was denied his manhood, because he was denied his name. Marine identified the arguments against Ali clearly:

Muhammad Ali's refusal to take the one step forward that constitutes formal induction into the armed forces of the United States is rife with ironies, and not the least of them is that an athlete, representing a feared and outcast group, has committed the act of leadership in the 'best educated' nation in the world, while its intellectuals, far from banding together in defense of 'treason'—if treason be necessary in pursuit of truth—bicker among themselves while they compete for government grants. But perhaps the greatest irony is the almost uniform castigation of Ali for being what Americans have always professed to admire: a man who combines courage and principle.

Ali represented to Marine what was great about Americans—men and women who stood up for their beliefs regardless of consequences. However, Ali was not rewarded or praised for such action by most of the wider society. Marine continued:

Ali is berated as a coward or a fake or both; at best, newsmen and columnists by the dozens have quoted, with sad, wise approval, a fellow inductee who said, 'if I have to go, then he ought to have to go.' None of them, so far as I know, has drawn the obvious corollary the other guy didn't have to go either. More important, none has taken the time to think out loud about the meaning of Muhammad Ali and his act. ...He is a symbol of the failure of the rest of us—but he is a person, a human being, before he is any kind of symbol.

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<sup>23</sup> "The Inquiring Reporter-Photographer" *The Philadelphia Tribune*, April 25, 1967, 10.

The disapproval of Ali's stance and the outright hatred poured on Ali by sports media, his peers and the general public denied Ali his manhood. As sports writers continued to call him Cassius Clay, they added to the derision and disrespect they heaped on Ali each week in their columns. Marine saw this as a great disservice to Ali and his stance. Ali was abandoned by the people who supported his athletic feats—his fans, the public who made his life possible, and religious leaders. Ali's stature as a celebrity and outspoken sports figure made him polarizing. The public's support or at least general acceptance of other antiwar stances by Bayard Rustin and white intellectuals made Ali's lack of support all the more egregious. Marine eloquently showed this in his closing:

The principled act of Muhammad Ali is a tragic-ironic heroism. He stands out not only because he is right but because he is alone, in a position which might be, but isn't, shared by all the intellectuals, the religious leaders, the men and women who by profession or position or announced dedication should today be in the forefront of 'treason.' It is time, I think, to call Muhammad Ali by his right name.<sup>24</sup>

Ali's response to those who denigrated his manhood was always the same—in boxing there were rules and a referee to enforce those rules. In war, this was not the case; it was anarchy and mayhem, where soldiers killed women and children for the indefensible reason that they were the enemy. While older men and soldiers often questioned Ali's manhood, a Philadelphia mother saw Ali as the definition of the new black man. Grieving the loss of her son in Vietnam, she would rather see her surviving son serve the same fate as Ali, than serve in Vietnam. "I am proud of being black but we are not free. The war in Vietnam is a senseless one, so why should our boys have to fight in it?" she asked. Ali's stance defined a manhood based on honor and moral conviction,

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<sup>24</sup> "Nobody knows my Name" Gene Marine, with Robert Avakian and Peter Collier, *Ramparts* 5, No. 12 (June 1966): 11-16.

guided by a belief in the possibility of a just world and the need for blacks to fight for their freedom. This manhood was at odds with that espoused by older men and soldiers, but it was embraced by the nascent Black Power movement forming at the time of Ali's fateful decision.

The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) saw Ali's decision as one he was forced "to make to maintain [his] self-respect, to retain [his] dignity as a Black man." As a man of deep religious convictions, Ali's refusal to fight in Vietnam demonstrated his manhood because he stood with his principles and set an example for other black American men. CORE's support for Ali was unprecedented. While SNCC leader and Black Panther sympathizer Stokely Carmichael had voiced his support for Ali, those organizations did not publicly express their support. CORE had recently adopted a resolution condemning the Vietnam War and pledging support "to those persons who refuse to participate in the armed forces of the United States during its engagement in the war in Vietnam." Their letter in support of Ali was the first step in affirming the manhood of those who chose to show their patriotism through refusing to fight. CORE even demanded support from leaders of other Civil Rights organizations:

We call up Mr. Whitney Young (Urban Leaguer), Mr. Roy Wilkins (NAACP), Mr. Jackie Robinson (Rockefeller Republicans), and Ralph Bunche...to recognize the little guy needs their guidance as the real life, present day deliverers of the 'promised land' through self help. They must be made aware that they are helping no one, not even themselves, while acting as front men for the 'establishment's' power structure.

This demand fell on deaf ears, but highlights the intraracial tensions Ali's stance created. Although CORE had taken a more militant stance in Civil Rights before Ali made his decision, their endorsement of Ali's draft refusal provided a degree of legitimacy for some Ali supporters. Additionally, their endorsement of Ali's brand of manhood, based



on consistency and moral strength, showed many African Americans that refusing to fight required just as much patriotic fortitude as picking up a gun did. It is not hard to see why other radical groups, including the Black Panther Party and SNCC soon adopted some of Ali's questioning attitude in their own protest activities.<sup>25</sup>

CORE claimed that Ali was a role model for young blacks, telling Ali in an open letter, "You have shown your Black brethren your courage and have given them a new faith in their own destinies. You have given Black youngsters an independent Black hero."<sup>26</sup> For some young athletes and students, Ali had solidified himself as a role model. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, then known as Lew Alcindor, a basketball player at UCLA, felt that Ali's:

impact on young people was very formidable. I remember when I was in high school the teachers didn't like him because he was so antiestablishment and he kind of thumbed his nose at authority and got away with it...the fact that he was proud to be a black man and that he had so much talent and could enjoy it in a way that didn't have the dignity they assumed that it should have... When Ali announced his refusal to accept the draft, I thought it was a very brave stand... This impact was obvious to everybody and I think this kind of heightened that.<sup>27</sup>

Abdul-Jabbar's sentiment was also expressed by future *New York Times* sports columnist Bill Rhoden, who saw Ali as his generation's Jackie Robinson. Rhoden characterized Ali as, "my Jackie Robinson, the sports figure who transcended sport to become a true role model. His example gave many of us strength...for me, Ali brought home the concept of principle, that there was something greater in life than fame, though fame has its place. And he taught me that in the right hands, wealth and fame, the fruits of athletic success,

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<sup>25</sup> Floyd McKissick, "A Letter to the Champ" May 3, 1967. Congress of Racial Equality Papers, 1959-1976, University Publications of America, Reel 31.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Kareem Abdul Jabbar in *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s-1980*, ed. Henry Hampton (New York: Bantam Books, 1990), 329-331.

could be used as a tool in the ongoing struggle.”<sup>28</sup> Rhoden and Abdul-Jabbar saw Ali as someone who was willing to push boundaries and stand up for his personal beliefs, in spite of public scrutiny. The connection to Robinson made by Rhoden is all the more interesting considering Robinson’s own disgust with Ali. As a symbol of the new black masculinity, Ali’s antiwar stance embraced the past, the struggle for more respect and freedom in the United States for African Americans, but also pushed those rights forward.

Ali’s stances, while not endorsed by old guard Civil Rights leadership were appealing to the younger, more radical generation of Black Power activists. Stokely Carmichael, never afraid to engage the President or lawmakers and always willing to highlight the inequities of a given situation, took SNCC’s anti-draft stance to the House Committee on the Armed Services with Carl Oglesby, President of Students for a Democratic Society. Carmichael reasserted SNCC’s position on the draft, stating “we are opposed to a system under which a group of men can compel another man who has had no voice in their decision to renounce his liberty and risk his lifeblood for a cause which is not his.” He compared conscription laws to slavery and implored the “committee to seek testimony from those who are affected by the decision of the selective service as well as from those who make those decisions” so that the draft would be abolished.<sup>29</sup>

The short address was more than a clarifying statement on SNCC’s anti-draft stance. In fact, it was a call to arms to the committee, as it laid out the inequalities of draft policy, the problems of the federal government’s inaction in addressing those problems,

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<sup>28</sup> William Rhoden, *Forty Million Dollar Slaves: The Rise, Fall, and Redemption of the Black Athlete* (New York: Broadway Books, 2007), 18.

<sup>29</sup> “Statement of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and of the Students for a Democratic Society on the Conscription Laws Before the House Committee on the Armed Services,” ND, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 52.

and the need for open dialogue. But, coming from an already distrusted individual, Carmichael's testimony served to further encourage members of Congress, President Johnson, and J. Edgar Hoover to follow and seek prosecution against the SNCC Chairman. Democratic Congressman and Chair of the House Committee on the Armed Services L. Mendel Rivers repeatedly wrote to the Attorney General demanding prosecution of Carmichael for sedition and avoidance of the Selective Service Program. Rivers believed Carmichael could be found guilty under Section 12 of the Universal Training and Service Act, which prohibited counseling evasion or avoidance of the draft. Rivers' demands went unheeded, much to the chagrin of the FBI, who reported they provided "all the material we obtained concerning possible Selective Service violations but they have declined to prosecute."<sup>30</sup> Carmichael's government repression went further than COINTELPRO investigations and constituted a multi-level directive to silence his protest, particularly around the draft. In short, Carmichael and SNCC were already considered enemies of the state by some in government for their Civil Rights organizing, but when they began to exhibit "anti-patriotic" responses to the draft they were eligible for heightened government intrusion. Their punishment for insurrection was not prison, but the desire to make them serve in the military they despised.

Carmichael, Chairman of SNCC following John Lewis, often spoke out against the drafting of black men, and repeatedly claimed he would refuse induction if he was drafted. Carmichael was registered in New York City with Local Board 26. Upon his initial registration in 1959 he was classified 1-A, but quickly earned a student deferment. When he graduated Howard University in December 1964, Carmichael was reclassified again to 1-A. He was asked to present himself before his draft board for the pre-induction

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<sup>30</sup> Memo, Mr. Wick to M. A. Jones, September 16, 1966, STOKELY CARMICHAEL, HQ 100-446080, 2.

physical examination. At this meeting, Carmichael spoke with the draft board psychiatrist, who viewed Carmichael's arrests as "connected with CORE activities, disorderly conduct, resisting arrests, etc. They seem not evident of any inherent anti-social or criminal traits, and I feel from our standpoint, he would rate a 'waiver recommendation.' However, there seems to be homo-sexual tendencies as well as hetero-sexual relationships."<sup>31</sup> Carmichael was subsequently reclassified as 4-F, but was to be examined again in 1966. Carmichael again submitted himself to the local draft board for physical and mental testing in February 1966. At the point the Army assigned him a 1-Y status, meaning he could only be drafted for military duty in a time of war or national emergency. The board psychiatrist found that Carmichael had experienced nervous breakdowns at the deaths of two of his friends, still had questionable morals, and continued to be arrested. Again, his ultimate classification was pushed down the line, as he was to be reevaluated in 1967.<sup>32</sup> By then, Carmichael was traveling the globe proclaiming Black Power, a strong anti-war message, and the liberation of colonial subjects worldwide.

Carmichael's wavering draft status highlighted the variability of local draft boards and the power the government used to control such actions. As Carmichael became more militant in his Black Power and antiwar stances, he was targeted by the administration, the FBI, and his local board for repeated competency examinations. His mental incompetency claims were similar to Ali's; however, Carmichael's deferments were given for morality and not mental capacity. By cultivating an identity of sexual perversion and mental incompetency, Carmichael appeared to the federal government as

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<sup>31</sup> Carmichael was arrested in incidents related to his organizing for SNCC in Lowndes County, Alabama.

<sup>32</sup> Memo, J. Edgar Hoover to Marvin Watson, 9/22/1966, "Stokely Carmichael Draft Status" Office Files of Mildred Stegwall, Box 73B, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, TX.

dangerous and unfit for military duty. However, he also protected himself from being drafted. Carmichael and other black men who chose to present themselves in such a manner created a space where they could assert their own definitions of manhood—resistance to the federal government, anti-colonial, and peaceful—while also living with the certainty they would not be drafted because of their 4F status. Carmichael was able to criticize the Johnson administration without fear of retribution. As draft status was part of a person’s record, Carmichael could have felt the retributions of his actions. It is interesting to note, then, that while the President and J. Edgar Hoover were astutely aware of Carmichael’s “mental deficiencies” they did not exploit his status to undermine him politically. Carmichael successfully tricked the federal government but allowing them to classify him mentally unfit to serve, while also protecting himself from draft status. He was now able to proclaim that he would never wear the uniform or fight for the United States in colonial wars of aggression while also never having to worry about taking on such a task. This attitude would be adopted throughout the Vietnam War by draftees. It took acting, a willingness to potentially undermine the person’s character, and the understanding that they would have to submit their draft status to potential employers, but it also saved men from a war they did not support. Covert draft protest through construction of a mental deficiency was especially productive in fostering a group of black men who were willing to rewrite the rules of manhood. By expressing questionable sexual morals (an interest in men, usually), or accusing the government of atrocities, or as Malcolm X did, asserting that the potential draftee wanted to be sent to the Third World so he could work with the “enemy” to harm white Americans, these men played on the racial fears of the draft board.<sup>33</sup> They took chances and may have reinscribed some

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<sup>33</sup> Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 56.

prejudices, but they also reclaimed their own masculinity and the right to define it. These men were now free of their draft burden and could focus on what they considered to be foremost—uplifting black Americans and working to circumvent United States aggression at home and abroad.

By 1967, SNCC members were receiving draft notices on a constant basis. The FBI, under J. Edgar Hoover, used the draft as a tactic of repression and attempted to silence the organization and its membership by drafting them into the war they opposed. Hoover's actions were supported by the Johnson Administration, as President Johnson requested and received a number of updates from Hoover regarding the draft status of "militant" black leaders. For SNCC Program Director Cleveland Sellers, the draft was an absurdity and he refused to participate in a number of ways. On three occasions between June 1965 and August 1966, Sellers refused to report for his pre-induction physical. Those actions led to Sellers being declared "delinquent," but in early February 1967, Sellers was notified that the Bamberg, South Carolina Draft Board had classified him 1-A and needed to report for induction on March 2.<sup>34</sup> Sellers pre-induction physicals came after the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965, after Carmichael proclaimed "Black Power," at the Meredith March Against Fear in early June, 1966, and as SNCC's anti-war messages and activism become more organized in the late summer of 1966. As a Program Director, Sellers helped shape policy and participated in SNCC's decision making, but unlike John Lewis, Sellers was less visible on the front line. When Lewis's draft board decided to designate him 4-F, they sought to embarrass a man of strong morals; in fact, they sought to infantilize Lewis, by claiming his arrests made him unfit to serve. For Sellers, the draft board was not interested in arrest records or medical problems. Instead,

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<sup>34</sup> Hubert Canfield, "Sellers' Draft Evasion Charges Dropped," *SOBU Newsletter*, July 24, 1971, 2.

the draft notices served as warnings and reminders that the local and federal governments were keeping tabs on his and his organization's actions.

On February 24, Seller's Atlanta based-lawyer, Howard Moore, "filed suit against Robert McNamara, the Governors of Georgia and South Carolina, and the entire Selective Service System on behalf of himself and all others similarly situated, which include[d] all black men, men from minority groups, and poverty stricken men in general."<sup>35</sup> Again, like Ali, Sellers' suit claimed that the draft boards in Georgia and South Carolina "were invalidly appointed and illegally constituted due to the systematic exclusion of black citizens." Moreover, Sellers claimed he was "ordered for induction out of turn," because of his involvement in SNCC and other civil rights organizations and that the FBI targeted him by gaining access to his draft records and illegally wire-tapping his phones. Finally, Sellers had documented medical issues, electrocardiomatic abnormalities, which made him physically unfit for service. The suit covered every conceivable reason why Sellers could not and would not serve, but was dismissed on May 1, 1967 by the Northern District of Georgia US District Court in Atlanta. He was ordered for induction the same day. Sellers refused to step forward, was indicted by the Federal Grand Jury for violating the Selective Service Act, and was released on \$1,000 bond. He was the 16<sup>th</sup> member of SNCC to be drafted following the January 1966 statement against the war, which according to SNCC was "part of the continuing efforts of a racist, hysterical Johnson Administration to stifle Black Opposition and dissent to the murder and burning of peasants in Vietnam and his double-crossing of black people in

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<sup>35</sup> Cleveland Sellers, "Black Men and the Draft," June 8, 1967, SNCC Memo. Cleveland Sellers Paper, Box 1, Folder 4 Avery Research Center, College of Charleston.

the United States.”<sup>36</sup> The draft, as much as the war itself, allowed the federal government to repress and exploit people of color.

Cleveland Sellers’ Black Power activism was not limited to refusing his draft notice. On the night of February 8, 1968, Sellers was arrested for inciting a riot at South Carolina State University where he helped organize a student group. The students sought to desegregate a local bowling alley using the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as the basis for their protest. State troopers were engaged to dispel the protesters and shots were fired. Sellers was shot, three students were killed, and twenty-eight others were injured. The events at Orangeburg were not explicitly connected to Vietnam, but the deaths of three young students and the arrest of Sellers highlighted the continued government interference with black desegregation efforts. Sellers’ knew he was under government surveillance and though he was injured, was arrested immediately.<sup>37</sup> His supposed actions in Orangeburg coupled with his involvement with SNCC, and his draft refusal led to a sentence of five years in prison and he was denied an appeal bond by U.S. District Judge Newell Edenfield in April 1968.<sup>38</sup> Edenfield did not feel Sellers deserved a bond, because of Orangeburg and Sellers other Civil Rights work. When Sellers chose to not allow the federal government to draft him, he denied Hoover and Johnson the ability to silence him. Now another arm of the government denied Sellers his freedom, and Sellers spent months in various prisons throughout the South. He spent time in solitary confinement because prison officials believed he was a danger to the inmate population. In Tallahassee his

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid; “Carmichael Aide Refuses Army Induction” *Chicago Defender*, May 3, 1967, 8.

<sup>37</sup> Lester G. McKinnie report on Orangeburg, February 9, 1968. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 58; For more information on the Orangeburg Massacre and the continued struggle for justice, see [www.orangeburgmassacre1968.com](http://www.orangeburgmassacre1968.com) (January 2013), Judy Richardson and Bestor Cram, Directors, *Scarred Justice: The Orangeburg Massacre 1968*, 2008; Jack Bass and Jack Nelson, *The Orangeburg Massacre*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996).

<sup>38</sup> “5 Yr. term given Negro in Draft Case,” *New York Times*, April 27, 1968, 36.



Afro was cut, as an act of control. Eventually, Sellers was housed at the federal penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana, where he felt his life was threatened. On August 22, 1968, Justice Hugo Black ordered Sellers to be released on an appeals bond of no more than \$5,000. Sellers' bond was set at \$2,500 and was released, but he spent the next three years appealing his conviction, avoiding surveillance by local, state, and federal authorities, and fighting other arrests in California, Louisiana, and South Carolina.<sup>39</sup> In June, 1969, the Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal on Sellers' case, but finally on June 22, 1971, Sellers' case was thrown out. The three year ordeal ended after Judge Edenfield, who originally found him guilty of draft evasion, ruled that Sellers' induction order "was not based upon the normal sequence of call, but upon Sellers delinquency status."<sup>40</sup> By 1971, the United States' Vietnamization plan was in effect, the draft system operated as a lottery (beginning in 1969), and the country was more than ready to move past the war.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, Sellers' sentence had to be lifted because the Supreme Court ruled in previous cases that men drafted out of turn were not guilty of draft evasion and lower courts could not overturn Supreme Court precedent. Sellers' draft battle came to a positive end, for him, but highlighted the unfair treatment and systematic targeting members of the Civil Rights community faced.

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<sup>39</sup> Cleveland Sellers, *The River of No Return: The Autobiography of a Black Militant and the Life and Death of SNCC* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1973), 240-244; "Justice Black Orders Bond be Granted for Sellers," *Jet*, September 19, 1968, 10.

<sup>40</sup> "High Court Refuses to Review Seller's Draft Case," *Jet*, June 26, 1969, 47; Sellers, *The River of No Return*, 240-244; Hubert Canfield, "Sellers' Draft Evasion Charges Dropped," *SOBU Newsletter*, July 24, 1971, 2, 6.

<sup>41</sup> Vietnamization began in March 1968, when the Johnson administration told South Vietnamese government and army officials, "that the US was willing to send limited reinforcements and substantial quantities of equipment but that continued American assistance would depend on South Vietnam's ability to put its house in order and assume a greater burden of the fighting." The Nixon administration popularized the term after it was unable to end American involvement by late 1969. Herring, *America's Longest War*, 239; 281-288; Young, *The Vietnam Wars*, 230, 240.

The draft was a weapon the federal government used against men and women Johnson, Hoover, and their deputies did not like and men who spoke out against the war in Vietnam or government policy were the first to be targeted. As a tool of repression, the draft served multiple functions. The threat of a draft notice was very real and forced men to make tough choices—to abandon their rhetoric to avoid jail terms or to stand with their beliefs and face the wrath of the federal government and local authorities. For members of SNCC, these decisions had to be made often. Some, like Bob Moses changed their surnames or fled to Canada, Europe, or the Middle East (Moses became Parris and moved to Canada for a time), others like Stokely Carmichael worked to confuse their draft boards and cultivate a 4-F deferment. For Sellers' the medical deferment was denied and a court battle was necessary. The lack of institutional privilege and protection created an environment where SNCC workers were easier targets than their white counterparts. While former Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush could find reprieve in higher education or the Air National Guard, Black Power participants did not have access to such deferments. If draft-age black leaders did, as was the case with John Lewis, one perceived step out of line put their draft status under new scrutiny.<sup>42</sup> For SNCC leadership, then, the choices they made had to reflect not only their own best interests, but the interest of their organization and the black freedom movement as a whole.

SNCC was pulled in multiple directions after they issued their antiwar statement. High level members including Bob Moses, John Lewis, Diane Nash, and Julian Bond left the group to pursue other options, the call for Black Power changed the fundraising

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<sup>42</sup> Institutional privilege refers to the ways race and class provide unearned protection in American systems of government, education, and social hierarchy. In the examples provided, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush had access to lines of power that provided them the protection of not having to serve or to avoid their draft notices through educational deferments, in the case of President Clinton, and signing up for a guaranteed non-combat position in the Texas Air National Guard, as President Bush did.

landscape, and internal battles raged about the direction and focus that SNCC should take as the 1960s wore on. Throughout, the struggle against the war remained a salient issue, as position papers were passed between members and the leadership continually referenced Vietnam and its relationship to SNCC, black Americans, and the struggle in speeches, interviews, and writings. The draft became the central issue around which SNCC's members chose to organize. While they sought peace like other antiwar organizations, their focus was directed clearly at the draft and the institutional racism SNCC believed it supported. Stokely Carmichael proclaimed in a speech to the Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam on April 15, 1967, that the "draft exemplifies as much as racism the totalitarianism which prevails in this nation in the disguise of consensus democracy."<sup>43</sup> The inequitable nature of the draft was plain to Civil Rights workers who saw themselves targeted and the men they organized deeply affected by a lack of deferment options and knowledge of the draft process. Organizing against the draft became a vital part of the SNCC platform as the war expanded.

While Julian Bond and Cleveland Sellers fought their battles against the draft system, SNCC and other peace groups formulated plans to bring the inequality of the draft and the problems with American involvement in Vietnam to the attention of the nation. In the summer of 1966, progressive groups began to formulate a plan of coordinated protests on Hiroshima Day, August 6<sup>th</sup>. Peace groups, anti-nuclear arms organizations, and Civil Rights leaders all pledged support for the mass demonstrations in major cities, including New York and Washington, D.C. August 6, 1966 also happened to be Luci Johnson's wedding day, the perfect event to stage a protest around, because

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<sup>43</sup> Stokely Carmichael, "Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam Speech," April 15, 1967. SNCC Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 52, 5.

foreign and domestic press would be covering every aspect of the wedding. As the summer wore on, plans became more concrete and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee signed on to participate in the march and to protest President Johnson's daughter's wedding ceremony and reception. SNCC planned a "silent protest," at 3:00 PM the afternoon of the 6<sup>th</sup> in front of the White House, as dozens of parades took place in New York City, San Francisco, and Chicago. The plans set off a firestorm of reactions, as a Democratic Senator from Ohio tried to block the parade permits in the District and the leaders of the mainstream Civil Rights Movement reprimanded SNCC for their actions. Dr. King, Roy Wilkins, A. Philip Randolph, and Whitney Young sent a tersely worded telegram to SNCC reminding the organization of its role in the Civil Rights Movement and the image they needed to protect. The men believed "such a protest, making due allowances for the sincere anti-war beliefs of many of the participants, is in extremely poor taste in that it will eject into a uniquely personal ceremony, the political and moral judgement [sic] of strangers." Moreover, the telegram continued, "...The protest demonstration, then becomes a futile and unflattering exhibition of egos of the demonstrators, with no practicable effect upon the objective said to be sought, mainly the ending of the war." According to the older leaders, the students choosing to protest Luci Johnson's wedding were undertaking a rude action that would reflect poorly on the whole Civil Rights Movement, and they needed to be scolded. They called upon Stokely Carmichael to withdraw support and work to end the protest out of respect for the President. Much like Dr. King's reaction to Muhammad Ali, the mainstream leadership felt the students, the younger organizers, needed to be guided and reminded of their

actions. They were uncomfortable with upsetting the President and felt that the Civil Rights Movement as a whole would suffer.<sup>44</sup>

King, Wilkins, Randolph, and Young's plan to scold and remind Carmichael and SNCC of the repercussions of their actions backfired. Instead, SNCC responded to the telegram with a straightforward rejection of their mentors' advice. SNCC accused the "so called responsible leaders of so called civil rights organizations" of caring more for Luci Johnson and her father than the "millions of black people being brutalized every day in the US...the colored peoples of Vietnam being napalmed...black soldier being exterminated in Vietnam...[and] our black brothers engaged in acts of rebellion in our cities." Referring to President Johnson as "boss-man" and claiming that the wedding was a diversion from remembering Hiroshima, SNCC labeled the leaders Uncle Toms and vowed to carry out any action they felt necessary to end the war. SNCC staked its moral authority on the right to protest the war and the war's connection to African American oppression at home. On August 6<sup>th</sup>, members of SNCC and the peace coalition gathered at the church and the White House, chanting "Hey, Hey LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?" and carrying cardboard coffins. While the protest was small, it garnered national attention, and coupled with the other marches in New York City and elsewhere, marked the start of the group's national actions against the war. The protest of Luci Johnson's wedding further split the Civil Rights Movement and made SNCC an even larger target for investigation and repression, as President Johnson and J. Edgar Hoover began to monitor Stokely Carmichael's movements and investigate and draft more members of the

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<sup>44</sup> "Telegram to SNCC from King, Wilkins, Randolph, and Young," ND, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 52; "Protest Ban Sought at Capital Wedding," *New York Times*, July 20, 1966, 32; Edward C. Burks, "Negroes Assail S.N.C.C. Protest," *New York Times*, August 5, 1966, 11; Carson, *In Struggle*, 220-221.

group. Johnson took a particular interest in the whereabouts of Carmichael in the fall of 1966 and spring of 1967, while also seeking to discredit Black Power. SNCC's anti-draft stance and action to support it made them a target for government repression, just as they gained momentum for their anti-war programming.<sup>45</sup>

In the fall of 1966, SNCC proposed a black anti-draft program, because, it was "obvious to any person in SNCC that the best way to break up the organization would be to draft all the young men who are of draft age and send them to Vietnam and have them shot."<sup>46</sup> The government was targeting individual members through the draft and SNCC leadership knew they would have to confront the situation at some point. However, a consensus for organizing against the war was hard to find. The 1966 proposal called for an appropriation of SNCC tactics to the draft problem. SNCC needed to support an anti-draft program because their constituents did not know the loopholes, had no support or security in protesting, a new youthful wing was necessary for sustained support of SNCC, and the draft was a substantive issue around which Black Power could organize.<sup>47</sup> The writer did not believe the organization was strong enough to come out against the draft in a "frontal" manner, even though they had already issued an anti-draft and anti-war statement. The desire to tangentially organize against the draft highlighted the sensitive nature of the issue. Fear of repression was real, as men in SNCC saw their draft statuses change overnight. Moreover, by 1966, SNCC's financials were not strong and their anti-draft statement coupled with the call for Black Power did not win them many new

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<sup>45</sup> "SNCC's telegram to King, Wilkins, Randolph, and Whitney Young," ND, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 52; Douglas Robinson, "5,000 In Times Square: Thousand March to Protest War," *New York Times*, August 7, 1966, 1, 3; Carson, *In Struggle*, 220-221.

<sup>46</sup> "A Black Anti-Draft Program," Aug. 1966, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972. University Microfilms International, Reel 58, 1.

<sup>47</sup> "A Black Anti-Draft Program," 2.

donations. Hugh N. Jones of Seardale, New York withdrew his support in January of 1966, following Lewis's statement. He believed SNCC's foreign policy stand was "simplistic and not expert." He regretted his decision, but felt "civil rights need SNCC—foreign policy does not."<sup>48</sup> Jones' letter was only one example of the reactions of northern whites and long-time SNCC supporters who withdrew funds and materials as SNCC's anti-war stance hardened.

To counteract the potential for a funding deficit when "a lot of rich white liberals" realized SNCC was working on more than voter registration and freedom schools and to slowly ratchet up SNCC's plans, members proposed using the lessons of organizing in Mississippi and applying them to the problems of Vietnam.<sup>49</sup> The plan called for a multi-focal program against the draft, targeting draft age men and those men still in high school who would soon be drafted. One proposal was a "Freedom of Choice" plan. The plan called for a petition to local draft boards and the federal government, wherein black Americans would choose where they fought for freedom, "whether they decide to fight in this country or in any foreign country such as Vietnam."<sup>50</sup> Men of draft age would sign the petition and similar to the Freedom Registration Forms of the voting rights fight, their signature would indicate their resistance. The petition would become a vehicle for resistance, as draft eligible men would take it to their local boards and get signatures of

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<sup>48</sup> Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart*, 226-234; Carson, *In Struggle*, 183-189; Hugh N. Jones to Robert Fletcher, January 26, 1966. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 52.

<sup>49</sup> Joanne Gavin, "Fund-Sources and Staff Salaries," ND, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 58. Gavin argued that SNCC needed to reduce the number of staff members and to work to build bigger reserve funds. She feared that the white, liberal public, who was funding much of SNCC's organizing work, would reduce support when they found out SNCC was doing more than "integration" work. Doug McAdam, "The Decline of the Civil Rights Movement," Jo Freeman and Victoria Johnson, eds., *Waves of Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 338-339.

<sup>50</sup> "A Black Anti-Draft Program," Aug. 1966, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972. University Microfilms International, Reel 58, 2.

draft classes. The petitions would be sent to Congress and “when the Congress turns it down, the people become more conscious and more determined to act for themselves.”<sup>51</sup>

The petition was an engine of organizing, as well as a tool for dissent.

The position paper went on to develop a plan around the petition, where the signees would become a coalition and when a member of the coalition was drafted, the other signees would protest his induction. Moreover, if the inductee distributed material on the racist nature of the war to fellow draftees or caused a disturbance at the induction site, the paper posited, he would be arrested and remain in jail past his induction date. At that point, SNCC or a local agency would bail the draftee out and he would remain in the United States until a trial. Once that passed, if he was drafted again, he would repeat the process. SNCC was learning and adapting to the situation in front of them. Because of the change in draft status for John Lewis and the denial of deferments to Cleveland Sellers, among others, being jailed seemed like a viable option. Lewis and Carmichael’s 4-F status was something to be emulated and SNCC worked to make jail sentences for draft resistance a viable and morally upright decision. Moreover, SNCC argued, a black anti-draft program was necessary, because “Black people don’t know the law” and “there is no valid alternative for a Black man of draft age.” Through their own experiences with the draft system and the emerging importance of the Third World solidarity, SNCC sought to confront the government’s draft policies head on.<sup>52</sup>

On August 17, 1966, SNCC put their organizing idea to the test, picketing the Twelfth Corps Headquarters, United States Army recruitment site in Atlanta. The protesters distributed a pamphlet to draftees, asking why the black men must fight for

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



white men against yellow men for freedom they did not have. The pamphlets were seized and twelve of the protesters were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct, refusing to obey an officer, and resisting arrest. Four men were further charged with assaulting an officer and one man, Johnny Wilson, was charged with insurrection (a Georgia state law that was punishable by death). The protesters were convicted and received three month sentences in the segregated facilities of the Georgia State Prison. While the original protesters were in jail, others continued to picket the Atlanta induction center, especially when members of their organization or those who had signed the Freedom of Choice petitions were drafted. The pickets caught the attention of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which was “monitoring” Stokely Carmichael at the time and the federal government indicted seven of the protesters in March, 1967 for “injuring government property and with interfering with the Universal Military Training and Service Act.”<sup>53</sup> The arrests proved SNCC’s original hypothesis, as the protesters spent months in jail. Had they been drafted eligible, their induction date would have passed. Moreover, their federal indictments could have led to III-A deferments, because they were charged with a felony and could be seen as morally unfit to serve or disruptive. SNCC was no stranger to arrests and their influence on the public, thus it should be no surprise that they used them to their full advantage, using the testimonies of the accused on recruiting and fundraising materials.

Johnny Wilson’s trial lasted two days in early 1967, as the State Assistant Solicitor General claimed Wilson was fighting in the streets of Atlanta, instead of fighting in Vietnam. Using the same language directed at Muhammad Ali, the Georgia

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<sup>53</sup> “Seven SNCC Workers Indicted” March 7, 1967. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 51, 1-3.

lawyer denigrated SNCC and Wilson's stance against the war and constructed an image of the black anti-war men as violent offenders who attacked their country instead of serving it. SNCC used Wilson's arrest and subsequent three year sentence to the Georgia Chain Gang to connect governmental repression of civil rights workers and the Vietnam War. In a press release, SNCC argued "this case blatantly exemplifies the fact that the courts and governmental officials across the United States are engaged in conscious conspiracy to 'frame-up' and deny justice to all black men and black organizations who dare to stand up and fight for their human rights, and refuse to fight yellow men abroad while black men remain an oppressed and despised colony within the United States."<sup>54</sup>

Although Wilson's civil disobedience resulted in the arrest of twelve SNCC members and his own incarceration, picketing of induction centers continued to be a viable avenue for protest for SNCC and Black Power organizations throughout the country. In New York City, the New York Workshop in Nonviolence undertook a three-day demonstration at the U.S Army Induction Center on Whitehall Street, to continually challenge the public through civil disobedience demonstrations. The drafting of young men and the lack of funding for domestic poverty programs motivated the New York group, while in the South, induction centers were targeted for drafting men of color over white men.<sup>55</sup>

The draft center protests and SNCC's decision to picket Luci Johnson's wedding were direct challenges to the Johnson Administration's embrace of Project 100,000 and placed Black Power advocates and SNCC in particularly, in the cross hairs of the FBI's

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<sup>54</sup> "Johnny Wilson Statement," n.d., Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 51.

<sup>55</sup> Peter Kiger, "Rationale for Civil Disobedience Demonstration on September 22," Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 52.

COINTELPRO. SNCC affiliated Blacks Against the Draft (BAD) in Cleveland, Ohio was ransacked, “drawers and bookshelves were pulled out and overturned on the floor...files were rifled and anti-war leaflets were strewn on the floor.” BAD also reported a stolen television, typewriters, a tape recorder and tapes “which contained valuable information on conferences and meetings.” BAD connected their break-in with other violence directed at SNCC affiliated groups in Philadelphia, Detroit, and San Francisco, in response to anti-war activities.<sup>56</sup> The constant threat of break-in, arrest, and surveillance took a toll on Black Power demonstrators and forced organizations to rethink their activism as they moved to protect themselves and their neighborhoods. Yet, the continual drafting of poorer men of color meant that SNCC and other Black Power organizations could not retreat from draft protest, but instead had to find new avenues to reach those who needed their services.

Another tactic SNCC pursued was filing suit against the Selective Service System “to expose the inconsistency between what this country says it is fight for in Vietnam—‘freedom’—and the fact that the very institution which is mandated to bring about freedom in Vietnam—the military—is committed to a policy of segregation and discrimination.” Further, SNCC found that draft eligible men serving in the Peace Corps or VISTA programs were given one year deferments. Because VISTA students worked with SNCC to register voters in the South and educate children in Head Start and other programs, the SNCC organizers felt they should also receive deferments.<sup>57</sup> SNCC contacted Conrad Lynn, a black lawyer in New York City, to help them file their

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<sup>56</sup> “Blacks Against the Draft (SNCC) Office Ramshackled and Robbed,” Social Action Vertical File Box 6, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI.

<sup>57</sup> Janet Jemmott “Regarding Vietnam and the Draft,” Memo. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972. University Microfilms International, Reel 52, 1.

grievances and to support SNCC members seeking to avoid their draft calls. Lynn was a civil rights lawyer who defended Freedom Riders and famously litigated the “Kissing Case,” where two black children were charged with rape for kissing a white girl while playing. He was the first black graduate of Syracuse Law School in 1932 and devoted his life to expanding legal precedents in civil rights matters.<sup>58</sup> Throughout the late 1960s, Lynn shared SNCC’s vision of draft resistance and worked with the organization to provide materials to better educate draft aged men on their options.<sup>59</sup> When the draft laws changed in 1967, Lynn published *How to Stay out of the Army*, a how-to guide directed at young black men, but applicable to any draft eligible person in the United States. The July 1, 1967 law barred the presence of lawyers in board hearings, so the defendants were on their own. Lynn used his pamphlet to educate young men on their rights and to serve as a primer of legal positions drafted men could take. In straight, clear, step-by-step processes, the book laid out the changes to the law, how it affected various groups of draft eligible men, and what each person, as an individual, could expect from their draft boards.

Lynn highlighted SNCC’s 1966 plan to disrupt induction centers as a viable option for resistance:

When a man has a record of a felony conviction, the draft board will generally classify him 1-Y. Certain types of misdemeanors, such as convictions for unlawful picketing in a demonstration against the war, may bring the same deferment. Right-wing columnists often call for induction of such ‘trouble-makers’ into the armed forces, but the policy makers of the Selective Service

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<sup>58</sup> Gary Pierre-Pierre, “Conrad J. Lynn, A Veteran Civil Rights Leader, is Dead at 87,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 18, 1995; For more information on the “Kissing Case” see Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: The Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 92-140; Conrad Lynn, *There is a Fountain: The Autobiography of Conrad Lynn* (New York: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1994); Conrad Lynn, *How to Stay out of the Army: A Guide to Your Rights under the Draft Law* (New York: Mass Market Books, 1967).

<sup>59</sup> Michael Simmons and Larry Fox to SNCC Staff, November 28, 1966. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972. University Microfilms International, Reel 51, 3.

system are not that impetuous. A boy who vigorously attacks the conduct of the war on the picket line may well be a disruptive influence in the army.<sup>60</sup>

Lynn encouraged his readers to know their rights and to work with anti-war organizations to gain the needed paperwork to earn specific deferments or statuses. He was straightforward, admitting that certain tactics, especially those based on class status, would not work. For example, he noted that III-A (Hardships—dependents, sole familial survivor, support), would not help the most disadvantaged members of the black communities because “When a family is receiving any form of supplementary welfare aid, such as aid to dependent children, a father may not qualify. The welfare investigator simply reports to the board that if the father is drafted, the welfare department will assume the full support of the rest of the family.”<sup>61</sup> If a draftee could not prove his family would suffer extreme hardship by induction, he was sent to the army without the support of welfare department. Thus, Lynn encouraged Civil Rights and antiwar groups to find alternatives to service for draft eligible, unemployed young men. Lynn believed that a massive jobs campaign would deprive the federal government of replacement soldiers, thus lessening the power of the draft and bringing an end to the war.<sup>62</sup>

To help their members and constituents make tough decisions about the war and the draft, SNCC members used a number of tactics to organize against the war. Building on their successful desegregation and voting rights campaigns, local groups used tools provided by the national office to educate community members, potential draftees, and their families about their options and the reasons they should oppose the war. To expand

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<sup>60</sup> Lynn, *How to Stay out of the Army*, 37.

<sup>61</sup> Lynn, *How to Stay out of the Army*, 48-49.

<sup>62</sup> Lynn, *How to Stay out of the Army*, 103-104.

their reach, John Wilson argued that revolutionary education had to accompany actions.<sup>63</sup> He argued that “a man with a gun but with no political education is like a child with matches,” and pressed SNCC to develop educational materials to define their beliefs and make clear the connections between the lives of blacks in America and the Vietnamese. He implored SNCC leaders to “educate your people with good political education.” To do this, SNCC needed strong educational materials that were accessible to a wide variety of people. Political education ranged from handbills explaining the “risks” of registering for the draft and the possibilities for attaining a deferment to eye-catching and provocative posters exclaiming “Uncle Sam wants you NIGGER. HELL NO! America is the Black Man’s battleground.”<sup>64</sup> Yet, the most effective tools were SNCC’s well-established tactics of mailers and pamphlets that organizers could use to shore up their own conversations with men seeking to avoid the draft, constituents of projects, and the public.

The Washington, D.C. project created a pamphlet that juxtaposed Black Power and Vietnam Power in a series of images and paragraphs. The visual created a direct connection between the struggle for black political power in the United States and the desire for freedom in Vietnam. The text explained the situation in Vietnam and why the United States was involved in the country. Moreover, it connected the feelings of South Vietnamese citizens to black citizens who were oppressed by someone they “didn’t elect.” The pamphlet constructed the Black Power movement and black Americans as

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<sup>63</sup> After his time in jail, Johnny Wilson began to refer to himself as John. Wilson went on to serve as a member of the Washington, D.C. City Council for a number of years before committing suicide in 1993. “D.C. Council Chairman John Wilson, 49, Dies at Home of Apparent Suicide,” *Jet*, June 7, 1993, 14-15; Carson, *In Struggle*, 306.

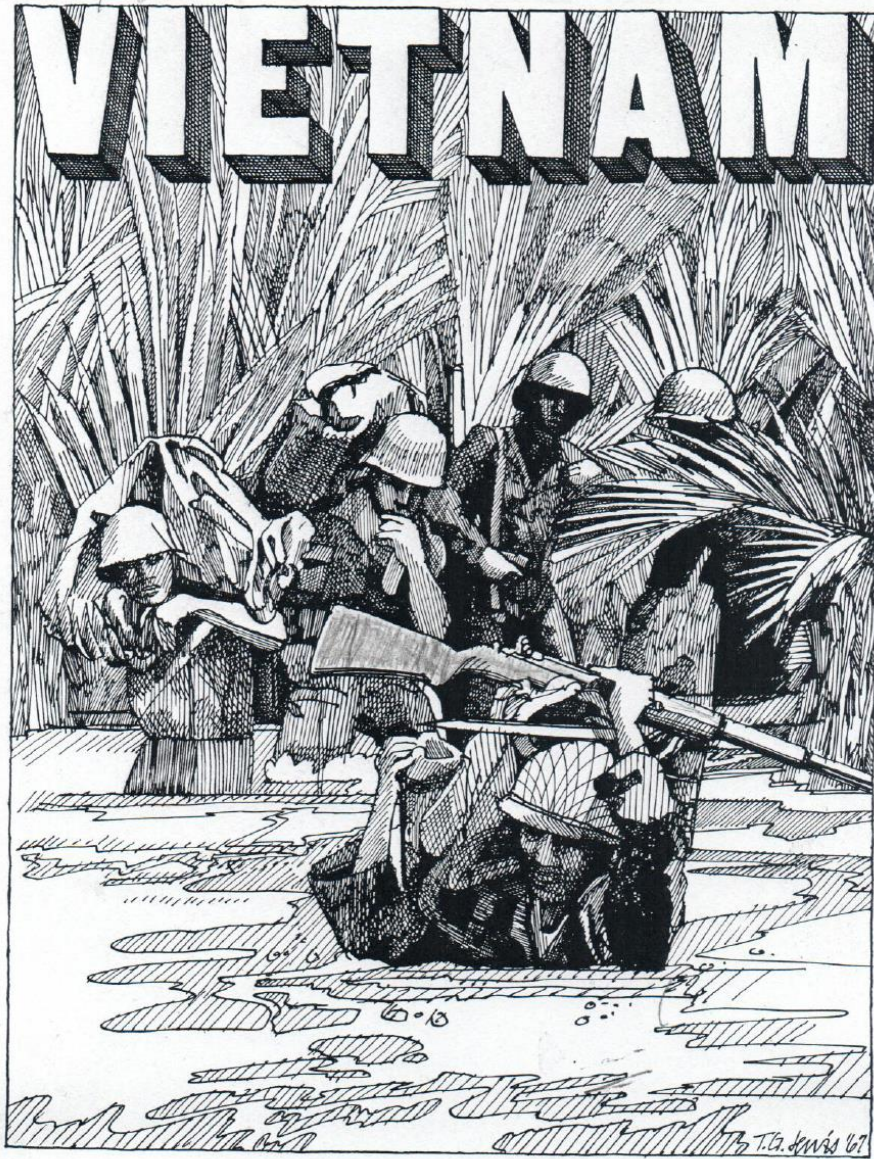
<sup>64</sup> Pamphlet and Poster, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 21.

Third World individuals living the United States. This imagery was used by SNCC in buttons protesting the war and on posters claiming solidarity with Third World people everywhere. Black Americans and the Vietnamese suffered the same atrocities— bombing churches and homes, killing children in villages and in Birmingham. The images were taken from the media and were placed next to simple paragraphs, no more than a few sentences on each page, in order to highlight the similarities. It ended with “for help avoiding the draft (legally) or for further information” contact SNCC’s D.C. office. The pamphlet was designed to reach possible draftees, but only mentioned the draft explicitly on one page. Instead, SNCC had crafted an educational tool that could reach a wide swatch of the black community and could rally those who were not as committed to protesting the draft by opening up a new avenue of dissent. If black Americans and Vietnamese were intimately connected by their oppression, then protesting the war and the draft made sense.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Untitled Pamphlet, ND, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 21. See the Appendix for a full reproduction of the comic.

Figure 4.1 Vietnam Comic Book Cover Page



Another especially effective tool organizers used was a comic book written by Julian Bond and designed by T.G. Lewis in 1967 and printed in SNCC's Atlanta office on an old printing press. The comic book was then sent to various field sites, projects, and friends of SNCC groups to be used in popular education programs.<sup>66</sup> SNCC had

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<sup>66</sup> Dr. Cleveland Sellers, interview with the author, 9/22/2012; Cleveland L. Sellers, Jr. "Black Power and the Freedom Movement in Retrospect," in *Rebellion in Black and White: Southern Student Activism in the*



adapted the community education programs from earlier organizers who hosted citizenship schools in their homes. Gwen Patton, a SNCC member, Tuskegee student, and life-long organizer, taught literacy and tutored community members in her paternal grandparents home beginning when she was eight-years-old.<sup>67</sup> Community schools served as fertile recruiting ground to encourage people to register to vote and to help those in attendance learn skills denied them in the Jim Crow system. SNCC adopted the community school program with their Freedom Schools in the early 1960s. The school's served as spaces to educate southern blacks about their rights, the Constitution, and the ways to pass the restrictive tests the South developed to deny black voting. By 1965, these schools had become recruiting sites for young people to join the movement and in some areas, freedom schools had transitioned into Head Start centers.<sup>68</sup> Within these popular education programs, SNCC members looked for ways to reach their students. Alan Jehlen acknowledged that getting people to attend community education programs on the war was difficult, because if people were interested in studying the war, they would take a course in East Asian Studies. Instead, Jehlen believed, "In all cases the momentum of the organization depends on an on-going program of activities which reach outside of the organization."<sup>69</sup> The comic book served this purpose, as Gwen Patton

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*1960s* ed. by Robert Cohen and David J. Snyder (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 281-305; Julian Bond and T.G. Lewis, *Vietnam: An Antiwar Comic Book*, 1967.

<sup>67</sup> Dr. Gwen Patton, telephone interview with the author, 1/15/2013.

<sup>68</sup> Throughout Mississippi, SNCC members staffed Head Start programs. Head Start parents, teachers, and students wrote to President Johnson requesting meetings and support for Head Start schools in Mississippi, which saw a reduction in funding in 1968. For examples of letters see White House Social Files, 1963-1968, Alphabetical File Program (Programs) boxes 1704-1709, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, University of Texas, Austin, TX. Folders are organized by Program, then the first initial of the last name of the letter writer.

<sup>69</sup> Alan Jehlen, "We All Hate to Study," ND, SNCC Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 58.

recalled using it to teach high school students about the war. She also remembered grade school children coloring the comic book and taking it home to their parents.<sup>70</sup>

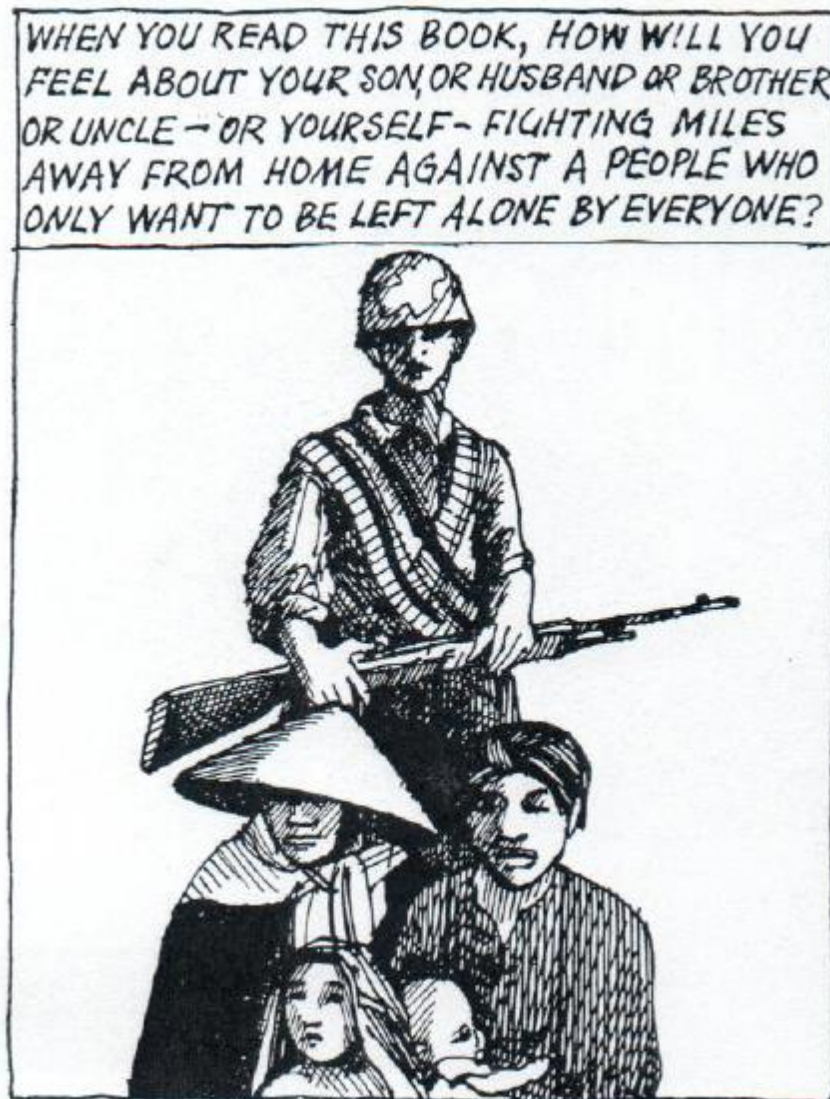
The comic book was simple, modeled after a similar pamphlet used by Stokely Carmichael to organize in Lowndes County, Alabama. Because of its small size, the book could be passed from person to person, in church, on street corners, or on the bus. In 20 pages, printed front and back, divided into four, neat quadrants the book laid out the problems in Vietnam, the reasons the United States was in the war, and asked the reader to pass judgment on the government's choices. It spoke to the readers in terms of their material world—welfare benefits were compared to the cost of the war, death statistics were juxtaposed with poverty numbers. The creators of the comic book sought to influence the political through the cultural, pushing the act of protest out of the streets and into the minds of young, seemingly unaffected youth throughout the country. SNCC knew members of the community could read, but “not well,” and used the book as a teaching tool to expose the problems of Vietnam and American involvement in a country so far from home.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Dr. Gwen Patton, interview with the author, 1/15/2013.

<sup>71</sup> Dr. Gwen Patton, interview with the author, 1/15/2013; Dr. Cleveland Sellers, interview with the author, 9/22/2012.

Figure 4.2 Vietnam Comic Book—pg. 6, Cell 3



The Vietnam comic book is interesting on a number of levels. Its audience was broad—it asked readers “When you read this book how will you feel about your son or husband or brother or uncle—or yourself—fighting miles away from home against a people who only want to be left alone by everyone?”<sup>72</sup> By targeting a larger audience

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<sup>72</sup> “Vietnam,” James Haughton Papers, Box 13, Folder 4, Schomburg Center for the Study of African American Culture and History, New York Public Library; “Vietnam,” Cleveland Sellers Papers, Avery Center, College of Charleston; “Vietnam,” Dr. Gwen Patton Collection, H. Councilll Trenholm State Technical College Archives, Montgomery, AL.

than just draft age men, the comic book spoke to the cultural ethos of community. Its audience was any reader on the street, because any person could, and often was, affected by the war. Due to the large and disproportionate numbers of African American men drafted between 1966 and 1968, the comic book had to speak not only to draftable men but also to their families and neighbors, in order to spread its message of dissent wider and potentially reach the men most likely to be called for the draft. If a mother or sister of a young, draft eligible man was given the chance to critique and challenge U.S. involvement abroad, they could continue that discussion with the draftable male. This, in turn, could help the man make a more educated decision if he received a draft notice. Additionally, a young man who decided to refuse his draft call could use the comic book to present the facts of the war cogently to his detractors—be they family members or strangers. As an illustrated text with a clear message, the comic book would help stave off a more personal attack.

While its circulation is unknown, the ubiquitous nature of comic books during the 1960s and 1970s suggests that it had an expanded viewership, beyond SNCC projects. The simple question, “how do you feel,” begged the reader to come to terms with the hypocrisy of the war itself, particularly for people of color in the nation’s inner cities. While providing a context for those feelings, and approachable, understandable arguments against the war, it did not bash the reader over the head with ideology. Instead, it repeatedly asks the reader how s/he felt. The closing line, “...the war is fought in your name...What do you think?” begged the reader to do more than passively ingest the words on the page.

Figure 4.3 Vietnam Comic Book, pg. 19, Cell 3



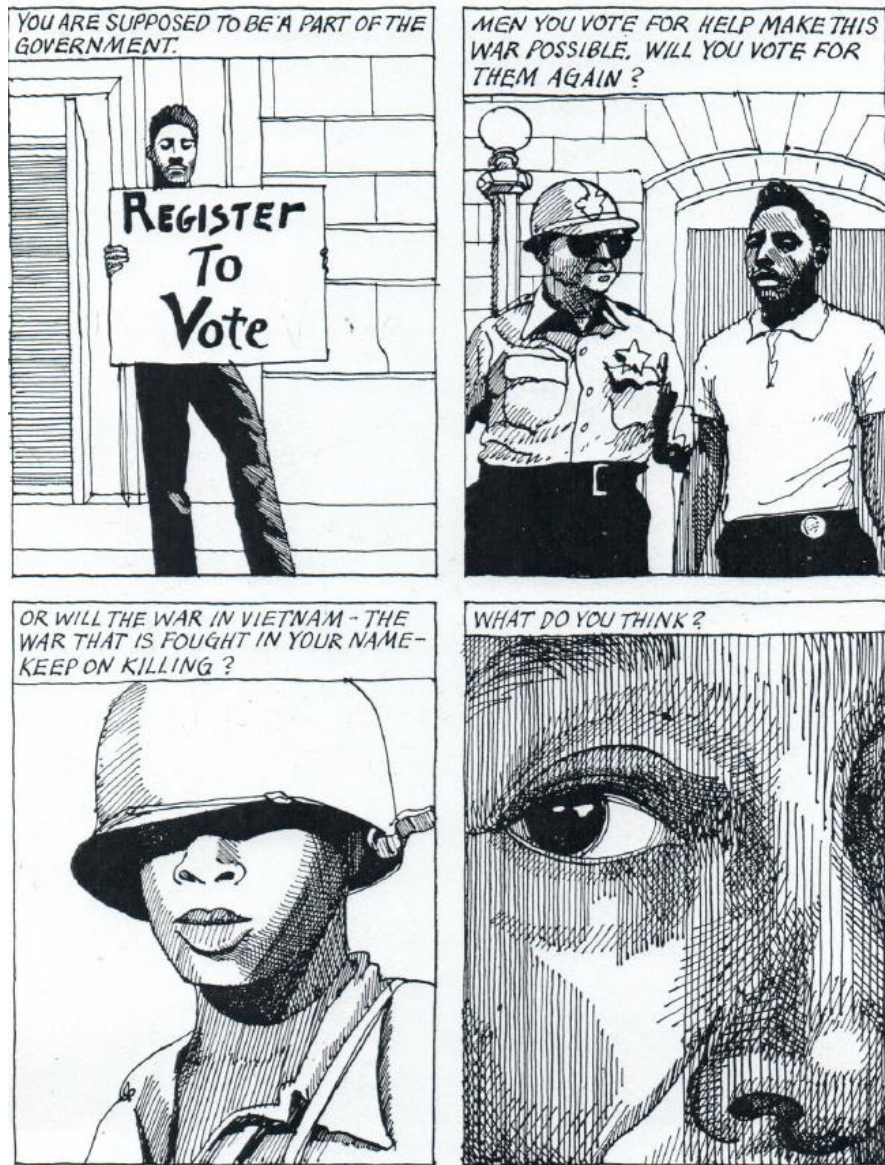
The audience was asked to participate in the movement by forming an opinion and expressing it. “What do you think?” it asked, while educating the reader on the workings of the federal government, the spending on poverty programs compared to spending in Vietnam, and the motivations of the Vietnamese in fighting for their independence. While it asked the reader’s feelings, the purpose of the comic was to lead to the reader to a particular conclusion, namely that the war in Vietnam was morally and politically unjust and that black men should not be forced to serve for the United States’ cause.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> “Vietnam,” James Haughton Papers, Box 13, Folder 4, Schomburg Center for the Study of African American Culture and History, New York Public Library; “Vietnam,” Cleveland Sellers Papers, Avery Center, College of Charleston; “Vietnam,” Dr. Gwen Patton Collection, H. Council Trenholm State Technical College Archives, Montgomery, AL.



Figure 4.4 Vietnam Comic Book, Pg. 20



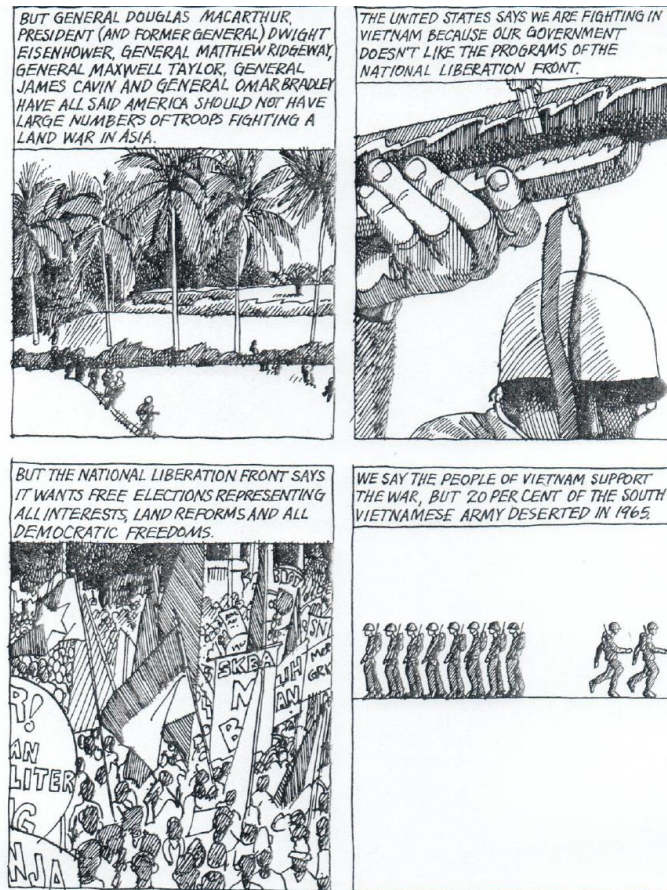
The comic book addressed the community itself with facts and anecdotes related to community issues and concerns. Speaking directly to draft age men, the book asked “why should we fight for a country who has never fought for us” and reminded African Americans that they were first-class citizens on the battlefield but not on Main Street U.S.A. In couching their argument in such a way, the community could rally behind a person who chose not to heed their draft call or sought a deferment through education or

the subversion of military medical examiners. Drawing even stronger connections to the problems in urban America in the mid-1960s, a soldier in the book lamented “We are worried about fighting a war against poverty in America. But we spend \$499,999.96 for every enemy soldier we kill or capture while people starve and go without good jobs at home.” By placing radical anti-war arguments in a tempered, tangible medium, the comic book was a vehicle to recruit new protesters and acclimated readers to the tenants of Black Power’s anti-war stance.

The comic covered all facets of the Black Power antiwar debate. If a reader was not swayed by poverty statistics or second-class citizenship, the book appealed to their sense of a shared Third World identity with other people of color oppressed by American imperialism and greed. First it compared the Vietnamese to black Americans, “some people called it [the enemy] the ‘Viet Cong’ like people who don’t like Negroes call us ‘niggers.’” The writers also illustrated the Vietnamese quest for independence in terms of the United States’ own revolution, arguing “the people of Vietnam are fighting their own war for independence. They want to run their own country and don’t want anyone—Americans, French, Chinese or Russian—to tell them how to do it.” By expressing the wishes of the Vietnamese through words and pictures—the art in that space was a picture of Vietnamese peasants and the flag of Vietnam, picking rice in a field, not as belligerents, but as humans attempting to survive—the comic book opened an imagined space where the Vietnamese and African Americans shared the same wants and needs. This, coupled with an earlier demand that black Americans should be fighting for voting rights in Mississippi and Alabama instead of free, democratic elections in Vietnam placed the comic book in conversation with other radical protesters, namely the Student

Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Congress for Racial Equality as both Civil Rights organizations had embraced the call for Black Power and an end to the war in Vietnam in 1966.

Figure 4.5 Vietnam Comic Book, pg. 14



The shared vision of peace and democratic participation at home and in Vietnam flowed through the comic book. The drawings themselves showed few violent images and any pictures with guns were clouded with a derogative air or included white soldiers with guns pointed at people of color. While the comic book was peaceful, it was not meek. By asking direct questions and challenging the readers' beliefs about the war, poverty, and the place of black Americans in the United States, the book had a direct point of view and a purpose. Just as in the beginning, as the comic book came to a close,



it reminded readers that they had the right to participate in the United States' democracy. "You are supposed to be a part of the government," the book declared. "Men you vote for help make this war possible. Will you vote for them again? Or will the War in Vietnam—the war that is fought in your name—keep on killing? What do you think?" By again asking the reader what they thought about the war, the book was in and of itself a talking point. It was meant to create a dialogue within the community about American politics and foreign policy. The comic book was both the spark for the conversation and the means by which the conversation could take place—meaning not only did the comic book force the reader to ask questions, it provided a context and facts for the reader to use in discussions going forward. It was the crucible through which brothers, sons, daughters, and sisters could speak coherently with radical protesters and question the government.<sup>74</sup>

The comic book served to educate people who could be drafted, the families of potential soldiers, and SNCC supporters. SNCC, and Gwen Patton in particular, knew that reaching younger men was important, but were also concerned with helping men who had received their draft notices. Patton felt that black students had a harder time acquiring II-S (student) deferments, even though they qualified, because they attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or because they did not know their options. Patton created a Draft Counseling Center at Tuskegee, to inform draft age men, and high school students who would soon enter the draft rolls, about their options. She also provided transport, funds, and housing for men seeking to flee the country to avoid the

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<sup>74</sup> "Vietnam," James Haughton Papers, Box 13, Folder 4, Schomburg Center for the Study of African American Culture and History, New York Public Library; "Vietnam," Cleveland Sellers Papers, Avery Center, College of Charleston; "Vietnam," Dr. Gwen Patton Collection, H. Councilll Trenholm State Technical College Archives, Montgomery, AL.

draft, and helped organize the National Black Anti-War, Anti-Draft Union (NBAWADU).<sup>75</sup>

Draft Counseling was a popular tactic in the white peace movement, as men and women assisted draftees in locating doctors who would “fudge” medical records, connect draft dodgers to an underground network of individuals willing to move them across the Canadian border, and filing Conscientious Objector paperwork. Draft counselors, usually college students, ministers, reporters, doctors, and other community members who had “day-to-day contact with the people,” would provide men with the facts and options for how to avoid service.<sup>76</sup> Gwen Patton’s Draft Counselor’s Training Institute (DCTI) served Tuskegee, Washington, D.C., New Orleans, St. Louis, Missouri, and Frogmore, South Carolina, and through a coalition of lawyers and SNCC workers, New York City. At the DCTI men were advised to avoid the draft and were provided “Freedom Physicals.” There were 469 diseases listed as deferrable medical conditions, so the DCTI provided documentation to draft age men to give to their draft boards. Doctors and lawyers worked to free men from the bondage of the draft through creative means, though many were unsuccessful, as Cleveland Seller’s petitions highlights.<sup>77</sup>

In Tuskegee, Gwen Patton’s maternal grandmother provided a safe house for men fleeing to Canada. Wealthier men would fly to New York or Detroit to cross into Canada, but most students took the Greyhound lines north and then found a contact who helped shuttle them into Canada and freedom. In many ways, the push for men to get into Canada was a modern underground railroad, with similar dangers for those involved. In

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<sup>75</sup> Dr. Gwen Patton, Interview with the Author, 1/15/2013.

<sup>76</sup> Black Draft Counseling Center, ND, Social Action Vertical File, Box 6, Folder 91, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI.

<sup>77</sup> Letter to Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee from Gwen Patton, December 27, 1968. Gwen Patton Collection, Box 14, H. Councill Trenholm State Technical College, Montgomery, Alabama.

1967, Patton drove a draft dodger named Ellerbee from Tuskegee to her grandmother's house in Montgomery in a rental car. Before they reached their destination, the pair was involved in a "strange one car accident," where the car imploded because of a faulty axle rod. Patton suffered a compound fracture to her leg which left her with mobility issues and forced her to seek treatment in New York City and Washington, D.C. The car accident was never explained, and according to Patton, was proof that local authorities were attempting to disrupt her draft counseling and shuttle programs.<sup>78</sup>

The DCTI programs worked under the auspices of the NBAWADU, an outgrowth of SNCC and the Student Mobilization Committee (SMC). SMC was organized in December 1966 by Bettina Aptheker, a Civil Rights organizer and peace advocate who worked closely with SNCC. Aptheker recruited Gwen Patton as the National Coordinator of SMC, which "was formulated on the grounds that there must be a student organization that will deal specifically with the war and will mobilize students throughout the country in various forms of actions of protests against the war."<sup>79</sup> SMC was dominated by white leftists, who, Patton felt were "oblivious of racism and its relationship to the Vietnam War."<sup>80</sup> Black students were drowned out of SMC's organizational structure and walked out of the meeting, but continued to work with the SMC on their protest efforts. During the December meeting, Patton was "amazed at the white naïve intellectualism and the deep-seated factionalism." Moreover, Patton felt that black anti-war advocates and the white peace movement had "a superficial coalition," full of contradictions and "black people [could] not afford at this point to ask for 'peace' because it [would] mean a return

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<sup>78</sup> Dr. Gwen Patton, interview with author, 1/15/2013.

<sup>79</sup> Memo to Central Committee of SNCC from Gwen Patton, November 6, 1967. SNCC Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 58, 1.

<sup>80</sup> Memo to Central Committee of SNCC from Gwen Patton, November 6, 1967. SNCC Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 58.

to the status quo.”<sup>81</sup> After another failed effort to gain support for a multiple part platform to include racial and economic issues at a May 1967 SMC conference, communication problems at protest sites, and local anger at SMC for bringing in outsiders to protests without helping or speaking with organizations in Washington, DC, Patton and other black students left SMC and formed the NBAWADU, as a program of SNCC.<sup>82</sup>

NBAWADU officially reconstituted itself at the end of January, 1968 and sought to help black men disrupt the system, because “if they go to the war or go to jail, black men are conforming to the rules and serving those racist institutions that perpetuate this racist society.”<sup>83</sup> The group worked with local chapters and SNCC field offices throughout the country to organize draft resistance groups and to set up draft counseling centers. In their first few months, they called for a protest on March 4 in support of Muhammad Ali at Madison Square Garden during the Joe Frazier/Buster Mathis heavyweight championship and set up outdoor community meetings to discuss the war. NBAWADU believed that Ali was the heavyweight champion and deserved to be fighting in the match, though he’d been banned from boxing for over a year at that point. The outdoor meetings served “to teach students that they have a direct responsibility to the black community.” NBAWADU’s efforts created new anti-war groups and worked to expand SNCC’s original anti-draft position to include economic motivations and the impact on the local communities. Although NBAWADU was short lived, it’s organizing

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<sup>81</sup> Gwen Patton, “Position Paper: Why Black People must develop own Anti-War and Anti-Draft Union...Heed the Call!” January, 1967, 2, 3. Dr. Gwen Patton Collection, Box 14, H. Council Trenholm State Technical College, Montgomery, AL.

<sup>82</sup> Memo to Central Committee of SNCC from Gwen Patton, November 6, 1967. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 58.

<sup>83</sup> Gwen Patton, “NBAWADU,” *Student Mobilizer* 2, Issue 2 (March, 1968): 3.

principles helped spawn new groups and reach less identified populations including pulling women into anti-draft and anti-war organizing. The need for separate black organizing against the war did not dissipate with NBAWADU's dissolution in the spring of 1969 (Patton's injuries kept her from fully participating in the group and SNCC's internal problems made funding difficult), but new tactics and targeted audiences were necessary. With the federal government's shift to a lottery system in July 1969, organizing along draft lines was less salient and Black Power moved toward discussing a Third World identity and the shared experiences of American imperial oppression.<sup>84</sup>

SNCC's anti-draft statement was the first public break with the Johnson Administration's war effort by a Civil Rights organization. Their leadership led to further repression by the government, as SNCC members saw their draft statuses investigated and were called for induction out of order. The organization also positioned itself as the vanguard in education on the war, developing new materials to reach the population most affected by it: young, poorer men of color about to graduate from high school, who did not have access to college. SNCC voiced Black Power's opposition to the Vietnam War, and though the group saw continually declining donations and a loss of membership, they fought for a more equitable system and the freeing of black men from the burdens of serving a country where their own rights were not respected.

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<sup>84</sup> Gwen Patton, "NBAWADU," *Student Mobilizer* 2, Issue 2 (March 1968): 3; Gwen Patton, "NBAWADU Report," *Student Mobilizer* 2, Issue 3 (April 1968): 4.

## CHAPTER FIVE: PATHOLOGICAL MATRIARCHY?: BLACK WOMEN, THE MOYNIHAN REPORT, AND ANTIWAR ACTIVISM

“They’re going to be snatched off from their mothers... We raise children and send them off to war.”—Eartha Kitt, to Lady Bird Johnson<sup>1</sup>

Women’s contributions to the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements have begun to be unpacked through recent scholarship, memoirs, and oral histories. The foundational and sustaining roles women played in creating, maintaining, and moving peace, justice, and freedom forward in the United States have long been relegated to tangential histories or ascribed traditional gendered stories—background support, nurturing, and respectability in the face of opposition. But, as Bobby Seale and others have noted, by 1968 women made up the majority of the Black Panther Party and similar demographics existed in many Civil Rights and Black Power organizations.<sup>2</sup> From the radical life of Rosa Park to the role of sexual assault and violence in spurring Southern civil rights activism, women’s place in the Movement is slowly being restored.<sup>3</sup>

However, black women’s role in antiwar activism remains hidden in plain sight, as scholars of the era focus on the activities of men who risked being drafted or jailed for

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<sup>1</sup> “Eartha Kitt,” *The Louisville Defender*, Jan. 18, 1968.

<sup>2</sup> Bobby Seale, *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey P. Newton* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1991); Erika Huggins and Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest, “Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education: The Black Panther Party’s Oakland Community School,” *Want to Start a Revolution: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* eds. Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 161-184.

<sup>3</sup> Gerald Gill, “From Maternal Pacifism to Revolutionary Solidarity: African-American Women’s Opposition to the Vietnam War,” *Sights of the Sixties*, ed. Barbara L. Tischler (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992); Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Marian Beth Mollin, “Actions Louder than Words: Gender and Political Activism in the American Radical Pacifist Movement, 1942-1972” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 2000); Jessica M. Frazier, “Collaborative Efforts to End the War in Vietnam: the Interactions of Women Strike for Peace, the Vietnamese Women’s Union, and the Women’s Union of Liberation, 1965-1968,” *Peace & Change* 37:3 (July 2012): 339-365; Jerry Lembcke, *Hanoi Jane: War, Sex, and Fantasies of Betrayal* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010); James Dickerson, *North to Canada: Men and Women against the Vietnam War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999).

speaking out against involvement in Vietnam. A few historians have begun to look at the connections between antiwar activism and the nascent second wave feminist movement, but fail to include women of color in their discussion. Moreover, these histories are often reductionist and focus on women who fulfilled traditionally acceptable female roles through their activism, as secretaries, note takers, and paper stuffers for organizations headed by men, or focus on women who used their role as mothers to counsel soldiers. While any discussion of women in the organizations is a welcome respite from the male dominated leadership of most antiwar literature, black women's role in articulating specific arguments about class, race, and gender and their relation to antiwar activism highlight the important intellectual, physical, and emotional work women brought to Black Power antiwar activism.<sup>4</sup>

Like their male colleagues, black women's antiwar activism took many forms and occurred across a number of organizational platforms. Working within already

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<sup>4</sup> There is a growing literature of black women's contributions and notable exceptions to the masculine discourse of organizing, including Winifred Brienes, *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, eds. *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* (New York: NYU Press, 2001); Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, *Want to Start a Revolution: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: NYU Press, 2009); Christina Greene, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Faith S. Holsaert, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner, eds., *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Danielle McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Knopf, 2010); Barbara Ramsey, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Belinda Robnett, *How Long, How Long: African American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Robyn Ceanne Spencer, "Engendering the Black Freedom Struggle: Revolutionary Black Womanhood and the Black Panther Party in the Bay Area, California," *Journal of Women's History* 20, no. 1 (2008): 90-113; Kimberly Springer, ed., *Still Lifting, Still Climbing: Contemporary African American Women's Activism* (New York: NYU Press, 1999) and *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968-1980* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Anne M. Valk, *Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, D.C.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Deborah Gray White, *Too Heavy a Load: Black Women in Defense of Themselves* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999); Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggles Against Urban Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

established groups and creating their own outgrowths, women brought the economic and social costs of the war to their activism, tying together calls to end the draft with expansions of welfare benefits and support for black communities in the United States. Facing no threat of being drafted, black women were able to forcefully use their voices and actions to demand change, while also highlighting the intersections of government policies abroad and the lived experiences of African Americans in the United States. Anti-Vietnam War activism proved a fertile test ground for expanded gendered arguments about the effects of race, class, and sex in the capitalist system and the exploitation of poverty to serve the government's agenda.

Black women's anti-Vietnam War activism was another galvanizing force in the reinvigorated feminist movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. The feminist movement is commonly remember as a series of waves, whereby the first wave of modern organizers secured the vote (1840s-1920), the second wave (mid-20<sup>th</sup> century) secured acceptance of notions of gendered equality through education access, wages, and citizenship rights, and the third wave (1990s-present) continues to pursue social justice while fighting anti-feminist backlash. In the wave theory, black women's stories are left on the margins of the movement. Kimberly Springer argues that feminist activism should not be theorized as a series of waves, but instead, as moments on "a continuum of participants' efforts from the arrival of black women on the continent to the present but also integrating black women in feminist history and theory, moving that experience from margins of the narrative of the women's movement to its center."<sup>5</sup> By focusing on periods of activism versus monolithic waves, the work of black women in anti-war organizing can be fully seen as integral to black women's articulations of a feminist future. It is also important to

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<sup>5</sup> Springer, *Living for the Revolution*, 7-9.



note that many--but not all--Black Power activists would not label themselves feminists, even when they did gendered organizational work. The Women's Movement and feminist ideology was often viewed as white women's work and liberal feminists were rightly accused of focusing on middle and upper class concerns of women's equality, rather than the needs of their sisters of color and those of all races who were less fortunate.<sup>6</sup>

Black Americans' interaction with the Vietnam War was dramatically shaped by the 1965 Moynihan Report which argued that one of the keys to addressing poverty in black American communities was through providing masculine work, like military service, to black men. To make such an argument, Moynihan denigrated black women, especially female heads of households and bread winners, who, according to the report, were overly dominant in the black family and stripped black male youth of their masculinity or desire to work. The matriarchical structure of black families, according to Moynihan's report, "because it is so out of line with the rest of American society, severely retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on

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<sup>6</sup> The Women's Movement's problems with race inclusivity date back to the earliest moments of activism. Though growing out of the Abolition Movement, black women were excluded from some suffrage groups and women's desire to gain the franchise overshadowed anti-lynching efforts, anti-Jim Crow work, and the needs of women of color in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. See: Elsa Barkley Brown, "Womanist Consciousness: Maggie Lena Walker and the Independent Order of Saint Luke," *Signs* Vol. 14, No. 3 (Spring 1989): 610-633; Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Signs* Vol. 17, No. 2 (Winter 1992): 241-274; Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy my Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labor After the Civil War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Anne M. Valk, *Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, D.C.* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008); Winifred Brieness, *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). For more discussion of the women's movement as a waves analogy see Barbara Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement: Dynamics of Change in Social Movement Ideology and Activism* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Verta Taylor, "Social Movement Continuity: The Women's Movement in Abeyance," *American Sociological Review* 54(5): 761-775; Jo Reger, ed. *Different Wavelengths: Studies of the Contemporary Women's Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Becky Thompson, "Multicultural Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave Feminism," *Feminist Studies* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 336-360.

the Negro male and, in consequence, on a great many Negro women as well.”<sup>7</sup> Labeling the female led black family a “tangle of pathology,” Moynihan warned that a cycle of poverty would continue to exist in the black community until it conformed to the dominate society’s (i.e. white) familial mores. In his call to action, Moynihan argued:

At this point, the present tangle of pathology is capable of perpetuating itself without assistance from the white world. The cycle can be broken only if these distortions are set right.

In a word, a national effort towards the problems of Negro Americans must be directed towards the question of family structure. The object should be to strengthen the Negro family so as to enable it to raise and support its members as do other families. After that, how this group of Americans chooses to run its affairs, take advantage of its opportunities, or fail to do so, is none of the nation's business.<sup>8</sup>

He blamed the “tangle of pathology” on the higher educational attainment numbers of black women and their ability to access white collar work at higher levels than black men. The survival tactics and coping strategies employed by black women—working outside the home as domestics, secretaries, and assistants—in order to support families at times when black men were denied jobs or access to advanced training were seen as barriers to black family mobility and success by Moynihan. Ignoring the lack of jobs for skilled black men throughout the country and using the words of conservative African American leaders like Whitney Young, President of the National Urban League, to defend his findings, the Moynihan Report essentially criminalized black womanhood.<sup>9</sup>

The Moynihan Report’s focus on gender and attainment highlighted both government racism in dealing with institutional barriers to economic success in the

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* Office of Policy Planning and Research, Department of Labor, March, 1965, 29.

<sup>8</sup> Moynihan, *The Negro Family*, 31.

<sup>9</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 76-106.

United States and the double-bind of being black and a woman in mid-century America. Historian Carol Giardina argued that the Moynihan Report was also a function of government backlash directed at black women like Fannie Lou Hammer, Ella Baker, and Rosa Parks, who angered white liberals with their militant stances, thus “a report blaming the ‘emasculating’ independence and strength of such women for their race’s poverty and unemployment might help to dampen black women’s militancy and keep them out of the black freedom struggle.” Moynihan’s focus on the pathology of black females served not to quell black women’s active participation in the economic and social advancement of their race, but encouraged further involvement and a desire to assert their own definitions of femininity and masculinity.<sup>10</sup>

The use of the report by the U.S. Department of Defense to justify relaxed draft standards and promote hegemonic, white notions of masculinity further denigrated black women by questioning their roles as mothers, wage earners, and community leaders and placing their sons, brothers, and husbands at increased risk for being drafted and sent to Vietnam to prove their masculinity. The Department of Defense failed to realize that removing black men from their community and sending them to fight a war where they could be injured, maimed, or killed, only served to heighten female heads of households, at least in the short run. Moreover, by demanding a hegemonic masculinity, the Moynihan report created a pathological black femininity, challenging generations of work in the politics of the respectability for black women.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Carol Giardina, *Freedom For Women: Forging the Women’s Liberation Movement, 1953-1970* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2010), 89.

<sup>11</sup> Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham explained the politics of respectability through the actions of middle class church women at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Those women “adhered to a politics of respectability that equated public behavior with individual self-respect and with the advancement of African Americans as a group. They felt certain that ‘respectable’ behavior in public would earn their people a measure of esteem from white America, hence they strove to win the black lower class’s psychological allegiance to

To counter Moynihan's criminalization and express their antiwar and anticolonial beliefs, black women used many outlets to reach their intended audiences. Some women worked within the framework of already established anti-war committees in Civil Rights and Black Power organizations. Linking black men's participation in the military to the overall quality of life for black Americans, female antiwar activists tied the war to white masculinity and white leaders' desires to further subjugate black men and women in the mid-century capitalist and neo-colonial system. Gwendolyn Patton of SNCC helped established the National Black Anti-Draft, Anti-War Union (NBADAWU) as an outgrowth of SNCC's antiwar fervor in the fall of 1966. Patton's work with the NBADAWU was multifaceted and relocated her to SNCC's New York City office, where she joined SNCC's women's caucus, chaired by Frances Beal. The women's caucus challenged the masculine rhetoric of SNCC and other Black Power organizations and highlighted what Beal labeled double jeopardy or the challenges of being black and a woman. SNCC's woman's caucus provided a space for women to explore leadership roles, learn gender and economic theory, and express new forms of activism. As a part of SNCC, women's caucus participants were uniquely aware of the intersections of race, class, and gender in the lives of black women in the Movement. Moreover, women like Beal and Gwen Patton knew the Vietnam War exacerbated gender and economic discrimination in the Black Power and antiwar movements, as men focused on the draft and military service, while downplaying the plight of women and welfare recipients.

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temperance, industriousness, thrift, refined manners, and Victorian sexual morals." *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 14; Tanisha C. Ford, "SNCC, Women, Denim, and the Politics of Dress," *Journal of Southern History* 79, No. 3 (August, 2013): 625-658.

Writing in the *Liberator*, a monthly magazine which coined itself, “the voice of the African-American,”<sup>12</sup> Patton identified the economic arguments against the war:

Black people saw that the Vietnam war was the reason why the war on poverty had diminished...Black people saw Black militants forced into the army because of inequities in the draft. Black people saw Black students forced into the army to become Black mercenaries because this country does not allow them enough economic stability to continue their college education.<sup>13</sup>

Patton presented a strong economic argument, expanding the lack of funding for War on Poverty programs to include the inability for black men to stay in college, which, according to Patton, led directly to black men being drafted, because they could not earn education deferments.<sup>14</sup> Reduced War on Poverty spending coupled with the criminalization of black womanhood meant that black men were shamed into mercenary action—being hired soldiers—in order to conform to a white definition of masculinity.

Patton continued her article by dissecting the arguments of “white capitalists” who said that black people should support the War because black men were earning money for their families and black people were given jobs in military factories. She refuted these claims by drawing attention to the racist treatment black Americans received, arguing:

a black mercenary was killed in the Special Forces in Vietnam supposedly fighting for freedom for the Vietnamese people, and he could not get buried in Wetumpka, Alabama, because there were no plots left in the Black portion of the cemetery. A Black mercenary returns to this country from Vietnam, and he cannot get served in a local bar in Illinois. The Black people in factories know that they will be the first ones fired and will suffer greater ordeals when the depression comes.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Front Matter, *Liberator* 7, No. 1, (January, 1967).

<sup>13</sup> SNCC, “Statement on Vietnam,” *Freedomways* 6, No. 1 (Winter, 1966): 6-7; Patton, “Black People and the War,” *Liberator* 7, No. 2 (February, 1967): 11.

<sup>14</sup> Heather Stur, “In Service and in Protest: Black Women and the Impact of the Vietnam War on American Society,” in *Soul Soldiers*, 102.

<sup>15</sup> Patton, “Black People and the War,” 11.

The supposed benefits of black men's participation in the war effort and community support for American internationalism did not play out in reality, according to Patton. She saw all American wars of the twentieth century as the United States "building a world empire through exploitation and capitalism" and claimed that the United States was a racist and imperial nation, which saw all people of color as "cannon fodder" for the white establishment's ever expanding colonial interests.<sup>16</sup> The military was not concerned with the actual economic and social issues affecting black Americans, but instead needed cheap, hired hands to conduct their business.

In order to curb American colonial wars and to end the exploitation of people of color by the capitalist U.S. government, Patton believed, "the course of action to take is not to simply stop the war in Vietnam, but to radically change this country so that no more horrors and atrocities will exist in this country and abroad." Radically changing the country also meant changing the attitudes of the leadership of progressive organizations, a position Patton articulated in her 1970 essay "Black People and the Victorian Ethos," published in Toni Cade's *Black Woman* anthology. Having spent most of her life in civil rights organizing, elected as class president of Tuskegee Institute, and almost killed in a single car accident in Birmingham while shuttling a draft dodger to a bus station, Patton wrote with the authority of a veteran. She called for black men and women to abandon the white community's notion of Victorian ideals and the politics of respectability. Victorian ethos allowed black men to dominate black women and for black men to be dominated by white men and women, thus it was a mentality of sacrifice, defeat, and desperation. The Victorian ethos created a subservient culture within black homes and communities, denying black women a chance at real political freedom and allowed for

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

government officials to continue to belittle and ignore the needs of women and men of color.<sup>17</sup>

The politics of respectability or the Victorian ethos ability to hold black communities back was clearly visible in the failure of the Johnson administration to fund the War on Poverty and the Vietnam War as a “racist-colonialist” policy, where “For many, Vietnam [wa]s their graveyard.”<sup>18</sup> Feminist author and activist Anita Cornwell accused the government of manipulating the Victorian ethos of respectability to convince people that black American’s participation in Vietnam was something to celebrate. She wrote:

Still another of our leaders tries to justify the Black man’s participation in the nation’s horrendous intervention in Vietnam by declaring with pride that Black men have fought in all of America’s wars from the Revolution up until the present moment. And that is true, but what this leader knows and does not choose to emphasize is that *before, during, and after* each of those wars the Black man and his family have been enslaved, lynched, robbed, raped, and totally excluded by the society he has risked his life to protect. Therefore, I declare that only an Uncle Tom would brag about serving Old Marse faithfully when Old Marse has *always* repaid that service with more and more oppression.<sup>19</sup>

Cornwell saw the issue as more of a problem in the black community itself. If black leaders would have stopped supporting black military service or trumpeting black military achievements in previous wars, Cornwell insinuated, black men would not be assisting in “America’s grotesque attempt to turn the world into another Mississippi.”<sup>20</sup>

Cornwell’s protest also called into question the masculinity and race pride of black

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<sup>17</sup> Gwen Patton, “Black People and the Victorian Ethos,” *The Black Woman: An Anthology*, ed. Toni Cade Bambara (New York: Washington Square Press, 1970), 140-148; Gwen Patton, interview with the author, 1/15/2013; Margo Natalie Crawford, “Must Revolution be a Family Affair? Revisiting The Black Woman,” *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, eds. Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodward (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 185-204.

<sup>18</sup> “The White House Conference and the ‘Great Society,’” *Freedomways* 6, No. 2 (Spring, 1966): 101-102.

<sup>19</sup> Anita R. Cornwell, “On Being Black,” *Liberator* 7, No. 4 (April, 1967): 14-15; Anita R. Cornwell, *Black Lesbian in White America* (Tallahassee, FL: Naiad Press, 1983).

<sup>20</sup> Cornwell, “On Being Black,” 14.

leaders who encouraged or supported black men's service. By labeling these leaders "Uncle Toms," she evoked a deferential black masculinity that was nonthreatening, and thankful for any handout provided by whites. An Uncle Tom was an emasculated man in the black community, fearful of upsetting his white oppressor, thus, unsupportive of radical politics and protests for change.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, an Uncle Tom, according to those who used the epithet, was a man who had no pride in his race, and wished to assimilate to oppression. Cornwell could not accept the premise that whites wanted to help blacks, often postulated by the "Uncle Tom" black leaders she despised, "for we, as Black, *unwanted* Americans, are *never* going to get anywhere in this country as long as we continue to delude ourselves with the myth that the white man *means* well toward us and all those other Black folk he has sent to an untimely, blood-soaked grave."<sup>22</sup> The nefarious motives of white American leaders was a prominent theme in black women's antiwar organizing, as they sought to remind their constituents, targets, and readers of the broken promises and emasculating actions taken by government and local officials in the past.

The role of women in creating and defining anticolonial and antiracist activism expanded greatly in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Frances Beal's Women's Caucus officially broke from SNCC in 1969 and by 1971 was renamed the Third World Women's Alliance, reflecting an expansion of the membership to include Puerto Rican, Asian, Chicano, and American Indian women. The Third World Women's Alliance goals included: "creating sisterhood through Third World solidarity; promoting Third World unity around economic, social, educational, and political issues; collecting, interpreting,

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<sup>21</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 167.

<sup>22</sup> Cornwell, "On Being Black," 14.



and disseminating information about the Third World; establishing solid relationships with Third World men based on ‘human love and respect’; and training Third World women for leadership in the revolutionary struggle.” Their work was not explicitly anti-Vietnam War, as by 1971 American involvement in Vietnam was slowly winding down, but reflected the desire to work collectively with other colonized women to end imperial wars and create independent nations with full equality.<sup>23</sup> The organization’s international perspective also reflected the globalization inherent in Black Power rhetoric and the belief that women throughout the colonized world shared similar experiences of oppression. However, the women did use the war in Vietnam and Vietnamese women as examples of revolutionary solidarity. In their newsletter, *Triple Jeopardy*, the group published antiwar speeches and reprinted articles commending Third World women’s gains through revolution. In one such article, the Third World Women’s Alliance used Vietnamese women to explore the role of women of color in the revolution. Creating an image of shared oppression, the unsigned article drew parallels between the treatment of Vietnamese women by American imperialists and the struggles of women of color in the United States. The author wrote, “We see, then that no matter where are people are geographically located, our struggle against colonialism is akin to other struggles. ...Our enemies are the same; our oppression is one; our similarities are greater than our differences.” The organization felt that the Vietnamese women had set the tone for their role in revolutionary struggle, thus “as Third World women we have a job to do. We must recognize our power and potential in the struggle.” The job included exposing the ways that American imperialism and capitalism entrenched racism, sexism, and class

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<sup>23</sup> Springer, *Living for the Revolution*, 49; Kimberly Springer, “Black Feminists Respond to Black Power Masculinism,” *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), 105-118.

discrimination adversely affected people of color from the Third World.<sup>24</sup> The organization used *Triple Jeopardy* to highlight the contributions of women of color to the struggle and in multiple issues used the center pages to celebrate women's work in the Cuban Army, the Filipino independence movement, Puerto Rican women's travel to China, and as educators, activists, and community leaders in the United States.

The Third World Women's Alliance took their mission beyond print activism, sponsoring and participating in a November 4<sup>th</sup> antiwar march in New York City. At the march, they called for support of the South Vietnam Peace Plan, ending national and racial discrimination, and ending attacks on working people. By linking peace in Vietnam with antidiscrimination action, the women were able to dissect and articulate the intersections of American war policy and the consequences of capitalist imperialism, as experienced by people of color in the United States and abroad. The Third World Women's Alliance and their allies sought to overthrow American capitalism and establish a "socialist society free of class, race and sexual exploitation," and worked to develop coalitions with groups including Black Workers Congress, Third World Youth Movement, and the Black Panther Party to advance their agenda.<sup>25</sup>

A partnership between the Third World Women's Alliance and the Black Panther Party could seem surprising. The Black Panthers were known for the masculine rhetoric, especially from Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver who famously bragged about raping white women in his autobiography *Soul on Ice*. He believed "rape was an insurrectionary act." Sexual violence against white women "delighted" him because he "was defying and trampling upon the white man's law, upon his system of values,

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<sup>24</sup> "Live Like Her," *Triple Jeopardy*, ND, 14.

<sup>25</sup> "Third World Antiwar March, Nov. 4," *Triple Jeopardy*, ND, 3.

and...defiling his women.” Through the rapes, Cleaver believed he “was getting revenge.” Cleaver was well aware of the long history of sexual violence that black women endured at the hands of white men. Cleaver’s glib defense of his crimes informed the image of the Panthers to the public, as the essay from his autobiography was first published in *Ramparts*. Although Cleaver had a leading role in the Panthers early on, by 1971 Cleaver was living in exile in Algeria and had been expelled from the Black Panther Party by Huey Newton. Moreover, as the Panthers matured in their revolutionary rhetoric, they promoted female empowerment and were eventually led by Elaine Brown. Panther women were at the forefront of much of their organizing and sustained the group throughout the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>26</sup>

The Panthers also believed strongly in the shared oppression of Third World people of color by American imperialism and sought to overthrow American capitalism in order to form a more just and free society. Moreover, by the early 1970s, the Party had gone through a series of reformations and had begun to focus their energies on community betterment programs like their Free Breakfast for Children campaigns, as well as cultivating relationships with other revolutionary groups. Much like the Third World Women’s Alliance, the Black Panther Party looked to anticolonial activists abroad, especially in Vietnam, as models for women’s behavior and place in the revolution. The only female chair of the Party, Elaine Brown, wrote of her introduction to the Panthers by Ericka Huggins, the young captain of women of the Southern California chapter:

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<sup>26</sup> Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice*, (San Francisco: Ramparts Press, 1968), 6; Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman’s Story*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 200-250; Martin Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013): 78-79, 95-98, 254-255, 306-307.

as women, our role was not very different from that of men, except in certain particulars. Ericka told us point-blank that as women we might have to have a sexual encounter with “the enemy” at night and slit his throat in the morning—at which we all groaned. She reminded us of the Vietnamese guerrilla women, who were not only carrying guns but using their very bodies against American forces... Our gender was but another weapon, another tool of the revolution. We also had the task of producing children, progeny of revolution who would carry the flame when we fell, knowing that generations after us would prevail.<sup>27</sup>

Huggins was candid with new women members of the Panthers that they would be exploited sexually, that their bodies were a tool in the revolution, which they should willingly employ when necessary. Huggins drew a connection between Panther women’s struggles in the United States and the much acclaimed women guerilla fighters in Vietnam. If the Vietnamese guerilla fighters are not ashamed of their bodies and sexual exploitation, why are you, she asked in response to the groan of her newly initiated members. A paternalistic notion of the Vietnamese seeped into Huggins’ rhetoric, as though to make her point, she had to show that the Vietnamese women were also fighting, dying, and using their bodies. Huggins shamed the women for their reactions to her warnings by illustrating the sacrifices of the Vietnamese, but why would the women be ashamed if they did not already feel superior to the Vietnamese? Huggins tactic could also be seen as another way for women of diverse backgrounds to be connected, to use their gender in a powerful statement against U.S. imperialism. The Panther women should take their clues from the Vietnamese women who were not fearful or timid, Huggins intoned. The use of a gendered argument to organize Panther women is interesting, especially considering the well documented abuse and sexist treatment of

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<sup>27</sup> Brown, *A Taste of Power*, 137.

Panther men toward female members.<sup>28</sup> Was Huggins buying into the treatment? Was this a way to circumvent rapes and beatings, by encouraging the women to seek out Panther men to procreate with, or was Huggins just too young to truly understand the implications of her remarks? Panther women saw themselves united with other revolutionary women and their willingness to use their bodies deepened this connection. Their sex was one step in a series to create drastic social change in the United States and abroad. It would be easy to blame Huggins' rhetoric on her youth and the influence of her husband, John Huggins. However, Ericka Huggins was a strong and determined member of the Panthers, who served two years in a New Haven, Connecticut jail, never losing her passion for the Panthers or their antiwar campaign.<sup>29</sup>

In February 1971, Huggins and Bobby Seale sent messages in support of the "People's Peace Treaty," a collaborative document developed by the Vietnamese and US students against the war. The peace treaty outlined terms for a negotiated peace, including the immediate and total withdraw of American troops from North Vietnam, discussion to secure the release of prisoners of war, and the respect of the sovereignty of Laos and Cambodia. Huggins message equated her situation with Prisoners of War in Vietnam: "educating the people about all the political prisoners of our war against

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<sup>28</sup> For example, Elaine Brown recounts the brutal treatment of Kathleen Cleaver by Eldridge in *A Taste of Power* (220-227), though Cleaver is often moot on the point, focusing instead on the power of women in the movement. See Kathleen Neal Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, eds., "Women, Power, and Revolution," *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party*, (New York: Routledge, 2001), 123-127.

<sup>29</sup> Huggins, Bobby Seale, and 7 other members of the New Haven, Connecticut Black Panther chapter were arrested on conspiracy charges in May, 1969. On May 19, 1969, Panther member Alex Rackley was kidnapped, because three members of the chapter suspected he was an FBI informant. The three tortured Rackley for two days, and after getting a confession, drove him to small town outside New Haven, shot him twice, and dumped his body in the Coginchaug River. Huggins was believed to have been in the New Haven apartment during Rackley's torturing and one participant claimed she boiled water. Huggins denied the charges and felt she was targeted by COINTELPRO. She spent two years in jail, much of it in solitary confinement. She and Bobby Seale had the charges against them dismissed on May 25, 1971. Huggins, Telephone interview with the author, Aug. 2012; Donal Freed, *Agony in New Haven: The Trial of Bobby Seale, Ericka Huggins, and the Black Panther Party* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973).

oppression. No heroes, no rhetoric, but massive educational rallies and street politicizing, show how POW's are examples of the situation every one of us face." Huggins also encouraged participation of all Americans, "young, old, black, brown, red, yellow, beige, whatever. Male, female, gay—everybody. Because everybody is faced with Amerikan [sic] oppression and all of us are the America that will be, you dig it?"<sup>30</sup> Huggins rhetoric, while no doubt influenced by the male members of the Panthers, was one of true belief and determination that a Panther woman's body was another weapon in the "grand revolution" and should be used whenever necessary to help win the war against American imperialism, like the body of the Vietnamese guerilla woman. Her experience in jail correlated with the experience of political prisoners and prisoners of war globally, because the captives were fighting American imperialism and aggression, in various ways.

The focus on black men's masculinity could appear to undermine the role of women in Black Power organizations or further subjugate them to background positions. Yet, historian Stephen Ward posits, "as a symbolic call to arms, a declaration of militant political commitment, or a metaphor for collective dignity, the struggle to reclaim 'black manhood' galvanized black women as well as men within the emerging political communities of the early Black Power Movement."<sup>31</sup> Ward's argument helps explain the work of women in Black Power organizations. In New York City a group originally formed to provide support for Malcolm X's widow took up anti-Vietnam war protests by

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<sup>30</sup> Ericka Huggins, "A Message from Prison," in *If They come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance*, Angela Y. Davis, ed. (New York: The Third Press, 1971), 107. For information of the "People's Peace Treaty" see Charles DeBenedetti with Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 295-296, 301-302. Text of the Peace Treaty: National Student Association, "People's Peace Treaty," *New York Review of Books* 16, No. 5 (March 15, 1971).

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Ward, "The Third World Women's Alliance: Black Feminist Radicalism and Black Power Politics," *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* ed. Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), 119-144.

directly challenging the manhood of black men.<sup>32</sup> The women, working under the title “Black Women Enraged,” (BWE) provided counseling advice, created leaflets and posters, and directly engaged with black men seeking to avoid the draft, as well as those men who wanted to join the military. Adopting New York lawyer Conrad Lynn’s *How to Stay out of the Army*, the women broke down the process of earning a military deferment and the expected outcome of various techniques.<sup>33</sup> BWE used simple, direct language and addressed their fliers to Young Black Men, especially those who had already received notification of their 1-A status. Unlike Lynn’s handbook, BWE encouraged young men to “write an entirely different letter insisting that as a black youth, you to [sic] do not want to fight in a war that seeks to perpetuate white supremacy. State that your war is in the black ghetto at home.” The women continued with their advice, “if you have appealed on racial grounds, the draft board will write to you saying that the reasons you have given are not legal. Now understand this! They are saying it is illegal for you a black man, to refuse to fight whitey’s war.” The group did not sugar coat the process of attempting to get a draft deferment based on a racial argument. Instead, they provided step-by-step instructions on how to deal with the draft boards, including the possibility of arrest, insisting on men visiting Conrad Lynn, paying a \$100.00 retainer fee, and fighting their draft notices. Politely, they told men to “be sure to pay him a consultation fee. It is a felony to advise any person to avoid the draft, but if a lawyer is paid a fee, it is then legally correct for him to advise you.” By insisting that men pay Lynn a fee, BWE

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<sup>32</sup> Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America’s Second Wave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 87.

<sup>33</sup> Conrad Lynn, *How to Stay Out of the Army: A Guide to your Rights Under the Draft Law* (New York: Grove Press, 1967); Conrad Lynn, *There is a Fountain: The Autobiography of Conrad Lynn* (New York: Lawrence Hill and Company, 1993); “Conrad Lynn, a Veteran of the Civil Rights Movement, Dead at 87,” *New York Times*, Nov. 18, 1995.

attempted to protect Lynn and the draftees from government prosecution and provided Lynn with a potential stream of clients.

Another tactic BWE employed was to use jive and slang in their posters to draw the attention of the young black men they sought to protect. In one such poster, the women sought to undermine black youth's arguments for not worrying about the draft. On the handwritten poster, BWE told young black men in Harlem: "We-l-l, they're drafting black men with police records. You're not going because you think you can get out of it since you're so co-o-ol. So what about your brother baby? Or don't you care about your brother?" The women mimicked street slang in order to undermine the nature of street corner bravado.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, they played to the notion of the collective, reminding potential draftees that even if they were able to avoid service, their brothers may not be so lucky. They also addressed the issue of patriotism head on, arguing: "Oh, you're an American? And you want to fight for your government? Well Malcolm told you, you ain't Americans, you're ex-slaves and you have no government. The government is of the whites, by the whites and for the whites." In doing so, the organization promoted a black manhood wherein black men refused service inductions, took responsibility for their actions, and helped their brothers to avoid service as well.<sup>35</sup>

BWE encouraged men to choose jail over the armed forces, because the war in Vietnam was the white man's war, and black men needed to be at home. They told black men that Vietnam only held death for them and that they should "stay here and fight for

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<sup>34</sup> Daniel Matlin, *On the Corner: African American Intellectuals and the Urban Crisis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 11; 108.

<sup>35</sup> Black Women Enraged, Social Movement Vertical File, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.



your manhood. Black women will not allow you to stand alone in your decision.”<sup>36</sup>

Fighting for black manhood was not a task for only black men. Women were important players in defining how and when black men expressed their manhood and what it meant. Black women also needed men to refuse to serve in Vietnam because “black women are murdered when you [black men] are murdered. Black women have decided we shall no longer be victims!”<sup>37</sup> Black women needed black men at home, caring for their children and living in their homes, so that black women could be protected.

The language of protection ran throughout BWE’s posters and leaflets. If black men were drafted, they could not protect the lives of their women and children, the organization argued. Because black women and children needed protection from “the murder and rape of the white racist,” black women “must have the courage to back our men when they choose jail rather than die in Vietnam!!!” The choice of jail seems counterintuitive to the need to protect black women and children, however, serving a jail sentence meant that at some point, the man would return to his family, whereas serving in Vietnam came with the real possibility of death. However, refusing to serve in Vietnam was not the only action black men needed to take against the white power structure to show their manhood.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Black Women Enraged Poster, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1954-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 52.

<sup>37</sup> Black Women Enraged Social Movement Vertical File, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

<sup>38</sup> Andrea G. Hunter and James Earl Davis, “Constructing Gender: An Exploration of Afro-American Men’s Conceptualizations of Manhood,” *Gender and Society* 6, no. 1 (Sept. 1992): 464-479; Douglas Schrock and Michael Schwalbe, “Men, Masculinity, and Manhood Acts,” *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol. 35 (2009): 277-295; Andrea G. Hunter and James Earl Davis, “Hidden Voices of Black Men: The Meaning, Structure, and Complexity of Manhood,” *Journal of Black Studies* 25, no. 1 (Sept. 1994): 20-40; Christopher S. Parker, “When Politics Becomes Protest: Black Veterans and Political Activism in the Postwar South,” *The Journal of Politics* 71, no. 1 (Jan. 2009): 113-131.

In the fall of 1966, BWE wondered where black men were as members of the New York Police Department's 32<sup>nd</sup> precinct in Harlem "stripped a Black Woman and hauled her to the station house." The action took place in front of people and BWE felt "the police showed in that instant how weak-kneed and white-livered he considered Black manhood!" Black men were raised to protect white wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters, but not black womanhood, according to BWE, and black men needed to begin to defend their women from the police and assaults on their bodies. They asked "when are you Black Men going to stop being faggots of the world?" Using a degrading slang term from homosexual males, BWE themselves questioned black manhood and black men's position in their communities. If they could not or would not protect black women, why were they there? Black men needed to assert their power: "We need not only Black Power, but also physical power to deal with this beast white man." Black men could no longer stand ideally by as black womanhood was assaulted by police, or as black women and children were threatened, intimidated, and sexually assaulted by white men. Instead, black men needed to meet force with force, proving that they were just as or more powerful than white men and would protect their families in similar fashion. Thus, Black Women Enraged's definition of black manhood required black men to protect black womanhood and to fight "here for their dignity as black men."<sup>39</sup>

Black Women Enraged also presented black womanhood as something that needed to be protected, but acknowledged and celebrated the importance of black women in supporting black men's desire to avoid service in Vietnam and to express their manhood at home, presenting black women in opposition to the Moynihan Report. They

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<sup>39</sup> "Black People of Harlem," Fall 1966, Social Movement Vertical File, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin and "Black Women!," n.d., Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Files, 1954-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 52.

were not the root of black pathology and the reason black Americans were in poverty; instead, black women were victims of white racial resentment, of sexual violence, and of emasculated black manhood. Black women did not emasculate black men, as Moynihan believed. Black men were emasculated by “whitey,” who “pushes our children out of school after failing to teach them, then labels them ‘drop-outs,’ ‘hoodlums,’ ‘criminals,’ and the like...these are just part of whitey’s plan to keep us children from cradle to the grave!” By labeling black men deviant or criminal, Black Women Enraged argued, black men were denied the chance to attain standing as a respected man. White men protected their own definitions of manhood by infantilizing black men and controlling black men’s actions in public. When Moynihan suggested that black men needed discipline and order to restore their manhood, thus pushing for an increased number of black men in the military, he attempted to force black men into the white man’s definition of manhood. BWE attempted to counteract that thinking by bringing nuance to the discussion and showing that black men’s manhood needed to be tied to their ability to protect their families at home, not by dying for a racist war in a foreign country.<sup>40</sup>

Black Women Enraged’s leadership included Patricia Robinson, author of “Poor Black Women,” a psychotherapist and a Planned Parenthood volunteer who advocated for expanded access to birth control and family planning services for black women in New York City. Her family published the *Afro-American* in Baltimore and were ardent defenders of Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois against McCarthy era attacks.

Robinson’s father was a reproductive rights activist and “president of the Social Services Advisory Board of Maryland, where he blazed a trail of policies that stopped nighttime

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<sup>40</sup> “Black Women!,” n.d., Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Files, 1954-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 52.

searches of welfare recipients homes and ensured that they not be excluded from family planning because they were single.”<sup>41</sup> Robinson’s work to better the lives of black women in the inner cities and to end black men’s participation in the war in Vietnam highlighted the connection between the war and the welfare state. Subject to nighttime raids, denied benefits if married, and now subject to their fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons being drafted, poor black women had little choice but to fight the war machine.

On the West coast, the Black Women’s Organization Against the War and Racism also sought to redefine black manhood through avoiding the draft. In a flier, the women argued that “It takes a man to say ‘hell no’ to McNamara and a slave to blindly and silently refuse to make the decision as to who or when he should kill innocent people that never called him nigger.” The women demonstrated in Berkeley and sought monetary donations to help keep black men out of the war. They sought to tie up the courts with citizenship and colonization arguments if men were charged with avoiding the draft. Like Black Women Enraged, the San Francisco based Black Women’s Organization against Racism and the War knew that black men who refused the draft would be prosecuted, but felt real black men would make the moral and political stand. However, unlike their East coast counterparts, the Black Women’s Organization against War and Racism and the War did not employ jive, slang, or plain language. They presented their arguments in theoretical and political terms, most likely because of their proximity to many bay area college campuses, whose students made up the core of the Black Power and civil rights activism in California in the late 1960s.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Carol Giardina, *Freedom for Women*, 64.

<sup>42</sup> “Black Men Stay Home!” April 1967, Social Movement Vertical File, Black Women’s Organization Against War and Racism, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin; Donna Murch, *Living*

Outside of antiwar groups and nascent feminist organizations, welfare activists continually linked the egregious costs—monetary and human—of fighting in Vietnam to the ineffectiveness of War on Poverty programs, strapped by dwindling funds. In Mississippi, Mrs. Anne Rankin, a black woman freedom fighter and follower of Stokely Carmichael, spent the month of April, 1967 “trying to get young Negro boys who was call [sic] to be sent to the war a later date to sign a petition to send to the Secretary of war stating that they would not serve in Viet-nam because this war is the rich man’s war and the poor man[‘s] fight meaning 80% Negroes and 20% white gets killed.”<sup>43</sup> Rankin used class based language to make her argument, claiming that Vietnam was the white (rich) man’s war, but the black (poor) man’s fight. She saw that the white establishment was using poor people to fight their war. She went further, citing “statistics” to back up her argument, claiming that 80% of those killed were black men. These statistics were overblown, as in the entirety of the war, blacks made up only 12.5% of those killed in Vietnam.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, as historian George Herring noted, “African Americans correctly saw themselves as the primary victims of an inequitable selective service system that drafted their sons in disproportionate numbers and used them as cannon fodder.”<sup>45</sup> Rankin was one African American woman who clearly saw this inequality in the draft system and worked to rectify it, by removing black men from the draft rolls.

Rankin, writing to her “freedom friends,” Mr. and Mrs. Frank Stewart, expressed great discontent with the war in Vietnam, stating, “they are somewhere trying to clean up

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*for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

<sup>43</sup> Anne Rankin to Mr. and Mrs. Frank Stewart, April 25, 1967. Anne Rankin Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Tougaloo College Archives, L. Zenobia Coleman Library, Jackson, Mississippi.

<sup>44</sup> Combat Area Casualty File, November 1993. Center for Electronic Records, National Archives, Washington, DC.

<sup>45</sup> George Herring, *America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (4<sup>th</sup> edition, Boston: McGraw Hill, 2002), 212.

some body else [sic] house and they so filthy until it hard to live here. Do you understand I mean they need to clean up here.”<sup>46</sup> Mrs. Rankin did not stop her political action against the Vietnam War with her petition work. She also gave an undated speech to a group of Civil Rights demonstrators in Mississippi. She used her position as a mother to call people to action, asking:

how does the president and Government feel sending mothers sons to war now just look I go thru the process of carrying the Child and Birthing him and then they go call Uncle Sam stop in snatch him up to go do his dirty work and all the while he was unable to be of any service to me or his self. I couldn't get Even a desent [sic] education nor Health Care. Now what is this raising 2 legged pigs for the market?<sup>47</sup>

Rankin felt that the government owed her an education and health care, at least, for taking her son away from her. Interestingly, she felt Uncle Sam was responsible for causing her to lose a vital income, when she stated, “he was unable to be of any service to me or his self.” Rankin worked hard to raise her child, but was not able to give him health care or an education. Now, he was also not given the chance to work to benefit his mother or his own family because the government had taken him from his community. By comparing male children raised in the black community to two legged pigs sent to the market, Rankin highlighted the feeling among many antiwar supporters that black men were simply expendable goods. They were raised to be sold on the market to the highest bidder, one who could use them in any way they saw fit. The image of the two legged pig also allowed Rankin to analogize black men to pigs, who added to the American diet, allowing for a more diversified lifestyle for those who could afford it. Thus, the black

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<sup>46</sup> Anne Rankin to Mr. and Mrs. Frank Stewart, April 25, 1967. Anne Rankin Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Tougaloo College Archives, Zenobia Coleman Library, Jackson, Mississippi.

<sup>47</sup> Anne Rankin, “Speech Vietnam War,” undated, Rankin Papers, Tougaloo College Archives, Box 1, Folder 11 Tougaloo College Archives, Zenobia Coleman Library, Jackson, Mississippi.

male, sent to war to do the bidding of white (rich) men, were not only sold on the market, they were also nourishing the white establishment who “bought” their services.

Rankin did not stop at attacking the government for stealing the black communities’ men, who were now unable to provide for their families. She continued, “now we are talking about how much we are needed in Vietnam and we are needed here at home worst [sic]. The problems are here at home we are having unnecessary killings here. May I say you can’t put out fire with fire. Somebody has got to listen. Don’t just sit there and give orders for dirty jobs to be did and place the responsibility on the one you gave the orders to. Blame yourself.”<sup>48</sup> In this section of the speech, Rankin spoke directly to her audience. She called them to action, imploring them to not only work to end the war in Vietnam, but to see the problems that were currently affecting black communities in the United States.

Unlike Gwen Patton, who formed the National Black Antiwar Antidraft Union in 1967 to focus solely on ending the war in Vietnam and preventing the black antiwar organizations from being absorbed into white organizations, Rankin worked to develop integrated antiwar groups. Rankin also attempted to draw stronger connections between America’s foreign policy and failed welfare programs. She viewed American foreign policy as a distraction from the problems at home, and saw the U.S. government as a racist regime whose sole goal was to spread capitalism and oppression throughout the world. While Patton and Patricia Cornwell believed the lack of funding for poverty programs and the cost of the Vietnam War were directly related, as did middle class activists, Rankin’s words were spoken from someone who had direct knowledge of welfare. They were not filtered through a veil of sympathy or the drive to lift all black

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

people into the middle class confines of “respectability” that characterized much of the middle class activism against the war and for poverty programs. For Rankin the cost of the war was felt in her pocket book. “The welfare it is rotten with the cost of living going up,” she wrote. “Everyday taxes going up. Still a family on welfare has to live on what they give...why is this? Welfare is just a help out not enough to live...this is slavery and this only on the poor, both black and white.”<sup>49</sup>

Rankin identified with the hundreds of black welfare mothers in Mississippi and throughout the country who refused “to send their sons to Vietnam to kill and die for a State which kept them on the edge of starvation.”<sup>50</sup> These women connected welfare and peace in a similar fashion as Rankin, arguing that their sons were not the property of the state, to be taken at the whim of a man in Washington who would not send his own progeny. Mrs. Anne Henderson of Milwaukee articulated this position in 1972, stating:

If you think I’m gonna have a baby—and what that child grow up with no food or clothing; and then watch him go to school where teachers don’t teach him anything; and worry that he’s gonna become a pimp or start shooting up dope; and finally, when he’s raised, see him go into the army and get really shot up in there—if you think I’m gonna go through all that pain and suffering for an extra \$50 or \$100 or even \$500 a month, why you must be crazy.<sup>51</sup>

Mrs. Henderson was reacting to the racist assumption that welfare mothers had children in order to get larger welfare payments. Her assertion that she would not raise a child, worry about his behavior, and watch him be drafted, illustrates a link that welfare recipients felt between the war in Vietnam and their welfare funding. While the draft had ended by 1972, Mrs. Henderson recognized that working class men were more likely to

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Wilmette Brown, *Black Women and the Peace Movement* (Bristol, England: Fallingwall Press, 1984), 26.

<sup>51</sup> Mrs. Anne Henderson in Milwaukee County Welfare Rights Organization, *Welfare Mothers Speak Out: We Aint Gonna Shuffle Anymore* (New York: W.W. Norton Press, 1972), 83; Angela Y. Davis, “The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working-Class Perspective” *Women, Race, and Class*, ed. Angela Y. Davis (New York: Vintage Books, 1981), 222-242.



be drafted if another war occurred, and believed that draftees from poor areas were more likely to be killed in action. She echoed actress Eartha Kitt's earlier denunciations of the war to First Lady Johnson, at a White House luncheon in January 1968. Kitt said:

the young people are angry and the parents are angry because they are being so highly taxed and there is a war going on, and Americans don't know why... The youth is not rebelling for no reason at all, they are rebelling against something and we can't camouflage what it is... Truthfully, no self respecting, concerned, involved and discriminated American, be they Negro or Caucasian could be expected to do any less.<sup>52</sup>

Kitt spoke for a group of Americans who did not have access to the Johnsons or even their elected officials. Her words stung, and created a backlash among some Americans, while others embraced her. Mrs. Lee Stahl found Kitt's argument compelling, writing in

*The Louisville Defender*:

I agree with Eartha Kitt. We would not have the unrest in our cities if it were not for the knowledge that the war in Vietnam is draining away our resources so that there is no money for improving conditions in the ghetto. In some way the bombing of North Vietnam must be stopped and American Policy should be to let people of other countries choose their own form of government. All that the average citizen can do is make his opinion known. This, Miss Kitt has done for many, many Americans. May she continue to be blessed with wisdom and courage.<sup>53</sup>

Mrs. Stahl did not have a particular remedy for ending the war, though she tied the problems in the ghettos to the bombings of North Vietnam. She, like Kitt and others, understood that young Americans of color were confused and isolated from politics.

Kentucky State Representative Mae Street Kidd also voiced this opinion, stating:

Blacks, in my opinion – and my opinion may not be worth anything... blacks were of no consequence in politics other than the fact that blacks worked and got up here and worked for the election of candidates but usually if you let me run a dive or place of business or you have a whiskey store or something of this kind... I never got the feeling that it was, if I assist you or help you in your election, would

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<sup>52</sup> "Eartha Kitt" *The Louisville Defender* Jan. 18, 1968.

<sup>53</sup> Letters to the Editor, *The Louisville Defender* February 8, 1968.

you help me? Whites, in my opinion... never felt that blacks had any place in politics or any power structure.<sup>54</sup>

Representative Kidd's words echoed leaders of the antiwar and Civil Rights Movements. Kidd's words described the emotions of many African Americans, who felt they were being placated by the Johnson administration through rhetoric but not action on issues like Vietnam and poverty. This led some to more violent protest and overt action, while many older, middle class women remained behind the scenes, including Kidd. She sympathized with the movement, but was not one to protest in the streets. She understood that overt protest could lead to changes at the local and even the national level, but did not feel that she should be a part of the action.<sup>55</sup>

Welfare workers, antiwar protesters, and Movement insiders found a common ally in Shirley Chisholm, the first black woman to serve in Congress. Chisholm, a Representative from Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn (she defeated former CORE President James Farmer in the November 1968 election for the newly created seat), embraced the intersectionality of her identity, insisting "upon the equal salience of her racial and gender identities."<sup>56</sup> Her work through formal party politics, as a member of the House of Representatives and a candidate for the Democratic nomination for president in 1972, brought Black Power antiwar and economic discourse into mainstream channels of power. Chisholm won her seat by building a multi-ethnic coalition, speaking

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<sup>54</sup> Representative Mae Street Kidd oral history conducted by Kenneth Chumbley, tape number 686, Oral History Center, University of Louisville, December 5, 1978.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Farmer was a "liberal-Republican" and shared many of the same positions as Chisholm. However, Farmer's use of thinly veiled references to black matriarchical pathology and his inability to connect with Puerto Rican voters in Brooklyn hindered his chances. Farmer told voters they need a male voice in Washington, because women had run black communities for too long. John Kifner, "G.O.P. Names James Farmer for Brooklyn Race for Congress," *New York Times*, May 20, 1968, 34; John Kifner, "Farmer and Woman in Lively Bedford-Stuyvesant Race" *New York Times*, October 26, 1968, 22.

Spanish with Puerto Rican immigrants, and addressing the shared struggles of poor people of color in her district.<sup>57</sup>

Chisholm arrived in Washington promising to speak frankly and passionately about issues that affected her district and her own intersectional identity. In her first speech on the House floor, she denounced the War in Vietnam and newly-inaugurated President Richard M. Nixon's backtracking of campaign promises to speedily end the war. Her speech, delivered on March 28, 1969, came as hundreds of women protested outside the Capital, carrying black balloons and demanding limitations on government appropriations to the Defense Department in order to better fund poverty, education, and city revitalization programs. Chisholm echoed the demands of her anti-war sisters, insisting on an explanation for Nixon's desire to build a missile defense system while at the same time he cut funding for Head Start programs in Washington, D.C. She was incredulous at Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird's Senate testimony, in which he told legislators to expect to be in Vietnam for at least two more years. Calling the Defense Department's budget a "cancerous growth," Chisholm lamented, "Two more years of hunger for Americans, of death for our best young men, of children here at home suffering the life-long handicap of not having a good education when they are young." If the Nixon administration was unwilling to curb spending in Vietnam, Chisholm warned that poverty in the United States would continue to grow, robbing young people of the chance to contribute to society and grow into full citizens. Instead of spending "2/3 of

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<sup>57</sup> Joshua Guild, "To Make that Someday Come: Shirley Chisholm's Radical Politics of Possibility," *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* eds. Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 248-270; "Chisholm, Shirley Anita," House of Representatives Biographies <<http://history.house.gov/People/detail/10918>>. Accessed 6/25/2013; Shirley Chisholm, *Unbought and Unbossed* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970); Shirley Chisholm, *The Good Fight* (New York: Bantam Books, 1973); A non-juvenile audience biography of Chisholm's life has not been produced since the early 1970s and would be a welcome addition to American women's studies.

federal income,” on the Defense Department and oversees imperial adventures, Chisholm implored the House of Representatives, and by extension the Nixon Administration, to “respond to the mandate the American people have clearly expressed. They have said, ‘End the War. Stop the waste. Stop the killing. Do something for our people first.’... We must force the administration to rethink its distorted, unreal scale of priorities. Our children, our jobless men, our deprived, rejected, and starving fellow citizens must come first.” Chisholm promised to vote no on any bill in the House that provided funding for the Defense Department and cemented herself as a strong antiwar and antipoverty advocate.<sup>58</sup>

Chisholm’s denouncement of Nixon’s Vietnam policies and domestic economic spending continued throughout her time in the House of Representatives and made her a favorite of Black Power and antiwar organizers. In June of 1969 she called for amnesty for all men who resisted the war, and in October joined House members and protesters around the country to call for a Moratorium on the fighting. Speaking again on the House floor, she drew parallels between the lack of funding for poverty programs and the bloated budget of the Defense Department.<sup>59</sup> Chisholm’s passionate antiwar stances continued into her second term and set into motion her unsuccessful, but historic, run for the 1972 Democratic Presidential Nomination. Although never a front runner, Chisholm brought her antiwar, antipoverty, and black feminist identity to the campaign trail. At an Oakland, California voter registration event, Chisholm asked, “Do we need more military

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<sup>58</sup> Shirley Chisholm “People and Peace, Not Profits and War,” *Not in Our Name: American Antiwar Speeches, 1846 to Present*. ed. Jesse Stellato (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Press, 2012), 162-165.

<sup>59</sup> See: Chisholm, “Amnesty for Men Resisting the War in Vietnam,” June 19, 1969, Harriet Tubman Literary Circle, University of Texas Digital Libraries <[https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/12423/Chisholm\\_VietnamResistersCR.pdf](https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstream/handle/2152/12423/Chisholm_VietnamResistersCR.pdf)>. Accessed June 25, 2013; Chisholm, “Vietnam,” *Congressional Record-House*, October 14, 1969, 30023-30024.

spending or guaranteed income, education, housing, and health care?” She encouraged black people to register and vote for progressive black and white candidates and to become part of the system “because there is no other place to fight.” Chisholm believed black Americans could not be “silently accepting” of gross government spending on the military and space exploration. She linked the lack of funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development to overspending by the military in Vietnam.<sup>60</sup> Chisholm’s historic run for the presidential nomination in 1972 brought together a coalition of students, feminist activist, Black Power advocates, and antiwar protesters. Her candidacy embodied the intersectional lives of activists, especially women, who worked to end oppression in many forms as American involvement in Vietnam waxed and waned. Though she failed to win the nomination for the Democratic candidate for President in 1972, she won 152 delegates (5.04%), the fourth most among candidates.<sup>61</sup>

Black women’s antiwar protests were an integral part in the development of the black and Third World women’s movements of the mid and late 1970s and beyond. Gwen Patton, Shirley Chisholm, and others used their experiences in antiwar, Black Power, and Civil Rights organizing to launch the Third World Women’s Alliance, the Combahee River Collective, and many other local, national, and international feminist organizations which sought to address social, economic, and political issues facing women of color throughout the world. Black women’s contributions to antiwar and feminist organizing has often been ignored, as white, middle class activists of both genders were projected as the vanguard forces in social change. The work of black

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<sup>60</sup> Shirley Chisholm, “Speech for Voter Registration Conference, Oakland,” March 29, 1972. 3-4. Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation Files, Series 2, Box 18, Folder 8, Green Library Special Collections, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

<sup>61</sup> Ethel Payne, “Some Win, Some Lose at Dems Convention,” *Chicago Defender*, July 15, 1972.

women to redefine black manhood and womanhood in a light of the Moynihan Report and the Vietnam War were refutations of hegemonic masculinity and femininity based on white standards. By connecting welfare, war spending, and the plight of black Americans women challenged the economic arguments presented as reasons for black men to enlist in the military. Most importantly, black women's strong stances against the war and encouraging black men to refuse service presented black womanhood not as pathological, but as uplifting and supportive of families, communities, and themselves. Instead of being reduced and degraded by the Moynihan Report and its various implementations across governmental policies, black women showed that black womanhood was made up of "matriarchs, but we have been forced to live in abandonment and been used and abused... Let it be clearly understood that Black women's liberation is not anti-male; any such sentiment or interpretationa [sic] as such cannot be tolerated. It must be taken clearly for what it is—pro-human for all peoples." By removing black men from their homes and communities, the draft and the War forced black women to continue to live without men in their lives. Thus, black women's focus on keeping black men out of military service served to undermine matriarchical dogma, while also reinforcing the humanistic arguments of a shared Third World mentality and imagined community of colonial subjects.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Maryanne Weathers, "An Argument for Black Women's Liberation as a Revolutionary Force," Oct. 1968, 1-2, Social Action Vertical File, Black and Third World Women's Liberation Alliance, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

## CHAPTER SIX: DISRUPTING IMPERIALISM: BLACK POWER GOES INTERNATIONAL

“Is it not conceivable, then, that that the Negro people, who understand the white man’s hypocrisy better than that of any one else and who are already applying an enema to the rot which has for so long contaminated America’s domestic social organization, may spark an international purification as well?”—Robert Span Browne<sup>1</sup>

Calling for the end of the draft, burning draft cards, and demanding expanded antipoverty programs were not the only actions radical black Americans took against the war in Vietnam. Just as important as keeping black men from being drafted to fight in Vietnam, the need to disrupt American imperialism in the Third World occupied Black Power’s rhetoric and actions.<sup>2</sup> For Black Power advocates, a Third World mentality pervaded the language of their organizations and provided a clear connection between black Americans at home and people of color abroad suffering under American neo-colonial warfare. In order to disrupt American diplomacy, Black Power advocates traveled to North Vietnam, to China, to Cuba, to the African continent, and to sympathetic Western nations like Switzerland to orate against American diplomatic choices, investigate and testify on war crimes committed by the United States against the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, and to cultivate relationships and establish homes for Black Power throughout the world.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert S. Browne, “The Freedom Movement and the War in Vietnam” *Freedomways* 5 No. 4 (Fall 1965): 477.

<sup>2</sup> Third World does not mean division of countries along political alignment linked to the Cold War. While Black Power used the term Third World as Cold War jargon, alignment and political affiliation were not precursors for Third World demarcation by Black Power advocates. Thus, while Cuba was a communist country and as so, considered Second World (aligned with the Soviet Union), Black Power imagined Cuba as a Third World nation, with a shared, colonial identity.

<sup>3</sup> Michael L. Clemons and Charles E. Jones, “Global Solidarity: The Black Panther Party in the Global Arena,” *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and Their Legacy*, eds. Kathleen Neal Cleaver and George Katsiaficas (New York: Routledge, 2001), 20-40; Kathleen Neal Cleaver, “Mobilizing for Mumia Abu-Jamal in Paris,” *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther*

African Americans traveling abroad and finding support for their domestic causes was not new in the mid-1960s. The Soviet Union, even before the ramping up of the Cold War following World War II, supported black American's bids for freedom through the Communist Party USA and their effort to integrate labor unions, end racial segregation in the South, and defend the Scottsboro Boys. Glenda Gilmore, Thomas Borstelmann, and Mary Dudziak traced the ways Civil Rights organizations used American diplomacy to gain rights at home. Their foundational works highlight the efforts of domestic organizers to connect American rhetoric to action. Gilmore argues, "African Americans always used geopolitics to fight domestic racism. They exposed U.S. imperialism and Jim Crow as two sides of the same coin..."<sup>4</sup> As Jim Crow was dismantled, the desire to expose U.S. imperialism as exploitative, dangerous, and colonial did not abate. In fact, communism and socialism were tools radical leaning black Americans employed in their fight to rid the United States of colonial tendencies and expand Third World independence. The Soviet Union had provided support and money to campaigns for equal rights, integration, and economic mobility in the United States and supported newly formed independent

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*Party*, 51-68; Ruth Reitan, "Cuba, The Black Panther Party, and the US Black Movement in the 1960s: Issues of Security," *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party*, 164-174; Nico Slate, ed. *Black Power Beyond Borders: The Global Dimensions of the Black Power Movement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Glenda Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), 7; Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); James H. Merriweather, *Proudly We Can be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Jonathan Rosenberg, *How Far the Promised Land: World Affairs and the American Civil Rights Movement from the First World War to Vietnam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); Julia Erin Wood, "Freedom is Indivisible: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Cold War Politics, and International Liberation Movements" (Dissertation, Yale, 2011).



nations that Black Power advocates admired, like Cuba and North Vietnam. It only made sense to exploit the connections to further the anti-draft, anti-war fight in the 1960s and to create a Third World people's movement against American imperialism and oppression. To do this, however, required exporting Black Power thoughts and leaders to the emerging world—a thoroughly American practice if there ever was one. Thus, while Black Power sought to disrupt American diplomacy through fostering an imagined community of independent Third World nations, they still fought their own American-made demons of the capitalist system, privilege, and inequality.<sup>5</sup>

The United States has never been a truly isolated country, but the end of World War II catapulted the US onto a world stage, as the only developed nation who did not suffer major infrastructure and civilian destruction during the conflict. The Cold War heightened the United States' desire to contain communism, which required worldwide engagement in economic and political issues of independent and newly decolonized nations. As tension between the United States and the Soviet Union deepened, the world became, at least to the United States, permanently divided between "us" and "them," or First, Second, and Third World nations. The First World was comprised of the United States and its allies, the Second World, the Soviet Union and its allies, and the Third World as unaligned nations. The unaligned nations were the most dangerous and those that needed the most supervision, according to US foreign policy, because if the Soviet Union was able to influence one of these nations to establish a communist government,

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<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). "Declaration of Consciousness by Afro-Americans on Vietnam," ND. Robert S. Browne Papers, Box 20, Folder 2. Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

others would follow.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the US sent diplomatic missions throughout the world to establish contacts with US institutions and to attempt to foster pro-American and pro-democracy feelings in the nascent nations. Robert S. Browne was one such diplomat. A University of Chicago educated economist, Browne worked for a US foreign aid program in Cambodia and Vietnam from 1955-1961. Upon his return to the United States, he undertook a campaign to educate Americans about the problems of being involved in Vietnam and the mistakes of the government. His activism intensified as American involvement grew deeper and as the Black Power movement took off. Browne used his knowledge of Vietnam to frame his arguments in terms of economic and racial self-determination, helping to articulate much of Black Power's arguments against the war. While concerned with black Americans being used to fight in Vietnam and remaining anti-draft, Browne expanded the early arguments against the war to include economic determinism and the problems of the American imperial agenda.<sup>7</sup>

Beginning in 1962, Browne wrote opinion pieces and cultivated a lecture circuit in the hopes of providing "the American public with a view of what was taking place in Vietnam," a view which conflicted with national media coverage at the time. Browne was an early participant in the Teach-Ins and helped create talking points and consciousness raising activities for students and "concerned community people." He also used W.E.B.

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<sup>6</sup> George Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: US Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 652-656; 681-683; 711-719.

<sup>7</sup> Domino Theory, first publicized during the Eisenhower Administration and France's Dien Bien Phu debacle, had its roots in the Truman Doctrine in Eastern Europe and President Truman's "loss" of China. The belief that the loss of one nation in a region would lead, like dominoes collapsing on each other, to communist takeover of an entire region was the foreign policy dogma of the United States from the mid-1950s through the 1980s. Regardless of the political party in charge, containing and defeating communism was the overriding goal. George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 661, 738, 787-788. Robert Span Browne, "Background Paper for Ebony," December 14, 1972. Pg. 3 Robert S. Browne Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Du Bois' progressive journal *Freedomways* to advance his arguments for intertwining Civil Rights and antiwar activism. Writing in the fall of 1965, Browne highlighted the reasons why Civil Rights and peace organizations did not currently work closely together and the benefits that could be reaped from building a partnership. After laying out the potential partnership of peace and Civil Rights activism, Browne used his experiences in Vietnam earlier in 1965 to connect American atrocities there with racist nature of the war. He wrote, "I was further appalled by what seemed to be a disproportionately large number of Negro faces among the United States troops and I could only wonder if this were the Pentagon's way of attempting to deflect the accusations of whites killing non-whites—and at the same time a way of driving a wedge between American Negroes and the colored people of Asia." Browne claimed to have never experienced racism in Vietnam and recounted that in May, 1964 Saigon taxi drivers "called for a one week boycott of all foreign passengers *except American Negroes,*" to illustrate the commonalities between African Americans and Asians in the struggle against American imperialism. Although he cautioned against being "overly suspicious," he warned black Americans to not become tools of American internationalism. Instead, "Afro-Americans can perform no greater service to their country and to humanity than to use their unique position to encourage international racial amity and to prevent international racial conflict." Browne's article was a foundational text in Black Power organizing against the war, providing the intellectual links between decolonization and freedom struggles in the US and the Third World and laying out the problems and possibilities of black antiwar activism. His international perspective and firsthand accounts of American exploitation in Vietnam strengthened his words and highlighted the importance of international travel

and interaction in shaping the burgeoning Third World thinking in the peace and freedom struggles.<sup>8</sup>

Using his popularity on the lecture circuit and his position as a leading economist, Browne was persuaded to enter the 1966 New Jersey Senate race as a Democratic candidate, by the “deterioration of the proper functioning of our constitutional system.” He hoped “that by focusing my campaign on the issues which underlie our involvement in Vietnam, some of the emotion can be removed from the Vietnam debate and the American people offered an opportunity to view dispassionately just where our present policies are carrying the nation and the world.” Browne used America’s involvement in Vietnam as a foil to domestic issues which he hoped to address if he won the Senate seat. While his candidacy for political office was not the route many Black Power anti-war advocates pursued, his speeches highlighted the shared aspects of struggle that black Americans and Vietnamese citizens faced from U.S. imperialism.<sup>9</sup>

Browne relied on an economic and social narrative to connect problems in the United States to the War in Vietnam. He argued, “it seems unconceivable that at a time when our newspapers are daily bombarding us with grave and disheartening statistics concerning conditions in our own country, at a time when the ghettos of our ugly urban conglomerations are seething with unrest and deprivation, that our government should be choosing to embark on foreign adventures of the most dubious kind.” Browne saw the current elected officials, particularly Johnson and the Senate Foreign Relations

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Span Browne, “Background Paper for Ebony,” December 14, 1972. Pg. 3 Robert S. Browne Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library; Robert S. Browne, “The Freedom Movement and the War in Vietnam,” *Freedomways* 5, No. 3 (Fall, 1965): 467-480.

<sup>9</sup> Untitled biographical sketch. Robert S. Browne, October 26, 1972, pg. 1. Robert S. Browne Papers, Box 1, Folder 1; Robert Span Browne, “Background Paper for Ebony,” December 14, 1972. Pg. 3 Robert S. Browne Papers, Box 1, Folder 1; “Untitled Speech,” June 1966, 1-2 Robert S. Browne Papers, Box 18, Folder 2, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Committee as suspect and connected his candidacy to bringing about the end of the war and reasserting the need to help people, especially poor people of color in America's inner cities, at home. Browne saw the Vietnam War affecting black Americans and Vietnamese similarly—through economic and moral injustices. In the United States, black Americans and urban, ghetto dwellers were “hustled” by the American economic system that kept them disadvantaged and failed to deal with the violence of the inner cities. Moreover, as the government waged a racist war against the Vietnamese, they used African American soldiers as cannon fodder, exerting more violence on the black communities of the United States and joining Vietnamese and African Americans in a shared struggle against the government's violence and exploitation. Browne became discouraged by the number of people who attempted to provide counter arguments to his commentary, especially by focusing on the supposed atrocities of the North Vietnamese Army against United States and South Vietnamese fighters. In response, Browne reminded his critics, “we have neither access to nor responsibility for the crimes of other nations, only for our own.” The United States' crimes were multifold and could not be addressed solely by ending the war in Vietnam, because people of color worldwide suffered under the imperial agenda of the Johnson Administration. Browne quit the Senate race in September 1966 because he “did not have enough time,” and by 1967 “had pretty much dropped [his] efforts to bring some sanity into our Southeast Asia policy,” choosing to focus on the needs of African Americans in the urban northeast.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Span Browne, Untitled Speech, ND, Robert S. Browne Papers, Box 18, Folder 1; Robert Span Browne, “Statement of RSB,” June 1966, Robert S. Browne Papers Box 18, Folder 2, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library; Robert Comstock, “Peace Editor Browne Quits Senate Race,” *The Record*, September 29, 1966, 2. While Browne claimed he did not have enough time, he lacked funds to continue the race. His candidacy was not recorded in the *New York Times* or the *Chicago Defender*, even as Earl Harris won a primary election to become New Jersey's first black Congressman. “Threat to Brooke's Bid to U.S. Senate,” *Chicago Defender*, Sept. 24, 1966.

Browne's burnout on Vietnam came after five years of bringing attention to American involvement in Southeast Asia and the role of African Americans in the United States imperialist struggle. Even as Browne bowed out of the fight, Black Power leaders were turning their attention more and more to international issues and a shared commitment to self-determination. Using some of Browne's own talking points, Black Power leaders sought friendships in the Third World and to make political and social connections across continents. However, Black Power's decision to seek international coalitions and to foster a Third World support network was not without problems. Because such work required international travel, government scrutiny was inevitable. While advocates did not seek visas or tickets to travel directly to Hanoi, Moscow, or Beijing, they still had to apply for passports to leave the country. Most travelers took a route out of the country through Paris and found ways to get from one communist nation to another through circumvented custom agents or false papers. For Conrad Lynn, an investigator for the Bertrand Russell War Crimes Tribunal, the trip to North Vietnam required stops in Paris, Rome, Tel Aviv, Tehran, New Dehli, and Bangkok. Once he arrived in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Lynn still had to find a way into North Vietnam. While Cambodia was not listed as a belligerent country, if he crossed the border into North Vietnam with his American passport, he risked losing it upon his return to the United States. Instead, Lynn was able to procure papers which identified him as a diplomatic aide to the Cambodian government.<sup>11</sup> The federal government saw the travel as potentially traitorous and sought to deny passport applications to Black Power advocates or to seize passports of men and women who had travelled or been outspoken

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<sup>11</sup> Conrad Lynn, *There is a Fountain: The Autobiography of Conrad Lynn* (Brooklyn: Lawrence Hill Books, 1979), 196-200.

against American foreign policy. For example, Stokely Carmichael's passport situation was investigated a number of times by the FBI, but never seized. The desire to repress Black Power's internationalism coincided with the government's use of the draft as a silencing tactic. Moreover, it highlighted the perceived threat Black Power advocates aligned with Third World independence movements posed to the federal government and their foreign policy aims.<sup>12</sup>

International travel was used as a tool in expanding the worldview of some Black Power advocates, especially those connected to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. A few SNCC leaders had the opportunity to travel to Guinea in the fall of 1964, funded by their friend and fundraiser Harry Belafonte. SNCC's leaders had already tied their struggle for Civil Rights in the South with African nation's independence from colonial powers. The trip served to strengthen SNCC's resolve to better create international connections while also highlighting their limited knowledge and the ways the United States government controlled information available to international outlets. SNCC's steps into the international arena were slow and followed American diplomatic channels at first. In April, 1966 Chairman John Lewis embarked on a "world tour" with Stanley Wise. The pair stopped in London, Rome, Scandinavia, Paris, and Oslo, where Lewis spoke to a group of supporters. Lewis's tour of Europe was sponsored by a student organization and provided SNCC with a fundraising outlet. Lewis's successful European travel led SNCC to develop a new international education program, which included

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<sup>12</sup>Memo, Mr. W. C. Sullivan to F. J. Baumgardner, August 19, 1966, STOKELY CARMICHAEL, HQ 100-446080; Memo, Federal Bureau of Investigation to President Johnson, October 30, 1966, November 30, 1966, December 9, 1966; Memo, Marvin Wilson to President Johnson, December 28, 1967; Foreign Broadcast Information Service, "Special Memorandum: Reportage and Comment on Stokely Carmichael's Activities and Statements Abroad from October 6 to December 12, 1967." December 12, 1967. Office Files of Mildred Stegall, Box 73B, Presidential Papers of Lyndon Baines Johnson, 1963-1969, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, TX.

“considerable travel abroad by SNCC staffers as guests of youth groups in Africa, Latin America, Europe, and Asia.” Lewis was placed in charge of the new program, but resigned from SNCC before it even began. SNCC’s desire for an international presence strengthened as their activism turned to issues of American diplomacy and linking economic, social, and political issues in the black communities to American military and diplomatic missions.<sup>13</sup>

While the desire to internationalize the struggle was only beginning in early 1966, by that fall, as the organization followed the leadership of Carmichael and heightened its anti-draft activism, SNCC also developed a strong Third World mentality and distrust of the federal government’s international reports highlighted by the inclusion of Julius Lester and Charlie Cobb on the Bertrand Russell International War Crimes Tribunal investigating the war in Vietnam. The Tribunal, convened in Stockholm, Sweden, sponsored investigative teams to travel to North Vietnam, and sought to prove that the United States committed war crimes under the Geneva Codes of War. Chaired by John-Paul Sartre, but without authority to charge or try American leaders, the Tribunal was a symbolic move to express disgust with the American war machine and to embarrass the United States on a global stage. Cobb and Lester were selected as part of a team sent to North Vietnam to investigate American bombings and to report to the Russell committee.

Julius Lester joined SNCC in 1966 following the election of Stokely Carmichael as Chairman. He was outspoken and, according to his 1976 book *All is Well*, “determined

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<sup>13</sup> “News from the Field #2,” April 19, 1966, Ella Baker Papers, Box 7, Folder 6, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library; “‘What’s Happening in SNCC?’ A Special Bulletin from the New York Office,” June 3, 1966, Ella Baker Papers, Box 7, Folder 6, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 231.



to be a revolutionary.”<sup>14</sup> Charlie Cobb, on the other hand, was a longtime SNCC member, who joined the movement at its earliest stage, after being arrested in Baltimore in 1961.<sup>15</sup> Lester believed participation in the Tribunal was SNCC’s “first big move into the international arena,” and knew that sending two field secretaries was a political move with potential disastrous repercussions, but one that was necessary to further SNCC’s goals.<sup>16</sup>

For Lester and Cobb, travelling to North Vietnam required circumvention of U.S. travel restrictions, by way of France, Greece, Egypt, Pakistan and, finally, Cambodia. Interactions with the French and Cambodian locals left Lester and Cobb struggling to come to terms with their American identities. While poor and black in the United States, the pair were considered relatively wealthy and exotic in Cambodia and to be ignored and ridiculed in France. Lester attempted to speak with French Africans at a bar, to reach out in solidarity, but was rebuffed by the revelers, who were, according to Lester, “totally inhabited to being French, while talking black.” When the SNCC representatives arrived in Phoum Penh, they were overwhelmed with neo-colonialism, as French officers guarded the airport and Cambodian women adorned in high heels, Western clothes, and straight hair-dos offered their bodies for pleasure. For Lester, the sights were unsettling and reinforced the notion that de-Americanization throughout the world would be a long process. As they travelled through the countryside, however, Cobb felt he was in Mississippi, “It looks like the Mississippi Delta—it really does, only wetter; but I knew I

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<sup>14</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 237-238; Julius Lester, *All is Well* (New York: William Morrow, 1976), 131.

<sup>15</sup> Jean Wiley and Bruce Hartford, “Oral History/Interview: Charlie Cobb,” February 2009. <<http://www.crmvet.org/nars/cobb1.htm>>. Accessed Feb. 5, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Julius Lester to SNCC, March 16, 1967, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilm International, Reel 52; Juila Erin Wood, “Freedom is Indivisible,” 270-272; John Duffet, ed. *Against the Crime of Silence: Proceedings of the Russell International War Crimes Tribunal* (New York: O’Hare Books, 1968), 206-210.

had travelled the roads and paths and fields I saw.” The intersections of their lives, Western economic exploitation, and the shared experiences of poverty converged in Cambodia.<sup>17</sup>

By the time the pair reached Vietnam, they were aware of their unique position in the Tribunal investigative group and, according to Conrad Lynn who was also on the team, were very distrustful of the white members of the commission. Lester explained this distrust as being aware of his surroundings and realizing the presence of “at least one agent keeping tabs on us....No longer are we watched by cracker cops in the South alone. Cracker cops the world over now watch.” The suspicion and unease came not only from the presence of white people, but the uncertainty of how Lester and Cobb were being used by the Tribunal. The pair realized their vanguard position as the only Civil Rights organization sending representatives to the tribunal (Lynn was invited without an affiliated group), and believed their actions would lead to greater repression of SNCC and their allies at home. The distrust dissipated over the course of the month long investigation, but Lester and Cobb remained on edge and were only truly comfortable when investigating the bombings in the countryside. The hyper-vigilance was with due reason, though, as J. Edgar Hoover issued a memo to the Atlanta and New York bureau offices to investigate if SNCC, and especially Carmichael, planned “to attempt to go to North Vietnam and/or attend the ‘war crimes tribunal.’ All pertinent information relative to the participation of Carmichael and SNCC concerning the matter should be immediately submitted to the Bureau.” The memo went on to lay out the illegality of unauthorized travel to Vietnam and the importance of “competent evidence” to prove a

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<sup>17</sup> “SNCC Workers on War Crimes Mission: Letters from Hanoi,” *The Movement*, May 1967, 5.

violation of State Department regulation, if a member of SNCC travelled without proper documentation or in violation of their passport records.<sup>18</sup>

Once in country, Lester and Cobb used established contacts to collect information about American bombings, particularly of hospitals, schools, and other non-combatant areas that would result in war crimes under the Geneva Accords. The field work, as Cobb described it, actually served to reinforce the imagined community of colonial subjects. According to political scientist Benedict Anderson, nationalist movements drew together disparate people who probably had never met, under the common “image” of a nation, united in a struggle for freedom. While Anderson’s discussion was wide, it was also nation based, relying on defined borders to describe the community. Subsequently, scholars have expanded the definition of an “imagined community” to include cross-national support for decolonization movements.<sup>19</sup> The North Vietnamese were not all that different from black Americans, their struggles were parallel and against the same enemy. The interactions with North Vietnamese civilians taught Cobb and Lester that SNCC was not well known in Vietnam, though their contacts knew Carmichael’s name, but were restricted to only the information available in the US press. Thus, Cobb and Lester worked in North Vietnam much like they did in the American South, using SNCC tactics of education, local leadership, and dialogue to establish new avenues for protest

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<sup>18</sup> Lynn, *There is a Fountain*, 196-207; “SNCC Workers on War Crimes Mission, Letters from Hanoi,” *The Movement*, May 1967, 5; Memo, J. Edgar Hoover to SACS: Atlanta, New York, Washington, DC, August 18, 1966, STOKELY CARMICHAEL, HQ 100-446080, 1-2; “Stokely Carmichael—‘Advocate of Black Power,’” Federal Bureau of Investigation Secret Report, March 23, 1967, Office Files of Mildred Stegall, Box 73B, Folder “Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (Stokely Carmichael) Jan-Nov, 1967,” Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Papers, 1963-1969, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, TX.

<sup>19</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4-6. Examples of expanded use of “imagined communities,” include: Susan Geiger, *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997) and Jean Allman and Victoria Tashijeau, *“I will not Eat Stone”: a Women’s History of Colonial Asante* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000).

and alliance. The pair found that the shared struggle against US imperialism was real, and that people of color had to band together to fight for justice.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, overall, the War Crimes Tribunal was a disappointment for Lester. The Tribunal heard his and Cobb's report on the bombings in North Vietnam along with seven days of testimony from world peace leaders and investigative teams, and found the Johnson Administration guilty of aggression and bombing civilians in North Vietnam. However, the tribunal had no punitive power and could not change the reality of the war. The symbolic gesture was not enough for Lester, because the tribunal was less interested in expanding the critiques of the war to include issues of race. Lester was appalled by the lack of engagement in the issues of race and the global stage, especially because Sartre chaired the meeting. Still, as Lester argued, "the fact remains that at the present time the world is polarizing into West (white) versus everybody else (colored, black, and yellow) and that the war in Vietnam is only a rehearsal for what the U.S. must do if it is to protect its interests in Latin America, other parts of Asia, Africa, and at home." Viewing American action in Vietnam in a vacuum undermined the work of Third World individuals and disassociated shared experiences of oppression between people of color globally, in Lester's view. Thus, the Tribunal only served to help Western intellectuals assuage their guilt and record their disdain for American aggression. It reinforced for Lester and other people of color that the Western world, even those progressives who had

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<sup>20</sup>"SNCC Workers on War Crime Mission, Letters from Hanoi," *The Movement*, May 1967, 5; Julius Lester to SNCC, March 16, 1967, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 52; Charlie Cobb to SNCC, March 16, 1967, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 52; Duffet, *Against the Crime of Silence*, 206-210, 660.

shared interests in ending US imperialism, were not interested in the much less glamorous work of ending oppression.<sup>21</sup>

Former SNCC organizer Diane Nash Bevel, who in 1960 as a student at Fisk University helped desegregate Nashville lunch counters, also traveled to Vietnam in December 1966 with three white antiwar women. The group, as Bevel stated, “were four individuals. Each of us had her own particular opinions about the issues and each had her own reasons for going. In fact, I might say we disagreed on particularly every subject from child care and men, to politics and nonviolence. The only issue that I can remember all of us agreeing upon during the entire month we were together was that we were all against the war.”<sup>22</sup> Bevel and her companions were not sponsored by any antiwar groups in the United States, though all four women belonged to various organizations. The women toured North Vietnam, spoke with political leaders and Catholic priests, and visited victims of American bombings. Bevel was against the war because, “I am against using murder as a solution to human problems.”<sup>23</sup> Her children were too young to serve in Vietnam, but she saw the destruction the United States incurred on the country and was not supportive of such tactics. Historian Heather Stur claimed that Nash travelled out of a “maternal sense of duty to protect young men” and that she was motivated to travel to North Vietnam after she saw a Vietnamese mother holding her wounded child, “I saw

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<sup>21</sup> Julius Lester, *Revolutionary Notes* (New York: Richard W. Baron, 1969), 9-20.

<sup>22</sup> Diane Nash Bevel, “Journey to North Vietnam,” *Freedomways*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Spring, 1967), 118-128. For more information on Nash’s (she briefly married James Bevel, but the relationship fell apart) experiences in Nashville see David Halberstam, *The Children* (New York: Fawcett Books, 1998); Raymond Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 86-87, 509-510, 625-626; Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 18-23, 189-190.

<sup>23</sup> Halberstam, *The Children*, 119.

myself in this mother's place."<sup>24</sup> Yet, Bevel's focus was not on the Americans killed or on the black men who were drafted or enlisted to serve, but on the ravages of the War that the Vietnamese had to live with daily. She did however, question why black men were serving, challenging them to "decide whether or not they want to help murder other non-white people," in Vietnam.<sup>25</sup> Thus, while Bevel travelled with white women protesters, she framed her argument separately, as one of human cost and a shared suffering of all human beings at the hands of an unjust war.

SNCC's offshoot organization, the National Black Anti-War, Anti-Draft Union (NBAWADU) also used internationalism to gain support for their efforts. They designated April 26<sup>th</sup> as a day of international protest, bringing black and Third World students together as "an act of solidarity against the racist oppression of Black America, racist United States aggression against the Vietnamese people and the violation of the right of self-determination of the people of Asia, Africa and Latin America."<sup>26</sup> Led by John Wilson, the NBAWADU struggled to remain funded and relevant in an increasingly cluttered anti-war and anti-draft field. Wilson had served time for "disrupting the Selective Service" in Atlanta in 1966, but by 1967 had risen to the top of SNCC's antiwar activism leading to him addressing a joint conference of SNCC workers and Vietnamese antiwar activists in Czechoslovakia. There he told the delegates that black Americans had to view their own struggles as related to the liberation struggles of the Third World because "the goals of our struggles are the same and we have the same enemy. We

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<sup>24</sup> Heather Stur, "In Service and Protest: Black Women and the Impact of the Vietnam War on American Society," in *Soul Soldiers*, ed. Samuel W. Black (Pittsburgh: Senator John Heinz Regional History Center and Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, 2006), 103.

<sup>25</sup> Diane Nash, "A Negro Mother tells Why the U.S. Cannot Win in Asia," *Muhammad Speaks*, February 10, 1967, 17.

<sup>26</sup> "National Black Anti-War, Anti-Draft Union Statement, April 20: Student Strike," ND, Robert S. Browne Papers, Box 20, Folder 15, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

believe that it is a necessary to meet with representatives of the liberation struggles in order to share experiences and ideas.”<sup>27</sup> Using SNCC’s techniques of local leadership and learning through dialogue, the conference served to strengthen ties between the National Liberation Front, the North Vietnamese, and SNCC activists. It also presented Americans in a differing light than the government projected throughout the world. Black Americans meetings with the Vietnamese espoused anti-imperialist attitudes and unseated the dominant American cultural ethos of conquer and colonize. Instead, their very presence showed that the federal government’s foreign policy was not accepted by large parts of the American population. By traveling abroad and meeting with other members of their imagined Third World communities, SNCC and Black Power advocates undertook citizen’s diplomacy. In doing so, they created coalitions and helped to undermine government policies at home and abroad by partaking in open dialogue.

The disappointment with Bertrand Russell’s War Crime’s Tribunal and the desire to continue to forge Third World contacts led Stokely Carmichael and SNCC representatives to “accept an invitation from Ralph Schoenman of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation” to attend a conference in Havana, Cuba.<sup>28</sup> Coinciding with John Wilson’s testimony at the SNCC/Vietnam conference and the expansion of Black Power rhetoric at home, Carmichael’s travels led to heightened scrutiny of SNCC (though he was no longer Chairman) and to a deepening connection between Black Power and Third World nationalism.<sup>29</sup> Carmichael’s first major Third World event came in Cuba, where

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<sup>27</sup> “Statement by John Wilson Bratislava, Czechoslovakia,” ND, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972, University Microfilms International, Reel 23, pg. 4-5.

<sup>28</sup> Carson, *In Struggle*, 275-276; Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*, 600-602; Wood, “Freedom is Indivisible,” 270-272.

<sup>29</sup> Carmichael’s movements were tracked by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and weekly reports detailing SNCC and Carmichael’s public and private appearances were sent to President Johnson. Hoover’s memo’s reinforced the need to closely follow Carmichael, because of Johnson’s personal interest in him.

he, Julius Lester, and George Ware participated in the Organization of Latin American Solidarity (OLAS) meeting in Havana to discuss the future of revolution in Latin America and what tactics the countries should use (legal or armed resistance). While the conference was focused on armed resistance in neo-colonial Latin America, representatives from the National Liberation Front in Vietnam, as well as the widow of Franz Fanon were present, expanding Latin America to include Third World people throughout Asia as well.

Carmichael used his platform at the OLAS meeting to continue to construct the Third World alliances against American imperialism, telling the press that the only action to overthrow colonial oppression was armed resistance and guerrilla warfare. The National Liberation Front's anti-US aggression in South Vietnam would be replicated in the United States, according to Carmichael, because "it is crystal clear to us that we are fighting an international structure that enslaves us all. The only way we can beat it is to internationalize our struggle so you'll have an international power fighting an international power." For the revolutionaries to be an international power, they had to work together against their shared oppressors, with similar tactics and constant support. If the imagined community of revolutionaries became a thriving group, even if they did not have the same individual goals or political ideologies, they would "create two, three, many Vietnams," and "have them fighting on all fronts at the same time and they can't

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These reports were based on information provided by undisclosed sources close to SNCC, some which the FBI felt had more credibility than others. Yet, the information was passed up the chain to the president, where an aid, Marvin, would summarize the FBI report in a memo attached to the larger piece. This behavior continued until the end of the Johnson presidency and highlights a concerted effort to "catch" or harass Carmichael and SNCC on the part of the Johnson administration, through Hoover's FBI. See Office Files of Mildred Stegall, Boxes 63A, 71A, 71B, 72A, 72B, and 73B, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, TX; Department of Defense, "Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee," October 10, 1967, Counterintelligence Research Project. Members of Congress were also interested in charging Carmichael with treason, "Carmichael to Lose Passport," *New York Times*, July 27, 1967; "Carmichael Appears Safe Despite Calls for Action by U.S.," *Los Angeles Times*, August 3, 1967.



win.” Subterfuge and spreading valuable resources would lead to the destruction of Western imperialism and a more just world.<sup>30</sup>

Addressing the OLAS activists, Carmichael made an impassioned plea for Third World solidarity and put the black struggle in the United States in conjunction with the fight for freedom from colonialism worldwide. “We are moving to control our African American communities as you are moving to wrest control of your countries—of the entire Latin continent—from the hand of foreign imperialist powers,” Carmichael explained. To guarantee self-determination and control, “we must change North America so that the economy and politics of the country will be in the hands of people.” To drive the point home, Carmichael turned his attention to Vietnam, “the struggle we are engaged in is international. We well know what happens in Vietnam affects our struggle here and what we do affects the struggle of the Vietnamese people. This is even more apparent when we look at ourselves not as African-Americans of the United States, but as African-Americans of the Americas.” If revolutionaries saw themselves as brothers in arms, their struggle would be more apparent and more easily solved. By turning attention to Vietnam, Carmichael highlighted the possibilities of armed struggle. He also again reinforced the shared nature of struggle and the importance of the National Liberation Front, a non-government entity, in creating change in a colonial situation. After all, it was the war in Vietnam that made the Third World mentality possible in the United States;

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<sup>30</sup> Julius Lester, “Black Revolution is Real: Stokely in Cuba,” *The Movement*, September 1967, 1, 5; Translation of Letter from Haydee Santamaria to Stokely Carmichael, June, 1967, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, Microfilm Edition, University Microfilms International, Reel 11.

only when Black Power began to see itself as connected to the Vietnamese, did the wider connections to worldwide anti-colonialism come to fruition.<sup>31</sup>

Carmichael's address to the OLAS in Cuba was the first stop on a tour of the Third World, expanding upon his August speech and doing the work of alliance building, at least through national media and speaking engagements.<sup>32</sup> His travel was closely monitored by the Johnson administration, as it posed a threat to diplomatic missions in the developing world, where alliance with the United States or the Soviet Union laid the terrain of the Cold War. After leaving Havana, Carmichael made his way to Hanoi where, according to new SNCC Chairman H. Rap Brown, he would "see for himself the atrocities being perpetrated against the people of Vietnam, a people who are heroically defending their right to self-determination." Carmichael's trips were as much about spreading the Black Power message of Third World collectivity, as about creating contacts with revolutionary governments and investigating war crimes. Carmichael met with North Vietnamese leaders and discussed revolutionary tactics including guerrilla warfare, as a means to bringing about the end of United States imperialism around the world. Because many Black Power advocates used a highly theorized notion of empowerment, based on the works of Che Gueverra, Frantz Fanon, Mao Tse-Tung, Kwame Nkrumah, and others, the chance for Carmichael to see revolution in action was important. Moreover, the appearance of Carmichael, an American freedom fighter, next to and among other revolutionaries added credence and power to his message. No longer

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<sup>31</sup> Stokely Carmichael, "Black Power and the Third World. Havana Cuba, Aug. 1967 (Address to the Organization of Latin American Solidarity)," (Thornhill, ON: Third World Information Service, 1967), 3-4; Stokely Carmichael, "Stokely Carmichael: On Puerto Rico, Cities, The Draft, Blackness, and More," *The Movement*, February 1967, 1, 4-5.

<sup>32</sup> Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*, 594-638; Carson, *In Struggle*, 273-277; "Stokely Carmichael Speaks to the Peoples of the Third World," *Aframerican News Service*, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, University Microfilms International, Reel 17.

was Carmichael simply reciting theories of colonial power, he, even for a short time, lived revolution abroad. This physical connection made the intellectual linking of anti-colonial struggles more powerful.

While his physical presence in Cuba and other decolonizing nations was important, Carmichael's most effective tactic, however, was a series of radio broadcasts directed at black American soldiers fighting in Vietnam. He again articulated the imagined community of Third World people, imploring black soldiers not to fight in Vietnam, because "no Vietnamese ever called me Nigger," and reminded the soldiers that their fight in the United States, because black people had no country. By speaking directly to the men he called black mercenaries, Carmichael's words served multiple purposes—potentially gaining new supporters of Black Power, undermining American imperial pursuits by using an international platform to criticize US diplomacy, and gaining allies in the fight to free the Third World. His message was only made more powerful by his use of personal experiences in North Vietnam and the international connections he continued to cultivate. Circumventing the United States media and government, Carmichael was able to educate and be educated, much like Cobb and Lester, though on a larger stage. Thus, though the choices to go to the Third World were politically motivated, Carmichael was able to spread citizen diplomacy through his contacts and manipulation of media. While the effectiveness of Carmichael's radio broadcasts to US soldiers is unclear, his willingness to challenge military and government authority, particularly around knowledge acquisition and community building, were important steps in challenging hegemonic notions of American imperialism.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Foreign Broadcast Information Service, "Special Memorandum: Reportage and Comment on Stokely Carmichael's Activities and Statements Abroad from 6 October to 12 December 1967," Dec. 15, 1967,

Carmichael took that same message to Cairo, Algiers, Paris, and Copenhagen over the course of the fall months of 1967. At each stop, he addressed the media and made speeches further enforcing the shared experiences of oppression created by American and Western capitalism. Moreover, he used the international media to express the dangers he faced in speaking out against the United States, repeatedly saying he expected to be arrested when he returned home and that he expected to meet a bloody end. These rhetorical flourishes may have been the result of Carmichael's real fears—he had faced multiple arrests and seen friends die at the hands of American whites—however, they also served another purpose. By expressing his fears of US repression, even if they never came to be, Carmichael again undermined the image of the United States as a democracy where all were free. His words created a shared experience of oppression, where white America, especially President Lyndon Johnson, was morally corrupt. The US, according to Carmichael's rhetoric, was not a protector of freedom rather, it was a denier of rights. This was evident, according to Carmichael, in the treatment of black Americans at home, where their very existence in the United States resulted in “lynching, burning, and the bombing of our houses, schools, and churches.” To end American aggression, Carmichael pledged that black revolutionaries “will change America or destroy it.”<sup>34</sup>

Repeatedly, for six months, Carmichael spoke in the terms of Third World solidarity, pushing back against American hegemonic notions of democracy. Yet, he was still a product of a capitalist system and could not escape his own paternalistic notions of

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Office Files of Mildred Stegall, Box 73B, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, TX; Memo Marvin to President Johnson, December 28, 1967, Office Files of Mildred Stegall, Box 73B, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, TX.

<sup>34</sup> Foreign Broadcast Information Service, “Special Memorandum: Reportage and Comment on Stokely Carmichael's Activities and Statements Abroad from 6 October to 12 December 1967,” Dec. 15, 1967, Office Files of Mildred Stegall, Box 73B, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, TX, 1, 3, 7.

the Third World. When describing Vietnam, he was impressed by the Vietnamese persistence in the face of the war, going about their business as usual, as well as their lives close to the land. Carmichael told the Havana Democratic Service, "...wherever one goes and one sees people with their trousers rolled up working in the mud very close to the land," and was impressed with the Vietnamese knowledge of the African American struggle in the United States. Carmichael went on, saying, "they held solidarity meetings with the African-Americans, and I thought, 'here is a little country being bombed by the United States—and I mean their hands were certainly full—but they can take time out to be concerned about other oppressed people.'" Carmichael's words were meant as compliments to the Vietnamese, but were also reminders of his own privilege. While he could claim Third World solidarity and espouse a Third World mentality, he could not help but frame those struggles in paternalistic and neo-colonial words. By focusing on living "close to the land," he created images of incivility or pre-industrial worlds. Moreover, his "little country" remark, while true in comparison to the United States' landmass, also served to show the pervasive nature of stereotyping the "enemy" in the United States as undersized. Again, Carmichael was complimentary to the actions of the Vietnamese and seemed even shocked that they "took time out to be concerned" his words had a paternalistic tone—one directed not at the Vietnamese, but at Carmichael's countrymen and friends, who hands were not as full and seemed less interested in the struggles of the Vietnamese than their own issues.<sup>35</sup>

Carmichael's world tour brought him international notoriety, as the intellectual and political leader of Black Power. His earlier work organizing the Lowndes County

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<sup>35</sup> Foreign Broadcast Information Service, "Special Memorandum: Reportage and Comment on Stokely Carmichael's Activities and Statements Abroad from 6 October to 12 December 1967," Dec. 15, 1967, Office Files of Mildred Stegall, Box 73B, Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, TX, 4-5.

Freedom Party (Alabama), and the SNCC pamphlet “How the people in Lowndes County Armed Themselves,” inspired the organizers of the Black Panther Party, founded in Oakland, California in October, 1966 by Bobby Seale and Huey Newton.<sup>36</sup> The two men were greatly influenced by the 1965 Watts rebellion, the rejection of nonviolence by the black community, and the writings of Mao Tse-Tung, Malcolm X, and Frantz Fanon. The two men recruited a number of followers, including Newton’s appointment of Carmichael to “serve as the party’s field marshal with authority ‘to establish revolutionary law, order and justice,’ in the Eastern United States,” and installed over forty chapters throughout the United States over the next decade. The Panthers worked to establish themselves into the mainstream of Black Power early. The Black Panthers in October 1966 released their ten point party platform and program. The platform included:

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black Community... 3. We want an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our Black community... 6. We want all Black men exempt from military service... 10. 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.<sup>37</sup>

The Black Panther platform laid the foundation for the groups Civil Rights and antiwar activity for the next decade. The Panthers’ explicit inclusion of military exemption for black men and the request for a United Nations plebiscite indicated a strong aversion to American colonial policies, one which allowed Black Panther members to identify with other people of color in colonial settings throughout the world. This identification

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<sup>36</sup> Jefferies, *Bloody Lowndes*, 103-104.

<sup>37</sup> Huey P. Newton, “Patrolling,” in *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and First Hand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990*, Clayborne Carson and others (eds.), (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 346-347; Carson, *In Struggle*, 278-279.

become more and more pronounced as the 1960s faded into the early 1970s and the American confrontation in Vietnam winded down, only to draw African American attention to other oppressive situations, including Apartheid in South Africa and the decolonization efforts of many African nations. The Panther platform was guided by nationalist and socialist rhetoric, demanding a drastic change in American society, one which would, if properly implemented, recast the position of all poor people in the United States. While the platform included black separatism statements, the Panthers were an inclusive group, who would “fight for all working people,” and included white organizers in their Free Huey demonstrations in 1969 and in their antiwar protests. According to Elaine Brown, the only woman chairperson of the Black Panther Party, “We set the agenda and the goal and the vision, it was truly inclusive, not multicultural, it had to come with the liberation of all human beings. Capitalism really had to go. We wanted to change the paradigm.”<sup>38</sup> The idea of changing a paradigm, particularly moving America away from a capitalist society that exploited its citizens for the benefit of a few chosen, privileged white men, guided much of Black Panther and radical organizing.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> “Mayday,” *What We Want, What We Believe: The Black Panther Party Library*, DVD, Directed by Roz Payne (2006; Oakland, CA: AK Press). Elaine Brown, “New Age Racism,” delivered at the University of California Santa Barbara, May 1, 2001. Voices Series #5720, 116min, <[www.youtube.com/watch?v=80YtzBf3z6g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80YtzBf3z6g)>.

<sup>39</sup> Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, Jr. *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 309-322. The Panthers are one of the most written about Black Power organizations, so much so that when one speaks of Black Power there is a presumption that the Black Panther Party is the topic of discussion. Panther members have also been prolific autobiographers and many of those who are still alive continue to work on anti-racism, prison reform, and anti-poverty programs. Ericka Huggins, telephone interview with the author, Aug. 2012; Paul Alkebulan, *Survival Pending Revolution: The History of the Black Panther Party* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007); Curtis Austin, *Up Against the Wall: Violence in the Making and Unmaking of the Black Panther Party* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2006; Ruth-Marion Baruch, *Black Panthers 1968* (Los Angeles: Greybull Press, 2002); Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992); Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Fire* (Waco: Wood Books, 1978); Kathleen Neal Cleaver and George Katsiaficas, eds., *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party: A New Look at the Panthers and their Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Angela Y. Davis, *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1974) and *If They Come in the Morning: Voices of Resistance* (New York: The Third Press, 1971); Emory Douglas, *Black Panther: The Revolutionary Art of*

The connection to revolutionary governments and socialism was the hallmark of Panther discourse. The Panther's critique of American foreign policy and their open support of a Socialist revolution in the United States allowed them to visit Communist countries and speak with representatives of Socialist governments not recognized by the United States. In the summer of 1970, Elaine Brown was given the task of traveling to Pyongyang, North Korea with Eldridge Cleaver and other Party members. Brown left Los Angeles and flew to Paris, then to Moscow and finally to Pyongyang, again circumventing the United States State Department by first visiting an allied country

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*Emory Douglas* (New York: Rizzoli, 2007); Philip G. Foner, ed., *The Black Panthers Speak* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970); G. Louis Heath, *Off the Pigs: The History and Literature of the Black Panther Party* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc, 1976); David Hillard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1993); Elbert Howard, *Panther on the Prowl* (Oakland, CA: BCP Digital Printing, 2002); Judson L. Jeffries, "An Unexamined Chapter of Black Panther History," in *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast*, Judson L. Jeffries, ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 185-223; Charles E. Jones, *The Black Panther Party (Reconsidered)* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998); Jim Kaskins, *Power to the People: The Rise and Fall of the Black Panther Party* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997); Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), especially 200-297; Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams, *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2006) and *Liberated Territories: Untold Local Perspectives on the Black Panther Party* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Gene Marine, *The Black Panthers* (New York: New American Library, 1969); Steve D. McCutchen, *We Were Free for a While: Back to Back in the Black Panther Party* (Baltimore: Publish America, 2008); Donna Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, CA* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); Huey Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York: Harcourt Brace Javanovich, 1973); Michael Newton, *Bitter Grain: The Story of the Black Panther Party* (Los Angeles: Holloway House, 1980); Akua Njeri (Deborah Johnson), *My Life with the Black Panther Party* (Oakland, CA: Burning Spear, 1991); Jack Olsen, *Last Man Standing: The Tragedy and Triumph of Geronimo Pratt* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000); Akinyele O. Umoja, "The Black Liberation Army and the Radical Legacy of the Black Panther Party," *Black Power in the Belly of the Beast*, 224-251; Hugh Pearson, *The Shadow of the Panther: Huey Newton and the Price of Black Power in America* (Reading, PA: Addison-Wesley, 1994); Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: New Press, 2007); Katherine Rout, *Eldridge Cleaver* (Twayne's United States Authors Series Boston: Twayne, 1991); Bobby Seale, *A Lonely Rage: The Autobiography of Bobby Seale* (New York: New York Times Books, 1978) and *Seize the Time: The Story of the Black Panther Party and Huey Newton* (New York: Random House, 1970); Assata Shakur and Angela Davis, *Assata: An Autobiography* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2001); Jennifer B. Smith, *An International History of the Black Panther Party* (New York: Garland, 1999); Roy Wilkins, *Search and Destroy: A Report by the Commission of Inquiry into the Black Panthers and the Police* (New York: Metropolitan Applied Research Center, 1973); Jakobi Williams, *From the Bullet to the Ballot: The Illinois Chapter of the Black Panther Party and Racial Coalition Politics in Chicago* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013); Yohuru Williams, *Black Politics/White Power: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Black Panthers in New Haven* (New York: Brandywine Press, 2000).



(France). The Panthers, because of their own socialist beliefs, were treated with respect and as honored guests. They enjoyed stately dinners, toured the Northern partition of the Demilitarized Zone, and eventually, after a month in the capital, visited the North Vietnamese embassy. This meeting led to an invitation to spend two weeks in Hanoi with a group of sympathetic Western journalists. Cleaver accepted the invitation, and the Panther delegation continued their tour of America's enemy lands. The Vietnamese, according to Brown, "offered us their best, when they had so little. They were passionate, unabashedly weeping as they spoke of the horrors of the war, and able to laugh with equal vigor—even about the war."<sup>40</sup> Brown found great strength from the Vietnamese and decided, from her time in Vietnam, that the Panthers, like the North Vietnamese Army and the National Liberation Front fighting in the South were, "truly a vanguard organization, a small unit in a big endeavor, whose purpose was to trigger a step-by-step revolutionary process, to clarify the issues, develop the mass mind, solidify the base of struggle, prepare our people to achieve freedom as nonantagonistically as possible—or to prevail in a conflict decided by bloodshed."<sup>41</sup> Brown's commitment to socialist revolution was reenergized in Vietnam, where she found camaraderie with the Vietnamese women who struggled for freedom. She observed:

there were young guerilla girls we met on the beach at the Gulf of Tonkin, thirteen- and fourteen-year-olds, up from Saigon for a rest, girls who should have been giggling about boys or lipstick or hairstyles. There were the children we met whose bodies had been maimed by napalm, and those who had only one arm or one leg, missing limbs destroyed by U.S. bombs. There were the stalwart old women who had lost everyone in their families in U.S. troop destructions of their villages.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Elaine Brown, *A Taste of Power*, 229.

<sup>41</sup> Brown, *A Taste of Power*, 231.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

The girls Brown saw at the Gulf of Tonkin could have easily been her childhood friends from the Philadelphia projects, forced to grow up earlier than most. Brown saw part of herself in the guerilla fighters and the old women in the villages who persevered despite terrible loss. The Panthers were like the fighters. They put their lives on the line every day for a cause; they continued to organize for that cause, even when their brothers and sisters were targeted by the same U.S. government who dropped bombs in Vietnam.

While their fights were in distant locations from one another, Brown's words, like Carmichael's radio addresses, evoked the idea of an imagined community, where women of color, oppressed by the United States government for wanting a better life for their families, for wanting to be free, saw each other as comrades in arms. She, and her Panther compatriots throughout the United States, saw their efforts as joined with the decolonization and independence movements occurring throughout the world at the time. While fighting in different locations and with varying goals, the Vietnamese and the Panthers were both attempting to end white, colonial domination by the United States. They sought sovereignty, for their country or their neighborhoods, and respect. Brown's connections with the Vietnamese women and children she saw on her two week stay in Vietnam strengthened her feelings of community and commitment to socialist revolution. It also reinvigorated her understanding of the American imperial agenda, one which had to be stopped. Thus, protesting the Vietnam War, though not always explicitly acknowledged in Panther literature and platform speeches, was an important part of Panther organizing.

While disrupting American imperialism through travel and exile were important ways Black Power spread their message and articulated Third World mentalities, other

forms of resistance also served to heighten that identification. When addressing white anti-war organizations in the United States, Black Power leaders consistently referred to the connections between anti-Vietnam protests and the need to end colonialism at all fronts, including in the United States. SNCC International Relations Director James Forman, in a letter to the Fifth Avenue Vietnam Peace Parade Committee, reminded activists that “all efforts against the United States genocidal war in Vietnam must be seen as efforts to help oppressed people around the world to obtain self-determination—including black people in the United States, a people of African descent.”<sup>43</sup> Forman went on to connect the Vietnamese struggle for independence with the American Revolution and the black struggle for self-determination in the United States with the recolonization of the United States following independence from the British, as the US expanded its borders and pushed Native American tribes westward and kept African American enslaved. Forman’s speech again highlighted the imagined community of oppressed people of color around the world and the ways United States foreign policy served to keep them oppressed.

Although the draft often occupied the themes of Black Power advocates’ anti-war speeches, the Third World mentality and desire to end American colonialism was also present. On November 12, 1969 in Oakland, California, Angela Davis, delivered a speech titled, “The Liberation of our People.” Davis, a child of middle class upbringing, discovered radicalism in college and had been an early opponent of the Vietnam War. She spent time in East Germany, while studying at the Sorbonne in Paris and was

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<sup>43</sup> James Forman to Fifth Avenue Peace Parade Committee, February 3, 1968. Ella Baker Papers. Box 7, Folder 8, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

dedicated to Socialist revolution in the United States.<sup>44</sup> In her speech, Davis articulated Black Power's position on Vietnam, exclaiming, "we have to talk about what's happening in Vietnam as a symptom of something that's happening all over the world, of something that's happening in this country." She implored her listeners to make connections between the antiwar movement, the liberation movement, and an international struggle to escape white, racist imperialism. Davis continued, "...we're seeing as this country is being defeated in Vietnam, more and more acts of repression are occurring here on the domestic scene."<sup>45</sup> Connecting American oppression of anti-war and Black Power advocates to the losses sustained in Vietnam was not ground breaking rhetoric; however, it did serve to reinforce the shared experiences of those fighting against the American imperial agenda.

Davis used both class and race rhetoric to implore her listeners to take a stand against the war and to see the connections between the fighting in Vietnam and their situation at home. She dissected the economy, arguing:

This whole economy in this country is a war economy. It's based on the fact that more and more weapons are being produced. What happens if the war in Vietnam ceases? How is the economy going to stand unless another Vietnam is created, and who is going to determine where that Vietnam is gonna be? It can be abroad, or it can right here at home, and I think it's becoming evident that Vietnam is entering the streets of this country. It's becoming evident in all the brutal forms of repression, which we can see every day of our lives here.

Davis appeared to echo Dwight D. Eisenhower's warning against a military industrial complex, and saw that the American capitalist economy had become dependent on

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<sup>44</sup> Angela Y. Davis, *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1974), 142-144.

<sup>45</sup> Angela Davis, "The Liberation of Our People," Delivered November 12, 1969, Defremery Park, Oakland, California, pg. 1-2.

military action to keep working.<sup>46</sup> Unlike some of her brethren, Davis was not explicitly concerned with the funds Vietnam was diverting from poverty programs; instead, she worried that ending the war in Vietnam could lead to a further economic downturn in the United States. Nonetheless, she was opposed to a military presence in Vietnam, yet she feared that ending the war would lead to a new battle on U.S. streets.

Davis's reading of the military economy in the United States was a departure from the basic economic arguments of the antiwar and Civil Rights movements. She asked tough questions about the reality of ending the war and how it would affect working class people in the United States, implying that when the United States left Vietnam, they would redeploy troops somewhere else, maybe in the United States, to continue their racist, repressive legacy. In order to prevent this from happening, Davis believed, "we can't talk about protesting the genocide of the Vietnamese people without at the same time doing something to stop the genocide that is—that freedom fighters in this country are being subjected too." Davis saw the murder of the Vietnamese in war as analogous to the murder of men and women in the United States, as both were fighting for freedom from oppression by a white overlord. More importantly, Davis articulated the Panther belief in an international movement for peace and freedom. It is in this moment that Davis voiced a Third World consciousness, which could be appropriated in the United States. All oppressed people in the world were Panther brothers and sisters:

within the whole liberation struggle in this country, the black liberation struggle and the brown liberation struggle there has continually been the sentiment against the American Imperialist aggressive policies throughout this world because we have been forced to see that the enemy is American imperialism and although we feel it at home it's being felt perhaps much more brutally in Vietnam, it's being

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<sup>46</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, "The Military Industrial Complex," Public Papers of the Presidents, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1960, p. 1035- 1040.

felt in Latin America, it's being felt in Africa, we have to make these connections.

Davis saw the connections between foreign imperialism and domestic repression, though she was unwilling to admit that the brutality was equal. Instead, foreign repression was worse, and it was the responsibility of repressed Americans to challenge their status, so that colonial subjects in Vietnam, Latin America, and Africa could also be inspired.<sup>47</sup>

Davis continued, “what we have to talk about now is a united force, which sees the liberation of the Vietnamese people as intricately linked up with the liberation of black and brown and exploited white people in this society, and only this kind of a unified front, only this kind of united force can be victorious.” The connection between black, brown, oppressed white, and the Vietnamese was both paternalistic and unifying. Davis claimed that the only way to overthrow the colonial power was for all oppressed groups to unify, yet she also claimed that those groups in the United States needed to set an example for the rest of the world. By elevating the status of U.S. protesters against their own government, over that of colonial subjects abroad, Davis betrayed herself as a product of American imperial thought. It is an important point to make, because it shows that working against a power paradigm, like the idea of American superiority, was difficult, even for those who were oppressed by the United States. Davis ended her speech with a rousing call for the release of all political prisoners in the United States and in Vietnam.

The ending exhortation made the strongest connection between incidents in Vietnam and the United States. Davis relied on the example of Bobby Seale<sup>48</sup>, arguing

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<sup>47</sup> Davis, “The Liberation of Our People,” 2-3.

<sup>48</sup> Seale, along with seven others, were arrested for inciting a riot, conspiracy, and other charges during the 1968 Chicago Democratic Nominating Convention. The other seven men were tried as a group, but Seale

that his prison term was no different from men being sent to Vietnam to fight “a dirty war in Vietnam. They are victims too and they have to be shown that their true loyalties should be with us in our liberation struggle here and with the Vietnamese people in their liberation struggle there.” She did not overtly demand that men stop serving in the military; instead she relied on a subtle argument of education. Servicemen had to be shown the connections between Vietnamese freedom and their own. Again, Davis’s rhetoric seems to reek of a bit of class antagonism, as she seems to think that most American servicemen would need to be educated about the dual struggles and their similarities. However, Davis’s words were more likely a part of her radical rhetoric and training, which attempted to educate the public to socialist principles and assumed that most people were unaware of the teachings of Malcolm X, Mao, and Marx. Moreover, Davis delivered this speech to an integrated group of anti-war protesters, therefore articulating the connections explicitly served to potentially bring more people into the imagined community of the oppressed. Nevertheless, Davis and the Panthers felt it was their responsibility to educate the masses, to make the connections between the war in Vietnam and repression in the United States clear and accessible to their followers. This effort is laudable and should not be deluded because Black Power, like the men and women they often criticized, still used paternalistic rhetoric to make their points.<sup>49</sup>

While speeches provided listeners and readers with the theoretical underpinnings of Black Power’s antiwar and Third World rhetoric, they were only one tactic for

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had his trial severed by the supervising judge due to his outbursts. Seale was sentenced to four years in prison for contempt. See “A Judicial Travesty Against Bobby Seale,” *Chicago Defender*, November 1, 1969, 1; “Persecution of Bobby Seale,” *Chicago Defender*, November 22, 1969, 8; Sylvan Fox, “Police vs. Nonconformity: Chicago Demonstrators Challenged ingrained Beliefs and Backgrounds,” *New York Times*, December 2, 1968, 39.

<sup>49</sup> Davis, “The Liberation of Our People,” 4.

showing support of the imagined community of Third World victims. At a May 1972 Anti-War, African Liberation, Voter Registration and Survival Conference sponsored by the Oakland Chapter of the Black Panther Party, the following petition was circulated:

We, the undersigned are the poor and oppressed people of the world. WE have long suffered hunger, indecent living standards and murder at the hands of warmongers who have run rampant through our various communities laying waste to our territories and enslaving our people.

The most flagrant violations of our humanity have been and are daily committed by the U.S. ruling circle and the U.S. government. We poor and oppressed people, therefore, petition the U.S. government, in the name of Humanity, to stop its war of aggression in Vietnam, in Southern Africa, in Latin America and its brutality and exploitation in all our communities, so that we world's peoples may begin to live together in harmonic peace and freedom. The struggles being currently waged in Vietnam, in Southern Africa, in the Black and poor communities in the U.S. itself, as well as elsewhere, are all our struggles and we are uniting and pledge ourselves to unite ever stronger together as one for our common survival and complete liberation. This is what we want. This is what we believe.<sup>50</sup>

The petition, directed at the United States government and ruling class, connected the struggle of African Americans and colonial subjects waging wars of independence in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, through their shared experiences of poverty. Like the speeches and position papers delivered in the 1960s, the petition connected Black Power's domestic and international aims for peace in struggling communities by ending American imperial pursuits. The circulated petition also used the language of the Black Panther Party—"This is what we want. This is what we believe."—as the ending, signifying the power of the Party and the changing direction of their revolution. The petition was most likely not signed by many non-Americans, as it was circulated at a Black Panther conference in Oakland. The conference's marketing material boasted 10,000 free, full bags of groceries, speeches from Bobby Seale, Elaine Brown, and

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<sup>50</sup> Anti-War, African Liberation, Voter Registration, Survival Petition, ND, Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation Files, Series 2, Box 19, Folder 3, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA.



Congressman Ron Dellums of California's 7<sup>th</sup> District, voter registration, and 10,000 Sickle Cell Anemia tests.<sup>51</sup> The conference directly benefited Oakland's poor, the men and women the Panther's worked with on a daily basis. Yet, the internationalism present in the petition and the conference's title highlight the Panther's imagined community of shared struggle. Using food and medicine to garner interest in and support for international ties also served to reinforce the shared experiences of oppression. Like the Vietnamese, Oakland's impoverished suffered from a lack of medical care and food insecurity brought on by, according to the Panthers, the U.S. government's neo-imperialism abroad and neglect at home.

The rhetorical and symbolic efforts of Black Power to connect their struggle to that of oppressed people throughout the world resulted in the establishment of international channels of discussion and an expanded network of support. The Third World rhetoric passed through these associations, whereby anti-American leaders in Vietnam provided intellectual support to Black Power's internationalism, while also highlighting the importance of anti-colonial struggles within the United States. Tran Van Tu, the head of the National Liberation Front's delegation to a 1968 meeting in Stockholm hand delivered a letter to Jim Harvey, NBAWADU's representative at the meeting. Tran's letter expressed solidarity with black Americans, stating, "The Vietnam war waged by the U.S. Government has caused so much sufferings not only to the Vietnamese people, but also to the Afro-Americans; therefore your struggle against the draft and for liberation is ours." Tran also reinforced the reciprocal nature of the alliance, telling his "Afro-American Friends! We salute you and congratulate every victory you

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<sup>51</sup> Conference Poster, June 24, 1972, Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation Files, Series 2, Box 19, Folder 3, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA.

have won. Your brave acts constitute a great encouragement to our freedom fighters.”

Using similar language as Carmichael, Brown, and Davis, Tran’s letter was an example of the power of citizen’s diplomacy and highlighted the shared nature of the struggle. It also signified the cross-cultural exchanges that occurred during Americans trips to the Third World and through international tribunals to discuss peace and freedom.<sup>52</sup>

Beyond the semi-governmental representation of the National Liberation Front, a Vietnamese citizens group based in Hanoi, the Vietnam Committee for Solidarity with the American People, reached out to organizations fighting for racial and economic justice in the United States. James Haughton, Director of New York’s Fight Back which organized Harlem for better housing and job opportunities was contacted by Tran-trong-Quat of the Vietnam Committee in July, 1971. Tran expressed his organization’s support of Haughton’s efforts and admitted that though Fight Back was fighting racism, oppression and exploitation, Harlem faced “the same enemies who are waging a war of aggression against our people.” The Vietnam Committee for Solidarity with the American People saw a shared experience of oppression and although Fight Back did not explicitly organize against the war in Vietnam, their literature did connect the American imperialism to Harlem’s issues. Unlike other correspondence, however, the Vietnamese Committee for Solidarity reached out to Haughton, highlighting the shared commitment to cross-cultural exchange and Third World alliances, as well as the genuine belief in a shared struggle against American imperialism. While the meetings most often occurred between non-governmental actors, the pledges of support and the continued correspondence helped to facilitate the imagined community of Black Power advocates and led to further expansion into internationalism, with the Black Panther Party

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<sup>52</sup> *The Student Mobilizer*, April 15, 1968, 4.

establishing an international wing in Algiers after Black Panther Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver's self-imposed exile. Moreover, by the end of 1969, Stokely Carmichael had decided his life was better abroad, and made Guinea his home for the remainder of his life.<sup>53</sup>

The Panthers were particularly effective in garnering support from both non-government representatives and the leaders of countries aligned against American interests. To do this, the Panthers sent telegrams and letters of interest to leaders in Cambodia, North Vietnam, North Korea, and China, with birthday wishes, congratulations on military victories, and offers of support for independence or requests for information. In return, the Panthers received endorsements of their ideals, intellectual backing, and the ability to claim the support of Third World revolutionaries. Further, the Panther's communication allowed leaders like North Korea's Kim Il Sung an American audience to denounce American imperialism. In one such telegram, Kim wrote "I avail myself of this opportunity to strongly denounce the fascist suppression of the US imperialists against your party and reiterate the firm solidarity with your just struggle for freedom and liberation though you are fighting in an arduous circumstance..." Kim's correspondence proved the link the Party often presented the *Black Panther*, the Panther's newspaper, which printed international news and commentary, including the telegrams from world leaders the party received. The Panther newspaper was circulated nationally by its 40 chapters and mailing list, meaning it reached a wide audience beyond Oakland. Kim's telegram was one in a series of Asian countries representatives,

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<sup>53</sup>Tran-trong-Quat to James Haughton, July 19, 1971, James Haughton Papers, Box 14, Folder 9, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library; Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight House*, 240.

including Cambodia and North Vietnam, expressing support for revolutionary actions in the United States and shared experiences of capitalist oppression.<sup>54</sup>

Through international travel, correspondence, speeches, and conferences, Black Power used an imagined community of Third World oppression to express antiwar and anti-imperial rhetoric. The Vietnam War and its continued atrocities provided Black Power advocates with fertile ground on which to connect their own struggles in the United States to those of the neo-colonial subjects of U.S. military aggression. By highlighting shared experiences, especially around treatment by government officials, food insecurity, medical needs, and living conditions, Black Power's Third World imaginations were easily accessible to colonial subjects in the United States and abroad. Moreover, the rhetoric allowed Black Power advocates to open dialogues about shared experiences of oppression and to provide a counter narrative to the U.S. government's exceptionalist rhetoric, which sought to prove American superiority and the virtues of democracy over self-determination for South Vietnam and the world. In so doing, Black Power internationalists became the instruments of righteousness exiled leader Robert F. Williams described to Mao Tse-Tong during his time in China.<sup>55</sup> Black Power's internationalism served to open China before Nixon and Kissinger's Ping Pong diplomacy of the 1970s and disrupted American imperial goals by providing people suffering under American neo-imperialism with a connection to non-white, non-democratic individuals within the United States who shared similar objectives and fears.

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<sup>54</sup> Kim Il Sung to Black Panther Party, Oakland, June 18, 1971 and Nodomom Shianouk to Black Panther Party June 3, 1971, Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation Papers, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 16, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA.

<sup>55</sup> Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 299-301; Robin D. G. Kelley and Betsy Etsch, "Black Like Mao: Red China and the Black Revolution," *Souls* 1, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 6-41; "Interview: Robert F. Williams," *The Black Scholar* 1, no. 7 (May 1970): 14.

This Third World mentality and imagined community created intellectual arguments to further Black Power's struggle and provided the opportunity for different types of activists, particularly women, to enter into Black Power's antiwar and anti-colonial struggles.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

“Because they marched, city councils changed and state legislatures changed and Congress changed and, yes, eventually the White House changed.”-President Barack Obama, on the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the March on Washington<sup>1</sup>

Fifty years after John Lewis stood on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, defiant but respectful in addressing the hundreds of thousands of marchers who came to Washington to demand jobs and freedom, he was again in the shadow of Lincoln as the only remaining living speaker from the 1963 program. While John Lewis continues to proclaim the “fierce urgency of now,” the fiftieth anniversary of the March on Washington was a celebration of a whitewashed, watered down version of Civil Rights, with Black Power completely absent from the proceedings. Even Lewis, who has remained unwavering in his pursuit of equal rights, celebrated a past that his twenty-three-year-old self would not recognize. The speeches on August 28, 2013 focused on Dr. King’s Dream and the problems that still remain in America—joblessness, underemployment, health care access, voting rights—but they also comfortably fell into the master narrative of the Movement. Both Presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama spoke of Civil Rights victories and defeats: Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church that killed four young girls in 1963, and the beatings of SNCC, SCLC, and CORE workers on the Edmond Pettus Bridge on Bloody Sunday in 1965. President Clinton told the crowd, quoting King biographer Taylor Branch, “The movement here gained the force to open, quote, ‘the stubborn gates of freedom,’ and out flowed the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act,

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<sup>1</sup> “FULL TRANSCRIPT: President Obama’s speech on the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington,” *The Washington Post*, August 29, 2013.

immigration reform, Medicare, Medicaid, open housing.”<sup>2</sup> In Clinton’s story, King’s words were enough to dramatically reshape the United States.

President Obama reminded the crowd that the United States has witnessed great progress since those dark days, and “to dismiss the magnitude of this progress, to suggest, as some sometimes do, that little has changed--that dishonors the courage and the sacrifice of those who paid the price to march in those years. Medgar Evers, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, Martin Luther King Jr., they did not die in vain.”<sup>3</sup> By jumping from the Mississippi Burning murders in the summer of 1964 to the assassination of Dr. King in April 1968, President Obama parroted the comfortable narrative of an integrationist-minded, peaceful Movement who saw tragedy but remained triumphant. By forgetting the murder of Sammy Younge, the militancy of African American anti-war activists, and the rhetoric of Dr. King after 1967, the President and those listening in the crowd were fed a sanitized and far less truthful version of our

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<sup>2</sup> “TRANSCRIPT: Bill Clinton’s speech on the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington,” *The Washington Post*, August 29, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> “FULL TRANSCRIPT: President Obama’s speech on the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington,” *The Washington Post*, August 29, 2013; Medgar Evers was the first field secretary in Mississippi for the NAACP, where he attempted to integrate the University of Mississippi, to register voters, and to promote equal rights. He was assassinated, in his driveway, by Byron de la Beckwith on June 12, 1963. De la Beckwith was prosecuted twice by the state of Mississippi in 1964, but both trials resulted in hung juries. He was eventually found guilty of the assassination in 1994 and died in prison. FBI case File #157-901 (Medgar Evers); John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 158-169; Charles M. Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California, 1995), 43-68, 287-290.

Goodman, Chaney, and Schwerner were Freedom Summer (1964) organizers in Mississippi. Goodman and Schwerner were white northern college students, while Chaney was a native Mississippian and African American. They disappeared after being arrested and released on June 21, 1964, outside Philadelphia, Mississippi. The three were investigating the burning of Mt. Zion Baptist Church. The young men were shot at close range after a pursuit by Klan members. Their bodies were discovered in an earthen dam on August 4, 1964. The United States government charged 18 Mississippi Klan members with “conspiracy to deprive of civil rights by murder,” and on October 20, 1967, seven defendants were found guilty. They served no more than six years of jail time. FBI Case File #44-25706 (Mississippi Burning); Dittmer, *Local People*, 247, 283-284; Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom*, 395-396; Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981): 114-115.

nation's past. While Barack Obama has acknowledged that the nation is not post-racial, that his presidency has not ended the racial problems the United States continues to deal with, he remains a trumpet of triumph, celebrating a Civil Rights Movement that further elevates the master narrative, ignoring the Long Movement thesis and important work of his fellow citizens.

Historian Timothy B. Tyson tells this same narrative another way:

In this story and in popular memory, a respectable and eloquent black preacher came to the pulpit to confront white America. A handful of us welcomed him, most of us feared him, and some of us hated him. But when this elegant man of the cloth arrived, he was not so threatening after all. Instead, his sonorous voice evoked our best selves and reminded us just how *good* we really were. Prodded by the simple sense of decency we learned as children, we listened nervously as the black minister promised to make the rough places smooth and the crooked places straight, and asked only our tolerance.<sup>4</sup>

Tyson does not claim that the story is completely without merit; however, he argues the problem with it is “*why* we cherish that kind of story: because we want to transcend our history without actually confronting it.”<sup>5</sup> The master narrative that ignores African Americans’ anti-war activism and downplays the contributions of Black Power to change in America allows us to celebrate our past without critically investigating it.

When we stop looking for triumph and are willing to get messy and complicated, a truer account of the era is possible. Moreover, as this dissertation argues, by looking at the places where movements intersect, we see the ways diverse people worked to change the nation, sometimes together, sometimes not, but with the goal of a more perfect union in mind. Black Power’s anti-Vietnam war activism was different than the popularly remembered white, student-led movement. It focused on ending or curbing the draft and

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<sup>4</sup> Timothy B. Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name: A True Story* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2004), 317-318.

<sup>5</sup> Tyson, *Blood Done Sign My Name*, 318.



the war itself. Black Power advocates created a shared identity as Third World colonial subjects and expressed their anti-war notions in solidarity with the colonized Vietnamese. Black Americans and the Vietnamese were victims of American imperialism, according to Black Power's anti-war messages. Moreover, black troops were mercenaries and bore a larger burden in the fighting in Vietnam, drafted into the Army as members of McNamara's Project 100,000.

For too long, the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements have been presented as a narrative of declension after the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. By elevating Black Power's anti-war activism from the footnotes of historiography, a more nuanced understanding of the way American citizens engaged with their government and voiced their opposition to policy becomes clearer. It also highlights the multifaceted nature of protest in the latter half of the 1960s and early 1970s. If we only look at anti-racism activism or the work of local branches of national organizations like SNCC and the Black Panthers it is easy to miss the varying and intersecting lives activists led. The War was ever present in Black Power advocates lives. Men faced draft notices and jail time; women helped to organize coffee houses and helped men avoid the draft in semi-legal ways. Organizations won and lost support from individuals and the government for their anti-war and anti-draft statements.

As historians continue to try to come to terms with the monumental changes the activists of the 1960s and 1970s brought to the United States, more work on the intersection of movements is necessary. While the local stories provide rich, illuminating texts, focusing the lens a little wider—on more than one organization or a more national picture—will help to bring the era into a less blurry frame. We have only skimmed the

surface of the ways the Movement worked to change the United States. Much more of the story is hidden in plain sight, behind the master narrative and popular memory. We only need to look.





WHO IS AGAINST THE WAR IN VIETNAM?



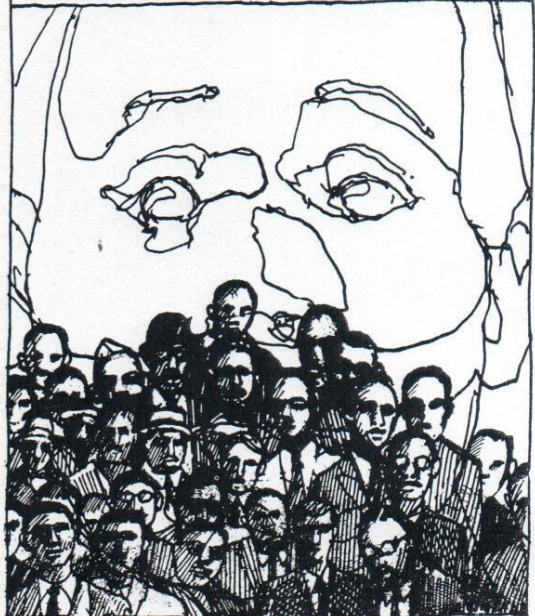
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



AND THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE ARE AGAINST IT.

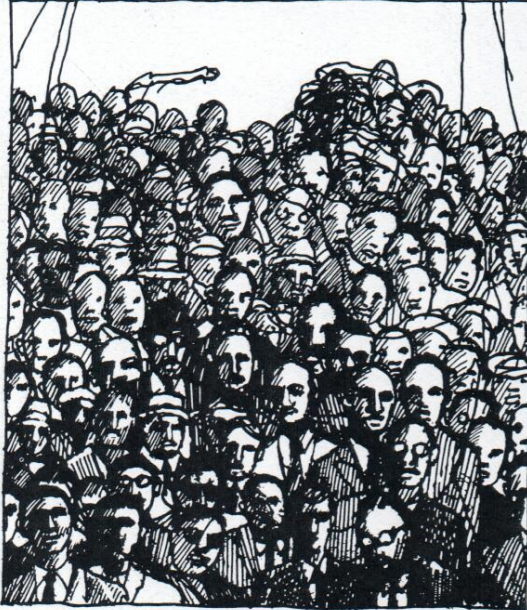


THE SOUTHERN CONFERENCE EDUCATIONAL FUND, AN INTERRACIAL CIVIL RIGHTS GROUP, IS AGAINST IT.

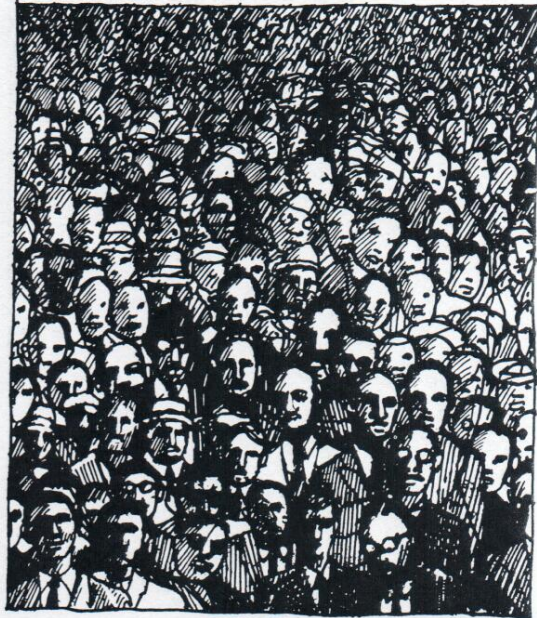




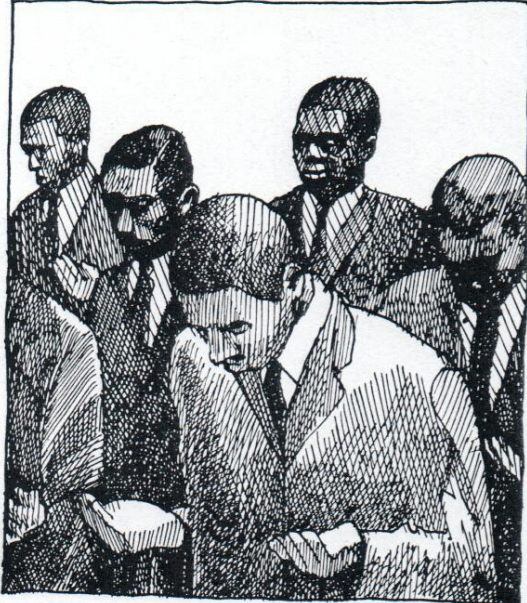
JOHN LEWIS, STOKLEY CARMICHAEL AND THE STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE ARE AGAINST IT.



ONE SNCC MEMBER, JULIAN BOND, WAS THROWN OUT OF THE GEORGIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BECAUSE HE IS AGAINST THE WAR IN VIETNAM.



CASSIUS CLAY-MUHAMMED ALI- AND ELIJAH MUHAMMED AND THE BLACK MUSLIMS ARE AGAINST IT.



MALCOLM X WAS AGAINST THE WAR IN VIETNAM.

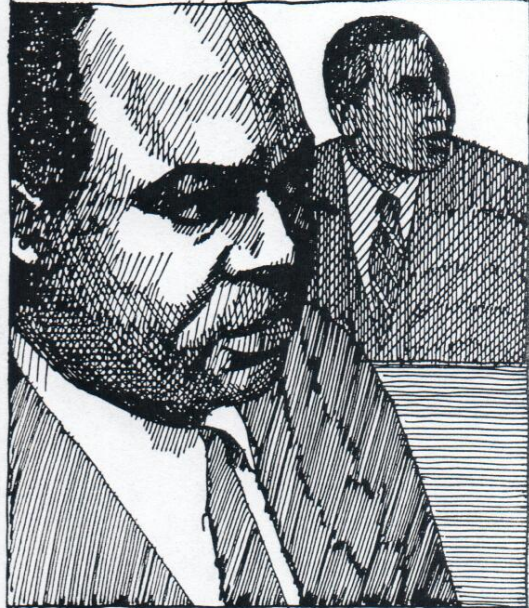




SO IS ADAM CLAYTON POWELL.



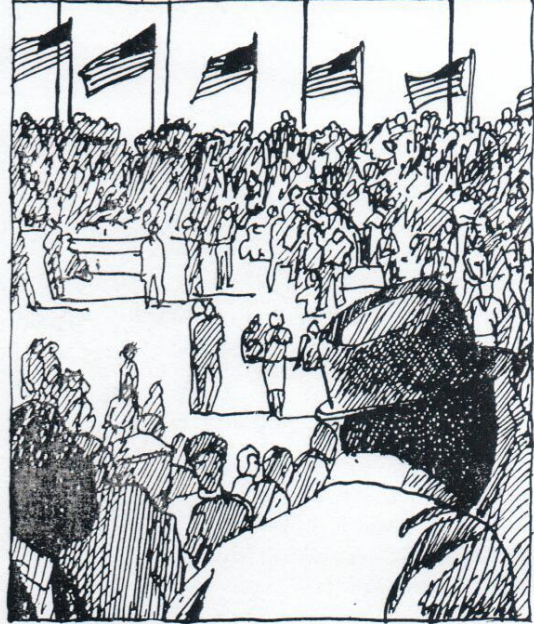
JAMES FARMER, FLOYD McKISSICK AND THE CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY ARE AGAINST IT.



MOST OF THE AFRICANS AT THE UNITED NATIONS ARE AGAINST THE WAR IN VIETNAM.



SO ARE THOUSANDS OF OTHERS, WHITE AND BLACK, RICH AND POOR.

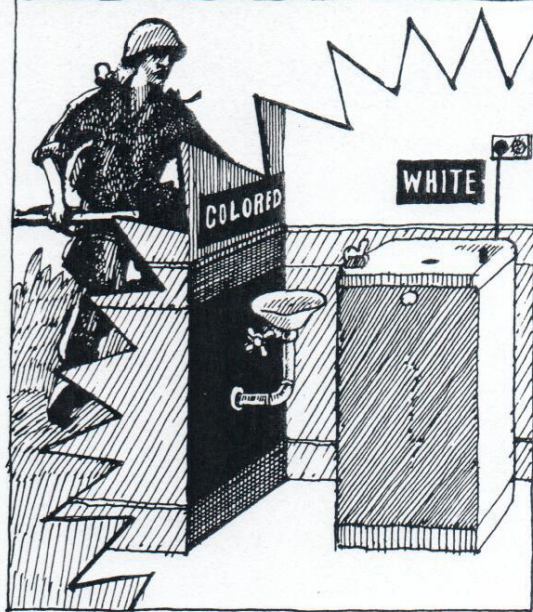




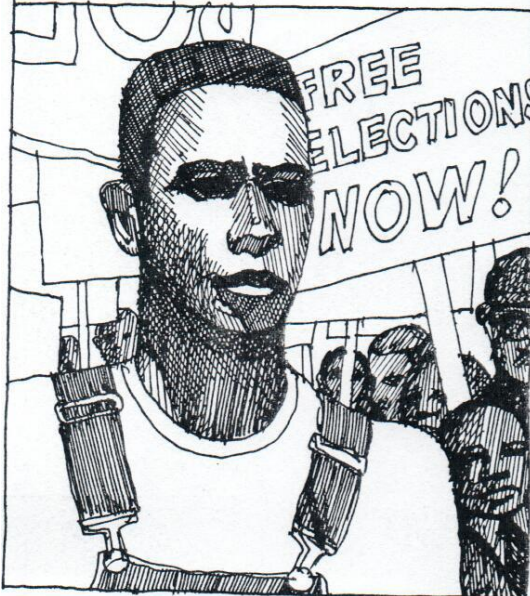
ONE NEGRO MAN SAID: "WHY SHOULD WE FIGHT FOR A COUNTRY THAT HAS NEVER FOUGHT FOR US?"



ONE SAID "WHY ARE WE ALWAYS FIRST CLASS CITIZENS ON THE BATTLEFIELD, AND SECOND CLASS CITIZENS AT HOME?"



ONE MAN SAID "WE SHOULD FIGHT FOR FREE ELECTIONS IN MISSISSIPPI AND ALABAMA, NOT IN VIET NAM."

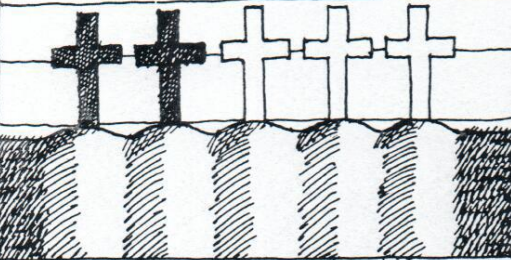
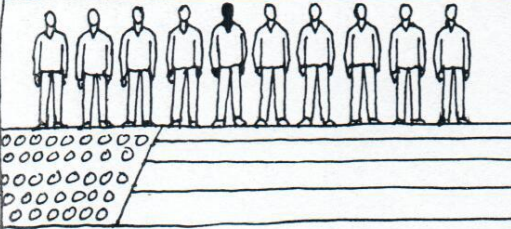


SOME NEGROES ARE WORRIED BECAUSE SO. MANY OF US SUFFER FROM THE WAR.





ONE OUT OF EVERY TEN YOUNG MEN IN AMERICA IS A NEGRO.



BUT TWO OUT OF EVERY FIVE MEN KILLED IN THE WAR IN VIETNAM IS A NEGRO.

THE UNITED STATES SAYS THIS IS BECAUSE NEGROES ARE VERY BRAVE, BUT MOST PEOPLE KNOW IT IS BECAUSE WE DO MORE OF THE DIRTY FRONT-LINE FIGHTING THAN WE SHOULD.



WHEN YOU READ THIS BOOK, HOW WILL YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR SON, OR HUSBAND OR BROTHER OR UNCLE - OR YOURSELF - FIGHTING MILES AWAY FROM HOME AGAINST A PEOPLE WHO ONLY WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE BY EVERYONE?





IN 1860, WHEN THE UNITED STATES WAS FIGHTING A WAR TO FREE THE SLAVES,



THE FRENCH WERE FIGHTING A WAR TO MAKE SLAVES OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN VIETNAM. THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE WANTED TO RUN THEIR OWN COUNTRY, BUT COULD NOT DEFEAT THE STRONG FRENCH ARMIES.



DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR, ONE GROUP OF FRENCHMEN WAS FRIENDLY TO JAPAN AND GERMANY. THESE MEN SURRENDERED VIETNAM TO JAPAN WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT.

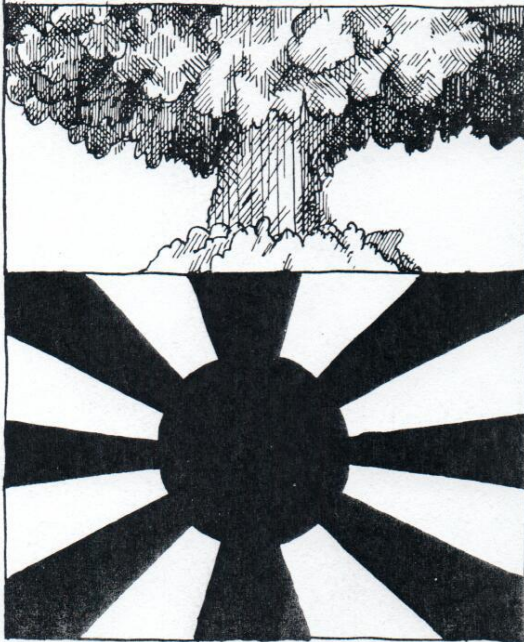


THE JAPANESE TOLD THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE THEY COULD BE FREE UNDER JAPANESE RULE, BUT A GROUP OF VIETNAMESE UNDER A MAN NAMED HO CHI MINH WANTED FREEDOM UNDER THEIR OWN RULE. THESE MEN FOUGHT THE JAPANESE.





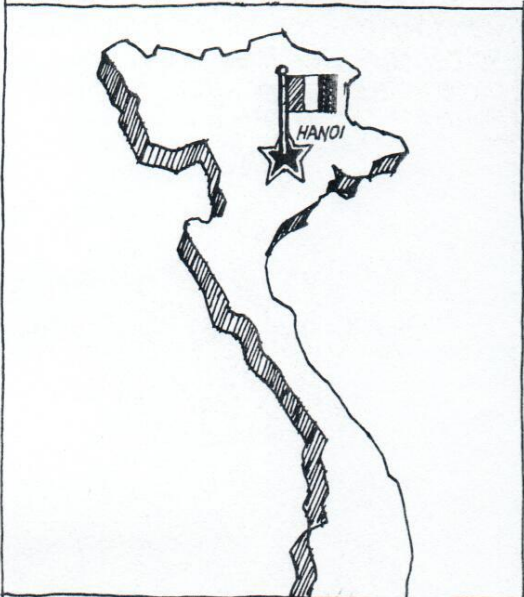
WHEN THE SECOND WORLD WAR WAS OVER AND JAPAN WAS BEATEN.....



THE VIETNAMESE RULED THE COUNTRY. THEY HAD AN ELECTION AND HO CHI MINH WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT.



THE FRENCH WANTED TO TAKE OVER THE COUNTRY AGAIN, HOWEVER, AND CAPTURED THE CITY OF HANOI.



BY 1946, FRANCE AND VIETNAM WERE AT WAR.





EVEN THOUGH THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE WERE FIGHTING FOR INDEPENDENCE AND FREEDOM IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY AGAINST AN OUTSIDE FORCE,



THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT HELP THEM. INSTEAD, WE HELPED FRANCE.



BUT EVEN WITH OUR HELP, WITH MODERN WEAPONS AND MANY MEN, THE FRENCH COULD NOT WIN. SOME MEN WANTED US TO TAKE OVER THE WAR WHEN THE FRENCH...

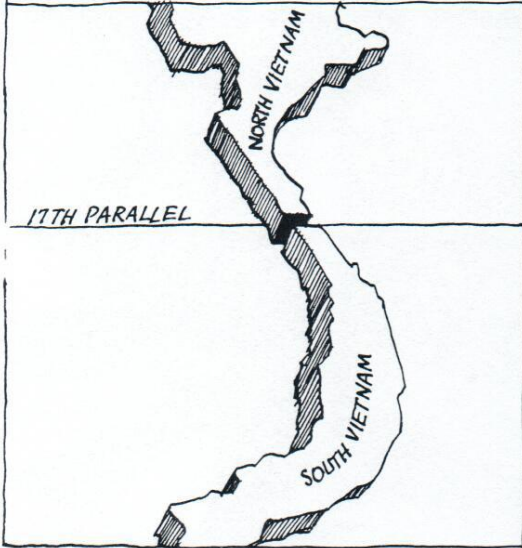


SURRENDERED BUT PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON, WHO WAS THEN STILL JUST A UNITED STATES SENATOR SAID HE WAS AGAINST "SENDING AMERICAN G.I.'S... ON A BLOOD-LETTING SPREE TO PERPETUATE COLONIALISM AND WHITE MAN'S EXPLOITATION OF ASIA."

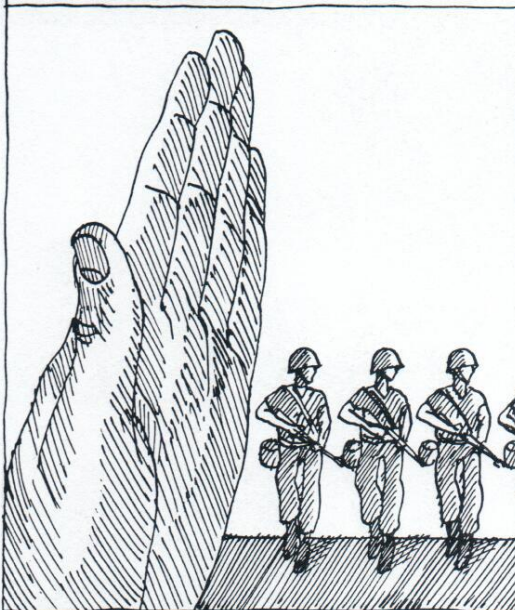




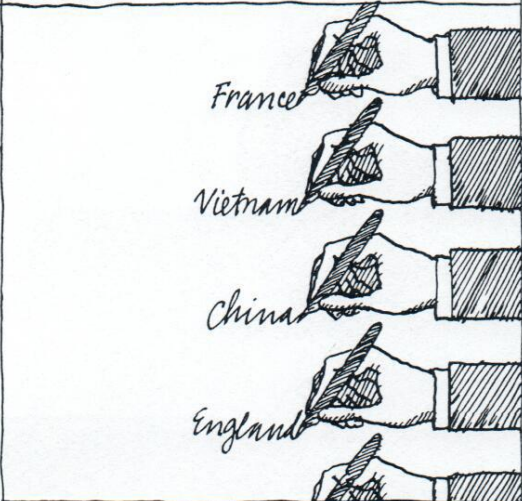
IN 1954, FRANCE AND THE VIETNAMESE AGREED TO STOP FIGHTING AND TO DIVIDE THE COUNTRY IN HALF UNTIL AN ELECTION COULD BE HELD AND THE COUNTRY UNITED AGAIN.



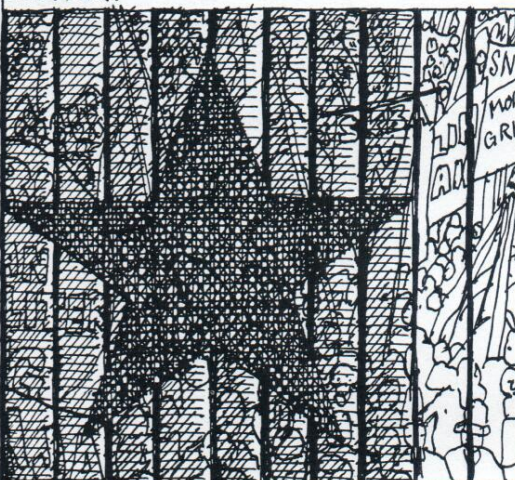
THEY ALSO AGREED THAT NO SOLDIERS OR WEAPONS FROM ANY COUNTRY WOULD COME INTO VIETNAM.



FRANCE, VIETNAM, CHINA, ENGLAND, RUSSIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES SIGNED THIS AGREEMENT. THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT SIGN, BUT WE AGREED WE WOULD NOT TRY TO OVERTHROW THE AGREEMENT BY FORCE.



THE UNITED STATES DIDN'T WANT AN ELECTION IN VIETNAM. PRESIDENT EISENHOWER SAID IF AN ELECTION WAS HELD "POSSIBLY 80 PER CENT OF THE PEOPLE WOULD HAVE VOTED FOR THE COMMUNIST HO CHI MINH AS THEIR LEADER."





BECAUSE WE DIDN'T WANT THE PEOPLE OF VIETNAM TO SELECT A MAN WE DIDN'T LIKE, WE SET UP A MAN NAMED NGO DINH DIEM AS PRESIDENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND HELPED HIM HOLD TWO ELECTIONS IN THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE COUNTRY.



THE ELECTIONS VIOLATED THE AGREEMENT WHICH HAD ENDED THE FIGHTING.

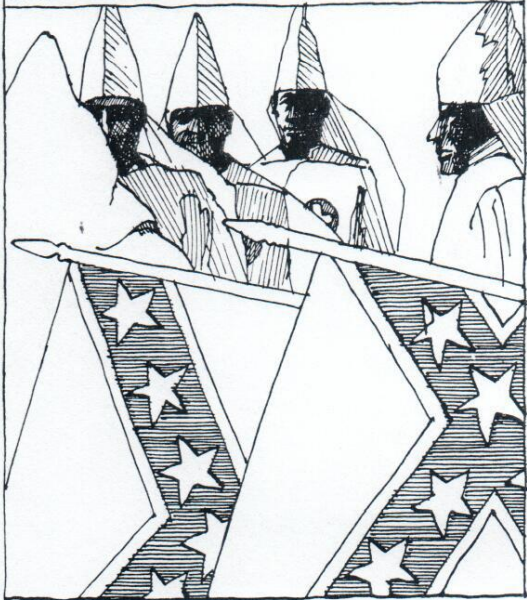
THE DIEM GOVERNMENT IN SOUTH VIETNAM ARRESTED, TORTURED AND KILLED MANY PEOPLE WHO DID NOT AGREE WITH IT.



IN DECEMBER, 1960, THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT WAS FORMED.



SOME PEOPLE HERE CALLED IT THE "VIET CONG" LIKE PEOPLE WHO DON'T LIKE NEGROES CALL US "NIGGERS."





THE MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT WERE DOCTORS, LAWYERS, CATHOLICS, BUDDHISTS, DEMOCRATS, COMMUNISTS, STUDENTS AND MEMBERS OF THREE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN VIETNAM.



THEY BEGAN TO FIGHT AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM.



THE DIEM GOVERNMENT ASKED THE UNITED STATES FOR MILITARY ADVISERS TO HELP TRAIN THE VIETNAMESE ARMY.



THERE ARE NOW MORE THAN 400,000 AMERICAN MEN FIGHTING IN VIETNAM.





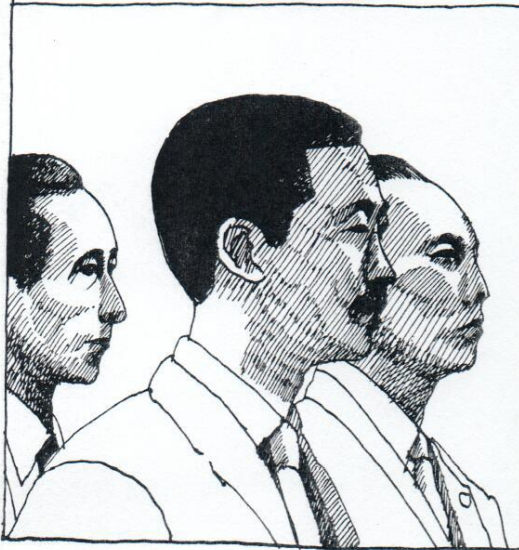
SOME AMERICANS SAY THAT SINCE HO CHI MINH IS A COMMUNIST, AND SINCE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT ARE COMMUNISTS, THEN THEY DON'T SPEAK FOR THE ORDINARY PEOPLE OF VIETNAM.



BUT HENRY CABOT LODGE, THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO SOUTH VIETNAM SAYS "THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN DOING ANYTHING FOR THE LITTLE MAN, THE MAN AT THE GRASS ROOTS, TO LIFT HIM UP, ARE THE COMMUNISTS."



AND PREMIER KY, THE MAN WHO RULES SOUTH VIETNAM TODAY, SAYS "THE COMMUNISTS ARE CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE'S YEARNING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND AN INDEPENDENT LIFE THAN HIS OWN GOVERNMENT."

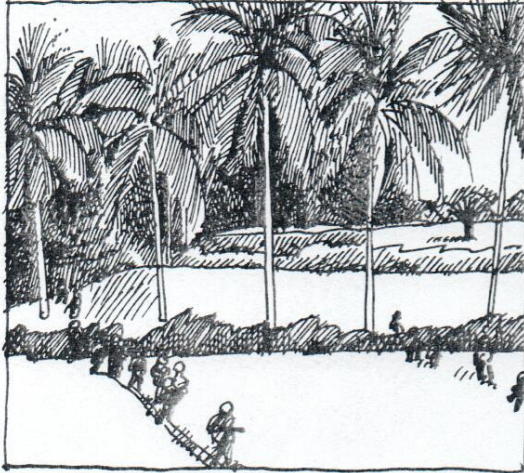


MANY AMERICAN GENERALS SAY WE CAN WIN IN VIETNAM.

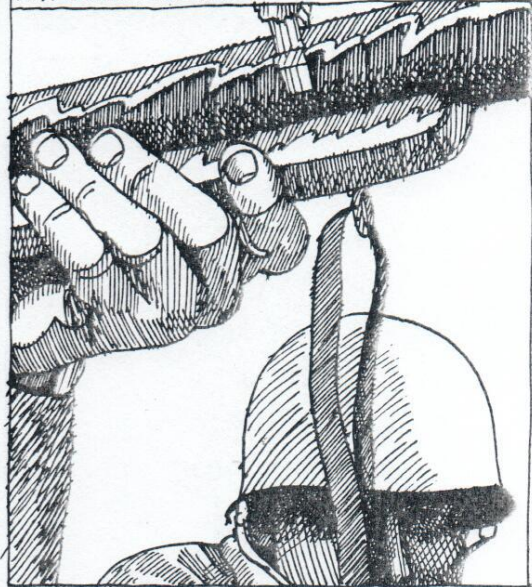




BUT GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR, PRESIDENT (AND FORMER GENERAL) DWIGHT EISENHOWER, GENERAL MATTHEW RIDGEWAY, GENERAL MAXWELL TAYLOR, GENERAL JAMES CAVIN AND GENERAL OMAR BRADLEY HAVE ALL SAID AMERICA SHOULD NOT HAVE LARGE NUMBERS OF TROOPS FIGHTING A LAND WAR IN ASIA.



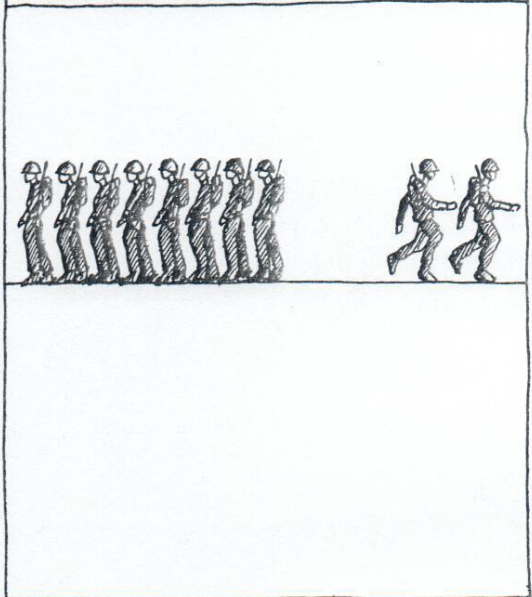
THE UNITED STATES SAYS WE ARE FIGHTING IN VIETNAM BECAUSE OUR GOVERNMENT DOESN'T LIKE THE PROGRAMS OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT.



BUT THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT SAYS IT WANTS FREE ELECTIONS REPRESENTING ALL INTERESTS, LAND REFORMS AND ALL DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS.

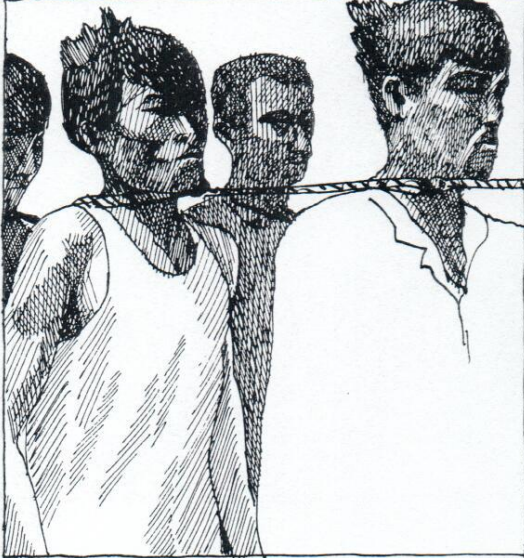


WE SAY THE PEOPLE OF VIETNAM SUPPORT THE WAR, BUT 20 PER CENT OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY DESERTED IN 1965.





WE SAY THE PEOPLE WE ARE FIGHTING THERE ARE OUTSIDERS FROM NORTH VIETNAM. BUT ONLY 6 PER CENT OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT'S ARMY IS FROM NORTH VIETNAM.



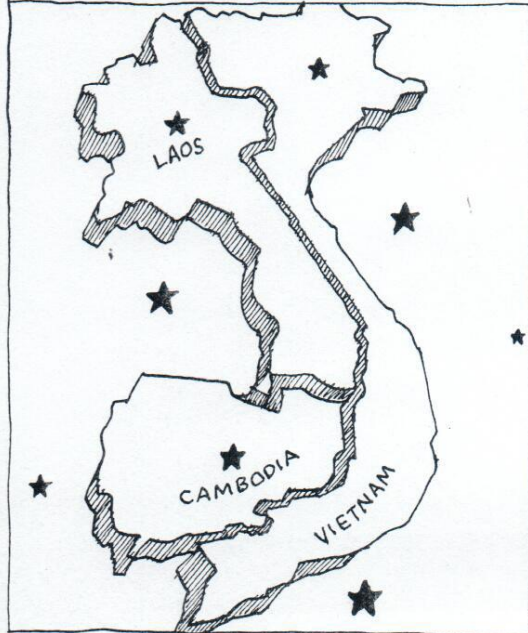
THE OTHERS ARE FROM THE SOUTH AND ARE FIGHTING OUTSIDERS - THE UNITED STATES - FOR THE FREEDOM OF THEIR OWN COUNTRY.



WE SAY WE FIGHT IN VIETNAM TO FIGHT AGAINST COMMUNIST CHINESE AGGRESSION IN SOUTH VIETNAM. BUT THERE ARE NO CHINESE TROOPS FIGHTING IN VIETNAM, NORTH OR SOUTH.



WE SAY IF SOUTH VIETNAM GOES COMMUNIST, THEN SO WILL EVERY OTHER COUNTRY NEAR IT.





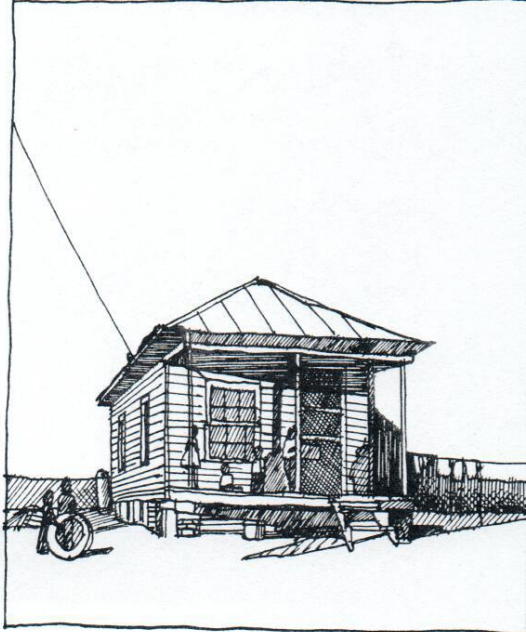
BUT WE ALSO SAY WE WANT THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE TO CHOOSE THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT, AND THEN WE WON'T EVEN LET COMMUNISTS RUN FOR OFFICE.



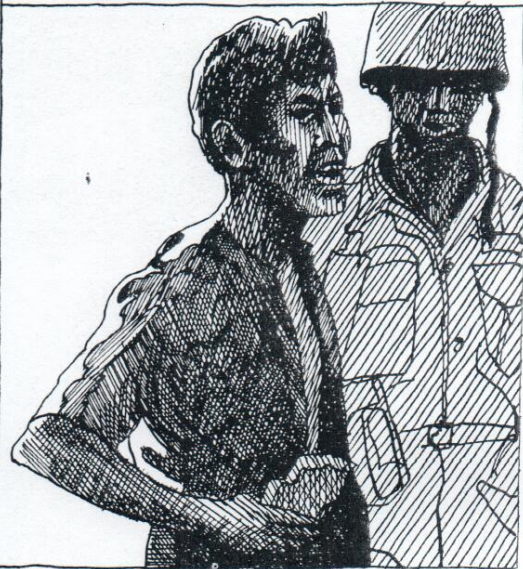
WE SAY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT NEGOTIATE WITH US, BUT THEY HAVE TRIED TO TALK WITH US SEVEN TIMES SINCE SEPTEMBER, 1964.



WE ARE WORRIED ABOUT FIGHTING A WAR AGAINST POVERTY IN AMERICA.



BUT WE SPEND \$499,999.96 FOR EVERY ENEMY SOLDIER WE KILL OR CAPTURE WHILE PEOPLE STARVE AND GO WITHOUT GOOD JOBS AT HOME.





WE SAY WE HAVE TO KEEP FIGHTING  
BECAUSE IF WE STOP, OTHER COUNTRIES  
WILL NOT RESPECT US.



BUT FRANCE LEFT AFTER HER TROOPS  
WERE DEFEATED IN VIETNAM, AND  
EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD RESPECTS  
FRANCE FOR HER DECISION.



WE SAY THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT  
DOES NOT FIGHT FAIRLY BECAUSE THEY  
HIDE BEHIND TREES AND BUSHES,



BECAUSE THEY TAKE LAND FROM THE  
RICH AND GIVE IT TO THE POOR.





BECAUSE THEY KILL THEIR ENEMIES.



BUT WE HID BEHIND TREES AND BUSHES  
WHEN WE FOUGHT THE BRITISH FOR  
OUR INDEPENDENCE.



WE ASKED FOR HELP FROM ANY  
COUNTRY THAT WOULD GIVE IT TO US  
(FRANCE, SPAIN AND HOLLAND DID GIVE  
US TROOPS AND AID).



WE TARRED AND FEATHERED AND  
KILLED OUR ENEMIES, AND TOOK  
THEIR LAND.





THE PEOPLE OF VIETNAM ARE FIGHTING THEIR OWN WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE.



THEY WANT TO RUN THEIR OWN COUNTRY, AND DON'T WANT ANYONE- AMERICANS, FRENCH, CHINESE OR RUSSIAN- TO TELL THEM HOW TO DO IT.



WHAT DO YOU THINK? SHOULD WE BE FIGHTING IN VIETNAM, OR SHOULD WE LET THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE- CATHOLICS, BUDHISTS, COMMUNISTS AND DEMOCRATS- SETTLE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS THEIR OWN WAY?



YOU ARE A PART OF AMERICA.

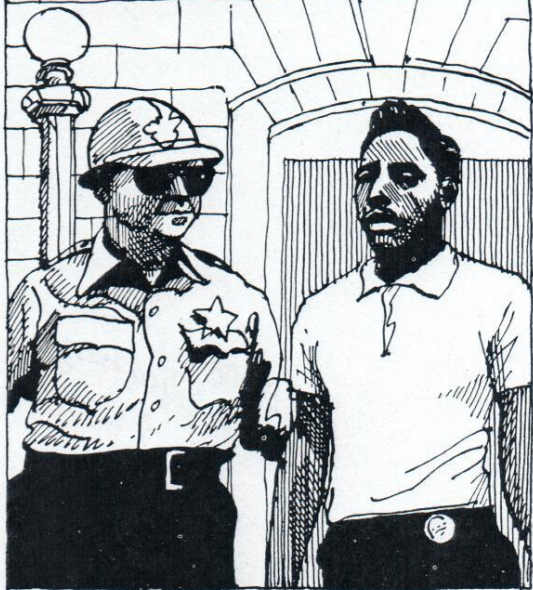




YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE A PART OF THE GOVERNMENT.



MEN YOU VOTE FOR HELP MAKE THIS WAR POSSIBLE. WILL YOU VOTE FOR THEM AGAIN ?



OR WILL THE WAR IN VIETNAM - THE WAR THAT IS FOUGHT IN YOUR NAME - KEEP ON KILLING ?



WHAT DO YOU THINK ?



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#### Websites

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## Education

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## Professional Positions

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University of Kentucky, Summer 2012, Part-Time Instructor, History  
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Charles Roland Fellowship (Summer 2011)  
Dorothy Leathers Fellowship (Summer 2011)  
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## Publications

Amanda L. Higgins. Review of Roman, Meredith L. *Opposing Jim Crow: African Americans and the Soviet Indictment of American Racism, 1928-1939*. Register of the Kentucky Historical Society. Vol. 111, No. 2 (Spring 2013).

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