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Louis E. Lomax

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Louis E. Lomax

“Address to Faculty and Students on the Historical Roots of Black Power”

December 2, 1968

Portland State University

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DENNIS PAYNE: Could I have your attention? [chatter in background quiets down] My name is Dennis Payne, and I'm chairman of the Speakers Program for Community Affairs. Today we are honored to have as our guest Mr. Louis Lomax, who comes to us from L.A. Mr. Lomax is one of the most prominent Black newspapermen in the United States. He is author of five bestsellers; his last book, the one that's just out, is *To Kill a Black Man*, which is a comparison of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Mr. Lomax is a graduate of Yale and has acted as assistant professor of sociology at Georgia State College. As I said before, he now lives in Los Angeles, California, where he has his own twice-a-week program. Mr. Lomax is going to speak to us today on “The Historical Roots of Black Power.” At this time: Mr. Louis Lomax. [applause]

LOUIS LOMAX: It is a pleasure to be with you again. I want to thank you for turning out in such impressive numbers. I regret that all of you are not yet seated; however, as a former shoeshine boy from Georgia, I would be less than candid if I did not say it does my heart good to see white boys standing at the back of the bus. [laughter] Perhaps no phrase is heard more frequently, more loudly throughout the land, than the phrase “Black Power.” It is, for a lot of people, a disturbing phrase. There are those who prefer, I suspect out of a kind of cultural fright, to pass it off as so much Black rhetoric. But I shall attempt, at this time, to sustain the thesis that the concept of Black power is more than style; that it has, indeed, considerable substance. And I believe the concept now has reached the point of credibility, where it is, in order for scholars such as you, to begin to come to grips with the historical roots of the concept, all to the end not only of better scholarship, but to the end of better understanding of the peoples who people the American republic.

To get at the historical roots of Black power, we must first pause and come to grips with the phenomenon of power itself, and how it has functioned in American society. And I submit that once we will have come to grips with the concept and the function of power itself, then, I think, and only then will we be prepared to go on and consider Black power in a historical context, examine its style, examine and explore, indeed, its substance.

What, then, do we mean by power? I submit, as a functional definition, that power is the possession of the force to selectively—and that's a key word—to selectively plan one's own life and to manipulate the lives of others. Viewed, then, in terms of sociological function, power is the possession of the force necessary to selectively control your life, and then to manipulate the lives of others. I put emphasis upon the word "selectively" because the man who has power has all of the alternatives at his disposal. He can elect to go up, down, sideways, to the bottom, or to the top. The option is his to do what he wishes, by and large, with his own life, but he manipulates in the process the lives of other people, therefore robbing them of any options and making them, to the degree he wishes it, in his image. To me, this is power.

There are five traditional power tools, as I analyze American society. The first and perhaps the foremost of these American power tools is the law, the codified, alleged behavior pattern of a society. Without a single exception, an examination of the law will show that the law is the extension of the ruling class. They make the law, you keep the order. They can opt, read it as they wish, but you have no options. They selectively, by and large, control their own lives. They make the law in order to create the kind of society they have elected to live in for themselves, and they manipulate you by their use of the power of the law to make you live in the kind of world and to assume a kind of role in that kind of world that they dominate and push down upon you. A classic example of this, of course, is what happened in Chicago during the Democratic National Convention. As you all know, and I happen to have been in the thick of it, Mayor Daley made the law and they cracked heads until they were able to maintain order. Just today, for example, a scathing report, a federal report, has now been made on the scene in Chicago, and the report comes up with the startling statement that the police rioted—an incredible indictment—the police rioted. But you see, men who wield the kind of legal power Mayor Daley wields, these kinds of men have done wrong so long and gotten away with it so completely they now think it's right to do wrong. And the end result was none other than Mayor Daley himself went on television and commended the men for the report and recommended that it have wide distribution. He doesn't have moral brains enough to realize that the report called him a barbarian. [laughter] He's proud of it! [applause]

And this is how force is implemented by the wielding of the law as a power tool in American society. A second power tool is money. He who pays the fiddler invariably will call the tune. He

who has money has the alternatives. He has the alternative not only to exercise an option and shape his own life, but in the process, he manipulates your life. A classic example of the use of money as a power tool in American society, of course, is marriage. What is it really all about, in most instances? Wife, you stay home. I'll go out alley cattin', but *you* stay home. I really am not too anxious about you going to school. If you follow the injunction of power, you really should be quiet in the church; perhaps it would be better if you walked a few paces behind me, and regardless of how I treat you, don't get uppity! [laughter] And the reason why you better not get uppity is because I am the male. I earn the money, and I will cut off your charge account, and I will use money as a power tool in American society.

Now, you can not only see this in the strange relationship that describes some marriages, but you will invariably find it as young men such as you march out of here and go into industry, and you have ambitions of one day sitting in the swivel chair. And watch what they do with you because they've got the money. They make you dress like they want you to dress. They'll really pick your wife for you. They have company executives who do nothing but tell you where to live, what kinds of suits to wear, what kind of car to buy, at a certain level of... as you go up this rat race treadmill. The use of money to corrupt, to manipulate other people's lives, while leaving myself, if I have the money, with all of the options.

Combine the two for a moment. The use of law as a power tool, the use of money as a power tool. If a millionaire's son loses his head and and steals and automobile, the chances are that in some quiet, secluded judge's chamber, he will be put on probation for a matter of four or five days. But God help some poor Black man [...] when he steals a car. He's gone for fifteen years. Now, what's the difference? It's the use of money as a power tool in American society.

A third and a very interesting power tool is how that society looks at itself. Call it self-image, if you please. Call it, for the want of a better word, custom. It becomes a power tool, and a very powerful one at that, in that custom and tradition are used: one, to give the wielders of power options, but to make sure that the remainder of you conform. A classic example, of course, you can see all over campus today, and that is everybody gets all uptight if your hair, you know, is down around your neck, and if you have on a turtleneck and a medallion, and some sneakers, because somehow or another the word is out that the real, good college student will wear a Brooks Brothers suit, a white shirt, and a black tie; his hair will be neatly cut and his nails will be cleaned, and he will take on all of the appearance of upper-middle-class, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Which is something that is very difficult, you see, for Dennis to do. [laughter] But the entire use of custom, the entire use of tradition to give the wielders of power options about their own lives but to manipulate the lives of others, when this is used as a power wedge, it works in terms of ostracism, it works in terms of causing people to do things they really would

not do, it makes them conform because somehow or another, they want to remain within the four walls of the accepted society.

Another tremendous power tool in American society is religion. Call it psychology if you want to. I could argue a case that they both add up to the same thing. But the thing about religion as a power tool is that religion, like the law, is an extension of the ruling arm of those who wield power. The institutionalized church, and I say this to [...], but the main function of the institutionalized church is to provide the kinds of options that are comfortable for the people who make power, and in the meantime manipulate the lives of the masses. This is why the church as an organized institution has become, by and large, a Sunday morning country club, where people who look and think and act alike all go to see each other. It has nothing to do with any kind of revolutionary ethic. It has nothing to do with broad, sweeping leadership in terms of overall social change; rather, it is designed to make people conform. It captures minds and it becomes one of the most effective power tools in American society. For example, can you imagine a woman professor with a Ph.D. from Harvard anguishing over whether or not she is free to take the pill? Despite her splendid mind, her incredible education, her mind has been literally seized by the institutionalized church, and she is being manipulated to the point of letting somebody else tell her how she and her husband should behave in the bedroom. The church is a power tool, an effective and incredible weapon.

The fifth of the traditional American power tools is violence. Here comes that dirty word. For society, particularly American society, has achieved what it has achieved and it maintains it through violence. It is the ultimate American power tool. In other words, as Mayor Daley said, "If you folks don't behave non-violently, I'm going to shoot you." Violence is mine, you see, sayeth the ruling class, and I will use violence to keep you where you are; I will use violence to maintain my power base in American society.

Now, if you examine these tools, you will find that not only are they accurate power tools, but you will find without a single exception, these power tools as they operate in American society today are exclusively white. White-conceived, white-owned, white-manipulated, white-operated. Take the law. Why do you suppose the question of law and order only is being raised now? All of those years when we were being beaten and kicked in Little Rock, Selma, Birmingham, nobody said a word about law and order. All of those years when Black bodies were hanging from every other tree in Mississippi swamps, nobody said a word about law and order. All of those years when Black bodies were floating down the Mississippi River, nobody said a word about law and order. As I talk to you this morning, it's been almost fifteen years since the Supreme Court gave the decision desegregating the public schools, and as I talk to you, less than ten percent of the Black kids in the South are getting an integrated education,

and nobody says a word about law and order. So what does this thing about law and order mean? Really, it's shorthand. Middle-class, white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant shorthand for saying "nigger." That's what it means. [applause]

And who was it, who was it who stood in the schoolhouse door and stopped the federal marshals from carrying out the order and enforcing the law? None other than Mr. Law and Order himself, the great white savior on a horse for America, George Wallace. [laughter and applause] You see, and here you have the entire record of George Wallace, literally, as governor, defying the law of the land, and then he has the unmitigated gall to go to Watts and tell some Black cats to obey the law and keep the order. Whose law? What order?

Money is a power tool in American society and certainly one of the most powerful white tools. Black folks don't have any money, and this society has gone to great pains to see to it that Black folks either individually or as a group will never get any money. They come up with nonsense like Richard Nixon's proposal of "Black capitalism." Now, what in the world does that mean? Does that mean now that I'm supposed to go to Watts and take over these mama and papa shops? Does this mean I'm supposed to go and take some run-down, dilapidated meat market in Watts—it would be a wonderful thing if they could get all of us hung up on this Black capitalism bit and all of us take off to the Black ghetto, and take over these little stores that can't compete. But you see, this is the use of money as a power tool, because as long as you take over the stores in the Black ghetto you never will have anything. But when the day comes that you begin to take over the stores in downtown Portland, then you break the power hold that money has upon you, and what must be devised, and we'll talk about that later. There are ways for those who are Black and who wish to become aggressive capitalists to participate in the fullness of the power that money wields in American society.

Custom as a power tool of the American middle-class white man is obvious. It's in the nature of the dress demanded. It's in the nature of the traditions that we carry out in our schools; and I'll combine it with the nature of white religion, for they both work, in a sense, in the same orbit of custom. What do you think Portland State really is? Look at the curriculum. What is it built to do? Portland State, like practically every other college in the United States, is nothing but a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, male cookie cutter designed to cut out and make more white Protestant Anglo-Saxon males. [applause] Everything from the makeup of the curriculum to the way the classes are taught, all of these things are designed to make Johnny just like the middle-class, white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant male. Look at the textbooks—this is where you're having trouble on campus today. Go the library, get yourself a good, solid American history. You know, the beautiful ones, the ones with the pictures in it that we talked about when I was here last year. Go through those textbooks on history, and look at those pictures. Without a single

exception: jut-jawed, God-fearing, New England Protestant Anglo-Saxon males. And you turn the pages, and you say now, “Didn’t anybody else make any contribution to American society?” The only time you women made it was when Betsy Ross sewed the flag [laughter] and Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote a book, and I keep turning these pages looking for me somewhere. Because somewhere, once upon a time, I was told that my people had been here for five hundred years. I was told that my blood, my sweat, my tears are in this country, and I keep turning this book looking for me, and finally you get to page 213, and lo and behold, there I am, there’s a picture of a Black man with a ball and a chain around his leg, he’s eating a piece of watermelon, and the legend says, “Happy slaves relax after a day on the plantation.” [laughter and applause]

Now, what is this really all about? It is the projection, you see, of power, through the use of the school as an institution. The church is the same thing. Watch how it starts. Watch how it’s carried out. It’s to, again, project this white image of America. Again, if you want some pictures, go to church. Look at those images carved in the window. Go up in the pulpit, please, and get the Bible, get the big swinging one, the one with pictures in it. You’ve seen ‘em. Open it up and look at those pictures. They’ve got pictures of everybody from Adam and Eve to John, who allegedly wrote the latter part of Revelations. And you turn the pages. And you know this happened in the Middle East, and you look at these pictures: everybody blond-haired, blue-eyed, lily-white. And you say, “How did this happen?” And finally you get to the New Testament, and there, lo and behold, believe it or not, is a picture of Jesus. Go look at it. Long, golden, flowing hair, white as he can be, blue-eyed, jut-jawed New England Puritan. Now, Mrs. Lomax and I just returned from two months in the Holy Land, Israel and Jordan. We spent several days in Bethlehem of Judea, and verily, verily, I say unto you: [laughter] There is no way under the sun for anybody to come out of Bethlehem looking like Spiro Agnew. Impossible. [laughter and applause]

Now what does this mean? What does this mean? How do you account for this? It means that Western white man as a power tool has carried out one of the greatest exercises in anthropomorphic thinking in the history of civilization. What he has literally done—and watch this, young people—what he has literally done is to create God in his image. And you see, once you create God in your image, you make him look like you, the next logical step is to make him think like you. This is how, then, the church has been used as an incredible power tool by white American society.

Violence is a white power tool. Everybody comes to me when I go on campus and asks me, “Dr. Lomax, are Negroes going to get violent?” We never said we were non-violent, we just carried out a non-violent tactic as a maneuver, but anybody who has been in the Black community on

Friday or Saturday night knows very well that we are not essentially a non-violent people. [laughter] But Negroes are not violent because they're Black. Negroes are violent because they are human, and man is violent. That's the key to it. Remember, don't be swayed with this violence business, and don't let people use this as a power tool against you. Let it be recorded once and for all that everything America is, they got it by taking it away from somebody. Would even the most conservative among you suggest that America was non-violent with the Indians? We certainly weren't non-violent with the British, were we? Not only did we refuse to obey our local police in Boston, but we were litterbugs, remember? We threw this business in the harbor. And can't you imagine Paul Revere galloping through the moonlit New England evening singing "The British are coming, the British are coming," and some middle-class white burgher raises [...] and says, "Slow down, boy, you're bringing down my property values." [laughter]

And what would happen, young people, if Stokely Carmichael were to stand on the steps of the Capitol in Washington D.C., raise his Black Power fist, and say, "Give me liberty, or give me death"? [applause] When Patrick Henry did it, it was right! Because he's white. And he has the power. But when Stokely does it, he's got to be a Communist-inspired Black agitator. He's got to be.

We don't have to delve way back into history to show this use of violence. Let me give you two direct quotes from a recent interview with Governor Reagan. These are direct quotes. Governor Reagan—he then was aspiring to the presidency—Governor Reagan, what about Vietnam? Answer: "Turn it into a parking lot." Governor Reagan, what about the *Pueblo*? Quote: "Give 'em a week; if they don't give us our ship back, go in and kick the devil out of 'em." Close quote. Now look at how Ronald Reagan solves *his* problems. So little Black Johnny, sitting at a television set in Oakland, he sees Reagan say this, he hears Reagan say that, and little Black Johnny says, "Aha. Now I know how to solve my problem." And the end result is that little Black Johnny can't wait to grow up and go and turn Sacramento into a parking lot and kick the devil out of Ronald Reagan. [laughter and applause]

The point that I prosecute is that we use violence as a power weapon, but we teach duplicity about it. We, as whites, are violent, and we say it's good, it's just; we only become critical of violence when somebody else resorts to violence. Classic case: America looks to Cuba and sees Russian missiles, and we move to the brink of the third war as America says to Russia, "Move those missiles." What's wrong with the missiles? Well, they're pointing at us. [laughter] America. Move 'em. And we forced Russia to move them, but at the very time we forced Russia to move her missiles out of Cuba, we had our missiles all around the Mediterranean pointed right at Moscow. It's right for me, white God, to have my missiles pointed at you, but it's wrong, you see, for you to have your missiles pointed at me. It's wrong, Russia! You're an atheistic

Communist state! It's wrong to go into Czechoslovakia, but because I love Jesus, it's right for me to go into the Dominican Republic. [laughter and applause] This duplicitous concept of power.

So then, the cry for Black power, I think, can be clearly understood. As I read it, it means that Black people individually and collectively in this country are determined to participate in the making of power decisions that affect their own lives and the lives of their families and the lives of their children. To use a phrase from my friend Dr. Nathan Wright, what we're talking about is nothing less than the de-honkification of power in America. It means—you educators will tremble at this—it means rethinking the university, it means rethinking the church, it means rethinking the distribution of wealth in America. It means the reordering of economic priorities. It means, for example, in the case of money, that this nation, if it is to survive, must invest as much money in re-establishing, reclaiming the lives of Black people wrecked by the experience of life in this country, and spend as much money doing that as we're spending, say, in Vietnam carrying out a war that is not only militarily unwinnable, but morally untenable. [applause]

We now spend, young people, 35 billion dollars a year in Vietnam alone. With 35 billion dollars, I could legally burn down every ghetto in America and build it back into the kind of community where everybody of every race and creed could come and live. [applause] With half of 35 billion dollars, you could provide a guaranteed annual wage for the unemployed head of every household in the United States. We're not talking about *new* tax money. We're talking about the reordering of the economic priorities. The reordering of how we spend the money we now spend. The problem of the ghetto is not a problem of money, it's a question of the national will. We've got the money. We've got the power. But do we really want to see Albina cleaned up? Don't we really feed on that slum? Don't we really enjoy knowing that there are some folks down there at the bottom of the pile, that we always have a ready source of cheap menial labor? Don't we enjoy living in our middle-class cocoon, knowing that the police are for us and against them, that the whole law and the whole system is built to see to it that they never cross Main Street and get over to where we are?

So the cry for Black power means, individually and collectively, Black people are tired of being the manipulated ones in American society. We want a part of the action. A piece, and a big piece at that, of the power pie. We want to help make policy. We want to help write law. And we want the kind of law that will function as fairly for me as it functions for you. As far as this question of violence is concerned, I as a social critic would be less than honest if I did not say that as I read the signs in the sky today, young Blacks are determined to have power, and the question is not whether they want to become violent, the question is, what must they do to get what rightfully belongs to them? As I read young Blacks today, they are going to be standing at

the oven as the American pie is baked, and when the door is opened, these young Blacks are going to get their share of the pie even if they have to take it. [applause]

So as we talk about reordering of America's view of itself, let me issue two brief statements of warning. One: it would be tragic if young Blacks today, particularly the UBSU [University Black Studies Union] types, become so hung up on your Blackness that you forget your humanness. Black may be beautiful, but it isn't everything. One of the things that disturbs me as I move about on university campuses and I meet with BSU people, they get involved with a great deal of Black rhetoric. They're Black this and they're Black that, which is all groovy, *but*. You can't put it in a cash register. Civilization is a little bit more than a four-letter word, and man's search for a cure for the common cold is not hardly going to be enhanced by kidnapping the university college president. There is a danger of one becoming so preoccupied with his Blackness that he becomes almost paranoid, indeed he does. It's part of the psychological problem of many American white people. They're so obsessed with their whiteness, they have destroyed their effectiveness as human beings. I'm suggesting, then, that as you move toward a kind of Black power, that you not forget that ultimately what you're talking is the sharing of human power. [applause]

A second warning flag I would fly, particularly on campus and again particularly to BSU people, is that in the process of demanding that the curricula of American society be reordered, take care that you don't replace white academic nonsense with Black academic nonsense. [applause] Some of the Black power versions of American history, for example, are just absolutely incredible in their distortion. So distorted is much of the Black history being spewed around today that last Friday, none other than Dr. John Hope Franklin, chairman of the Department of History at the University of Chicago and perhaps the most distinguished Black historian in all the world, John Hope took to the platform in Washington D.C. and gave the Black power concept of history the most incredible academic spanking I have heard in a long, long time. So I'm saying, young Black people, you've gotta tell it like it is. But tell it like it is! And don't forget, don't get so hung up in telling it like it is you forget to do it as it has to be done.

What am I talking about? I'm saying to you bluntly that the most significant thing about the year 1968 is not the election, not the crisis in the ghetto, not even the war in Vietnam. The most significant thing about 1968 is that, as of 1972, the political majority in this country will be under thirty years of age. The election of Richard Nixon was the last stand of the old folks. [applause] To use a Kennedy phrase, then, there is a sense in which the torch is being passed to a new generation. And as I look at you young white students, particularly those of you who are radicals, I ask myself, now, look man, are you playin' revolution? Could it be that you're just thumbing your nose at Daddy? Could it be that you're gonna come out of Portland State and

take right off to suburbia and become afflicted with a split-level home and a tri-level morality? [applause] In other words, I'm saying to you young white people, as you begin to move into the centers of power, can we expect decency and change from you, or are you going to turn out to be just like Daddy? And you young Black students, what are we looking at when we look at 1972? Are you going to be any better than they are? Could it be that somewhere, in some of your extreme Black power rhetoric, I hear hate? Could it be that after all of these years that we as Black people have struggled, that you now are going to come down with the same cancer of hate that has laid the white man low? If hate has destroyed him, and it has, what makes you think, young Black folks, it won't eat you up also? Hate is a cancer that consumes the mind of man, eats out his soul. Robs him of all of the creative opportunity that is the essential nature of man.

So, not all of us over thirty are crazy. Not all of us are frightened that the torch is being passed toward your generation. But better those of us who feel that we are not passing the torch to you, we are sharing it together for the revolution. It belongs to all of us. There is a sense in which the Black man is the final coming to be of the revolution of 1776. There is a sense in which the American Black man is the ultimate working of the non-institutionalized Judeo-Christian ethic. There is a sense in which the American Black man is America finding, at long last, a sense of its own identity, a sense of its own culture. Indeed, who would have believed that when the good ship *Jesus* set sail from Liverpool and went to the coast of West Africa where Black men sold Black men into slavery under white men, who would have believed that that ugly bastard and criminal act would one day result in the ultimate purification of the American dream? [applause]

PAYNE: All right, for those who have to leave, thank you for coming. We'll have a short ten- to fifteen-minute question and answer period. If you want to have a question would you please raise your hand to identify you and state your question? Open for questions from the floor. I guess we'll wait until everyone leaves who's gonna leave. Question?

[audience member asks questions in background, off microphone]

LOMAX: The question is, how can Blacks carry out the kind of revolution I'm talking about unless they acquire skills which match those of their opponent, and how can they get these skills if they don't get them through the university? I would basically accept that suggestion, and this is why I'm saying to Black students, for God's sake, do your thing, but stay in school and do your work! You know, at least stay in Chemistry 101 long enough to learn how to make a Molotov cocktail, if that's what you want to do. [applause] So, I am saying that as I see it, it's a kind of participatory revolution. A revolution that will be carried out, I think—of course there

will be some confrontations and of course there will be violence—but I do not see mass violence, and I think it's the kind of revolution that will be brought out as students study. For example, I am deeply impressed with the work that's being done on some campuses to include what is called Black Studies, the concept of the Black family, the concept of the Black society, the concept of almost a Black church, and certainly a concept of Black history. And there's a great debate about this, and I don't hesitate to take my position on it. What I see is ultimately we're not talking about Black history, we're talking about the correct version of American history. We're not talking about Black sociology, we're talking about American sociology.

One of the main problems about America, and I hinted at it toward the end of my lecture, is that America really, really doesn't have a culture. You're talking about an identity crisis, the entire nation has an identity crisis. You see, everybody came from somewhere, and we all came running over here with our little cultural knapsacks, and this is why we're always referring to "you are Irish" and "you a Jew" and you know, we always have to think back across the pond. Our language, you see, is not indigenous to American civilization; our religion certainly was imported. And, as I'm suggesting at San Diego State next week in a lecture, I think for the first time a truly American culture is beginning to emerge, that is, a culture which is the product of the group experience here in America. So what I'm talking about is that when we ultimately do this thing like it should be done, instead of a Black history what we're going to have is the correct version of American history that tells the truth about Black folks, about women, about Mexicans, about Indians, and about everybody else. And we're going to come up, I think, with a Black social science. I mean, not a Black social science but an honest social science which, again, gives the social function an apparatus of a general society.

So, I certainly agree with you, sir. And not only young Blacks, but young whites. That you do need the tools. If there's any one thing, and I know you young militants think that the civil rights movement was born the day after you got here, but it wasn't really. One of the things that my generation did that most of you really are too young to grasp, and that is that we took the white man's law and wrapped it around his neck and beat his brains out with it. We were the first people that I knew of who literally took another man's jurisprudence and busted his head open. And when we came out of the Supreme Court in 1954, we had taken his law and beaten him to death, and put him in the position of being the most massive lawbreaker in human history. And we did it because we had the tools. So this is why I find so much validity in your comment. Yeah?

[audience member asks question off microphone]

LOMAX: How to expose it? [...] I don't think it's ever going to get off the ground, because it has really no merit to it. I think the Black community, once it understands what Nixon is talking about, I think they will... they have some rather interesting ways of opposing things they don't like. [laughter] And I think they'll send up a few smoke signals about it, and he'll get the message. The thing about the Black capitalism business that frightens me is that not only does it mean, you know, telling you fellows to come on and get yourself a degree in business and then go own some mom and pop store in the ghetto; there's no way in the world for you to compete with Safeway. How you gonna compete with Safeway? No way. They buy by the freight car full, and you buy one can at a time and try to retail it. So what they're really trying to do is to avoid the reordering of American economic priorities, and they're going to have to do it in terms of a guaranteed annual wage, in terms of participation not in the mom-and-pop store, but getting a piece of AT&T, man. That's where the power is, you see. Get a piece of the First National Bank. That's where the power is. Then you can really crack a whip and help divide up this thing. So I think, across the country, I know I'm going to be on seventy-five university campuses this year and everywhere I go—I've already been on thirty—I'm saying this business about Nixon, practically everybody is saying it, even Floyd McKissick, who was someone thinking as to have approved it the first time around, has publicly apologized for it.

But since we're on the question of Nixon... [laughter] I have one thing to say to you young people both Black and white. I predict, knowing something about Nixon, knowing something about the people around him, I predict that Richard Nixon is going to carry out four years of serious oppression and repression. And just keep this in your mind: make sure when you hit the streets or you start something, make sure your cause is just and make sure it's worth the effort, because just as sure as that light burns, Richard Nixon has no humanity. He does not understand the nature of civilized protest. He doesn't know the difference between a person who breaks the law for a moral principle and a person who breaks the law to steal a ham. To him, they're all criminals. And I would not be surprised at all to see wholesale arrests and detentions of young Blacks and young whites, and you heard about all these concentration camps, haven't you? They're still sitting around. I know it. They're sitting around waiting for somebody. So all I'm saying is, if you decide to do your thing, be sure to ask two questions. One: is my mission just, and two: do I want to pay this kind of price? When in four years, the whole thing is going to [volume drops very low, 00:51:07-00:51:25] [...] [laughter in background] I don't want to see, really, I don't want to see you get your heads busted, and bleeding and dying in the streets of Portland over what we call a hummer. You know what a hummer is? Or some jive nothing. You see what I'm saying? When in four years, you can stay in school and get your tools ready. Or things are gonna fall right through your hands. [...] I don't want you dead. [laughter] [volume rises 00:51:55] Yes sir?

AUDIENCE MEMBER [in background]: You mentioned five institutional aspects of power but you didn't mention the political [...]

LOMAX: Yeah.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: [unintelligible]

LOMAX: Yeah. Well, I think there is a sense in which you could say that political power draws its essential power from these sources. It's a combination of money, custom, tradition, church, all of these wielders of power. It is very interesting that Nixon came up with the phrase "the great silent center." They're power sources, that's what he meant. Of course, invariably politicians carry out the will of those who elected them, and Nixon, I think, although he is a minority president, sees himself as having some kind of mandate from the silent center. I wouldn't be surprised to see him put men like Strom Thurmond, for example, in positions of tremendous power. Can't you imagine? Good God, a Cabinet meeting, Nixon presiding, Agnew to his left, Thomas Dooley, Secretary of State, and the invocation by Billy Graham! You know... [laughter] when you really think this thing out... But I do believe that—and I'm going to use a word on you now, watch it—but I do believe that the Nixon interregnum—do you know what that is? It's a void between two things. The Nixon interregnum will be one of repression and suppression, and I fully expect, in fact I'm keeping an anxious ear right now for San Francisco State, because trouble's brewing. Yes?

[audience member asks question in background]

LOMAX: I think you have, in a state like Oregon or in a state like Washington, where you have a relatively small Black population, you have two routes to go. I suspect both will be followed simultaneously. I suspect that you will begin to get, even here it should already have occurred, you ought to be able to get at least Black local officials, like City Council. Got one here, in Portland... [voices in background, someone says "Zero."] Well, you should be able... this, it seems to me, that you can do. I think you could get a tremendous amount of white support, and here we go again, this business of doing your Black thing, but you can't do this Black thing by yourself. A great deal of what we have to do, we have to do it with help. We have to acknowledge the services of our allies. So I think at the local level you should be able to break the border there. We broke it in L.A., in fact, a Black man is now [...] there. The other thing I think that's going to happen, it's a very interesting phenomenon. For example, you take a man like Senator Ed Brook. Almost no Negroes in Massachusetts, but again, you see, what Brook did was to ally, again, with this aggregation of power. And he was elected as a Republican, not as a

Black man. You almost had a Black man as lieutenant governor of the state of Washington the last time around.

So I think more and more, an enlightened kind of society sees the wisdom of putting Blacks in positions of political power, which is another reason why it's going to be so necessary for you kids to get the tools. Because after all, if we're going to have a Black man eventually at the state house, then you've got to be that man, which means you've got to do the fundamental things here. It's one thing to say, "I want a Negro to be governor," but it's another thing to come up with a Negro who can run the state. This is another—just another minute—this is another point that I like to leave with both Blacks and SDS types who are talking revolution. It's one thing to say you're going to take over society, but it's another thing to start asking who's going to keep the water moving, who's going to put the television station on the air, who's going to run the bank, who's going to make the airplanes fly, who's going to keep society operative? We had a situation develop in Los Angeles after the Watts riot; white liberals got all up-shook and went and found three Negroes who said they wanted a supermarket, and they were willing to give Negroes *anything* then. So they gave 'em \$150,000. Go put up a supermarket. Only one thing wrong. Nobody knew how to run a supermarket. Not one Negro has ever become manager of a Safeway. So, the end result, at the first week's end they forgot to put the freezer on and they blew about fifty thousand dollars' worth of meat. End result, in six weeks the thing was gone. You see, it's one thing to say, "I'm going to take over the businesses," and it's another thing to get the training to run the business once you take it over. We've got time for a couple more. Yes sir? One more? Go.

[audience member asks question in background]

LOMAX: No, I'm talking about a guaranteed annual wage, not a dole. I'm talking about getting rid of this white Anglo-Saxon Protestant ethic about work, which means that work is something that puts coins in your hands and you sweat and smell bad, that's work. You see, it's the Protestant middle-class ethic directed toward the masses! You're the ones who are supposed to work in the concept that work is sweaty, and lifting barges and totin' bales. The middle class doesn't work like that. We pay folks, professors, we pay folks twenty-five or fifty thousand dollars a year to do nothing but sit down and think! Why can't we go get Black sister Lucy and pay her to think? She probably would tell you how to solve the problem of the ghetto.

[applause] In other words, I'm saying that work has to be defined as any function one carries out which keeps society operative. Work does not necessarily have to end up with making something, or turning out an artifact. It can simply be a creative, participating member of society. Once we get over this Protestant hang-up, then... in other words, I'm talking about getting rid of this debasing welfare system. Replace that whole thing with a check-mailing

machine, really, and hire folks. In other words, what I'm saying is, go out and take young men like these and you don't give him anything! You hire him. And he gets paid every Friday, and his job is to go to school. That's his job, and if you really want to keep your Protestant hang-up, pay his salary on a C, and if he makes a B, give him a raise. [applause]

PAYNE: I'd like to thank everyone for coming, and now, the speech is officially over. Thank you. [applause; about twenty seconds of background conversation; program ends]