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The New American Gazette: Stokely Carmichael's speech "Black Power" at Ford Hall Forum, transcript

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Stokely Carmichael

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New American Gazette: Transcript of Stokely Carmichael Forum

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Recording Summary:

Stokely Carmichael, a leader in the civil rights struggle and chairman of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, appeared at Boston's Ford Hall Forum in 1966 advocating for the Black Power movement as a means to reclaim Black Americans' history and identity. This forum was rebroadcast in 1991, with an introduction by Donald Stewart, as part of the New American Gazette radio program.

Transcript Begins

INTRODUCTION: From Boston, the Ford Hall Forum presents the New American Gazette with guest host Donald Stewart

DONALD STEWART: Black power. These were the words that guided Stokely Carmichael as a civil rights leader in 1966. To the man who stood in the forefront of the black power movement, black power meant black Americans gaining political and economic control over their lives and their communities. He urged blacks to reject the values of white middle class America, reject integration, and called for meeting violence with violence.

[00:00:55]

Integration, he taught, was simply an effort to allow blacks to enter the white community from which they had been excluded with no regard for the existence of merits of the black community. He called for the development of the black community as a functional, honorable segment of the total society with its own culture, identify, life patterns and institutions.

[00:01:18]

Born in Trinidad, Stokely Carmichael came to the United States at the age of eleven and was raised in Harlem. Turning down scholarships to white universities, he received a bachelor's degree in philosophy from Howard University in 1964. In 1966, at the age of 25, he was named chairman of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, also known as SNCC. "I believe," he said, "SNCC is trying to lay the foundation for a revolution because reform movements will not solve the socioeconomic problems facing us." Stokely Carmichael played a key role in shifting SNCC's orientation from peaceful integration to black liberation.

Leaving SNCC in 1968, to join the Black Panthers, he resigned as that organization's prime minister in 1969, citing irreconcilable philosophical differences with Eldridge Cleaver. Stokely Carmichael, known today as Kwame Ture, resides in Guinea and travels to this country, lecturing to student groups on the issues of revolution and blacks returning to Africa.

This week, the *New American Gazette* takes you back to October 1966 as the chairman of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, Stokely Carmichael, called for blacks to reclaim their history and identity through black power.

[00:03:06]

STOKELY CARMICHAEL: Thank you very much. It is indeed an honor and a pleasure to be in Boston. We were surprised to hear the protests. We thought that new Bostonians carried on the traditions of the old Bostonians, rivaling the days of the old Transcendentalists, Wendell Phillips and Thoreau and Emerson and Parker. You ought to remind your new friends in Boston that the right of free speech has been something that old Bostonians have always fought for, especially in halls. [applause] We're grateful that some people still have the spirit to allow for free speech. A test for free speech is whether or not you can hear that which you want to hear least and tolerate it.

We usually only need one person to incite wherever we go. But since we were coming to Boston, we wanted to introduce the program's secretary of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee who's in the audience, Mr. Cleve Sellers. [applause]

[00:04:17]

We had an article appear in the *New York Review of Books*. We wanted the title to be "Power and Racism." The publishers wanted it to be "What We Want." And we didn't have any power, so we lost. And that was the first speech that we had prepared for the Ford Hall Forum. Since that time, it's been around quite a number of places; it's been reprinted. And we didn't want to use it again because we wouldn't want to be branded as being intellectually lazy. It's not that we have anything against being intellectual, but laziness has been with us too long. Trying to fight those stereotypes.

[00:04:56]

So there's a new article, which will appear in the *Massachusetts Review* in the next quarter. And we're going to read that one tonight. We're not too good at reading articles— [audience

interruption] The reason you can't hear well is because, you've got to understand, the CIA has got to get first priority. [laughter/applause]

But we're going to try and read articles because we find out that when we go to intellectual places that people have a tendency to believe that because one is an activist he cannot also be a thinker. And we don't think that that's necessarily true. One can be both an activist and a thinker. Some of the most brilliant thinkers in the country are the best activists that I know. They work in SNCC. [laughter]

One of the most pointed illustrations of the need for Black Power, as a positive and redemptive force in a society degenerating into a form of totalitarianism, is to be made by examining the history of distortion that the concept has received in national media of publicity. In this debate – and a debate which we have not been in on – as in everything else that affects our lives, blacks are dependent on, and at the discretion of, forces and institutions within the white society which have little interest in representing us honestly.

[00:06:28]

Our experience with the national press has been that where they have managed to escape a meretricious special interest in "get whitey" sensationalism and race-war mongering, individual reporters and commentators have been conditioned by the enveloping racism of the society to the point where they are incapable even of objective observation and reporting of racial incidents, much less the analysis of ideas. But this limitation of vision and perceptions is an inevitable consequence of the dictatorship of definition, interpretation and consciousness, along with the censorship of history that the society has inflicted upon the blacks and, consequently, itself.

Those words are so big, it took me all night just to do the first paragraph. [laughter]

[00:07:22]

Our concern for black power addresses itself directly to this problem, the necessity to reclaim our history and our identity from the cultural terrorism and depredation of self-justifying white guilt. To do this, we shall have to struggle for the right to create our own terms through which to

define ourselves and our relationship to the society, and to have these terms recognized. This is the first necessity of a free people, and the first right that any oppressor must suspend. The white fathers of American racism knew this –instinctively it seems – as is indicated by the continuous record of the distortion and omission in the chronicles of their dealings with the red and black men.

[00:08:11]

In the same way that Southern apologists for the Jim Crow society was established in the 1870s after the effort to reconstruct the South, along the lines of true political democracy was subverted, have so obscured, muddied and misrepresented the record of that period so that it is almost impossible to determine what really happened. Their contemporary counterparts are busy doing the same thing with the recent history of the civil rights movement.

That's for the press. I didn't want to leave them out.

[00:08:43]

In 1964, for example, the National Democratic Party, led by Lyndon Baines Johnson and Hubert H. Humphrey, cynically undermined the efforts of Mississippi's black population to achieve some degree of political representation. Yet, whenever the events of that convention are recalled by the press, one sees only that version fabricated by the press agents of the Democratic Party. A year later, the House of Representatives, in an even more vulgar display of political racism, made a hollow mockery of the political rights of Mississippi's blacks when it failed to unseat the Mississippi delegation to the House which had been elected through a process which methodically and systematically excluded over 450,000 voting-age blacks, almost one-half of the total electorate of the state of Mississippi.

[00:09:39]

Whenever this event is mentioned in print, it is in terms which leaves one with the rather curious impression that somehow the oppressed black people of Mississippi are at fault for confronting the Congress with a situation in which they had no alternative but to endorse Mississippi's racist political practices.

[00:09:59]

I mention these two examples because, having been directly involved in them, I can see very clearly the discrepancies between what happened and the versions that are finding their way into general acceptance as a kind of popular mythology. Thus, the victimization of the blacks takes place in two phases – first, it occurs in fact and deed; then, and this is equally sinister, in the official recording of those facts.

[00:10:27]

The black power program and concept which is being articulated by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and the Congress of Racial Equality, and a host of community organizations in the ghettos of the North and South has not escaped that process. The white press has been busy articulating their own interpretations and criticisms of their own creations. I'm reminded of a line in one of Mr. Dylan's folk songs – "Come you liberals and do not criticize that which you cannot understand."

For example, while the press had given wide and sensational dissemination to attacks made by figures in the civil rights movement – foremost among which are Roy Wilkins of the NAACP and Whitney Young of the Urban League – and to the hysterical ranting about black racism by the political chameleon that now serves as Vice President, it has certainly failed to give accounts of the reasonable and productive dialogue which is taking place in the black community and in certain important areas in the white religious and intellectual community.

[00:11:31]

A national committee of influential Negro Churchmen affiliated with the National Council of Churches, despite their obvious respectability and responsibility, had to resort to a paid advertisement to articulate their position, while anyone shouting the hysterical yappings of "black racism" got ample space. Thus, the American people have gotten at best a superficial and misleading account of the very terms and tenor of this debate. I wish to quote briefly from the statement by the National Committee of Churchmen which I suspect that the majority of Americans have not seen. This was a paid advertisement that was taken on by several Negro

churchmen. Its statement appeared in the *New York Times*, the July 31st issue. I'd like to quote a great deal of the statement because I think it's vitally important.

[00:12:22]

We, an informal group of Negro churchmen in America are deeply disturbed about the crisis brought upon our country by historic distortions of important human realities in the controversy about black power. What we see shining through the variety of rhetoric is not anything new, but the same old problem of power and race which has faced our beloved country since 1619. The conscience of black men is corrupted because, having no power to implement the demands of conscience, the concern for justice in the absence of justice becomes a chaotic self-surrender. Powerlessness breeds a race of beggars. We are faced now with a situation where powerless conscience meets conscienceless power.

That's important. I'd like to repeat that:

[00:13:11]

We are faced now with a situation where powerless conscience meets conscienceless power threatening the very foundations of our Nation. We deplore the overt violence of riots, but we feel it is more important to focus on the real sources of these eruptions. These sources may be abetted inside the ghetto, but their basic cause lies in the silent and covert violence which white middle class America inflicts upon the victims of the inner city.

In short, the failure of American leaders to use American power to create equal opportunity in life as well as law, this is the real problem and not the anguished cry for black power.

Without the capacity to participate with power – i.e., to have some organized political and economic strength to really influence people with whom one interacts – integration is not meaningful.

America has asked its Negro citizens to fight for opportunity as individuals, whereas at certain points in our history what we have needed most has been opportunity for the whole group, not just for selected and approved Negroes.

We must not apologize for the existence of this form of group power, for we have been oppressed as a group and not as individuals. We will not find our way out of that oppression until both we and America accept the need for Negro Americans, as well as for Jews, Italians, Poles, and white Anglo Saxon Protestants, among others, to have and to wield group power.

[00:14:42]

Traditionally, for each new ethnic group, the route to social and political integration into America's pluralistic society has been through the organization of their own institutions with which to represent their communal needs within the larger society. This is, simply stated, what the advocates of black power are saying. The strident outcry, particularly from the liberal community, that has been evoked by this proposal can only be understood by examining the historic relationship between the black power structure and the white power structure in this country.

Blacks are defined by two forces – their blackness and their powerlessness. There have been traditionally two communities in America – the white community, which controlled and defined the forms that all institutions within the society would take; and the black community, which has been excluded from participation in the power decisions that shaped the society, and has traditionally been dependent upon, and subservient to, the white community.

[00:15:44]

This has not been accidental. The history of every institution of this society indicates that a major concern in the ordering and structuring of the society has been the maintaining of the black community in its condition of dependence and oppression. This has not been on the level of

individual acts of discrimination between individual whites against individual blacks, but as total acts by the white community against the black community.

This fact cannot be too strongly emphasized – that racist assumptions of white superiority have been so deeply ingrained in the structure of the society that it infuses its entire functioning of the society, and is so much a part of the national subconscious that it is taken for granted and is frequently not even recognized. Let me give an example of the difference between individual racism and institutionalized racism, and the society's response to both.

[00:16:41]

When unidentified white terrorists bomb a black church and kill five black children, that is an act of individual racism which is widely deplored by most segments of the society. But when in that same city, Birmingham, Alabama, not five but 500 black babies die each year because of a lack of proper food, shelter and medical facilities, and thousands more are destroyed and maimed physically, emotionally and intellectually because of conditions of poverty and deprivation in the ghetto, that is a function of institutionalized racism.

[00:17:21]

But the society either pretends it doesn't know of this situation, or is incapable of doing anything meaningful about it. And this resistance to doing anything meaningful about conditions in that ghetto comes from the fact that the ghetto is itself a product of a combination of forces and special interests inside the white community, and the groups that have access to the resources and power to change that situation benefit, politically and economically, from the existence of that ghetto.

[00:17:55]

It is more than a figure of speech to say that the black community in America is the victim of white imperialism and colonial exploitation. This is in practical economic and political terms true. It is a truism. There are over 20 million black people comprising ten percent of this nation. They, for the most part, live in well-defined areas of the country – in the shanty-towns and rural black belt areas of the South, and increasingly in the slums of Northern and Western industrial

cities. If one goes into a black community, whether it be in Jackson, Mississippi, Cambridge, Maryland, Harlem, New York, or Roxbury, one will find that the same combination of political, economic, and social forces are at work.

[00:18:43]

The people in the black community do not control the resources of that community, its political decisions, its law enforcement, its housing standards; and even the physical ownership of the land, houses, and stores lie outside the black community. It is white power that makes the laws, and it is violent white power in the form of armed white cops that enforces those laws with guns and nightsticks. The vast majority of blacks in this country live in these captive communities and must endure these conditions of oppression because, and only because, they are black and powerless.

[00:19:20]

I do not suppose that at any point the men who control the power and resources of this country ever sat down and designed these black enclaves, and formally articulated the terms of their colonial and dependent status, as was done, for example, with the Apartheid policy in South Africa. Yet, one cannot distinguish between one ghetto and another. As one moves from city to city, it is as though some malignant racist planning-unit had done precisely this – designed each one from the same master blueprint. And indeed, if the ghetto had been formally and deliberately planned, instead of growing spontaneously and inevitably from the racist functioning of the various institutions that combine to make the society, it would be somehow less frightening.

The situation would be less frightening because, if these ghettos were the result of design and conspiracy, one could understand their similarity as being an artificial and consciously imposed quality, rather than the result of identical patterns of white racism which repeat themselves in cities as distant as Boston and Birmingham.

Without bothering to list the historic factors which contribute to this pattern – economic exploitation, political impotence, discrimination in employment and education – one can see that to correct this pattern will require far-reaching changes in the basic power relationships and the

ingrained social patterns within the society. The question is, of course, what kinds of changes are necessary, and how is it possible to bring them about?

[00:20:57]

In recent years the answer to these questions, which has been given by most articulate groups of Negro leaders and their white allies, the liberals of all stripes, has been in terms of something called "integration." According to the advocates of integration, social justice will be accomplished by "integrating the Negro into the mainstream institutions of the society from which he has been traditionally excluded." It is very significant that each time I have heard this formulation it has been in terms of "the Negro," "a Negro," "Ralph Bunch," "the individual Negro" [applause], rather than in terms of the black community.

[00:21:47]

This concept of integration had to be based on the assumption that there was nothing of value in the black community and that little of value could be created among blacks, so the thing to do was to siphon off the "acceptable" Negroes into the surrounding middle-class white community. Thus, the goal of the movement for integration was simply to loosen up the restrictions barring the entry of Negroes into the white community. Goals such as public accommodation, open housing, job opportunity on the executive level –which is easier to deal with than the problem of semi-skilled and blue collar jobs which involve more far-reaching economic adjustments – are quite simply middle-class goals, articulated by a tiny group of Negroes who have had middle-class aspirations.

Now, the press has been helpful in interpreting some of the things that we were doing in SNCC. They have said that SNCC was busy integrating a couple years ago and that we were talking about the beloved community, about changing hearts and that we've now changed. And there's nothing more nonsensical than any of that statement. No one in SNCC ever left their homes to go and sit next to James Clark. We went to render Mr. Clark impotent over our lives. And that needs to be understood. [applause]

[00:23:12]

I think that needs to be understood. We were fighting against white supremacy. We were not fighting to sit next to white people. We were fighting against white supremacy; we wanted to get rid of all the Wallaces and the Eastlands the other people in the North, too, when I come home. But the papers often call it a movement for integration. That was never our idea at any rate.

[00:23:44]

There were several other respectable Negroes, however, who were articulating a position of changing the hearts of people in the country. I think that's an admirable deed, I really do. I think that Dr. Martin Luther King, for example, is one of the greatest men in this country. He's got a compassion that I think very few men in this country have. But when I sit and look at a picture of Lyndon Baines Johnson and I think what a job he will have of teaching him how to be non-violent in Vietnam. [applause]

[00:24:25]

This limited class orientation was reflected not only in the program and goals of the civil rights movement, but in its tactics and organization. It is very significant that the two oldest and most respectable civil rights organizations have constitutions— I have a block to using that word [laughter/applause]; that is because I can only say three-fifths of it. [laughter/applause] However, within their written documentations of these two respectable civil rights organizations, they have been barred and prohibited them from partisan political activity.

CORE [Congress of Racial Equality] once did, but changed that clause when it changed its orientation toward black power. But this is perfectly understandable in terms of the strategy and goals of the older organizations. The civil rights movement saw its role as a kind of liaison between the powerful white community and the dependent black community. The dependent status of the black community apparently was unimportant since it was – if the movement was going to be successful – going to blend into the white community anyway. We made no pretense of organizing and developing institutions of community power in the black community, but appealed to the conscience of white institutions of power. The posture of the civil rights movement was that of the dependent, the suppliant. The theory was that without attempting to create any organized base of political strength itself, the civil rights movement could – by

forming coalitions with various liberal pressure organizing groups in the white community, liberal reform clubs, labor unions like Mr. Reuther, church groups, progressive civic groups, and at times one or other of the major political parties – influence national legislation and national social patterns.

[00:26:38]

I think we all have seen the limitations of this approach. We have repeatedly seen that political alliances based on appeals to conscience and decency are chancy things, simply because institutions and political organizations have no consciences outside their own special interests. The political and social rights of blacks have been and always will be negotiable and expendable the moment they conflict with the interests of our allies.

[00:27:07]

If we do not learn from history, we are doomed to repeat it, and that is precisely the lesson of the Reconstruction period. Black people were allowed to register, vote, and participate in politics because it was to the advantage of powerful white allies to promote this. That's people who talk about the populist movement all the time. This was the result of a white decision, and it was ended by other white men's decision when it became politically astute– politically expedient, rather – when it became politically expedient for whites to get rid of the blacks, they just got rid of them in the populist movement. And we don't want to be in the position this time around where they can just get rid of us when the political winds change. We want to be able to be organized independently to have something to say about that.

[00:28:04]

But this was a result of white decisions and it was ended by other white men's decisions before any political base powerful enough to challenge that decision could be established in the Southern black community. Thus, at this point in the struggle, blacks have no assurance – save a kind of idiot optimism and faith in a society whose history is one of racism – that if it were to become necessary, even the painfully limited gains thrown to the civil rights movement by the Congress will not be revoked as soon as a shift in political sentiments should occur.

[00:28:34]

The major limitation of this approach was that it tended to maintain the traditional dependence of blacks, and of the movement. We depended upon the good will and support of various groups within the white community whose interests were not always compatible with ours. To the extent that we depended on the financial support of other groups, we were vulnerable to their influence and domination.

A lot of supporters of the civil rights movement used to read the *New York Times*, you know. I'm always looking to see how often we get paid advertisements in the *New York Times* condemning black power.

[00:29:12]

Also, the program that evolved out of this coalition was really limited and inadequate in the long term and one which affected only a small, selected group of Negroes. Its goal was to make the white community accessible to "qualified" Negroes and presumably each year a few more Negroes armed with their passports – a couple of university degrees – would escape into middle-class America, adopt the attitudes and lifestyles of that group, and one day the Harlems and the Watts would stand empty. [applause] And this, of course, would be hailed a tribute to the success of integration.

[00:29:56]

This is simply neither realistic nor particularly desirable. You cannot integrate communities, but you assimilate individuals. Even if such a program were possible, its results would be, not to develop the black community as a functional and honorable segment of the total society, with its own cultural identity, life patterns, and institutions, but to abolish it – the final solution to the Negro problem.

[00:30:31]

Karl Marx said that the working class is the first class in history that ever wanted to abolish itself. If one listens to some moderates and respectable civil rights leaders, one would believe the Negro race was the first race that wanted to abolish itself. The fact is that what must be abolished

is not the black community, but the dependent colonial status that has been inflicted upon it. The racial and cultural personality of the black community must be preserved, and the community must win its freedom while preserving its cultural integrity. [applause] This is the essential difference between integration, as it is currently practiced, and the concept of black power.

ANNOUNCER: You're listening to Stokely Carmichael on a special edition of the Ford Hall Forum's New American Gazette.

STOKELY CARMICHAEL: What has the movement for integration accomplished to date? The Negro graduating from MIT with a doctorate will have better job opportunities available to him than even to Lynda Bird Johnson. [laughter] But the rate of unemployment in the black community is steadily increasing, while that in the white community decreases. More educated Negroes hold executive-type jobs in major corporations and federal agencies than ever before, but the gap between white income and black income has almost doubled in the last 20 years.

[00:32:16]

More suburban housing is available to Negroes, but housing conditions in the ghetto are steadily declining, while the rent is increasing for the rats and roaches that live with us. [applause]

While the infant mortality rate of New York City is at its lowest rate ever in the city's history, the infant mortality rate of Harlem is climbing.

[00:32:43]

There has been an organized national resistance – national, not Southern – national resistance to the Supreme Court's order to integrate the schools, and the federal government has not acted to enforce that order. Less than fifteen percent of black children in the South attend integrated schools; and black schools, which the vast majority of black children still attend, are increasingly decrepit, overcrowded, under-staffed, inadequately equipped and funded.

[00:33:17]

It's apparent to me that one of the things that this country has been able to do with its gigantic propaganda machinery is to always focus attention on six, ten, twelve or maybe fifty little black children trying to integrate a white school. And after going through mobs of big, white men who stamp, crush, beat them, they finally make it into the schools, are allowed to sit down with the children of the parents who just beat them up. And people hail this as a victory. And two days later, after the white country now is entirely shocked – because this has no effect on black people in the ghetto – the President sends the FBI, the National Guard, the state troopers, the policemen and Martin Luther King armed with non-violence. [applause]

[00:34:09]

We are not concerned with those six percent; we are concerned with the 85-90 percent who still live in black schools that nobody talks about. That's who we're concerned about. And we think the country ought to face the reality that they're going to live in those schools. And we're not concerned about white schools, we just want better schools. [applause]

This explains why the rate of school dropouts is increasing among black teenagers, who then express their bitterness, hopelessness, and alienation by the only terms they have – rioting. And they're not so different from Americans, you know, because we express ours through bombing. Ask Ho Chi Minh, he'll tell you. [applause]

[00:34:59]

As long as people in the ghettoes of our large cities feel that they are victims of the misuse of white power without any way to have their needs represented – and these are frequently simple needs: to get the welfare inspectors to stop kicking down our doors in the middle of the night, the cops from beating our children, the landlord to exterminate the rats in our home, and the city to collect our garbage – we will continue to have riots. These are not the products of black power, but of the absence of any organization capable of giving the community the power, the black power, to deal with its problems. [applause]

[00:35:39]

SNCC proposes that it is now time for the Black Freedom movement to stop pandering to the fears and anxieties of the white middle class in the attempt to earn its good-will, and to return to the ghetto to organize these communities to control themselves. This organization must be attempted in Northern and Southern urban areas, as well as in the rural black belt counties of the South.

[00:36:04]

The chief antagonist to this organization is, in the South, the overtly racist Democratic Party, and, in the North, the equally corrupt big city machines. The standard argument against independent political organization is, "But you're only ten percent." Ask Mr. Spivak about that.

[00:36:29]

I cannot see the relevance of this observation, since no one is talking about taking over the country, but taking control over our own communities. The fact is that the black population, ten percent or not, is very strategically placed because – ironically– of segregation. What is also true is that blacks have never been able to utilize their full voting potential of our numbers. Where we could vote, the case has always been that the white political machine stacks and gerrymanders the political subdivisions in black neighborhoods so that the true voting strength is never reflected in political strength. Would anyone looking at the distribution of political power in Manhattan, ever think that blacks represented sixty percent of the population there?

[00:37:18]

Just as often, the effective political organization in black communities is absorbed by tokenism and patronage, the time-honored practice of giving certain offices to selected Negroes. The machine thus creates a little machine, which is subordinate and responsive to the white community. The black political leaders are really vote deliverers, more responsible to the white machine and the white power structure than to the community they allegedly represent. Thus, the white community is able to substitute patronage control for audacious black power in the black community.

[00:37:58]

This is precisely what Johnson tried to do even before the Voting Rights Act of 1966 was passed. The National Democrats made it very clear that the measure was intended to register Democrats, not Negroes. The President and top officials of the Democratic Party called in almost 100 selected responsible Negro leaders from the Deep South. Nothing was said about changing the policies of the racist state parties, nothing was said about repudiating such leadership figures as Eastland, Barnett, Wallace, and Talmadge. What was said was simply, "Go home and organize your people into the local Democratic Party. Then we'll see about poverty money and appointments."

[00:38:45]

Incidentally, poverty money in the South is handled by the same racists who were there prior to 1966. They have a new thing now; they use it to have black people be dependent upon on them. In the past, if a black person registered to vote, he could lose his job and be run off from the land. Now if he registers to vote, he can lose his Head Start job.

[00:39:12]

We must organize black community power to end these abuses, and to give the black community a chance to have its needs expressed. A leadership which is truly responsible – not to the white press and power structure, but to the community – must be developed. A leadership which will recognize that its power lies in the unified and collective strength of that community. This will make it difficult for the white leadership group to conduct its dialogue with individuals in terms of patronage and prestige, and will force them to talk to the community's representatives in terms of real power.

The single aspect of the Black Power program that has come into the most criticism is this concept of independent organization. This is represented as third-partyism which has never worked, or a withdrawal into Black Nationalism and isolationism. Or, to some, more or less intelligent people, reverse racism.

[00:40:07]

If such a program is done, it will not have the effect of isolating the black community but the reverse. When the black community is able to control local office, and negotiate with other groups from a position of organized strength, the possibility of meaningful political alliances on specific issues will be increased. That is a rule of politics and there is no reason why it should not operate here. The only difference is that we will have the power to define the terms of these coalitions.

[00:40:38]

The next question usually is, "So, can it work? Can the ghettos be in fact organized?" The answer is that this organization must be successful, because there are no viable alternatives – not the War on Poverty, which was at its inception limited to dealing with effects rather than causes, and has become simply another source of machine patronage. Integration is meaningful only to a small chosen handful of accepted Negro people in our community.

[00:41:05]

The revolution in agricultural technology in the South is displacing the rural black community into Northern urban areas. Both Washington, DC, Newark, New Jersey, and Gary, Indiana, now have black majorities. The inner city in most major urban areas is predominantly black. And with the white rush to suburbia, blacks will in the next three decades control the heart of our great cities. These areas can become either concentration camps, with a bitter and volatile population whose only power is the power to destroy, or organized and powerful communities able to make constructive contributions to the total society.

[00:41:45]

Without the power to control our lives and their communities, without effective political institutions through which to relate to the total society, our communities will exist in a constant state of insurrection. This is a choice that this country will have to make. Not ours.

I want to thank you very much. [applause]

DONALD STEWART: Stokely Carmichael will shortly be questioned. First, we hear from Dean Clarence Q. Berger, who is tonight's moderator.

CLARENCE BERGER: Let's start with this section over here. Yes, sir.

[00:42:32]

The questioner says that you wish to substitute black values for white values in the community, and asks what some of these values might be.

[00:42:45]

STOKELY CARMICHAEL: Number one, I've been a little bit concerned about a term that white society has been throwing in our face. It's called illegitimate children – "you have too many illegitimate children." There are no illegitimate children. All children are legitimate; they come out the same way. [applause]

[00:43:08]

Now, there may be something called illegal children in the sense that they're run in conflict to the norms or mores of the society, but that since we are in a college campus area and we must talk frankly, we know that abortions can stop illegitimate children. And that's where we find a large percentage of them, as a matter of fact, on the college campuses.

[00:43:30]

So we want to reject the idea that a child be castigated because his mother and father weren't married. Because you don't know if mine were. It's none of your business. That's one we want to reject. We want to develop and keep that within our community there's always been an idea of a child is a child is a child. Those are very simple things.

But when you speak about that, you speak overall about the fact that anything that black people have produced in this society they're made to be ashamed of. For example, we used to have something called rhythm and blues. You now call it rock and roll. [applause] And we were made to be ashamed of it until the Beatles legitimized it and gave it back to us.

[00:44:20]

The second thing, for example, is that we have cultural values within black society that are looked down upon as animalist or savagery or uncivilized. For example, I think— as a matter of fact, I know that James Brown has as much musical genius as does Brahms, Bach and Mozart put together. [applause] Because he has the ability to externalize something that is very internal and that when he does that, even if your name is Lyndon Baines Johnson, if you're hearing him, you've got to tap your feet.

[00:44:59]

So we have to develop and embrace these things we are ashamed of and keep running from, and that has to do with the fact that we are black and that everything we read is white, what is beautiful is white. And whatever is bad is black. And we have to develop a new concept of value based on the fact that we are black and that our noses are broad, our lips are thick, our hair is nappy, but we are beautiful. And we are beautiful in our blackness. We cannot be like Dick and Jane, and even their little white dog Spot. [applause]

CLARENCE BERGER: The question is, how do you account for the growing white backlash in the country and what can be done to counteract it?

[00:45:51]

STOKELY CARMICHAEL: We start from different assumptions. I think yours is fallacious. I don't believe there's anything called a white backlash in this country. This country is racist. I think that when people move to destroy racism, then racists move to defend it. For example, black people knew that they could not live in Cicero [IL]; white people knew that black people could not live in Cicero. But when some Negroes got smart with a civil rights bill in their back pocket and thought they could walk into Cicero, the whites had to remind them that they could not. That is no white backlash; it's black people pushing harder to destroy racism. So I don't see any white backlash. [applause]

There is one other point to substantiate; that is that I'm told that I'm responsible for causing several political upheavals in this country. [laughter] Based on that, we've been— I just started to read the Harris polls. I never paid them much mind, but since SNCC has become so powerful, we're going to run the chairman for presidency in 1968. I figure we've got to win.

[00:47:02]

In Maryland, a man by the name of Mahoney won over the issue of occupancy, open occupancy, and his slogan was, "a man's home is his castle." He was against open occupancy. And he won. And all the political astute analysis in the daily columns said that Stokely Carmichael was responsible for that. They didn't even say that the District of Columbia is now all black because white people ran to Maryland to get away from black people. And did they think those same white people will now vote for black people, to move them out of Maryland into Virginia?
[applause]

CLARENCE BERGER: If part of your goals are to develop black culture, black unity, why do you spend time addressing predominantly white audiences?

[00:48:01]

STOKELY CARMICHAEL: I don't spend most of my time addressing predominantly white audiences. We do talk to white audiences because we feel they're people. Sometimes. [laughter] But secondly, we feel that the problem of racism exists within the white community. And we feel that white people individually inside that community may feel trapped by the institutions of racism, and that many of them really want to move to destroy racism. I think a lot of them are trapped. But in order for that to be done, they must start working inside the white community to tear them down. I think that we need those type of white people to be stimulated to do that.

[00:48:43]

I also feel that black people in this country only have power within the black community, not within the white community, and that there is a need for white people to start moving inside the white community establish different institutional structures. We also feel that white people ought

to have a right to hear both sides of the story. And while most of them just read *Time* magazine and the *New York Times*, we thought they ought to have a chance to hear our side.

CLARENCE BERGER: The lady says, do you anticipate the possibility of the whole emerging black power movement becoming hysterical in certain situations? And if so, is there any provision within the structure of SNCC to contain such hysterical manifestations?

STOKELY CARMICHAEL: Well, we're not for containing anybody, number one. And number two, I'm not too sure that that hasn't been done by the white press, blown out of proportion, and by other people who started debating the issue. We do not see that as a possibility. We think that there's going to be violence in the major cities anyway. And that's already started. There has been violence in major cities in this country before – after World War I and during the 1940s. Across the country. And I think the push is going to be harder because black people are going to push for the things they have to have. And if there's no way for them to redress their grievances, then they will take it out in violence.

[00:50:11]

We do hope that the programs that we articulate will be able to organize black people to push for the changes that they want. We might add that wherever we've been working, we've been able to produce programs and to organize black people to work for that change. It is only where there have been no organizations organizing people that they've erupted in violence.

CLARENCE BERGER: The question was that– [OMISSION]

[00:50:39]

STOKELY CARMICHAEL: Since in most other minority groups in the country – i.e., the Greeks, the Italians, the Poles – there is a culture within that community. And since black people have been cut off from culture in Africa because they've been told that Africans were all savages, do we now think that we can develop a culture for black people that they will be proud of, and the middle class would embrace this culture that has developed or will they run away from it?

[00:51:15]

I remember in Sociology 101 that [laughter] culture was defined as anything manmade. And to say that black people have no culture or that they're culturally deprived is to deny their very existence. Black people have culture. [applause]

I do believe that, in terms of the hookup with Africa and the feeling of the middle-class Negroes out of the community, that there are several issues that we can talk about. Number one is, I think that to be successful in this country is to be anti-black; or, some people say to be anti-poor. Well, since most black people are poor, it's sort of puts us in the same category. So what happens is that every time a Negro becomes successful, he takes a job with IBM, Wall Street, Madison Avenue, or teaches at Harvard University, to prove to white people that he's just as good as they are and he runs away from the ghetto; he becomes ashamed of it. I think that's what the Negro middle class does. They can't embrace the culture that we have because they think that we have too much rhythm anyway. [laughter/applause] So it's a question of how they can get oriented to accepting what they've been running away from – chitlins and James Brown. [laughter]

[00:52:46]

Now, the question about Africa is very important because we have to develop a new consciousness in terms of hooking up with Africa. We have to realize that we are oppressed in this country because we're black, and for no other reason. So our destiny is hooked up with people of the same color who are oppressed around the world by the same whites because they are black. And that works psychologically against us.

[00:53:14]

When I was a boy, I used to go to the movies to see Tarzan. And Tarzan used to get up and fight and he was proper, he was white and English, Anglo Saxon, and he spoke very well – [yells like Tarzan]. [laughter] I was proud of Tarzan's beautiful articulation and his superiority in speaking. [laughter] And I was always disgusted at the little black savages who came around [chants] and throwing spears. [laughter] And they would always be throwing spears at Tarzan. Whenever Tarzan got in trouble, I'd say, "Tarzan, kill the savages, kill the beast, beat up those little black

people! Kill me because those are my ancestors." [applause] That is precisely the psychology that was operating in my mind.

Now we understand that Tarzan is back on the scene these days, and we're urging our little black children that when they see Tarzan, yell for the chiefs to beat the hell out of that white man and send him back East. [applause] And tell him that when he goes back to Europe to take all this companies that exploit us with him. [applause]

CLARENCE BERGER: The questioner points out that the Peace Corps is sending large numbers of young, white volunteers to Africa. In your judgment, what is their purpose there?

[00:54:54]

STOKELY CARMICHAEL: I want to make an analogy between the modern Peace Corps people and the missionaries. [applause] I want to explain that I don't believe that missionaries are bad people. I thought for the most part they were good, earnest and well-intentioned people who thought they were doing their best, and they just fell into a scheme of exploitation, which made it good to have them around.

[00:55:29]

For example, the missionaries went to Africa on the assumption that black people were uncivilized and that they were savages, and that they were going to carry out Mr. Kipling's strong points of the white man's burden. Their mistake was that the white man's burden had to be preached in Europe, not Africa.

[00:55:48]

But at any rate, they went to Africa with Bibles. Africans had land. When they left, they had the land and we still have the Bibles. I think that they felt that that was the price that we had to be charged for civilizing us and giving us culture.

I think those people themselves meant well, but that they were used to continue to exploit black people. What the Peace Corps does is that it teaches people how to learn English and to read and

write and build houses. I think that what underdeveloped countries need are technical skills – how to build industrial plants inside their nations so they can convert the raw materials that they have and get the products themselves, rather than have to send them to the United States or put them on the market, the world market, which is controlled by the United States. And then have to sell it back to them.

[00:56:55]

If the Peace Corps people really wanted to do something to benefit those countries, then they should teach them technical skills. That's what Mr. Nkrumah was trying to do in Ghana.

[applause]

[OMISSION]

Thank you. [applause]

[You've been listening to a special edition of the New American Gazette. Stokely Carmichael was recorded at Jordan Hall in Boston on October 16, 1966.

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