BLACK POWER: SOME COMPONENTS
OF THE CONCEPT AS SEEN IN THE
NEGRO CHURCH

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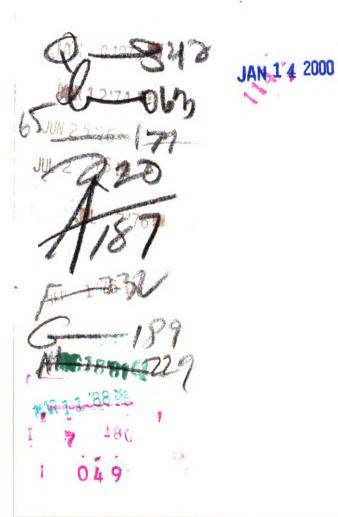
JOSEPH PARQUE WINSTON

1970

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By

Joseph Parque Winston

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ABSTRACT

BLACK POWER: SOME COMPONENTS OF THE CONCEPT

AS SEEN IN THE NEGRO CHURCH

By

Joseph Parque Winston

The policy of racial discrimination and segrega-
tion that has been practiced in the United States has
afforded blacks limited access to the economic, politi-
cal, social, and educational advantages of the nation.
These limitations have made blacks highly dependent on
whites and have imposed on blacks a state of powerless-
ness. This position of weakness precipitated the cry
for Black Power.

The rebirth of the concept came at a time when
racial tension was high; thus, Black Power was immedi-
ately condemned by white segregationists as well as by
many well-meaning whites and blacks who had worked and
hoped for racial integration. Since that time, however,
attitudes have modified as more explicit definitions of
the concept have evolved.

Black Power is believed to be more than just an
expression of ethnocentrism. There are many who contend

that Black Power possesses certain components that are vital to the improvement of the condition of blacks and to the acceptance of blacks by the majority group.

The Black Church is the institution that has possessed Black Power and it has demonstrated best the effects of it. Consideration is given to the role that the Black Church has played in educating blacks to the need of power and the leadership that the Black Church has provided the community in the quest for power.

Despite the criticism so often directed to the Black Church, it is still a viable force in the Black Community. Although it, like other institutions, will experience some change, it is unlikely that its position of power and influence will diminish in the foreseeable future.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Social beings generally recognize and are happy to acknowledge their interdependence in all respects of life. I have been made acutely aware of this in the preparation of this paper. Without the assistance of others it is unlikely that this paper would be a reality. The writer, therefore, wishes to express gratitude for assistance given by members of the thesis committee, Dr. Ruth Hamilton, Dr. James McKee, and Dr. Francis Donahue.

The writer is especially indebted to Dr. Hamilton, the chairman of the committee, for the invaluable counsel and direction that she provided.

Appreciation is also expressed to Dr. John Useem who served as academic advisor to the writer. His encouragement provided the needed stimulus in pursuing this study.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Study

This study is an endeavor to identify and analyze several possible elements of Black Power and to establish the presence of these in the Negro Church. It is theorized that elements of the Black Power concept have been present in the Black Church since the days of slavery and although there have been periods when Black Power was less visible, it has never altogether ceased to exist in the church.

It is the writer's belief that Black Power is not necessarily a destructive force as it has sometimes been described; nor is it simply a slogan to be temporarily used then cast aside. To the contrary, Black Power can be a constructive tool, an instrument that can be effectively employed to help resolve some of the problems that have developed in America because of the pattern of segregation and discrimination of blacks and the resulting inequities that have frequently followed.

It is not the purpose of this study to engage in the theological merits of an "all-black," "all-white," or "black-white" church relationship. This paper is limited

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to defining the concept and identifying some of its possible components. An effort is then made to show the presence of these components in the Negro Church.

Significance of the Study

During the past century the United States has been beset with domestic problems of varied design, but few have been of greater concern than the racial conflict that has gripped the nation over the past two decades. It is thought that the conflict developed out of the policies of segregation and the attending practice of discrimination that grew out of slavery and became institutionalized during Reconstruction.

Through the years these policies of segregation grew and wove themselves into the whole fabric of the nation--the social, economic, political, and religious. So closely woven have these policies and practices been that extreme anxiety has been registered whenever attempts have been made to rend them from the pattern of American life. Fears are expressed for the continuance of our nation as one people. Warnings increase of the danger of polarizing the American people into two distinct camps--black and white.

Further complicating the existing conditions is the speculation that within another decade seven out of ten of America's largest cities will boast a black population that will exceed that of the white. Predictions of

additional overcrowding and deterioration of the ghettos with lack of employment opportunities for Negroes due to their lack of skill, over-representation of blacks on welfare rolls, and the significantly higher crime rate that such conditions breed does not paint a particularly cheerful picture for the country. Local, state, and national leaders, men of good will and ability, black and white have proposed various social and economic programs in an attempt to abort present trends toward further racial misunderstanding and conflict. Many of these adventures have failed completely, while others have registered some marginal success. Thus, the search continues for some functional approach.

Some black leaders now express hope in the Black Power concept and have found some thoughtful and attentive listeners among the whites. Other blacks have also embraced the concept, but they have met highly negative responses from the majority group.

Perhaps there are certain elements in Black Power that may be worthy of investigation or that might lead to new approaches to a distressing problem. If some of these variables can be identified and employed along with other proven methods, then the probability increases that racial conflict might be reduced.

The Writer's Point of View

The writer firmly believes that no nation can afford

to sacrifice any of its potential intelligence, skill or manpower to the neglect of and indifference to any segment of its populace. This age of sophisticated technology and scientific skill exacts the acceptance, contribution, and involvement of all people. Furthermore, this age of complicated international relations claims of all people an interest and concern for all humanity.

These conditions, therefore, demand of all nations renewed efforts in understanding and tolerance. They require sincere endeavors to improve relations both within and beyond one's own national and geographical boundaries. The more affluent of all nations must recognize a responsibility to help change the state of poverty and need that grips so much of the world.

It can no longer be assumed that power as displayed through wealth, position, social class, education or political affiliation should be delegated or restricted to a favored group and denied others. All men must have some voice in matters affecting their welfare and determining their destinies.

CHAPTER II

THE BLACK POWER CONCEPT

History of the Concept

The Black Power concept is by no means new. Evidence of its use dates back nearly a century and a half. In 1829, David Walker, a free black, published "An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World" which was essentially an appeal for Black Power.[1] He encouraged pride in his black brothers and requested for blacks the right to determine their own way of life. He cautioned the white populace that they could not afford the luxury of misconstruing the Negro's desires and intent to control his own life.[2]

A black physician and lawyer, John S. Rock, delivered a speech in 1858 in which he compared white and black Americans.[3] He concluded that whites possessed no special abilities that gave them preeminence over

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[1]David Walker, "Walker's Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World," The Black Power Revolt, ed. Floyd B. Barbour (Boston: Extending Horizons Books, 1968), pp. 21-26.

[2]Ibid.

[3]John S. Rock, "Comparing White and Black Americans," The Black Power Revolt, ed. Floyd B. Barbour (Boston: Extending Horizons Books, 1968), pp. 43-47.

blacks. Rock not only advocated the principles of Black Power, but at the same time, he proposed the "Black is Beautiful" theory.[1]

According to Dr. Nathan Wright, Black Power has been a continuous refrain in the history of the American Negro.[2] He states that, "the slave uprisings continually reiterated the Black Power Theme." It was this urge for Black Power that stirred W. E. B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Malcom X, and countless other blacks. "They addressed themselves to the issue of the black man's cooperative strength and dignity."[3]

One of the strongest advocates of Black Power, and incidentally one of the most articulate yet to advocate the concept, was Frederick Douglass.[4] Long a contender for black freedom and power, Douglass' concept envisioned Negroes operating from a power base sufficiently broad and strong as to always ensure their liberties. He reasoned that, "no man can be truly free where liberty is dependent upon the thought, feeling and actions of others" and especially if the individual himself has no

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Nathan Wright, Jr., Black Power and Urban Unrest (New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1967), p. 13.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Frederick Douglass, Life and Times of Frederick Douglass (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 539.

way of "guarding, protecting, defending and maintaining that liberty."[1]

The philosophy of Douglass relative to Black Power has been that of many blacks from the days of slavery to the present. It cannot be said, however, that the cry for Black Power has been equally audible in all periods. There have been times when blacks have had to modify their methods of seeking power and even times when they feigned satisfaction with their existing plight in order to survive. This will be discussed later. At such times their cry for power was less audible and appeared to have expired. This seemed to be the case from the 1920's to the mid-fifties, but this quiescent period was brought to an end with a recharged cry for Black Power in the sixties.

Rebirth of the Concept

It was during the voter registration march through Mississippi that the Black Power concept was reintroduced. James Meredith, joined by a small group of marchers, set out from a Memphis, Tennessee hotel on Sunday, June 6, 1966 for the first lap of their 220-mile pilgrimage to Jackson, Mississippi. The march was labeled a voter registration march, but the motivation behind it was more.[2]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] "The March Meredith Began," Newsweek (June 20, 1966), pp. 27-30.

Meredith had experienced the oppressed life of a black living in Mississippi. He had grown up with his share of fears--fears created by the lawless White Power structure of the deep South. Few Southern Negroes have completely escaped those fears. He had also experienced the frustration that usually accompanies the prolonged powerlessness that for centuries has been a part of the milieu of Southern blacks.

In his attempt to matriculate at the University of Mississippi Meredith was catapulted into the very center of the confrontation between Federal forces and the "die-hard" segregationists of that state. Those were anxious days and they were not free of fear.

It was this element of fear that he had so often met and that was such a constant companion of his black brothers that helped to push Meredith to this voter registration march. This fear, Meredith determined to conquer.[1] He knew that the primary reason for the alarming scarcity of registered blacks in his state was their fear--a fear caused by the intimidation of the whites. This he also desired to change. These two factors, in part, provided the motivation that led to the march.

The first day of the march was a relatively quiet

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[1]Benjamin Muse, The American Negro Revolution (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), pp. 235-36.

one. Aside from a few curious passers-by, little atten-

tion was paid the handful of marchers. Recognition of

this march was not even given by other civil rights

groups. This was Meredith's march.

The second day, however, proved to be more spectac-

ular. The marchers had entered the state of Mississippi.

Whites driving by taunted the group. Negroes waved

encouragement. South of the town of Hernando, "a Negro

sitting in the grass beside the road told marcher, Claude

Sterrett . . . that a crank was waiting up the highway

to shoot Meredith.[1] As the group approached the spot a

voice called, "James. I just want James Meredith."[2] A

volley of shots penetrated the countryside and Meredith

fell, wounded.

This display of violence brought other front line

civil rights groups into the picture.[3] These groups

representing both the conservative and more militant ele-

ments, with Meredith's consent, continued the march.

Younger members of these contingents were near despair

with the violence that continued to greet the nonviolent

methods of older rights workers. Two of the more vocal

opponents of nonviolence were Floyd McKissick of the

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[1]"The March Meredith Began," op. cit., p. 28.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Time, June 17, 1966, pp. 26-27.

Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and Stokely Carmichael

of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

After the leadership of the march passed from

Meredith to the larger group of leaders it was decided,

in view of the attack on Meredith, to enlarge the scope

of the campaign.[1] Thus, planning sessions were convened

at which division arose relative to the goals and methods

of working.[2] One faction desired a more militant approach

whereas the old-line leaders insisted on nonviolence.[3] A

compromise manifesto was eventually developed, but not

before Carmichael had drawn support for his cry for power--

Black Power.[4] These words were favorably accepted by the

younger blacks who had become disenchanted with the non-

violent methods of the blacks and the violent reaction of

the whites. They recognized quickly the powerless base

from which they were operating and their cry was for the

relief of this situation. Floyd McKissick, director of

CORE, points out that the relative ineffectiveness of the

nonviolent approach convinced youth that it is futile.[5]

Black Power was what they needed; so their feelings ran.

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[1]Muse, op. cit., pp. 237-38.

[2]New York Times, July 8, 1966, p. 1.

[3]Ibid., p. 26.

[4]"The March Meredith Began," op. cit., pp. 29-30.

[5]Floyd McKissick, Three Fifths of a Man (Toronto:
The Macmillan Company, 1969), pp. 131-32, 141.

This approach, for the present at least, afforded bright-
er prospects for victory. For the next three weeks this
slogan was to provide a point of contention among the
Mississippi marchers and a subject for lively discussion
and investigation for months to come throughout the nation.

Latitude of Interpretation

The Black Power concept was reintroduced in an
atmosphere of tension. The constant awareness of blacks
to the inequities that resulted from the almost unlimited
power of the majority group and the frequent misuse of
that power was not conducive to tranquility. Efforts of
the blacks to change this condition and the resistance
of whites to this change provided conflict. Consequently
the issue produced ambiguous interpretations and feelings.[1]
It is understandable that the powerless blacks of the rural
South as well as the millions of blacks crowded into the
ghettos of the urban centers throughout the nation needed
power. But this cry represented a new approach which, as
Nathan Wright, Jr. observes, could "under the potentially
explosive conditions . . . herald a threatening imbalance
in the power relationship through which programs had been
previously charted."[2]

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[1]Wright, Jr., op. cit., pp. 2, 3.

[2]Ibid.

A poll conducted by Newsweek suggested that the concept posed a problem to the total civil rights movement.[1] It presented a "crisis of allegiance" among blacks and one of "confidence" among sympathetic whites. Blacks began to question the leadership and methods of the older and more moderate civil rights leaders. Whites who had been sympathetic with the minority's drive for full civil rights and who, in some instances, had participated in demonstrations began to take a skeptical look at the new approach.[2] Others like author, Lillian Smith (Strange Fruit), were resigning positions held in some civil rights organizations.[3]

Nor were black leaders unaware of the risk of losing white cooperation and support. John Lewis, former national chairman of SNCC, charged that the "new rhetoric" nothwithstanding its intent risked alienating sympathetic whites.[4] Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., along with some of his aides in SCLC, were alarmed that the Black Power chant might alienate some white allies from the rights

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[1]"Black Power: Politics of Frustration," Newsweek, July 11, 1966, pp. 26-32.

[2]"Pharoah's Lesson," Time, September 9, 1966, p. 22.

[3]"At the Breaking Point," Time, July 15, 1966, p. 16.

[4]"Black Power: Politics of Frustration," loc. cit., p. 32.

drive.[1] According to the New York Times these fears were realized in a decrease in financial contributions to civil rights groups and even affected church related human relations organizations.[2]

Thus, interpretations were applied to the Black Power concept which filled many whites with apprehension and produced uncertainty and even conflicts among many blacks, some of whom were responsible leaders in civil rights organizations.[3]

Responsibility for these uncertainties and conflicts over the term can be attributed to a number of factors, two of which should be noted. First, there was the failure of the exponents of Black Power to clearly define the term or to give an interpretation of its implications. One of the criticisms leveled at the advocates of Black Power by other black leaders was their delay and failure to clearly define a term that was so ambiguous and potentially explosive.[4] As has been mentioned, the term was reintroduced during a most tense period. For weeks it was used and subjected to a wide range of interpretations

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[1]"Negro Cry: 'Black Power!' What Does it Mean?", U. S. News and World Report, July 11, 1966, p. 52.

[2]New York Times, September 19, 1966, p. 36.

[3]McKissick, op. cit., pp. 131-32, 141.

[4]New York Times, August 5, 1966, pp. 1, 10.

before its advocates brought forth their interpretation.[1]
It was not until the release of the SNCC Position Paper
on Black Power that a definition began to take shape.
It is, therefore, conceivable that the introduction of
Black Power under such conditions would create misunder-
standing. The term had been used several weeks earlier
by Congressman Adam Clayton Powell in an address at Howard
University when he encouraged blacks to seek power--
"audacious power,"[2] but this mention had failed to evoke
widespread misunderstanding or to create any crisis situa-
tion. It should be mentioned that the speech in which
Congressman Powell urged blacks to "seek Black Power" was
given limited news coverage. It assumed national signifi-
cance only after the Meredith March and only then in
relationship to Stokely Carmichael's call for Black Power.[3]

A second factor that contributed to the widespread
apprehension and conflict over Black Power was the influ-
ence of the mass news media. Whereas a degree of hostility
toward whites may have been registered by some blacks
after the Meredith shooting, the mass news media over-
reacted to this. Too frequently this has been the situation

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[1]Whitney Young, Jr., Beyond Racism (New York:
McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969), pp. 237-38.

[2]"Negro Cry: 'Black Power!' What Does it Mean?",
loc. cit.

[3]Ibid.

in reporting any hostile reaction of blacks to the violence they have so often met from whites.[1] This over-reaction may not have been with the intent of misrepresentation, yet it produced the same results. Advocates of Black Power, like some blacks before them who have espoused Black Nationalism, have frequently been subjected to harsh treatment by news reporters.[2] This has occurred so often that some black leaders have had to take issue with the news media for lending interpretations inconsistent with their beliefs or positions.[3] Floyd McKissick, national director of CORE, cautions that it is difficult for black and white Americans to decipher what is truth from the "garbled news" that is served by the news media.[4] According to Mr. McKissick, "Black people know that they cannot trust the networks, the news service or, in fact, almost any of the white press."

Quite frequently Black Power was identified with racism and advocates of the concept were labeled "racists."[5]

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[1]Paul Fisher and Ralph Lowenstein, Race and the News Media (Missouri: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1967), pp. 3-10.

[2]Bradford Chambers, Chronicles of Black Protest (New York: The New American Library, 1968), pp. 203-204.

[3]New York Times, April 21, 1967, p. 22.

[4]McKissick, op. cit., p. 142.

[5]"Negroes Want Power," The Commonweal, Vol. 84, June 24, 1966, pp. 381-82.

News dealing with Black Power or with group activities of blacks often bore captions such as "Black Racism" or "Black Nationalism."[1] A pattern of this type sometimes follows the reporting of news relating to blacks who have sympathetic feelings toward Black Nationalism. This was true of the Black Muslims a few years ago.[2] The news media succeeded then in arousing strong feelings against the Muslims in their portrayal of their hatred for whites. Some blacks were even affected by this anti-Muslim feeling.

Likewise Black Power was sometimes associated with the violence that attended the rioting in a number of cities both prior and subsequent to the Meredith March.[3] Americans had experienced in the Watts (Los Angeles) riot of August, 1965 one of the most destructive civil disorders in the nation's peacetime history.[4] Thirty-four persons were killed and over 1,000 wounded or hurt. Again in March, 1966, racial disturbances occurred almost daily in some American city. Some of these developed into riots of varying dimensions. The news media magnified the thinking of some of the rebellious urban youths who interpreted

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[1] "The New Racism," Time, July 1, 1966, p. 11.

[2] The Autobiography of Malcom X (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1964), pp. 238-268.

[3] Chuck Stone, Black Political Power in America (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1968), p. 17.

[4] Muse, op. cit., pp. 204-11.

Black Power to mean "Burn, baby, burn!" or "Get Whitey!"[1] Some reporters began to associate these responses with what had occurred in Los Angeles months earlier. Evidence of the effects of this association of Black Power with riots is indicated in the clashes of whites (other than police) with blacks. The violence of earlier years (1964, 1965) except for that in deep Southern states generally involved only law enforcement officers and blacks. The conflict of mid-1966 and subsequent years, however, involved clashes between the rank and file whites and blacks in many Northern and mid-Western communities as well.[2] Whites in many areas now began to harass and even attack blacks. Baltimore, Milwaukee, and Brooklyn are but a few of the many cities where this occurred.

In Baltimore a mob of 1,200 incited by the National States Rights Party chased blacks through the streets shouting, "Kill niggers!" In Milwaukee demonstrating blacks were met by rock-throwing whites. Blacks in Brooklyn were harassed by members of SPONGE, the Society for the Prevention of Negroes Getting Everything.[3]

It was not unusual for peaceful demonstrations, led by blacks who did not embrace the Black Power philosophy,

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[1]New York Times, September 19, 1966, p. 36.

[2]Muse, op. cit., pp. 246-56.

[3]Muse, op. cit., pp. 248-49.

to be labeled "Black Power demonstrations" solely on the chants of a few blacks or the presence of an isolated sign bearing the words, Black Power.[1] Dr. Martin Luther King's marches in Chicago and Cincero, Illinois were often so charged.[2]

It should be noted that responsibility is not placed on the news media alone for the association of racism, Black Nationalism, Separatism, and violence with Black Power. The case against the news media is primarily that of the distortion of the news. Certain aspects of black response or behavior were magnified or overly dramatized and this frequently tended to distort the true picture.

As to the source of opposition to Black Power, this did not by any means all emenate from the white controlled news media, nor for that matter from white segregationists. Some of the strongest charges against Black Power came from moderate black civil rights leaders and whites who had formerly given support to the blacks in their quest for civil rights.[3] This opposition was often expressed through the organizations represented by these leaders.

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[1]"Black Power: Politics of Frustration," loc. cit.

[2]"As Negro Unrest Continues to Spread," U. S. News and World Report, July 25, 1966, p. 30.

[3]"Negro Leaders Dividing," U. S. News and World Report, July 18, 1966, pp. 21-34.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored
People (NAACP), the Urban League, and the Southern
Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) are cases in point.

Consideration should be given to some of these
charges and the sources. This will provide a basis for
determining the position of black leaders to the Black
Power concept. An analysis of the allegations will also
help to determine their validity and this will aid in the
attempt to determine the usefulness of Black Power.

The NAACP is one of the oldest and most widely
known of the civil rights organizations. From its incep-
tion the Association has been biracial.[1] Local branches
are still required to include white members and positions
of leadership in the organization are still filled by
blacks and whites. One of the primary objectives of the
NAACP is to gain for blacks full civil rights. This is to
be accomplished while promoting interracial understanding
and cooperation.[2]

It is partly this, the inclusion of whites in
policy making roles, that has brought the current criti-
cism of the NAACP from other civil rights groups that are

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[1]Charles F. Kellogg, NAACP, A History of the
Association for the Advancement of Colored People
(Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1967), pp. 9-45,
89-92.

[2]Kellogg, op. cit., pp. 117-132.

considered more aggressive. It is felt that the NAACP is not truly a black organization and thus does not really reflect the current thinking of blacks. In addition, the organization is financially dependent on whites. Therefore, black leaders are not free, but are in reality forced to adopt and follow white thought.[1]

These criticisms, of course, are debatable, but because of the policies and objectives of the NAACP it is possible that black leaders in the group, if truly espousing the philosophy of the organization, would be reluctant to approve a concept that meant to many "go it alone" or a cessation of black-white cooperation in civil rights.

Roy Wilkins, the Executive Director of the NAACP, denounced the Black Power concept and expressed the feeling that it proved to be a contradiction to the policies, objectives, and methods of his organization. The official position of the NAACP toward Black Power was stated by Mr. Wilkins in his keynote address at the opening of the 57th Annual Convention in Los Angeles.[2]

Black Power was interpreted to mean racism. It is racism in that it was considered anti-white. To Mr. Wilkins, this extols one race, but at the same time it downgrades another. He contends that this is much the same

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[1]New York Times, August 5, 1966, p. 10.

[2]New York Times, July 6, 1966, p. 14.

as South Africa's Apartheid policy.[1]

Black Power was thought to mean separatism, a reverse segregation and a policy of "go it alone" for blacks. This would rule out cooperation between whites and blacks and would virtually destroy the idea of integration as proposed by the NAACP.[2]

Black Power, according to Mr. Wilkins, was violence--ranging race against race. In the end it meant simply black death.

The position of the NAACP, he emphasized, is the very opposite of these. The organization, he promised, would continue to seek understanding of and cooperation with whites for the purpose of eliminating the segregation of blacks, but through ways that avoid violence.[3]

The position of Mr. Wilkins toward Black Power prevailed during the convention, but it was by no means accepted or approved by all the delegates. Evidence of conflicting positions was seen in the debates that followed. Maintaining the support of the vast majority of delegates, he was successful, however, in passing a resolution limiting the cooperation of the NAACP with other.civil rights groups.[4]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]New York Times, July 6, 1966, p. 14.

This action, of course, was directed primarily toward groups advocating Black Power.

John Morsell, assistant director of the NAACP, expressed the outlook of his colleagues and the majority feeling toward Black Power when he said that the days of united action among blacks was over.[1]

The National Urban League like the NAACP is one of the oldest civil rights organizations and has likewise been considered more conservative in its structure and methods of working for blacks. The League's birth in 1910 was the result of the coalition of three social agencies primarily concerned with the welfare of blacks.[2] The League continues to be biracial and is governed by an Executive Board of fifteen persons, eight of whom are white and the other seven black.[3]

This coalition of blacks and whites and the League's objective, like the NAACP, for the integration of blacks into the larger society are points of criticism by young blacks of other civil rights groups. Such criticism is not completely invalid when it is remembered that,

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[1]New York Times, July 15, 1966, pp. 15, 16.

[2]E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro in the United States (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1957), pp. 526-27.

[3]Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944), II, pp. 837-840.

notwithstanding the contributions and successes of the
NAACP and the Urban League, they have appealed more to the
middle class blacks and whites and have failed to gain
the support of the masses of blacks.[1]

Much of the success of the Urban League in recent
years can be attributed to the leadership of Whitney Young,
Jr. and his influence with white business.[2] In spite of
his success he has come under attack by youthful blacks
who disagree with his criticism of Black Power.

Following the Meredith March, Mr. Young was opposed
to Black Power and expressed his convictions.[3] His conten-
tions were very similar to those of Roy Wilkins. Black
Power was racism, separatism, and finally, it could be
associated with "self-destructive violence."[4]

This issue of Black Power was not an easy one for
conservative black leaders to handle. Mr. Young was no
exception. His position brought conflict with some of the
younger members of his organization. At the 56th Annual
Convention of the Urban League he was met by blacks
displaying signs which read, "Black Power By Any Means
Necessary." Youthful League Staffers echoed the cry of

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[1]Ibid.

[2]"Leading the League," Newsweek, August 15, 1966,
p. 23.

[3]"The New Racism," Time, July 1, 1966, p. 11.

[4]Young, op. cit., pp. 237-38.

the pickets and determined to move the organization in a new direction. Young was able, however, to maintain the same general policies of the organization despite the opposition. Since that time he has modified his position and has begun a careful investigation of the concept.[1]

The position of Martin Luther King, Jr. might also be considered in relationship to SCLC, the third of the moderate civil rights groups. Dr. King, in cooperation with clergymen from several Southern states, formed SCLC (1956) in the wake of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Its birth was due to the recognition of a need for a nonviolent organization through which the boycotts could be directed.[2]

Dr. King, a strong believer in nonviolence, was one of the first blacks to contradict the Black Power concept, but he was also one of the first to qualify the concept in terms of its usefulness to the Black Community.[3] The non-violent philosophy of Dr. King led him to condemn Black Power. His disagreement was based on a belief that it connotated black supremacy and expressed anti-white feel-ings which would precipitate violence.[4] His interpretation

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[1]Young, op. cit., pp. 238-255.

[2]Louis E. Lomax, The Negro Revolt (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1963), pp. 95, 103-108.

[3]"The New Racism," op. cit., pp. 11, 12.

[4]New York Times, July 6, 1966, p. 1.

of nonviolence did not allow for even defensive violence, which some members of SNCC and CORE were now advocating.

Dr. King was not oblivious, however, to the merits of Black Power. It was a necessity for blacks to gain power and a sense of dignity of which they had been stripped. He manifested insight in his defining and interpreting of Black Power which he condensed into three forces--the ideological, economic, and political.[1]

The opposition of these three civil rights groups just mentioned and that of the black leadership was very much the same. Black Power meant racism, separatism, and violence. Again, these points follow very closely the emphasis of the mass news media. Questions are now raised as to the validity of these charges. Does Black Power actually mean racism, separatism, and violence? Is this the intent or teaching of Black Power advocates?

In contrast to these civil rights groups and leaders generally opposing Black Power are SNCC and CORE. Because of the interpretation of Black Power by some of its opponents to mean racism, separatism, and violence and the association of these characteristics with the Black Muslims, this group will be included for comparative purposes.

It must be conceded, however, that the Black Muslims have been one of the greatest contributors to the total

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[1]"Martin Luther King Defines Black Power," The New York Times Magazine, June 11, 1967, pp. 26, 27, 93-96.

Black Power movement. They have been leaders in imple-
menting the philosophy of black economic power, black
self determination, and black pride. Some of the specific
contributions made by this group will be considered
later.

The Black Muslims are a Black Nationalist organiza-
tion led by Elijah Muhammad, the "Spiritual Head of the
Muslims in the West."[1] The Muslims actually predate SNCC
and CORE and thus some critics of Black Power are quick to
list the Muslims as one of the groups from whom the Black
Power concept has been patterned. The Muslims supposedly
represent a more extreme form of Black Nationalism and
have, thereby, been under constant surveillance by the FBI.[2]

The Muslims differ in many respects from SNCC and
CORE. They are basically a religious group with strong
emphasis on social action. They stress Black Nationalism
and openly express their hatred for whites whom they refer
to as devils.[3] Unlike SNCC and CORE, they have no desire
for peace with white America. Such peace is only an
expediency. They do not specify by which means the white

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[1]C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Muslims in America
(Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), pp. 3-32.

[2]Ibid.

[3]The Autobiography of Malcolm X (New York: Grove
Press, Inc., 1965), pp. 239-268.

man is to be annihilated, but they state that his time is up.[1] Separation from whites is not an option; it is a necessity.

Consider now the position of Stokely Carmichael, a leading Black Power advocate, and SNCC which he formerly headed. There is little doubt that Mr. Carmichael has been one of the most controversial figures associated with Black Power. He has been accused of being a militant and racist and of advocating Black Nationalism.[2] It may be conceded that ambiguous statements may have been made by Carmichael, but his explanation of these would be the most reliable criterion by which his intent and position can be judged. While some have taken the liberty to interpret his statements relative to Black Power in terms of racism and violence, his fuller statements give a different meaning.[3]

Consider the charge that his advocacy of Black Power is racist or that it encourages racism. Racism is defined as a belief that human races have distinctive characteristics that determine their respective cultures, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has

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[1]Lincoln, op. cit., pp. 136-37.

[2]"The New Racism," Time, July 1, 1966, pp. 11-13.

[3]Frank Millspaugh, "Black Power," The Commonweal, Vol. 84, August 5, 1966, pp. 500-503.

the right to rule others.[1] Is this Carmichael's or SNCC's

belief in relationship to Black Power? Do they suggest

Black Power with the idea of selling blacks as a superior

people based on their race or blackness? Carmichael states

concerning this charge:

> This is a deliberate and absurd lie. There is no
> analogy--by any stretch of definition or imagination
> between the advocates of Black Power and white racists.
> Racism is not merely exclusion on the basis of race
> but exclusion for the purpose of subjugating or main-
> taining subjugation. The goal of . . . Black Power
> . . . is full participation in the decision making
> processes affecting the lives of black people, and
> recognition of the virtues in themselves as black
> people.[2]

The ultimate goal of Black Power, he explains, is not domi-

nation or exploitation of others but an effective share in

the total power.

The cry of Black Power, according to its advocates,

appears to be not a quest for the control of others or

more specifically the subjugation of whites, but it is a

rebellion against the denial of blacks to be involved in

decisions affecting their lives and their destinies.

The racist charge is further contradicted in

Carmichael's and SNCC's position on coalition with whites.[3]

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[1]"Racism," Dictionary of the English Language-
Unabridged, Random House, 1966, p. 1184.

[2]Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, Black
Power: The Politics of Liberation in America (New York:
Random House, 1967), p. 47.

[3]Stokely Carmichael, "Power and Racism--What We
Want," The New York Review of Books, September 22, 1966,
p. 6.

With the removal of whites from policy making positions, SNCC was charged with racism. Critics of Black Power gave little consideration to a primary reason for the removal of whites. SNCC explained that these whites could best serve the cause by developing programs for poor whites which would eventually lead to a coalition of the two groups. SNCC had been and still was trying to organize poor whites, but had not been very successful. The responsibility of develping a "poor white power bloc" would have to rest on whites. These whites working in the black areas must seek to organize their own people with the goal of an eventual coalition of poor whites and blacks.[1]

There were also other advantages in this strategy. The removal of whites from policy making roles would make the organization more relevant to the current thinking and needs of blacks. In addition, such drastic action, as its critics thought it to be, was necessary in light of charges against the NAACP and the Urban League. SNCC had charged that these groups were not black controlled and thus they could not reflect the thinking of the masses of blacks. They were at best an extension of the thinking of whites.[2] SNCC could not afford to harbor the same weakness.

Carmichael's position on being pro-black again

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[1] Ibid.

[2] New York Times, August 5, 1966, p. 10.

nullifies the charge of being racist. He explains that he is not anti-white, but rather that he is pro-black.[1] The decisions of white America, even those involving the Black Communities, are made in the interest of whites without any special regard for the wishes or needs of the blacks. This is pro-white. In decisions relating to and affecting blacks there is need to think of black interests-- that which is best for blacks, not what whites wish for blacks. Carmichael justifiably reasons that this is not fighting whites, or being anti-white, or being racist, but this is simply being pro-black or giving priority to the interests and needs of the Black Community.[2]

This position is basically different from that of the Black Muslims who do not hesitate to express the belief that blacks are superior to whites, who are considered inferior both mentally and physically. "Absolute Perfection" is "Pure Black," thus white being the absence of color is incomplete, imperfect.[3] Eventually whites will be subjected to destruction and the supremacy of the blacks will be completely established. This belief is basically racist and does not reflect the position of SNCC and CORE and their leaders.

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Lincoln, op. cit., pp. 87-97.

Consider the charge of black separatism. Does this have the same meaning to Elijah Muhammed and the Black Muslims as it does to Stokely Carmichael and SNCC or to Floyd McKissick and CORE? Are they one and the same? The fact is that they are not.

The Muslims advocate complete separation--economic, political, and social.[1] Whereas economic and political separation can be taken in stages, personal contact with whites must be immediate and complete. This separation once effected is final. The inferior nature of the white man, and the dangers of weakening the black nation physically and morally, demand this separation.[2] In addition, separatism to the Muslims means withdrawal from the white community. It imposes the need for separate land or a separate nation.[3] The destiny of the white man which is complete annihilation demands a separation of the black to save himself.

The position of Stokely Carmichael and SNCC, however, does not approximate that of the Muslims. Carmichael and SNCC believe that blacks must possess sufficient economic strength to allow for self determination. Dependence on the white economy restricts the black and makes it

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[1]Ibid., pp. 87-97.

[2]Ibid., pp. 87-97.

[3]George Breitman, The Last Year of Malcom X - The Evolution of a Revolutionary (New York: Schocken Books, 1967), pp. 53-69.

impossible for him to completely reflect his own desires.[1]
Black control of black business and enterprise is, in
essence, the same position taken by the Muslims.

The difference, however, between the two as relates
to social separation is marked. Black Power advocates,
excluding the Muslims, do not suggest separation because
of any inherent inferior nature of whites. Nor do they
teach separation because of the inevitable annihilation of
the majority group. As we have previously stated,
Carmichael suggests that this basis for separation is the
position of the racists and although he does describe
white Americans as racists, he does not propose their
annihilation nor does he suggest that they are inherently
inferior. Separatism, as proposed by the Muslims, is to
be final with no intimation of future integration or coali-
tion. Black Power exponents do not suggest this. They
stress the need for black self determination and black
self identity which alone can make possible a situation
for coalition with whites.[2]

The position of CORE relative to Black Power is
quite the same as that of SNCC. Floyd McKissick is a firm
believer in Black Power and thus has been subjected to the
same type of criticism as has Carmichael. He too has been

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[1]New York Times, August 5, 1966, pp. 1, 10.

[2]Carmichael and Hamilton, op. cit., pp. 40-47.

described as anti-white and as advocating separatism.[1]

Mr. McKissick's form of separatism differs little from that of Carmichael. The former holds that black people in the United States live in a state of "de facto nationhood"; they live in landlocked islands of racial isolation. "The only aspect of nationhood they lack is independence."[2] This enforced isolation should at least offer to the blacks a choice of courses, one of which should be Black Nationalism. This extreme separation is not the wish of McKissick, for he suggests that the United States, by a painful re-evaluation of its policies (foreign and domestic), might still have time to achieve peace at home and abroad.[3] He offers two alternatives to the nation, one of which is black led and black controlled areas that are predominantly black populated. This, like Carmichael's position, is black self-determination rather than Black Nationalism and separatism.

It might also be mentioned that it was chiefly McKissick's influence that prevented the barring of whites from CORE.[4] This again is evidence that Black Power as interpreted by McKissick does not condemn black-white

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[1]_Newsweek_, July 18, 1966, pp. 23-24.

[2]McKissick, _op. cit._, p. 146.

[3]McKissick, _op. cit._, pp. 146-165.

[4]_New York Times_, July 6, 1967, p. 1.

cooperation nor does it advocate separation as articu-
lated by the Muslims. McKissick appears rather to be
concerned over the failure of whites to concede to blacks
the measure of self determination that is germane in meet-
ing the needs and changing the conditions of the Black
Community. He insists that the right of self determina-
tion must reside wholly with the blacks.

Some consideration must now be given to the charge
that Black Power advocates violence. The charge of violence
was raised as early as the Meredith March. Supporters of
Carmichael and McKissick were accused of abandoning the
nonviolent philosophy and adopting a violent method.[1]
McKissick did not encourage violence against whites. Quite
the opposite was the case. He cautioned blacks, "If any-
one can't live with it (the nonviolent discipline) we'll
give him his bus fare and let him go his merry way."[2] A
few weeks later at a news conference called specifically
to correct misinterpretations of Black Power, McKissick
again stated that Black Power is not black supremacy, nor
does it advocate violence.[3]

Both SNCC and CORE were accused of becoming more

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[1]"Negro Leaders Dividing--The Effect," U. S. News
and World Report, July 18, 1966, p. 31.

[2]New York Times, June 16, 1966, p. 35.

[3]New York Times, July 8, 1966, p. 16.

militant under the leadership of Carmichael and McKissick.[1]
This is basically true. Neither of these leaders denies
that they advocated greater militancy. They have stated
repeatedly their belief that the whole civil rights
struggle needed to move in this direction. One should not,
however, equate this militancy with violence. What is
advocated here is a more aggressively active program for
blacks in their pursuit of constitutional rights.[2] But
wantonly resorting to physical attacks on whites was not
advocated by either McKissick or Carmichael.

Dr. King, a firm believer in peace and nonviolence,
did not condemn the militant position of the advocates of
Black Power. He stated, "My problem with SNCC and CORE is
not their militancy--I think you can be militantly non-
violent."[3] His contention with the advocacy of Black Power
was primarily the interpretation that some might give to
it. He was concerned that violence might be precipitated
through the association of the term with racism by whites.

Carmichael and McKissick, however, do not rule out
defensive violence. Each holds that blacks should aggres-
sively seek their civil rights without recourse to violence,
but if while in pursuit of their rights within the framework

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[1]New York Times, July 7, 1966, p. 22.

[2]McKissick, op. cit., pp. 133-141.

[3]New York Times, July 9, 1966, p. 8.

of the constitution they are physically attacked by whites,
then blacks must be allowed to protect themselves if
protection is not provided by the existing law enforce-
ment powers.[1]

One should remember that such a position is not
inconsistent with the general belief of Americans. Evi-
dence of this is repeatedly seen in the many families that
legitimately provided themselves with firearms to protect
their property and their lives. This act is not generally
interpreted to mean an intent to commit violence, but
rather an expediency of protection. This is viewed as a
right of a citizen. McKissick contends that this right to
defend one's person and property from physical harm must
not be given to whites and denied blacks.[2] Carmichael
argues that citizens have a right to protect themselves if
protection is not provided by the nation. It condenses to
"a simple answer to a simple question: What man would not
defend his family and home from attack?"[3]

One of the reasons cited earlier in this study for
the controversy over Black Power was the absence of a
precise definition. One leader has observed that, "Black

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[1]Carmichael and Hamilton, op. cit., pp. 52, 53;
McKissick, op. cit., pp. 134-135.

[2]McKissick, loc. cit.

[3]Carmichael and Hamilton, op. cit., p. 53.

Power has meant all things to all people."[1] Frequently such has been the case. The term has been rather loosely defined and has thus acquired a vagueness that to the present has not been removed.

This inability or failure to precisely define the term is not unusual, nor should this in the final analysis diminish its worth. James Cone points out that many new concepts and philosophies develop in stages. Terms such as democracy, good, evil, and many others are still in the process of being defined.[2] The lack of a clear definition should not and does not prevent communication. Meaningful dialogue can be established if there is some general agreement as to the implications of the term.

C. Freeman Sleeper points out that the meaning of Black Power is constantly developing and that it will continue to do so. He suggests that the best we can hope to do is to get some sense of direction in which developments are moving, and by this endeavor to deal with the situations as they develop.[3] It is in this context that we seek the definition of Black Power. In the attempt to analyze the main criticisms of the Black Power philosophy

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[1]Young, loc. cit.

[2]James H. Cone, Black Theology and Black Power (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), pp. 5-7.

[3]C. Freeman Sleeper, Black Power and Christian Responsibility (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969), p. 47.

we have determined what it does not include. These criti-
cisms, we believe, are for the main largely unfounded. It,
of course, is still to be seen just what permanent direc-
tion the Black Power concept will take. As Carmichael has
stated, no guarantee can be given that Black Power, if
achieved, would not produce some of the criticisms already
made against it, for human behavior cannot always be
predicted.[1] One can state only the intent and the objec-
tives that are held and hope that through careful direction
the goals will be achieved.

We will review several of the definitions that have
been given to Black Power by its advocates and by those
who have objectively tried to define it and from this
endeavor to arrive at a consensus.

A Synthesis of Black Power

According to Carmichael and Hamilton, "Black Power
is a call for black people in this country to unite, to
recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community.
It is a call for black people to begin to define their own
goals, to lead their own organizations and to support their
organizations. It is a call to reject the racist institu-
tions and values of this society."[2]

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[1]Carmichael and Hamilton, op. cit., p. 49.

[2]Ibid., p. 45.

Carmichael further defines Black Power as "taking over the power structure according to the democratic process," where Negroes outnumber whites. In areas where whites outnumber Negroes, Black Power means to organize "independently outside both parties then move into these parties as a strong bloc vote."[1]

Adam Clayton Powell, Democratic member of Congress from Harlem, when asked the meaning of Black Power replied," Black Power means the same thing to any other ethnic group in the United States if you put that ethnic group name before the word power. For black people it means the right to be proud that you're black--the right to flex your black mental muscles and think about what to do that's best for yourself and your people . . . It means the organization of Negroes to vote as a block in those areas where they have a chance of catching up."[2]

The Congressman expanded this definition with "My Black Position Paper" which he considered to be a call to action for America's blacks. He outlined seventeen necessary areas for black action. Among the points listed were black pride, black control of black organi-zations, black support of black organizations, black

[1]"Negro Cry: 'Black Power!' What Does It Mean?" U. S. News and World Report, July 11, 1966, p. 52.

[2]"A Negro Congressman Talks About 'Black Power'" U. S. News and World Report, August 15, 1966, pp. 38-41.

control of black communities, black political power, and
black economic power.[1]

Floyd McKissick, in answer to critics, defined and
interpreted Black Power in this manner. "Black Power is
no mere slogan. It is a movement dedicated to the exercise
of American democracy in its highest tradition; it is a
drive to mobilize the black communities of this country in
a monumental effort to remove the basic causes of aliena-
tion, frustration, despair, low-esteem, and hopelessness."[2]

On another occasion, he identified these specific
factors as germane to the concept: black political power,
black economic power, improved self-image of black people,
black leadership, and the mobilization of black consumer
power.[3]

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., although critical of
some possible association of the concept with racism,
pragmatically defined Black Power in terms of three forces--
the ideological, economic, and political. The first of
these forces, King felt, was less prominent among Negroes
for the thinkers have not exerted their influence in the

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[1]"My Black Position Paper," Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.,
U. S. Congressional Record, 89th Congress, 2nd Session,
quoted in Floyd B. Barbour (ed) The Black Power Revolt
(Boston: Porter Sargent Pub.), pp. 257-260.

[2]New York Times, July 8, 1966, p. 16.

[3]Floyd B. McKissick, "Programs For Black Power,"
The Black Power Revolt, ed. Floyd B. Barbour (Boston:
Porter Sargent Publisher, 1968), pp. 179-181.

main current of American thought. He contends that the
economic force within the Black Community holds great
potential and should not be underestimated. This form of
Black Power provides stability within the internal life of
Negro society. The third force, or political power, has
been slow in forming and for the most part has been greatly
manipulated by the white establishment.[1]

He again defined the concept as "a call to black
people to amass the political and economic strength to
achieve their legitimate goals."[2] It is also "a call for
the pooling of black financial resources to achieve econom-
ic security . . . a call to psychological manhood."[3]

Whitney Young, Jr. admits that at the outset his
feeling relative to Black Power was one of misgiving, but
now defines the concept in an entirely different way. He
states, "Black Power, of course, was what we had always been
fighting for." It "can be--and should be--interpreted to
mean the development of black pride and self-determination.
It means that black people must control their own destiny
and their communities. It means the mobilization of black

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[1]Martin Luther King, Jr., "Martin Luther King
Defines Black Power," The New York Times Magazine, June 11,
1967, pp. 26, 27, 93-96.

[2]Martin Luther King, Jr., Where Do We Go From Here:
Chaos or Community? (New York: Harper and Row Pub., 1967),
p. 36.

[3]King, op. cit., p. 38.

political and economic strength to win complete equality."[1]

One may contend that the foregoing statements do not render a formal definition of Black Power but are more descriptive of what it does. To a degree, this may be true. We have cited the fact, however, that the absence of a formal definition does not preclude the existence or operation of a phenomenon. From these loosely structured definitions we are able to recognize and identify common elements that appear in each. These definitions embrace, along with other things, black pride, black self determination, black economic and political power. Lerone Bennett, Jr. observed that, "despite different emphasis and different strategies, most members of the new movement stressed black pride, black dignity, and self determination in the black community."[2] Another concedes that since the initial cry for Black Power there has come a steady shift in the attitude of even the moderate black leaders who were desperately opposed to the new crusade. "What has clearly developed from this change is a black power movement with a more respectable base. It is thought of in terms of Black Consciousness."[3] In the succeeding chapter we will consider

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Lerone Bennett, Jr., "The Rise of Black Power," Ebony, February, 1969, p. 36.

[3]"Black Power and Black Pride," Time, December 1, 1967, p. 20.

this black consciousness as it is manifested in the afore-
mentioned components of Black Power.

CHAPTER III

SOME ELEMENTS OF BLACK POWER NOW SEEN

IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Black Pride

Through the years the Negro has had little pride
in himself, his heritage, his status, or his accomplish-
ments. Through enslavement he was physically forced to
divorce himself from his past. He was deposited in an
environment wholly foreign to him and was exposed to an
entirely different culture, many facets of which he was
never allowed to claim as his own. Furthermore, the major-
ity group determined norms and values, all of which were to
the exclusion of the black and hardly accessible to him.[1]

Even the Negro's natural endowments--the black skin,
bold features, and kinky hair--were considered a handicap,
a disgrace, a curse. "In the past these characteristics
were taken as physical stigmata" and this "reinforced
negative attitudes toward the Negro."[2]

Bruce Gelb, president of Clairol, stated that he,

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[1]G. Franklin Edwards, "Community and Class Realities,"
The Negro American, ed. Talcott Parsons and Kenneth B.
Clark (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), pp. 280-282.

[2]Ibid., p. 282.

like so many other whites, thought that the best favor
that could be accorded a black was first not to refer to
him as black and then "to help him in every possible way to
act--and to look and to be" white.[1]

On this point of trying to remake the Negro, James
Baldwin muses that the hair was attacked with hard brushes
and Vaseline for it was shameful to have "nappy" hair.
Black women straightened the hair and used bleaching creams
to escape the stigma of being a Negro.[2] This picture was
generally true except for "a few bold bohemians . . .
entertainers and dancing ethnologists whose identification
with the exotic placed them beyond the pale of convention."[3]

The extent to which blacks felt stigmatized by their
physical appearance is perhaps partly seen in the flourish-
ing business of cosmetology. Even in depression years this
business has thrived in Black Communities. Presently, Negro
beauticians gross in excess of three billion dollars
annually.[4]

Today, however, blacks have turned from the

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[1]Bruce Gelb, "The Power of Black Thinking," *Vital
Speeches of the Day*, October 1, 1968, pp. 758-59.

[2]James Baldwin, "A Negro Assays the Negro Mood,"
The New York Times Magazine, March 12, 1961, pp. 103-104.

[3]Phyl Garland, "The Natural Look," *Ebony*, June, 1966,
p. 143.

[4]"Integration Comes to the Beauty Business," *Ebony*,
August, 1966, p. 140.

traditional concept of style and beauty as interpreted by white America. Negroes now take pride in emphasizing their natural endowments. The hair, for example, is now worn "natural" or "Afro."[1] This implies that the hair is kept in its natural state without giving it any special treatment that would change its texture. This is "a significant culture trend" which is the outgrowth of the movement toward black awareness and black pride.[2] The use of the term Afro is also significant. The black was formerly led to believe that he was without a heritage worthy of honor. He thus tried to disassociate himself from any African ancestry. Now the Negro seeks to emphasize this background as distant as it may be, and deliberately endeavors to identify with this past.[3] There is a "determination to glory in blackness and resurrect joyously the African past."[4]

The attitude that now grips the black was aptly put by a youthful staff field worker with SCLC who said, "We . . . must realize that there is beauty in what we are, without having to make ourselves into something we aren't."[5]

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[1]David Llorens, "Natural Hair--New Symbol of Race Pride," Ebony, December, 1967, p. 139-140.

[2]Ibid.

[3]David Llorens, loc. cit., p. 141.

[4]Martin Luther King, Jr., Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community? (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), p. 40.

[5]Phyl Garland, loc. cit.

This new sense of pride is described by another who stated, "I believe in choosing whatever goes best with my features and the feeling I want to express. That long, straight, Caucasian look just doesn't go with me."[1]

It is quite evident that this new black pride has not only captured the blacks, but it is likewise being adopted by some whites and is thus helping to reshape their attitude. Blacks were surprised that the natural "was being snatched up by the fad hungry mainstream."[2] One leading voice on women's styles said that "a feeling of inferiority has been replaced by pride . . . Suddenly it has become fashionable to be black . . . Now everybody wants to be a soul sister."[3]

Evidence of black pride is also seen in the attention that is given Afro fashions. Blacks have been proud to display their African jewelry with their Afro-styled clothes.[4] The dashikis captured the admiration of blacks and whites alike. Other styles more truly African have accentuated the "Black is Beautiful" concept. The acceptance of these fashions by blacks has provided a new source

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[1]Phyl Garland, op. cit., p. 144.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Richard Schickel, "Making It With Soul," Life, January 10, 1969, pp. 88-93.

of income in many Black Communities. Fashion shops such as the Harlem born chain, "The New Breed," are sprouting up in various communities.[1] "The New Breed" is part of an expanding chain of stores that sell African-styled clothes designed and manufactured by blacks in their own workrooms. "The African Shop" located in Chicago is another thriving fashion center specializing in designs and styles of African origin.[2] Such centers indicate an attempt by blacks to break with the traditional white designs and to create styles that enhance and complement their own concept of beauty.

In their eagerness to identify with their African past, blacks also take pride in sponsoring fashion shows that feature African attire. One extravaganza, "The Fashion Safari," was held in Washington, D.C.[3] Beautiful designs of African origin were displayed from some thirty-two African countries showing their influence on American clothing. Deep interest in this display was found among blacks. Again the influence on whites was attested to by the presence of wives and families of members of Congress.[4]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Phyl Garland, op. cit., p. 146.

[3]"Africa Wows Capital With a Fashion Safari," Ebony, November, 1968, pp. 177-180.

[4]Ibid.

One other noticeable evidence of black pride might be briefly mentioned. Formerly it was the black middle class, which included most of the college trained Negroes, who in many instances did not wish to be identified with the black mass. These middle class blacks tried to move as close to the white mainstream as possible. The extent to which this could be accomplished was determined to a great degree by how completely one was able to detach himself from his past. Today, however, few blacks deliberately try to sever their ties with their own people. Rather, they seek to be clearly identified with their black heritage.

This attitude, "is producing a new wave of Negro organizations and movements" on campuses, in professional circles, in the local community, and likewise on state and national levels.[1] This is perhaps most clearly seen on the college campuses. Black students in many colleges and high schools have demanded black-oriented courses as well as more black representation on faculties. Students at Albany State College (Georgia) contended for replacement of Romance language courses with Swahili.[2] Blacks at Harvard formed the Association of African and Afro-American Students and demanded more courses on Africa and more black faculty

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[1]"Black Power and Black Pride," Time, December 1, 1967, pp. 20, 21.

[2]Newsweek, October 9, 1967, p. 59.

members.[1] In Chicago more than 30,000 black students boycotted high school classes demanding the inclusion of black history in textbooks.[2]

These things substantiate the black's belief that he must look to himself to improve his self-concept, and he is learning that his efforts not only affect himself but they also affect the feelings whites have toward him.

Self-Determination

For centuries blacks have had limited control in the Black Community. Much of the control has been within the domain of the white society that possessed various forms of power.[3] Without considering what was in the best interest of the individual black or the community as a whole, power-wielding whites determined what was to be the way of life both within and outside the Black Community. Blacks, for the most part, were not allowed to participate in the decision making roles.[4]

Whites determined where and how blacks lived; they controlled the factors that provided employment for the

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Charles H. Harrison, "Black History and the School," Ebony, December, 1967, pp. 111-116.

[3]Everett C. Ladd, Jr., Negro Political Leadership in the South (New York: Atheneum Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 17-18.

[4]Stokely Carmichael, "Toward Black Liberation," Massachusetts Review, Autumn, 1966, pp. 639-51.

Negro or closed to him the opportunity of earning a liveli-
hood. Black leaders were chosen and controlled by whites
and thus black leadership was rendered impotent in the
Black Community. Black schools were directed by white
principals or by blacks carefully screened and selected
by white school boards. Even textbooks for black children
were white oriented omitting any contributions made by
Negroes to America's development and growth. These and
countless other decisions directly affecting life in the
black communities were made by whites who were completely
removed from the black areas and hardly interested in the
needs and wishes of black citizens.[1]

Carmichael and Hamilton describe this as "colonial
rule" in America and hold that whether the control exer-
cised by whites is direct or indirect (through a black who
is controlled by whites), that it is just as effective as
any colonial system that has ever existed.[2]

The advocates of Black Power insist that black people
must have the right of self-determination. Blacks must be
allowed to define their own terms, they must define them-
selves, and they must be able to organize themselves as

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[1]C. Eric Lincoln, "The New Black Challenge,"
Redbook, June, 1969, pp.16-23.

[2]Carmichael and Hamilton, op. cit., pp. 6-23.

they may choose.[1] This means that blacks "must be seen in positions of power doing and articulating for themselves."[2]

Here again is seen the position of the Black Power advocates in groups like SNCC and CORE. These groups were criticized for advocating the removal of whites from key positions of leadership within civil rights organizations. The rationale for the removal of whites from key leadership roles is based on the belief that "only a black people can convey the revolutionary idea that black people are able to do things themselves"[3] and thus are able in every sense to determine their own affairs.

Lincoln Lynch, former associate director of CORE, describes this need for self-determination as the "need for black people to stand on their own two feet."[4] This is what McKissick meant when he described Black Power as the effort by blacks to "remove the basic causes of . . . frustration, despair, low self-esteem, and hopelessness."[5]

The implementation of black self determination was quite evident in SNCC's efforts to gain political control

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Carmichael, "Speech at Berkeley," November 19, 1966.

[3]Stokely Carmichael, "Power and Racism: What We Want," The New York Review of Books, September 22, 1966, p. 6.

[4]New York Times, June 22, 1966, p. 24.

[5]New York Times, July 8, 1966, p. 16.

in Lowndes County, Alabama.[1] In the organization of an
independent black political party an attempt was made to
gain control of a predominantly black county, thus giving
blacks the right to determine what would be in their
individual communities.

Black self determination provides more power or
control to black people with less control from the out-
side. This was the major reason for the attempted decen-
tralization of public schools in New York's Harlem, Lower
East Side, and the Ocean Hill-Brownville sections.[2] In
this educational experiment locally elected boards and
administrators were given broad powers over the school
areas in these communities. The Ocean Hill-Brownville
Board exercised its power by forcing the removal of some
white teachers from the school.

Many contend that suburban school systems are often
good because parents are in a position of power, whereas
in the primarily black ghetto school the people are power-
less. School boards, recognizing this powerlessness, show
little concern for those areas.[3]

The need for black self determination is also now
being emphasized by the more conservative civil rights

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[1]Carmichael and Hamilton, op. cit., p. 46.

[2]Steven V. Roberts, "Control of Schools," The New
Republic, September 28, 1968, pp. 11, 12.

[3]Ibid.

organizations. Formerly the Urban League's primary objec-
tive was to bring the Negro into the "white middle class
mainstream." Focus has now shifted to black control of
black communities.[1] Whitney Young, Jr. said of the
League's plans, "We expect to build ghetto power, to give
the poor a voice in the community."[2]

Not all Black Power advocates believe that it will
be necessary to change the whole system, but increasingly
black people, especially the young, are convinced that if
they are to improve the quality of lives and overcome the
handicaps of discrimination they will have to determine
their own course, provide their own programs and select
their own leaders.[3]

Black Economic Power

The advocates of Black Power and many others who
have been more cautious in accepting the new concept are
generally agreed that blacks must gain economic and
political strength if they would effect any appreciable
and lasting improvements in the Black Community. Leaders,
both black and white, in the older civil rights organiza-
tions, have recognized that the Negro must be allowed a

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[1]"Black Pride and Ghetto Power," The New Republic,
July 20, 1968, p. 4.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Lerone Bennett, Jr., "The Rise of Black Power,"
Ebony, February, 1969, p. 36.

larger share of the economic prosperity of the nation, but
they have advocated very little change in the white-
controlled economy within and outside the Black Community.
"Some black civil rights leaders and white liberals argue
for a preferential treatment in employment,"[1] but they
oppose other kinds of action that are based on race. This
simply meant that blacks had to wait for whites to provide
economic opportunities. Thus Negroes have generally waited
for whites to create the economic opportunities in the
white business world.

Exponents of Black Power insist that there must be
a different approach to the total economic problem of the
Black Community. Generally these leaders denounce, for
the present at least, the integration orientation of the
old civil rights groups and insist on a new strategy which
is based on black control of resources, institutions, and
organizations in the Black Community.[2] Charles Hamilton
cautions that "black people will gain only as much as they
can win through their ability to organize independent bases
of economic and political power.[3] He explains that this
can be achieved through employment of several weapons such

[1]Robert L. Carter, et al., Equality (New York:
Random House, 1965), p. 94.

[2]Bennett, loc. cit.

[3]Charles V. Hamilton, "An Advocate of Black Power
Defines It," Ebony, February, 1969, p. 36.

as boycotts, rent strikes, work stoppages, and pressure
group bargaining.

The boycott has been effectively used by SCLC pri-
marily for the purpose of gaining certain concessions from
eating establishments, motels, and other businesses offer-
ing a public service but practicing segregation.[1] Econom-
ic gains were generally a secondary factor with these boy-
cotts.

The strategy of the Black Power advocates differs
in that it seeks control of businesses and resources in
the Black Community in addition to more hiring of blacks
in black supported enterprises outside the Black Community.
In addition, the emphasis placed on "Black Consciousness"
has tended to develop a sense of "togetherness" among
Negroes who are beginning to realize that their salvation
is not in the white man alone but primarily in their confi-
dence in their own ability to change conditions.[2]

This attitude, along with the employment of some
of the tools recommended by Hamilton such as the boycott,
work stoppages, and pressure bargaining, are paying divi-
dends. The "Black Cooperatives" is a striking example of
the use of several of the tools. Springing up throughout

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[1]Martin Luther King, Jr., "Martin Luther King
Defines Black Power," The New York Times Magazine, June 11,
1967, pp. 26, 27, 93, 94.

[2]Bennett, loc. cit.

the deep South are "Cooperatives" formed by blacks who formerly were completely dependent on whites for employment.[1] A black priest, Father Albert McKnight, conceived the idea of banding together a group of poor Louisiana farmers who, by the pooling of their meager resources and through quantity purchasing, would be able to effect sufficient savings to secure modern machinery and to eventually employ the most scientific methods of farming. This eventually would make them financially independent of the whites.[2] The organization started with a few families whose total capital was about $25,000. The success of the endeavor was startling. Within two years it had expanded its operation and its worth was $200,000.[3] By 1968, there were at least forty of these Cooperatives scattered through Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi with a membership of over 12,000 families.[4]

These Farming Cooperatives are now offering blacks the prospects of diversified crops, expanding production and economic independence. Through pressure group bargaining they are opening previously closed white controlled

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[1]Michael Miles, "Black Cooperatives," The New Republic, September 21, 1968, pp. 21-24.

[2]Ibid.

[3]"Black Power and Black Pride," Time, December 1, 1967, p. 20.

[4]Miles, loc. cit.

markets to their produce. Whites refused to sell

Cooperative members necessary farm items; white truckers

refused to make deliveries to these black farms, and white

distributors refused to handle their produce. In spite

of the economic and political pressure exerted by whites

the black Cooperatives survived by establishing other

businesses to supply the services denied by whites and by

securing other markets for their produce. Not only did

they survive, but their methods have been so successful

that they have been able to market their crops at prices

generally lower and have thus proved highly competitive

with white farmers.[1]

These blacks having gained economic independence

began to exert political pressure. They have at times

been successful in bypassing state agencies that were

uncooperative and unsympathetic to their needs and have

gained assistance directly from federal sources.[2] One

such association, The Southwest Alabama Farmers'

Cooperative Association, was able to obtain FHA approval

of a $852,000 loan after the state agency turned it down.[3]

These Cooperatives have not only included farmers

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

but other enterprises as well. The Crawfordville

Enterprise, a clothing manufacturer, is a community group

that was initially funded from private sources but which

since has qualified for assistance from government sources.

Evidence of black economic power is also seen in

the mass boycotts that have been staged by blacks. As has

been noted earlier these boycotts blossomed under the

leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the SCLC, but

were originally designed as frontal attacks on discrimina-

tion and not as a means of blacks gaining control in their

own communities.[1] Yet, these boycotts gave some of the

earliest evidence of black consumer power.

The 1963 Birmingham (Alabama) boycott is a case in

point. Dr. King admitted that the marching alone did not

bring about the integration of the public facilities. The

economic loss to Birmingham's downtown business was a tell-

ing blow. Blacks brought their purchasing power to bear

upon the merchants. At least 98 per cent of the Negroes

stayed out of the white stores, thus forcing merchants to

agree to black demands.[2]

Operation Breadbasket, a department of SCLC, is

another example of black economic power in operation.

Operation Breadbasket was created specifically to exert

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[1]King, loc. cit.

[2]Ibid.

pressure on white businesses to hire more Negroes.[1] The
program calls for blacks to support those businesses that
are fair in their hiring practices and to boycott those
establishments that have discriminating policies.

Representatives of Operation Breadbasket call on
the companies in question and determine the facts relative
to hiring policies, the total number of employees and the
number of Negro employees, their job classification and
salary scale. If discrimination is practiced, the company
is requested to correct the situation. If there is compli-
ance no action is taken against the company. If, however,
they do not make the necessary adjustments, blacks are then
requested to withdraw their patronage.

As a result of this program the earning power of
Negroes in Atlanta increased by more than twenty million
dollars in three years. It benefited Chicago blacks by
approximately eight hundred new and upgraded jobs and
increased their income by more than seven million dollars
in eight months.[2]

Reverend Jesse Jackson, Director of Operation
Breadbasket, focuses more on the need for black control in
the Black Community.[3] His program in Chicago is an

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Richard Levine, "Jesse Jackson: Heir To Dr. King?",
Harpers, March, 1969, pp. 56-70.

example. Relying on black consumer power, he has not only demanded the hiring of blacks in proportion to the black population, but also insists that blacks be the managers in stores located in the black ghettos. This has in essence effected a degree of black control in the Black Community.

There have also been demands that these chain stores located in the black ghettos engage black-owned establishments for the various services needed.[1] This has opened up opportunities for black-owned scavenger, janitorial, and exterminating companies as well as construction companies, banks, and public relations firms.

Black manufacturers have also gained from the emphasis on black economic power. All chain stores operating in the black communities of Chicago must serve as outlets for black-manufactured products.[2] Previously, practically no consideration was given to black produced items. Now they are given favorable shelf space and sufficient advertising to make them sell. The results are quite encouraging. Argia B's Food Products is such a case. Sales moved from practically zero to six figures, and its barbecue sauce now has 15 per cent of the entire Chicago market. Joe Louis Milk registered a 30 per cent increase

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid.

in sales primarily because of Operation Breadbasket.

Another example of the emphasis on black economic power is the National Economic Growth and Reconstruction Organizations (NEGRO) headed by a black neurosurgeon, Thomas W. Matthews.[1] NEGRO was founded on the belief that self reliance in blacks was damaged by oppression, and that self confidence can only be rebuilt through the Negro's own efforts. Confidence will not come as long as he is wholly dependent on the whites or on assistance that comes through welfare agencies.[2] Therefore, the concern of the organization is to improve the standard of living for the masses of black people by building up financial resources that belong to them as a whole.[3]

The organization now employs more than six hundred people in enterprises that are black owned. The payroll exceeds one million dollars annually and has present assets of more than three million dollars.

The program was funded by the sale of Economic Liberty Bonds ranging from twenty-five cents to ten thousand dollars.[4] Through this avenue NEGRO has been able to

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[1]Peter Bailey, "NEGRO Charts New Path to Freedom," Ebony, April, 1968, pp. 49-56.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]"Black Power and Black Pride," loc. cit.

acquire and operate a one hundred forty bed hospital

(Inter-faith Hospital) in Queens, New York, the Domco

Chamical Company in Jamaica, Long Island, the Domco Textile

Company, a manufacturer of uniforms, another clothing

manufacturing plant in Pittsburgh, two bus lines in the

Watts area of Los Angeles, two one hundred family apart-

ment buildings in Bronx, New York, in addition to other

enterprises.

Having experienced the varied benefits that accrue

from being allowed a larger slice of the economic pie, the

likelihood is that blacks will continue to push for an

even more equitable share of America's abundance.

Black Political Power

Chuck Stone, a black political analyst, states that:

> In the American political system, organizations
> and interest groups wield power, individuals don't.
> Individuals can affect power outside organizations
> only if they possess charisma, that undefinable
> quality of body and spirit reserved for a few 'world
> historical individuals.' Such charismatic leaders
> must still, however, rely on followers, and eventually
> these followers become institutionalized into some
> form of organizational structure.[1]

The foregoing statement partly explains the reason

for the powerlessness that prevailed in the Negro community.

Until his deeper involvement in the civil rights struggle

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[1]Chuck Stone, Black Political Power in America
(Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1968), p. 58.

of the fifties and his more recent concern for more rapid

change, the blacks remained essentially unattached from the

political activity of the larger community.[1]

There are several reasons for this lack of involve-

ment. In the South the white primaries, the poll tax,

literacy requirements, and identification devices were the

tools used to prevent the Negro from voting.[2] Should a

black hurdle these obstacles he still faced intimidation

by the whites. In the North as well as the South apathy

was also a factor in the black's lack of involvement in

politics.[3]

In both the North and the South blacks had received

such little of the political spoils that they were not

really aware of what full political involvement could mean.[4]

Some few blacks had been given political appointments, but

these individuals, as Black Power advocates contend, have

been manipulated in most instances by the white political

machine and have been of little value to the Black

Community as a whole.[5]

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[1]Ladd, op. cit., pp. 17, 18.

[2]Burke Marshall, "The Pattern of Southern Disen-
franchisement of Negroes," Freedom Now, ed. Alan F. Westin
(New York: Basic Books Inc., 1964), pp. 99-103.

[3]New York Times, June 26, 1961, p. 9.

[4]Stone, op. cit., p. 43.

[5]Ladd, op. cit., pp. 43, 44.

Politics has always been an effective weapon to
force change, but the Negro has seldom made the best use
of it. He has not consistently employed politics as a
tool to benefit his community. It was not until the late
fifties that Negroes began in a concerted way with politi-
cal involvement.

James Farmer was one of the black leaders who
recognized the great political potential in the Black
Community. He stated that the "major war now confronting
us is aimed in harnessing the awful political potential
of the Black Community in order to effect basic social and
economic change for all Americans, to alter meaningfully
the lives of the Black Americans, and to bring about a
real equality of free men."[1]

Negroes now, however, are becoming increasingly
aware of this potential residing in the Black Community.
Negroes are beginning to think black. Politically, "think-
ing black" means to elect black officials representative
of the Black Community. Such black leadership means black
power.

Exponents of Black Power have addressed themselves
to this very point. Carmichael and Hamilton, for example,
insist that the consolidation of black people behind their

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[1]James Farmer, Annual Report CORE National Conven-
tion, cited by Lewis M. Killian, The Impossible Revolution
(New York: Random House, 1968), p. 94.

own is essential before they can negotiate from a position
of strength. This solidarity will provide the basis for
political strength.[1] Carmichael reasons that political
strength would allow for self determination which alone
will answer the needs of the black ghetto.[2]

The programs of SNCC and CORE have been directed
toward the acquisition of political power. Carmichael
states concerning SNCC, "We determined to win political
power, with the idea of moving on from there into activity
that would have economic effect."[3] This power, Carmichael
correctly reasoned, would be the power of the masses who
would then be in a position to participate in decisions
governing their destinies.

As was mentioned earlier, the disenfranchisement
of blacks was accomplished in several ways, but as a last
deterrent intimidation was practiced. Thus, before blacks
could wield power they had to overcome these obstacles and
win the right to vote.[4] SNCC played a leading role in
accomplishing this. Voter registration drives were begun
in the South, particularly rural regions having Negro
majorities. Generally the plan provided for voter

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[1]Carmichael and Hamilton, op. cit., pp. 46-47.

[2]Carmichael, "Power and Racism: What We Want,"
p. 5.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

registration classes in which the material used was a

facsimile of the registration form, a copy of the state

constitution, and a personal excuse sheet on which the

person could state the reason he had never attempted to

register to vote.[1] Persons were instructed how to fill

out the forms and also taught to explain sections of the

constitution where this was required. After they had been

thoroughly instructed they were then told to attempt to

register.

These earlier attempts to register blacks, however,

were disappointing especially in the rural areas of the

deep South. For various reasons blacks were denied the

opportunity to register. In some areas they met with

violence.[2] Yet these efforts were not completely futile

for they brought into sharper focus the political inequities

of the South and thus provided fresh urgency for effective

federal legislation. This legislation came with the

passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting

Rights Act of 1965. These two laws aided later efforts to

register blacks.[3]

Attempts to register blacks in urban areas were

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[1]Lynd, op. cit., p. 430.

[2]Claude Sitton, "Bullets and Ballots in Greenwood,
Mississippi," Freedom Now, ed. Alan F. Westin (New York:
Basic Books, Inc., 1964), pp. 87-94.

[3]Carmichael, "Power and Racism: What We Want,"
pp. 5-6.

generally more fruitful both in "terms of numbers registered and the use to which the registered electorate is put."[1] Such was the case in Alabama and Georgia where SNCC had laid the foundation prior to the voter registration drive led by Martin Luther King, Jr.[2]

In spite of the difficulties black voting strength grew in Alabama to 228,000 by 1966. This represented about one-fourth of the total registration in the state.[3] This strength demanded a change of attitude by white political candidates. One Southerner observed that the word, "segregation," had virtually disappeared from the political vocabulary.[4] Four of the five major contenders for the position of governor of Alabama promised to alter state resistance to civil rights.[5] Benefits of the Alabama drive were also evidenced in the increased black vote in Dallas County which brought about the defeat of the segregationist sheriff, Jim Clark. Of the 23,000 registered voters in Dallas County, 11,000 were Negroes.[6]

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[1] Ladd, op. cit., p. 31.

[2] Lionel Lokos, House Divided (New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1968), pp. 155-56.

[3] New York Times, April 17, 1966, p. 63.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] New York Times, March 6, 1966, p. 76.

The emphasis on black political power through black solidarity was seen again in SNCC's move to organize an independent black political party. Alabama law allows any group of citizens to nominate candidates for county or state office, and if they win 20 per cent of the vote they may be recognized as a political party.[1] SNCC set to work to organize blacks in counties such as Lowndes where they were in the majority. The Black Panther Party of The Lowndes County Freedom Organization in Alabama was organized in 1966.[2] As a result of this organization Negroes were able to nominate candidates for the office of sheriff, tax assessor, and members of the school board. Because of the economic pressure applied by whites, Negroes were kept away from the polls. Blacks were threatened with eviction from houses owned by whites. They were ordered off white farms. Tents had to be erected to provide shelter for these people.[3] Thus, all the black candidates were defeated. This is not, however, the total picture, for there were some gains along with the losses.

Prior to the SNCC registration drive there was not one black registered voter in Lowndes County. Of the

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[1] Stokely Carmichael, New York Review of Books, September 22, 1966, p. 5.

[2] Stone, op. cit., p. 241.

[3] New York Times, January 1, 1966, p. 15 and October 31, 1966, p. 22.

15,000 persons in the county, 81 per cent were Negroes.[1]
By election day 2,681 blacks had been registered to vote
as compared with a total white registration of 2,519.[2]
By the close of SNCC's registration efforts a total of
3,900 blacks had been registered.[3]

One of the most striking examples of black politi-
cal power in the deep South is that which developed in
Fayette, Mississippi. Charles Evers, a civil rights leader,
led a successful registration drive for blacks in Fayette
County.[4] On May 13, 1969, Evers became the first black
mayor in a biracial Mississippi community since Reconstruc-
tion days.

Since his election blacks in Fayette have begun to
see some of the advantages of political power. Seven black
police officers have been appointed and this has silenced
any charge of white policy brutality in this town of
1,700 people.[5] Evers has raised more than $85,000 for the
Fayette Emergency Fund through his radio and television
appeals. He has launched a major effort for sewage exten-
sion, street paving, and lights. A compulsory school law

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Stone, loc. cit.

[4] The South Bend Tribune, November 9, 1969.

[5] Ibid.

has been enacted which assures at least a twelfth grade education.[1] These programs will mean help, especially for the Black Community which has suffered under the discriminating practices of white leadership.

Fayette is a concrete example of what Black Power advocates mean when they suggest black control of communities that are predominantly black. In those areas where blacks are outnumbered, however, a coalition with whites is necessary.[2] Such a coalition will be cited in the cases of Cleveland, Ohio and Gary, Indiana.

Someone has referred to 1967 as the "Year of the Black Mayor," for that was the year that witnessed the election of black mayors for Cleveland and Gary.[3] Prior to the election of Carl Stokes of Cleveland and Richard Hatcher of Gary, seven other black mayors had served in predominantly white cities. Stokes and Hatcher, however, were the only two elected in a city-wide popular vote.[4] The other black mayors were selected by their city councils.

The political success of blacks in these two cities is significant for it again suggests that blacks can share in political control of predominantly white cities when

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Carmichael and Hamilton, op. cit., p. 46.

[3]Stone, op. cit., p. 203.

[4]Ibid., p. 204.

there is black solidarity and movement toward a coalition
with whites.[1]

These two factors were successfully employed in
Hatcher's campaign in Gary. Had Hatcher not capitalized
on solidarity in the Black Community and on wooing some
whites to his support he would never have won the election.
The fact is that Hatcher was running without the support
of the local Democratic machine which controlled the city.
He would, therefore, lose its financial support, but more
important he risked losing Democratic votes to his
Republican opponent.[2]

After announcing his decision to run for the post
of mayor, Hatcher went to work and put together a "team of
the strangest political bedfellows ever assembled."[3] These
included white radicals, black nationalists, upper middle
class blacks, black mothers on welfare, and wealthy Jewish
businessmen.[4] He was successful in retaining enough white
Democratic support along with 91 per cent of the black
vote to assure his victory.[5]

The election of Stokes in Cleveland was also made

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[1]Carmichael and Hamilton, op. cit., p. 46.

[2]Stone, op. cit., p. 214.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 215-18.

[5]Ibid.

possible by strong black support and a coalition with whites. In 1965, Stokes, contrary to the wishes of the local Democratic party, placed himself as a candidate for mayor. He campaigned in some white neighborhoods but concentrated mostly on black areas. His campaign appeared to be successful. The newspapers conceded the victory to Stokes. Cleveland's blacks, however, had not sensed the dire need of their united support. They failed to turn out at the polls. Stokes lost.[1]

In 1967, when he again ran for the position of mayor, Stokes campaigned heavily in white neighborhoods winning white support. But, early in the year Cleveland had been plagued by racial violence which changed considerably the attitude of the Black Community. Blacks recognized their need for power and thus saw the need of black solidarity. They responded at the polls giving Stokes 94.5 per cent of their votes or a total of 86,669.[2] As strong as this black vote was, however, it would have been insufficient to elect Stokes. His appeals to the white voters made the difference. The 17,000 votes cast by whites for Stokes gave him the balance of power.[3]

The "thinking black" attitude of Negroes was

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., pp. 218-21.

[3]Ibid.

manifested not only in these political victories but also
in the number of blacks seeking public office who were
defeated. Black candidates ran for the office of mayor
in Chicago, Philadelphia, Memphis, Tennessee, Youngstown,
Ohio, and Mount Vernon, New York in 1967. Certain of
these defeats should be mentioned for they also attest to
the black solidarity that is now appearing largely through
the emphasis on Black Power. They also speak to the need
of coalition with whites when black voters are in the
minority.[1]

In the city of Mount Vernon where Reverend Samuel
Austin ran in a three-way race, the black candidate polled
only 14 per cent of the total vote. This 14 per cent,
however, represented all of the twelve predominantly black
districts which Austin carried in the city.

The Youngstown race should also be noted, for
although the black candidate for mayor, Hugh Frost, lost,
he was successful in breaking the predominantly Democratic
voting pattern of the city and thereby changed the political
composition of the city council.[2]

Blacks represent 20 per cent of the total population
of Youngstown, but Frost won 31 per cent of the votes cast
or 17,500 votes. An analysis of these votes reveals that

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[1]Ibid., p. 206.

[2]Ibid.

Frost not only carried the "faithful predominantly white

Republican minority but he also attracted a considerable

number of black votes to the Republican party for the

first time.[1] As a result, a city council was chosen that

included four Democrats and four Republicans. Formerly

only one Republican was represented on Youngstown's govern-

ing body.[2]

It is evident that black political power need not

end with the electoral process. The election of a black

to political office should pave the way for meeting the

needs and demands of the Black Community and the community

in general. The election of Congressman Adam Clayton

Powell is a case in point and one that reveals the determi-

nation of blacks to speak for their own communities.

Powell, despite criticism of his social life and the

domestic problem that consistently followed him, has demon-

strated the effects of black power.

In 1944, Powell was elected to Congress representing

the predominantly black congressional district in Harlem.[3]

Through the years he distinguished himself as an outspoken

champion of black rights. In 1961, his seniority elevated

him to the chairmanship of the Education and Labor

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[1]Ibid., p. 192.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

Committee. His efficiency and control of this important committee was recognized even by those who disliked him.

One of the surprising facts about his chairmanship was his ability to use the position as a base for the development of legislation that would benefit blacks across the nation.[1] Under his leadership the committee passed sixty pieces of major legislation which included increasing the minimum wage, fair employment practice, aid to elementary and secondary schools, Manpower Development Training Act, vocational rehabilitation, school lunch program, and war on poverty.[2] Each of these pieces of legislation would bring specific benefits to the Negro.

Powell also used his position to render help to his black constituents in Harlem and to blacks across the nation. His staff, which was recognized as one of the most efficient on Capitol Hill, was composed of more black professionals than existed in the entire Congress. Fifty per cent of the committee's twenty-four staff members were black. This was the most integrated committee of the sixteen in the Senate and the twenty in the House.[3]

Harlem was the recipient of several anti-poverty programs, one of which totaled two million dollars and

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 196-97.

employed four hundred Harlemites. Ten members from his church directed another poverty program which he helped obtain for his constituents.[1]

Powell was denied his seat at the opening of the Ninetieth Congress on January 10, 1967. This denial was on a temporary basis but later was made to extend throughout the entire ninetieth session. His constituents, although not in accord with much of his social life, exerted their power of self determination by re-electing Powell to Congress by an overwhelming majority.[2]

Of the four components of Black Power considered in this paper, it is quite evident that the political factor is one of great potential, but it has doubtless been the area that has been most neglected by blacks as a whole. In the light of political developments of recent years and the more recent emphasis on black political power, it is probable that this situation will change. Black politicians are convinced that where black bloc voting is not sufficient to win political office, coalitions with white groups can bring the desired results. Blacks as a whole are also aware that unity among them makes possible political power. Thus, it is quite likely that blacks will place even greater emphasis on this form of power

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid., p. 199.

which when gained will give other benefits to blacks.

CHAPTER IV

SOME ELEMENTS OF BLACK POWER

IN THE BLACK CHURCH

The Black Church and Self-Determination

The Black Church has always been essentially an

expression of self-determination. With the introduction

of the African slave to America the Negro had to work out

techniques for survival in his hostile environment. One

of the most significant techniques developed, however,

has been termed a religious technique in which the slave

attempted to establish his own church and in which he

developed his own religious music, the spiritual.[1] Both

of these became a vital part of the slave's life.

Neither the Negro's church nor his spiritual came

by accident. The slave's attempt to establish his own

church was not only an effort to adjust to new conditions,

but it was also a conscious means of developing "together-

ness" as well as an avenue by which he would seek his

freedom.[2] The spiritual gave expression to the deep

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[1]Benjamin E. Mays and Joseph W. Nicholson, The
Negro Church (New York: Russell and Russell, 1969),
pp. 1-7.

[2]Ibid.

feelings of the slave against oppression, but it also provided a means of communicating information and plans for escape.[1]

One theologian prefers to call this slave religion a "folk religion" rather than a church.[2] Joseph Washington believes that this religious experience of the slave was less institutional and more the spirit of the slave. He, therefore, feels that it is more correctly identified with the life of the slave than with a given congregation, for it is the factor of experience that accounts for the presence and contribution of the church.[3]

We find no reason to contend with this interpretation nor does this interpretation conflict with the position of this study, namely, that the Negro church provided a base for the operation of Black Power. In essence, Washington's position centers around the form of religion developed by the Negro out of his experiences rather than this "folk religion" having its roots in some previously structured institution. The fact remains, however, that this expression of religion in the black slave took organizational form in the Negro church.

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Joseph R. Washington, Black Religion (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), pp. 30, 31.

[3]Ibid.

We have cited the fact that the slave's religion was not only an endeavor to adjust to new conditions, but it was also a means of changing those conditions. Nor was his religion simply "other worldly" or "compensatory" intended to do "little or nothing to improve their status here."[1] The religious meetings of slaves were also forms of protest and occasions for communicating plans for escape and even rebellion.[2] The genius of the slave is evident in the use that he made of the church as we shall now have occasion to show.

Religion was one of the primary means used by slave holders to keep the Negro docile.[3] White evangelists were used to give a simplified gospel to blacks. This gospel extolled the virtues of meekness and submission, thus endeavoring to lead the slave to find contentment and even a form of compensation in his enslavement.

Frederick Douglass, a former fugitive slave, in one of his biographical works states that he had met in the South "many good religious colored people who were under the delusion that God required them to submit to slavery

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[1]Benjamin E. Mays, The Negro's God As Reflected in His Literature (Boston: Chapman and Grimes, 1938), p. 24.

[2]Washington, op. cit., p. 33.

[3]James H. Cone, Black Theology and Black Power (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), p. 101.

and to wear their chains with meekness and humility."[1]
Douglass made it clear, however, that he could "entertain
no such nonsense."[2]

Blacks were taught that Christianity expressed
concern for the future, but that it was wholly unrelated
to present social conditions.[3] Laws were passed to rein-
force these teachings. One such piece of legislation
passed by the Virginia Assembly ?1667) stated, "Baptism
doth not alter the condition of the person as to his
bondage or freedom."[4] This allowed the slave to be prose-
lyted and indoctrinated while at the same time it insured
his servitude.

With religious teachings so employed, it is, there-
fore, understandable why whites for years allowed and even
encouraged the attendance of slaves at religious meetings.[5]
One slave holder expressed the feeling of many others when
he said, "The deeper the piety of the slave, the more

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[1]Frederick Douglass, Life and Times (New York:
Crowell-Collier, 1962), p. 85.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Cone, op. cit., p. 102.

[4]John Hope Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom: A
History of American Negroes (New York: Alfred A. Knopf,
Inc., 1947), p. 71.

[5]Cone, loc. cit., p. 101.

valuable he is in every respect."[1]

Nor were these meetings always held jointly with white worshippers or under the direction of a white preacher. Slaves, for a time, were allowed to hold their own church services.[2] Trusted and oft-times talented slaves were permitted to preach.

These religious freedoms, however, were later restricted when the slave owners eventually realized the reason for the slave's intense interest in religion. Whereas whites were using religion to keep slaves in servitude, the slave was using religious gatherings to gain equality and freedom.[3] Laws were, therefore, enacted in different areas restricting the religious gatherings of blacks. One such law passed by the South Carolina Legislature in 1800 prohibited slaves "even in company with white persons to meet together and assemble for the purpose of . . . religious worship either before the rising of the sun or after the going down of the same."[4]

These religious gatherings were the only occasions that permitted blacks some measure of independence and

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[1]Quoted in Haven P. Perkins, "Religion for Slaves: Difficulties and Methods," Church History, X, 3 (September, 1941), pp. 228-45.

[2]Mays and Nicholson, op. cit., p. 78.

[3]Washington, op. cit., p. 225.

[4]Quoted in W. E. B. DuBois ed., The Negro Church (Atlana: The Atlanta University Press, 1903), p. 22.

opportunity for voluntary group activity.[1] In a sense
the Black Church provided a more closely knit institution
than did the black family which had been so repeatedly
disrupted by the ravages of slavery. Thus, for the slave,
the church provided a source of personal identity and a
sense of community.[2]

In spite of the subtle attempts by slaveholders to
reinforce the practice of slavery through religious indoc-
trination, the majority of Negroes did not accept it.[3]
Instead, they made the church an instrument of protest
and revolt. The slave preacher who was often trusted by
the whites and was considered the most capable of keeping
the other slaves under control was in many instances the
leader of insurrection and the one who coordinated the
plans for escape.[4]

The effectiveness of the slave church as an instru-
ment for revolt is seen in the response of the whites.
One slaveholder in Virginia, a Richard Byrd, wrote the
governor in May, 1810 stating his belief that "slave
preachers used their religious meetings as veils for

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[1]Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (New York:
Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944), II, p. 860.

[2]Cone, op. cit., p. 92.

[3]Ibid., p. 101.

[4]William L. Sperry, Religion in America (New York:
The Macmillan Company, 1946), p. 189.

revolutionary schemes." This letter indicted one, General

Peter from the Isle of Wright as one such preacher.[1]

The revolt led by the black preacher, Gabriel

Prosser, in Richmond, Virginia is another case.[2] It is

stated that Prosser used the Biblical account of Israel's

enslavement as an analogy to their own. He assured the

blacks that they would have God's support in an attempt

to gain their freedom just as did the Israelites. He

succeeded in gaining many followers, but the plan was

aborted. Prosser was apprehended but refused to implicate

others who supported him.[3]

In such planning the slave used his music, the

spiritual, to communicate his feelings of protest as well

as his plans for insurrection. Spirituals such as:

> When Israel was in Egypt's land,
> Let my people go;
> Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
> Let my people go:
> Go down, Moses, way down in Egypt's land;
> Tell old Pharoah - Let my people go.

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[1]Herbert Aptheker, American Negro Slave Revolts (New York: International Publishers, 1963), p. 224. (paperback edition)

[2]E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro in the United States (New York: Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 87, also Herbert Aptheker, American Negro Slave Revolts (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), pp. 162-63.

[3]Washington, op. cit., p. 203.

meant something to the black seeking his freedom.[1]

Nat Turner, the famed insurrectionist, developed a religious orientation for his uprising.[2] Turner, a Baptist preacher, led a revolt in Southhampton County, Virginia in 1831. He based his actions on religious convictions. He devoted time to meditation and prayer but was convinced that the way to freedom was by killing the whites nearest them who were responsible for their enslavement.[3]

The Nat Turner Rebellion elicited this response in the Richmond Enquirer: "The case of Nat Turner warns us. No black ought to be permitted to turn a preacher through the country. The law must be enforced or the tragedy of Southhampton appeals to us in vain."[4]

Another Black Church leader, Denmark Vesey, with two fellow leaders, Peter Poyas and Jack Pritchard, led a rebellion against "abuses" which had stripped the Methodist slaves of certain religious privileges in Charleston,

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[1]Cone, op. cit., p. 93; and Benjamin E. Mays, The Negro's God As Reflected in His Literature (Boston: Chapman and Grimes, 1938), pp. 28, 29.

[2]James Weldon Johnson, Black Manhattan (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930), pp. 36, 37.

[3]Washington, loc. cit.

[4]Quoted in George Washington Williams, History of the Negro Race in America (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1883), vol. II, p. 90.

South Carolina.[1] In 1818 a dispute over their burial

ground led more than two-thirds of the 6,000 blacks to

withdraw from the white church and to establish an indepen-

dent church called the African Church of Charleston. These

blacks even provided their own place of worship but the

white authorities closed the church in 1821.[2]

The insurrection planned by Vessey failed, termi-

nating in the execution of many blacks, but it is quite

evident that the Black Church did not simply fulfill the

slavemaster's intent.[3] The Black Church became an organiza-

tion of protest and expressed efforts by the blacks for

self-determination.

This quest for self-determination is further substan-

tiated by the response of blacks following the Civil War.

With the abolition of slavery and the almost immediate

institutionalization of segregation, blacks began a mass

exodus from the southern white churches.[4] The freed blacks

refused to accept any longer a segregated position within

the white church. Negroes were anxious to separate

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[1]Ulrich B. Phillips, _American Negro Slavery_ (Baton
Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1966), pp. 420-21.
(paperback edition)

[2]_Ibid._

[3]_Ibid._

[4]Carter G. Woodson, _The History of the Negro Church_
(Washington: The Associated Publishers, 1921), pp. 71, 72.

themselves from the churches of their former masters.[1]
They were suspicious of the intentions of the white church
and wished to be independent of its control.

Evidence of their desire for self-determination is
seen in their immediate withdrawal from the white assem-
blies. The black membership in the white churches
decreased rapidly while concurrently the number and
membership of black churches multiplied.[2] The black
membership of the Southern Presbyterian Church decreased by
70 per cent within several years. At least 129,000 blacks
left the Methodist Episcopal Church within six years. On
the other hand, the African Methodist Episcopal Church had
nearly 400,000 members by 1880. The African Methodist
Episcopal Zion Church gained nearly 125,000 members in
ten years.[3] The organization and growth of Baptist churches
were as rapid, if not more rapid than that of the Methodist
churches.

This rapid growth of the Black Church was a phase
of emancipation of the Negro from white supervision.[4] It

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[1]William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in
America (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1930),
p. 420.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (New York:
Harper and Brothers, 1944), pp. 860-61.

testifies to the urgency with which the blacks sought complete self determination. Thus, according to Cone, the "Black Church was the creation of a black people who refused to accept the white master's definition of black humanity and rebelled with every ounce of humanity in them."[1]

Father Thomas Millea, a Catholic priest, states that this withdrawal of blacks from white churches was the "first example of Black Power," for they were the "first Negro organizations independent of white control."[2]

The desire for self-determination is also seen in the choice of churches made by blacks. The blacks appear to have gravitated more toward denominations whose hierarchical structure imposed less control over the local church and where more independence could be exercised by individual congregations. Thus, the Baptist and Methodist churches had the greatest increase both in number of churches and in constituents.[3] On the other hand, churches whose structure precluded independence in order and form of worship as well as in the selection of a clergy gained fewer black followers.[4] Some feel that this factor of

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[1]Cone, op. cit., p. 92.

[2]Thomas V. Millea, Ghetto Fever (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1968), p. 138.

[3]Washington, op. cit.

[4]Frazier, op. cit., pp. 363-64.

control by the white hierarchy is responsible to a degree
even to the present for the limited growth of certain
denominational groups in the Black Community.[1]

Unfortunately, the role that the Black Church has
played in the quest for self-determination has not been
fully recognized. Criticism of the church has been severe
at times. It is charged, for example, that the attitude
of the Black Church has been more accommodative or that it
has followed more or less the general policies and practi-
ces of a segregated society.[2] This may be true to a
degree, but the charge should not be accepted without a
consideration of those extenuating circumstances that
helped to make for this response.

It is true that the Black Church has not always been
as active in social issues as it might have been. There
have been periods when it has been more quiescent than many
might have desired.[3] Some contend that it was this that
caused a decline in the rate of growth of membership in
black churches during certain years. This charge does not
appear to be valid for although some religious groups
experienced a slower rate of growth, yet other groups more

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Mays and Nicholson, op. cit., pp. 59-70.

[3]Charles S. Johnson, Growing Up in the Black Belt
(New York: Schocken Books, 1941), pp. 135-36.

removed from the control of white parent bodies increased.[1]

In answer to the criticism that the Black Church was more accommodative, it must not be overlooked that the church in general has not been particularly concerned with social issues, but the Black Church has been more involved in these areas and particularly those issues pertaining to human rights than has its white counterpart.[2] Even critics of the Black Church cite the fact that black preachers have failed to develop a theology of their own due to their over-involvement in the struggle for equality and justice.[3]

In addition, it should be remembered that the Black Church has had to exist in a land and at a time when its very presence depended upon some semblance of cooperation with the white power structure. Following the Reconstruction Period there were times when the intimidation of blacks by lawless bands such as the Ku Klux Klan and the absence of laws to protect blacks demanded caution on the part of black preachers.[4] Myrdal states that black preachers had to be cautious even in instructing their parishioners on doctrines such as purity for fear of reprisals from white

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[1]Frazier, op. cit., p. 350.

[2]Myrdal, op. cit., pp. 862-63.

[3]Washington, op. cit., p. 37.

[4]Myrdal, op. cit., pp. 860-61.

males who preyed on the black female.[1] Yet in spite of these difficulties the black clergy has never been wholly cautious nor has the Black Church ceased to serve as a base, and for many years the only base, for black protests.[2]

The Black Church and Black Pride

The Negro church since its conception has been an advocate of black pride. There are many evidences of this. The response of blacks to segregation within the white church is one way in which this black pride has been manifested.

After emancipation the majority of blacks refused to accept any longer segregation as it had been practiced in the white churches. They demanded equality and an end to the discriminating policies of the white religious organizations. When denied this they left the white communions by the hundreds of thousands and formed their own churches.[3]

Black preachers capitalized on the theme of black pride and the desire of the former slaves for identification on the race level.[4] Had it not been for this race pride blacks would doubtless have remained in white

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[1]Ibid., p. 939.

[2]Ibid., p. 876.

[3]Sweet, op. cit., pp. 473-74.

[4]Washington, op. cit., p. 221.

churches accepting the segregated policies as a very small minority elected to do.[1] Instead, Negroes formed their own separate churches. Nor were they content to simply have all black churches within white denominations; they also formed their own parent bodies which later incorporated many individual black congregations.[2]

The response of Richard Allen nearly three-quarters of a century earlier is a striking example of this black pride and the end to which it was employed by black preachers in the organization of all-black churches.

Allen was born a slave, but upon reaching manhood he and his brother were allowed to purchase their freedom by their master who had been converted under the preaching of Richard.[3] Coming to Philadelphia in 1786 Allen was permitted to preach at the St. George Methodist Episcopal Church and other white churches in the city. Blacks were attracted to the St. George Church in such large numbers that it provoked opposition by whites who wished to restrict the seating of Negroes. It was this attempt to segregate black worshippers that led to the organization of the African Methodist Episcopal Church.[4]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., pp. 30-127.

[3]Woodson, op. cit., pp. 71-75.

[4]Ibid.

Several blacks, including Richard Allen, were
disturbed by whites while they were kneeling in prayer.
The whites demanded that the blacks occupy the area desig-
nated for black worshippers. When the blacks refused they
were expelled from the church. This act precipitated a
mass exodus of protest by all the other blacks in the
church.[1]

Allen never returned to St. George. Instead, he
organized a church (1794) based on race but patterned after
the Methodist church.[2] This church, which was named the
African Methodist Episcopal Church, has since become a
monument in black religion.

Quite a similar situation led to the formation of
another Negro Methodist body.[3] Black members of the John
Street Methodist Church of New York City left this predom-
inantly white church when there was expressed an unwilling-
ness to accept Negroes in larger numbers or to place a
black as co-pastor of the church. In protest the black
members separated from John Street Church to form their
own independent church, the African Methodist Episcopal
Zion Church.[4]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Washington, op. cit., p. 189.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

These two cases are by no means unusual. Blacks, slave and free, in both the North and the South, formed their own black congregations.[1] These churches were primarily Baptist and Methodist not only because these groups did not stress the need for a trained clergy, but because these local bodies could exercise more independence and would experience less interference from church hierarchy.[2] This was a factor to be considered, since it was often necessary for slaves to accept aid from whites in building their own houses of worship.

The names chosen by these black churches are also indicative of the race pride that gripped them. It is evident that there was a deliberate attempt by the majority of blacks to disassociate themselves completely from the white churches and to identify with an earlier heritage. Thus, black churches still retaining denominational names designated themselves African.[3] Many of these groups have grown to become the largest black Protestant churches or the most influential.

Mention should also be made of other religious organizations that were smaller in size and considered more nationalist, but which also expressed black pride. These

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[1]Ibid., pp. 187-93.

[2]Ibid., pp. 68-74.

[3]Ibid., p. 38.

groups developed more after the turn of the century during the period when the more established black churches were accused of practicing accommodation.[1] Some of these nationalist groups were born in protest of this accommodative position, but we should not overlook the fact that these groups were religious organizations.[2]

 The Moorish Temple of Science in America and Marcus Garvey's Universal Mutual Improvement Association are two such groups.[3] The former repudiated the white man and his religion and extolled the virtues and superiority of the blacks. They rejected reconciliation and integration with the white race. The Garvey movement was both religious and political, but again its appeal to the poor blacks was primarily its Negritude which offered a black Christ and a black God.[4]

The Black Muslims, however, have been the most influential and successful of these nationalist groups. They have appealed to the Black Community on the basis of black pride perhaps more so than any other religious group. Although considered racist and expressing hatred for whites,

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[1]Myrdal, op. cit., pp. 810-42.

[2]Joseph H. Fichter, "American Religion and the Negro," The Negro American, ed. Talcott Parsons and Kenneth B. Clark (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), pp. 404-05.

[3]Lincoln, Black Muslims in America, p. 53.

[4]Myrdal, op. cit., pp. 746-47.

the Muslims have nevertheless appealed to blacks through their emphasis on dignity and self-respect.[1]

Evidence of this black pride and black self-respect is apparent when one considers the business establishments owned and operated by the Black Muslims. Restaurants such as the "Salaam" on Chicago's South Side, supermarkets merchandizing Muslim products under their own "Y O U R" label, bakeries, dry cleaning plants, barber shops, farms, and packing plans boast a complement of black workers displaying dignity and self-respect.[2]

The majority of blacks do not subscribe to the racist philosophy of the Muslims, but many blacks who are acquainted with the Muslims do not fail to express appreciation for the part they have played in building pride and self-esteem in Negroes and for the excellent organizational structure of the group.[3]

The social action of the Muslims reaches into the community down to the grassroots level, creating jobs for blacks and from this level developing a leadership cadre.[4]

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[1] James Q. Wilson, "The Changing Political Position of the Negro," Assuring Freedom to the Free, ed. Arnold M. Rose (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1964), p. 168.

[2] Jans J. Massaquoi, "Elijah Muhammad," Ebony, August, 1970, pp. 78-89.

[3] Wilson, op. cit., p. 168.

[4] C. Eric Lincoln, "Black Muslims: Catalysts of Civil Rights?", Current, May 1, 1960, pp. 9-12.

A classic example of such leadership is that of the late

Malcolm X who did not hesitate to state his indebtedness,

in this respect, to the Muslims.[1] Many believe that the

moral worth and value of blacks as articulated by Elijah

Muhammad is largely responsible for the philosophy of some

black leaders including the late Malcolm X who was a strong

exponent of the Black Power philosophy.[2]

The Muslims have stressed the contributions that

blacks have made to the development of America and have

thus helped to instill in blacks a sense of individual and

corporate pride.[3] The Muslims are largely responsible,

therefore, for the current re-evaluation of the role of

blacks in American History. From present findings it

appears that this is a much more significant role than

blacks have formerly dared to believe.

Black pride is also evident in the rapid expansion

of those black churches that broke more fully with white

organizations and provided their own black leadership.

Blacks did not gravitate to the Baptist and Methodist

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[1]Kenneth B. Clark, "Malcolm X Talks With Kenneth
B. Clark," Malcolm X - The Man and His Times, ed. John
Henrix Clarke (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1969),
pp. 168-81.

[2]Patricia Robinson, "Malcolm X, Our Revolutionary
Son and Brother," Malcolm X - The Man and His Times, ed.
John Henrix Clarke (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1969),
pp. 56-63.

[3]Lincoln, op. cit., pp. 9-12.

churches simply because there was less ritual and formality in worship, thus allowing more emotional display as some have argued.[1]

The movement of large numbers of blacks to Baptist and Methodist churches was likewise due to the measure of independence that these white parent bodies allowed the slaves.[2] Whereas, some other groups such as the Presbyterians and Congregationalists expressed opposition to slavery, yet these groups provided no independence for black worshippers. In such groups there could be very few, if any, black preachers, for black slave preachers were for the most part untrained.[3] On the other hand, the white Baptist and Methodist churches allowed for separate black religious meetings eventually served by black preachers. Therefore, blacks were in control of their religious meetings.[4] They learned to respect the black preacher, for he was the only black leader and one that, incidentally, was recognized by the white slave owner.[5] It is beside the point that these whites thought to control the slave through these black preachers. The fact remains that oft-times

[1]Washington, op. cit., pp. 30-42.

[2]Ibid., pp. 187-89.

[3]Ibid., pp. 190-91.

[4]Mays and Nicholson, op. cit., p. 3.

[5]Ibid.

this black leader was one who gave lip service to the white master, but worked undercover for the freedom of his people.[1] It was this undercover role that led to the suppression of the Black Church and to the restrictions placed on the religious meetings of the slaves as we have previously noted.

Thus, for years the black preacher has been regarded as a "Race Man."[2] Black congregations have expected nothing less of their religious leaders and black preachers generally know this. Studies suggest that this expectation continues even to the present. This is not to suggest, however, that the Black Church has always been as aggressively active as it might have been or that all black churchmen have consciously been "race men." With the resurgence of discriminatory and restrictive laws on blacks during the post-Reconstruction Period, the approach of the Black Church did change.[3] The church became less aggressive in race matters. We have mentioned that in defiance of this position many smaller black churches developed, some of them espousing nationalism. It was also during this period that other "improvement and protest" organizations such as the

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Washington, op. cit., p. 232.

Urban League and the NAACP had their birth.[1] These groups

coalesced with whites and were thought to be "accommoda-

tive." Thus, they never reached the masses of blacks.

This cannot be said of the Black Church, for although

there have been periods when the rank and file blacks

questioned whether the church was relevant, the church

remained the organization in the Black Community that

demonstrated some evidence of black solidarity.[2] Myrdal

holds that this separation, the independent Black Church

bespoke power.[3] Cone more emphatically states that it is

the "precursor of Black Power."[4]

The black clergy also encouraged black pride in

their attitude toward black business. In their study of

Negro life in Chicago, Drake and Cayton found that most

of the larger black churches advertise and encourage black-

owned business.[5] So frequently has this been done that

sometimes the preacher was accused of "racketeering."[6]

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[1]Myrdal, op. cit., pp. 812-57.

[2]Carleton L. Lee, "Religious Roots of the Negro
Protest," Assuring Freedom to the Free, ed. Arnold M.
Rose (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1964),
p. 50.

[3]Myrdal, op. cit., p. 940.

[4]Cone, op. cit., p. 94.

[5]St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton, Black
Metropolis (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962),
Vol. 2, pp. 428-29.

[6]Ibid.

This was done, however, on the assumption that black-owned businesses were an asset to "the Race."

Some church newspapers list the black businesses while some ministers mention publicly these establishments and request their members to patronize them. Drake quotes one minister as telling his congregation:

> We can get anything we want to wear or eat from Negroes today. If you would do that it would not only purchase the necessities of life for you, but would open positions for your young folks. You can strut as much as you want to, and look like Miss Lizzie, but you don't know race respect if you don't buy from Negroes.[1]

The extent to which black religious organizations have contributed to black pride is likewise seen in the influence of certain cults and sects on the Black Community. The success of such groups has not been wholly due to a theology, but more to the socially oriented program that they have fostered and their emphasis on black pride. Two such examples are the Father Divine Peace Movement and The United House of Prayer For All People.

The former grew out of an employment agency operated in Sayville, N. Y. by one Major J. Devine earlier known as George Baker.[2] The willingness of Devine to find employment for the destitute and, in many instances, not

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Robert Atterton Parker, The Incredible Messiah (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1937), pp. 3-33.

to exact a fee for this service gained him followers.
This number rapidly increased as Devine and his wife,
Penninah, began to feed many of these people free of
charge. So many individuals were recipients of Devine's
hospitality that rumors began to circulate that there was
a divine element connected with him that enabled him, a
poor man, to provide for so many.[1] These recipients thus
began to seek spiritual counsel of Devine and subsequently
began to address him as Reverend Divine and eventually as
"Father Divine."

Father Divine's followers multipled as stories of
healings and miraculous manifestations began to spread.
Followers shared with him their wages or at least entrust-
ed him with the management of their possessions.[2] These
funds were gainfully used by Divine to purchase buildings
called "Heavens" where he housed many of his followers. In
1940 in New York State along these properties were valued
in excess of one million dollars.[3] Thousands of blacks--
whites were also welcomed by Divine--were fed daily free
of charge in these "Heavens."[4]

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Henry Lee Moon, "Thank You, Father, So Sweet,"
The New Republic, September 16, 1936, pp. 147-50.

[3]Ollie Stewart, "Harlem God in His Heaven,"
Readers Digest, June, 1940, pp. 22-26.

[4]Sutherland Denlinger, "Heaven Is In Harlem,"
The Forum, April, 1936, pp. 211-18.

Businesses soon sprouted in the black ghettos bearing the name of "Father Divine" or one of his "angels" as his converts were called. Poor blacks were told to refuse charity and relief. They were instructed to own and operate their businesses. Employment among converts was 60 per cent greater than before joining the "Divine Peace Movement."[1]

Blacks took pride in Father Divine's Peace Movement. Converts came from menial jobs in homes, laundries, and factories from Northern ghettos and Southern farms. They were "poor, uneducated, inarticulate," and gripped by an overwhelming inferiority complex.[2] These were brought into clean, well furnished "Heavens," seated at tables sparkling with expensive silver and filled with a variety of foods. Converts were given other names and referred to as "angels" and told that they were "God's Chosen People."

The theology of George Baker may be questioned, but few can deny the dignity and pride that he instilled in segments of the Black Community and the degree of independence that he offered blacks. One "angel" expressed the feeling of many when she said, "Father gave me my first chance to be somebody. All my life I didn't amount to nothing--just cooking and cleaning for the white folks.

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[1]Parker, op. cit.

[2]Stewart, op. cit.

But since I came to know Father is God, I'm important. I'm a dietician in God's kitchen."[1]

The second group, "The United House of Prayer For All People," was formed in 1921 by Marcelino Manuel Grace who was known to his followers as "Daddy Grace."[2] The "Grace Movement" did not develop the social programs that characterized the "Divine Movement," thus its influence was more limited. The impact of Grace on the Black Community can largely be attributed to his business ventures that stressed black pride. This was achieved in the promotion and sale of black owned and black manufactured products. Blacks thus came to view Grace as a symbol of independence from white control.

Grace owned, among other businesses, a soap factory, coffee plantation, insurance company, and a home-buying association.[3] His factories produced cosmetics for blacks. Blacks bought toothpaste, pomade, hair straightener, face creams, and other products under the "Daddy Grace" label.[4] The extent to which blacks were influenced by Grace can be seen partly in the patronage given the Daddy Grace

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[1]Stewart, op. cit., p. 23.

[2]Richard R. Mathison, Faiths, Cults, and Sects of America (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1966), pp. 240-43.

[3]Ibid.

[4]"Grace To Harlem," Time, March 7, 1938, p. 30.

enterprises. At the time of his demise his financial worth was estimated to be twenty-five million dollars.

One cannot overlook the impact that black preachers such as Martin Luther King, Leon Sullivan (Philadelphia's Zion Baptist Church and Opportunities Industrialization Center), Jesse Jackson,[1] Albert Cleague, Jr.,[2] and countless hundreds of others have made on America's blacks in their call for black pride. Such men have created organizations out of the church and centered these around the religious institutions. They have etched marks of self-respect and black pride on the minds of black Americans.

The Black Church and Economic Power

Earlier in this study Black Power was defined to include economic power. This component of Black Power has also been present in the Negro church. We do not suggest that the Negro church has been characterized by wealth, for this has not been the case, nor has this been the case in the Black Community as a whole. In fact, quite the contrary is true. Despite the scarcity of material prosperity in both the community and the church, the Black Church as an institution has possessed economic power.

The church was the first black institution in which

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[1]Richard Levine, "Jesse Jackson: Heir to Dr. King?" Harper's Magazine, March, 1969, pp. 58-70.

[2]Albert B. Cleage, Jr., The Black Messiah (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968).

economic power was visible. The church for years was the only property owned by the Negro.[1] The acquisition of a church meant some degree of economic success to the propertyless black. Frazier states that, "In order to establish their own churches Negroes began to pool their meager economic resources and buy buildings and the land on which they stood."[2]

Groups of Negroes in both the North and the South, intent on separation from the white congregations and keen on developing a sense of "togetherness," moved to establish their own houses of worship.[3] Black Christians in Charleston, South Carolina secured land and built their own church. They proceeded to ordain two of their own race as bishops in the Methodist Episcopal Church and eventually had their own separate church.[4] Negro members of the St. George Methodist Church in Philadelphia left the church in protest of its segregated seating policies. Under the leadership of Richard Allen and Absolom Jones they secured their own properties and organized the African Methodist

[1]Mays and Nicholson, op. cit., pp. 279-80.

[2]E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 25.

[3]Vincent Harding, "Religion and Resistance Among Ante-bellum Negroes 1800-1860," The Making of Black America, ed. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick (New York: Atheneum, 1969), pp. 184-85.

[4]Ibid.

Episcopal Church and the African Protestant Episcopal
Church.[1]

These are examples of that which occurred wherever
Negro churches developed. Basically, it meant the same
procedure. It required the gathering of finances to build
the church and it necessitated the administration of these
finances. Later, as Negro congregations grew, it meant
the grouping of churches into conferences or districts
with the selection and remuneration of their ministers.[2]
Each of these steps gave to the Negro church a degree of
economic power and independence that for years was peculiar
to the Black Church.

Because of the limited resources of the individual
Negro, it was also necessary during slavery and reconstruc-
tion for the church to emphasize and even institute certain
services and programs for its members. It was this need
that led to the "beneficial," "aid," or "benevolent"
societies.[3] The many voluntary associations found in the
Black Community had their genesis in the church.

These "aid" societies were organized to provide
assistance for the poverty-ridden Negro in periods of

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[1]Woodson, op. cit., pp. 72-73.

[2]Kenneth B. Clark, Dark Ghetto (New York: Harper
and Row Publishers, 1965), p. 176.

[3]E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America
(New York: Schocken Books, 1965), pp. 35-38.

sickness, death or other emergency situations. These societies represented the "saving, banking spirit among the Negroes and are the germ of commercial enterprise of a power type."[1] They were the means used by the Negro to create capital and to "teach the masses of people habits of saving."[2] From this emphasis there have developed the multi-million dollar black insurance business, building and loan associations, banks, and other Negro-owned enterprises.[3]

August Meier states that since Reconstruction there has developed an increasing emphasis on economic activity as a factor in solving the race problem.[4] This emphasis rests on the assumption that by the acquisition of "wealth and morality" Negroes would win the respect of whites and would eventually gain their full rights. The success of this theory is contingent on the efforts of the Negro to help himself.[5] It is further reasoned that the Negro can best help himself through unity and racial solidarity.

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[1] Some Efforts of American Negroes for Their Own Social Betterment, 1898, p. 17, quoted in Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944), p. 955.

[2] Booker T. Washington, The Story of the Negro (1909) p. 168.

[3] Frazier, loc. cit.

[4] August Meier, op. cit., p. 42.

[5] Ibid.

This is basically the position of the advocates of Black Power.[1] They state that before the Negro can be integrated into the mainstream of American life he must experience consolidation.

The Black Church, since its infancy, has not only espoused this philosophy but has demonstrated it. This does not mean that the church has always been conscious of the promotion of this belief nor, for that matter, has it always been aware of its presence. Yet, the very purpose of the Negro church has made self-help and solidarity vital to its existence.

It has been pointed out that the slave's concept of the church was not only "other worldly" as some have held. The slave thought of the church and used the church as an avenue to freedom--as a means of improving his present condition. This belief demanded unity and racial solidarity. This "togetherness" was seen in the slave's quest for his own church, the acquisition of church properties, the emphasis placed on self-improvement, and finally, since Emancipation, it has been seen in the recognition and promotion that Negro ministers had to give to black-owned businesses in order to remain a "Race Man" in the eyes of his parishioners.[2]

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[1]Carmichael and Hamilton, op. cit., p. 49.

[2]Mays and Nicholson, op. cit., p. 3.

The Black Church has doubtless been unsurpassed in the encouragement and support given black-owned business. For years the church has promoted the philosophies of "self-help" and "buy-black."

One of the early independent advocates of these ideas was the rector of St. Luke's Church in Washington, D. C., Alexander Crummell.[1] He insisted that self-help and solidarity were essential to the Negro's existence. He cautioned that two of the greatest heresies that Negroes must avoid are the call to forget that they are black and to give up their own efforts to have their own schools, churches, and enterprises.[2]

The position of the Black Church relative to self-help and black business is again seen in the extent to which Negro ministers participated in the various National Negro Conventions prior to and during Reconstruction.[3] These annual conventions invariably brought together large numbers of leaders, most of whom were ministers. These men were not only strong supporters of anti-slavery legislation, but they advocated self-improvement, a Negro press,

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[1]Meier, op. cit., p. 42.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Howard H. Bell, "National Negro Conventions of the Middle 1840's: Moral Suasion vs. Political Action," The Making of Black America, ed. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick (New York: Atheneum, 1969), Vol. I, pp. 315-19.

various trades for Negroes as well as black farm coopera-
tives.[1]

In more recent years black churches have again
turned to the social and economic problems affecting their
people. Again we would cite the various programs developed
or implemented by black clergymen. The example of Dr. Leon
Sullivan and the Zion Baptist Church of Philadelphia is a
case in point.[2]

Recognizing the tremendous economic needs of blacks
in Philadelphia and the limited opportunities for employ-
ment, Sullivan called for his members to initiate a "selec-
tive buying" movement which in effect was a boycott of
white-owned businesses that practiced discrimination in
their hiring. Sullivan was joined by four hundred ministers
in Philadelphia and a half million followers.[3] The boycott
created job opportunities for blacks. So great was the
demand for black help that a program had to be developed
for the training of unskilled Negroes. This led to the
organization of the Opportunities Industrialization Center
(OIC), a massive program in man training.[4] In Philadelphia
alone more than 7,000 jobs for blacks were provided giving

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[1] Ibid.

[2] "Black Capitalism at Work," U. S. News and World
Report, February 17, 1969, pp. 60-64.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

an additional $25,000,000 purchasing power to Negroes.

The program developed by Dr. Martin Luther King,
Jr. (Operation Breadbasket), is patterned somewhat after
the Philadelphia project initiated by Dr. Sullivan.[1] King
also enlisted the services of black clergymen and the
support of their churches in his boycott of white busi-
nesses whose hiring policies discriminated against Negroes.[2]
Such boycotts were felt in many southern communities and
in northern cities as well.

Dr. King admitted that it was the boycott of white
businesses that brought success to the Birmingham drive.
It was the loss of black trade that brought white merchants
to the bargaining table, thus effecting integration of
public facilities and opening up job opportunities to
blacks.[3] Operation Breadbasket, though a part of SCLC, is
generally directed by black ministers who use their pulpits
to promote the program decided upon.

Reverend Jesse Jackson's "Black Christmas" sponsored
by Operation Breadbasket is a program in which black
churches exerted their power in the interest of the Black

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[1]Martin Luther King, Jr., "Martin Luther King
Defines Black Power," The New York Times Magazine, June 11,
1967, pp. 26, 27, 93, 94.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

Community.[1] Recognizing the tremendous economic drain
that "White Christmas" imposes on the black buyer, Jackson
proposed that gifts to families and friends be those
products, goods, and services made and sold by black men
and women. He stated that, "Black businesses cannot grow
unless we buy from them."[2] He also suggested that instead
of being given breakable toys, black children should be
given a savings account at a black bank or savings and
loan association.[3]

In a similar manner, Reverend Jackson and his associ-
ate ministers promote "Black Easter."[4] Jackson reasons
that Black Easter has spiritual, psychological, and
material dimensions. The spiritual is seen in the renewed
relationship of love between blacks. The psychological is
revealed in black consciousness which emphasizes a "black
somebody." The material is evident when black people buy
black goods and services.

The Shrine of the Black Madonna, a Detroit church
pastored by Reverend Albert B. Cleage, Jr., is another
example of black economic power in the black church.[5]

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[1]Ebony, November, 1969, p. 115.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., pp. 118-20.

[5]Alex Poinsett, "The Black Revolt in White Churches,"
Ebony, September, 1968, pp. 63-68.

Cleage capitalized on the Black Power mood and turned a small black congregation from fifty to nine hundred members in just a matter of weeks.[1] This spiraling membership pledged a minimum of five dollars each per week for black needs. This money was used as capital for black businesses.[2] The church now operates a co-op supermarket and an Afro-style clothing factory. After the church purchased a local service station, gasoline sales jumped from 35,000 gallons per month to over 50,000 gallons the first month of operation.[3]

Black economic and political power is also seen in black churches that form a small minority of predominantly white denominations. In such groups clergy and laymen have banded together to pressure the church to fulfill its obligation to the black population.[4] This response was precipitated primarily by the action of James Forman in the development of the "Black Manifesto" that was served on white churches.

Forman, a former leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, introduced to the National Economic Development Conference the idea that white churches

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Christopher S. Wren, "Black Power Shakes the White Church," Look, January 7, 1969, pp. 84, 85.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Poinsett, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

were partly responsible for the exploitation of the
American Negro and thus owed the blacks "Reparations."[1]
The Conference, which was organized to bring together
black leaders "for discussions and action on the economic
aspects of Black Power,"[2] adopted the idea of the "Black
Manifesto."

Forman moved immediately on the white churches
demanding millions of dollars in reparations and making the
prestigious Riverside Church of New York his first target.[3]
He moved on churches unannounced, leaving worshippers
wondering where he would appear next. This action of
Forman's stimulated responses within church groups that
were hopeful of avoiding direct confrontations with the
outspoken black leader. Forman also stimulated blacks
within many of the predominantly white denominations to
form groups or caucuses demanding a change in the inequi-
ties practiced within the group.

These black groups or caucuses appeared first among
the Unitarian-Universalists, but very shortly spread to a
number of other churches.[4] Each caucus operates primarily
within its own denomination and attacks those inequities

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[1]"A Black Manifesto," Time, May 16, 1969, p. 94.

[2]Ibid.

[3]"The Black Bill Collector," Newsweek, May 19, 1969,
pp. 74-75.

[4]Ibid.

within its own borders. Attacks have been registered against the second class status of black ministers as evidenced by their lower salary scale and their restriction to all black congregations.[1]

One of the primary charges against the white denominations is their support of foreign missions while they overlook the needs of poor blacks in America.[2] These caucuses have had a telling effect economically. The Unitarian are giving $1,000,000 over a four-year period for black development. The Episcopal Church has established a 4.5 million dollar program. The Methodists are contributing $20,000,000 for the ghetto; the Lutherans 6.5 million dollars; the Presbyterians 12.6 million dollars; the United Church up to $5,000,000. In a two-year period the American Baptist Convention invested $20,000,000 in low-cost urban housing.[3] Some caucuses are insisting that any assistance given hard core poor must be given with black participation. Others are demanding that black churches maintain absolute control over such operations.[4]

Thus the Black Church still serves as a base for economic power. Conditions have changed and have modified

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[1]Wren, op. cit., pp. 84-85.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid.

somewhat the methods that must be used to achieve the objectives, but the church has adjusted to these conditions and continues to allow its influence to be felt.

The Black Church and Political Power

One of the criticisms that has been directed through the years at the Negro church is its involvement in politics.[1] Church historians have been especially quick to attack the Negro church for what appears to be a lack of attention to theological concepts and ideologies while the church has busied itself with politics and matters of a social nature.[2] This is not to suggest, however, that political power has been developed to any great degree or that it has been employed as effectively as it might have been. But there appears to be evidence to support the belief that for years the Black Church has been a base for political power.

Mays and Nicholson admit that the Negro church has manifested evidence of political power, but they maintain that the importance of the church in this respect has been magnified because of the Negro's inability to function freely in other areas of the larger society.[3]

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[1]William Warren Sweet, The Story of Religion in America (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1950), pp. 328-32.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Mays and Nicholson, op. cit., pp. 6, 7.

Washington also agrees that black religion is more concerned with politics, economics, and equality than it is with the development of theology or liturgy.[1] Contrary to the idea of many, the Black Church has been concerned with the problems of this world.[2]

The black preacher has been described as a "leader, a politician, an orator, a boss."[3] Through the years he has been more closely related to politics than has been the white religious leader.[4]

The Black Church as a political instrument predates the Civil War. We have already noted that the church was the main social institution that was allowed to function in the slave community. Its very presence, as far as the blacks were concerned, had to do with freedom and equality. It was an institution of protest.[5]

The slave rebellions led by black preachers such as Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vessey, and Nat Turner were political acts. They were not simply a protest against a political system that endorsed slavery, but these were endeavors to change the system. The slaves, as we have seen, used

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[1] Washington, op. cit., p. 37.

[2] Ibid., p. 33.

[3] Washington, op. cit., p. 23.

[4] Myrdal, op. cit., p. 940.

[5] Cone, op. cit., p. 94.

the church as a center for planning and staging his political activities.

The Negro church in the North was likewise involved politically. These northern churches served as stations in the underground railroad where escaping slaves could find assistance in relocating in northern cities or continuing into Canada.[1] Abolitionist activities often centered in these churches. Black preachers were spokesmen for the emancipation of their people.[2] These men championed the cause of freedom as they addressed white audiences moving them to action. The activity of these ministers did much to galvanize the thinking of northern whites against slavery.[3]

The dedication and degree of involvement of these spokesmen is seen in the example of Bishop Alexander Payne. In a speech delivered at the Franckean Synod in 1839, Bishop Payne vowed that wherever he might see a human enslaved by his fellows he would not fail to lift his voice against the evil.[4]

It was the political activities of two Negro

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[1]Alphonso Pinkney, Black Americans (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), p. 108.

[2]Woodson, op. cit., pp. 169-70.

[3]Myrdal, op. cit., p. 860.

[4]"Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne's Protestation of American Slavery," Journal of Negro History, LII (1967), 60.

preachers of Philadelphia, Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Church, and Absolom Jones, a founder of the St. Thomas' African Episcopal Church, that awakened the interest of James Forten, a famed black abolitionist who had such a great influence over William Lloyd Garrison.[1]

Allen and Jones were leaders in the attempt by Philadelphia citizens to force Congress to modify the Fugitive Slave Act of 1793, and to institute measures that would eventually lead to the emancipation of the slaves. These men circulated a petition seeking the support of Philadelphians.[2] It was this that set James Forten in the struggle against slavery.

Other politically active Negro preachers included Charles Bennett Ray who published "The Colored American" from 1839-1843 and was an active worker in the Underground Railroad.[3] Ray was one of the more aggressively active abolutionists who believed that something more than moral persuasion would be required in destroying the institution of slavery.[4]

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[1] Roy Allen Billington, "James Forten: Forgotton Abolitionist," The Making of Black America, ed. August Meier and Elliott Rudwick (New York: Atheneum, 1969), Vol. 1, pp. 294-301.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Woodson, op. cit., pp. 173-175.

[4] Bell, loc. cit.

Henry Highland Garnett was a vocal exponent of freedom for all people.[1] Garnett not only preached against slavery, but openly encouraged the slaves to rebel. He was one of the leading figures in the organization and promotion of the National Negro Conventions of the middle 1840's.[2] These conventions were primarily calls for united action in the improvement of the condition of blacks in the United States.

A number of black religious leaders were unconvinced that moral persuasion would be sufficient to bring freedom to the slaves. Garnett was among these. These preachers sided more with the Liberal Party and the philosophy that there should be more political involvement if blacks were to obtain freedom. When such a resolution was introduced in the Convention of 1843, the chief supporters were found to be Garnett, William C. Munro, J. N. Gloucester, Theodore S. Wright, David Lewis, and Charles B. Ray. All of these men except Lewis were ministers.[3]

Garnett, an articulate and forceful speaker, moved the convention in his address directed to the slaves.[4] He said, "The humblest peasant is as free in God's sight as

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[1] Woodson, op. cit., p. 175.

[2] Bell, op. cit., pp. 316-17.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

is the proudest monarch that ever swayed a scepter.

Liberty is a spirit sent from God. Brethren, the time

has come when you must act yourselves."[1] He urged the

slaves to rebel and sought the adoption of the address by

the entire assembly.

Such black ministers were scattered in the free

states and their influence was felt not only in black

gatherings but in white assemblies as well. Some authori-

ties do not now hesitate to give these men credit for help-

ing to mold the thinking of the North to the point that

action other than moral persuasion was initiated.[2]

Thus, the issue of slavery in national politics gave

the Negro Church in the North as great an interest and

involvement in politics as the Civil Rights issue has pro-

vided for the Negro Church since the early 1950's.

The period following the Civil War was one of great

social change, but the Black Church still provided a degree

of leadership in the Black Community. During the days of

Reconstruction the church became even more involved politi-

cally. The rapid growth of all black churches provided

greater political potential. Many of the political leaders

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[1]Quoted in Mays, The Negro's God (Boston: Chapman
and Grimes, 1938), p. 46.

[2]William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, "Antislavery
Ambivalence: Immediatism, Expediency, Race," American
Quarterly, XVII (Winter, 1965), pp. 682-95.

had to come from the leadership cadre of black churches.[1]

J. L. Sims and Henry McNeal Turner were two such leaders. The contributions of these black ministers to the state of Georgia not only benefited their black constituents but a number of bills introduced to the state legislature by these men called for social reforms that benefited both blacks and whites.[2]

Georgia was one of the states that persistently attempted to circumvent the Reconstruction Act. This was seen in their refusal to seat blacks who were properly elected to the state legislature. In the election of 1868, thirty-two blacks won seats. Immediately white members of the legislature sought to expel these blacks on the pretext that they, as blacks, were not truly citizens and thus were ineligible for public office.[3] They instantly replaced these black members with white appointees.

The Supreme Court ruled shortly thereafter that blacks were citizens and thereby eligible to hold elected positions. Immediately black leaders in Georgia convened a closed session in which they mapped their strategy. Reverend Sims and Reverend Turner were chosen to report

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[1]Myrdal, op. cit., p. 861.

[2]W. E. B. DuBois, Black Reconstruction in America (New York: Atheneum, 1969), pp. 495-510.

[3]Ibid.

the facts to the Congressional Committee on Reconstruction.[1]
Their report not only included the action of the Georgia
Legislature in denying seats to elected blacks, but it also
called attention to the lawlessness that prevailed in the
state in the mistreatment of blacks.

So convincing was the report that military rule was
re-established in Georgia, and under Federal supervision
the legislature not only seated the black members but also
paid them for the time they were denied their seats.[2]

Both Sims and Turner were firm exponents of civil
rights. Their ability as leaders, however, was not recog-
nized only in their attempts to improve the condition of
blacks, but it was also evident in the social reform pro-
gram that they advocated.[3]

Turner urged the establishment of a State Police,
the granting of land to the State Orphanage, and voting
rights for females. Sims, on the other hand, was a strong
advocate of penal reform. He was considered one of the
most capable members of the Standing Committee on
Penitentiary Reform.[4]

The first black U. S. Senator, Hiram Rhodes Revel

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

of Mississippi, was a minister.[1] Under the astute direc-
tion of a black campaign manager, Revel succeeded in
winning a Senate seat in 1870.

The first two black U. S. Congressmen, Joseph H.
Rainey of South Carolina and Jefferson P. Long of Georgia,
were both preachers.[2] Rainey served his state from
1870-79, whereas the latter served only from 1870-71.[3]

Negro churchmen were also involved in local and
state politics. Bishop B. W. Arnett of the African
Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church was elected to the Ohio
Legislature in 1885. It was he who led the fight for the
repeal of Ohio's "Black Laws."[4]

Bishop J. W. Hood of the AME Zion Church was a
leading politician in North Carolina during Reconstruction.
Abraham Grant, also a bishop of the AME Zion Church, was
involved in politics while pastoring in Florida and Texas.

In Baptist circles were to be found leaders such
as Christopher H. Payne[5] elected to the West Virginia
Legislature in 1896 and appointed in 1903 as consul to the

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[1]Woodson, op. cit., pp. 183, 228.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Stone, op. cit., p. 95.

[4]Rayford W. Logan, "Educational Changes Affecting
American Negroes," Assuring Freedom to the Free, ed.
Arnold M. Rose (Detroit: Wayne State University Press,
1964), p. 189.

[5]Woodson, op. cit., p. 208-209.

Virgin Islands, J. Milton Waldron and Sutton E. Griggs

both of whom were active in the Niagara Movement, a

national protest organization formed in 1905.[1] These men

were proponents of racial solidarity who could not

subscribe to a conservative position on race issues.

Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. of the Abyssinian Baptist Church

of New York was another black minister whose influence

was felt politically during the first quarter of the

twentieth century.[2] During this same period Charles T.

Walker, born a slave, was a local Republican leader of

Augusta, Georgia who, though viewed as a "conservative"

and as one who worked well with the "best southern whites,"

stressed both the duties and rights of Negroes.[3]

The Negro minister has often been accused of sell-

ing out to white conservatives after the turn of the

century and thereby largely destroying the leadership role

of the church in the Black Community.[4] It is charged that

the Black Church lost its influence in the community from

that time until the 1940's because of its failure to

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[1]Meier, Negro Thought in America 1880-1915 (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1968), p. 221, and Myrdal, The American Dilemma, p. 742.

[2]Meier, op. cit., p. 221.

[3]Ibid., p. 222.

[4]Myrdal, op. cit., pp. 872-76.

express itself on race issues.[1]

It cannot be denied that this period produced less action on the part of the church on matters relating to Civil Rights than did some of the previous and subsequent years. However, this did not eliminate the church as a seat of power. It was still the institution providing solidarity for the Black Community.

Other authorities state that the leadership previously given by the church was transferred to the Improvement and Protest Organizations.[2] This is not as much the case as it might at first appear. It must be remembered that the organizations generally referred to include Nationalist Movements, Labor Movements, the NAACP, and the Urban League. These almost always included some of the black clergy. Some of the Nationalist Movements such as the Universal Negro Improvement Association (Garvey Movement), the Black Muslims, and others were not alone Nationalist, but were also religious and thus still represented a segment of the Black Church.[3]

The Urban League and the NAACP, as is currently charged, were not truly black controlled organizations[4]

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[1]Logan, op. cit., p. 189.

[2]Myrdal, op. cit., pp. 810-57.

[3]Ibid.

[4]New York Times, August 5, 1966, p. 10.

as can be said of the all-black church. Neither were
they altogether free of the accommodative position that
is charged to the church during that period. Thus, the
church was not alone in its failure to voice itself on
the treatment of Negroes. It should be remembered that
the local leadership of these groups, especially the NAACP,
was often that of the black clergy. The church was still
the promotional agency for the NAACP in the Black Community
and generally housed any mass meetings sponsored by the
Association. So, even during its weakest period, the
Black Church continued to be a seat of power in the Black
Community.

Currently the church must still be considered one
of the strongest bases of Black Power in the Negro
Community. Many agree that much of the success of the
Civil Rights struggle of the past two decades has been
church inspired and church directed.

It should be noted also that many of the contribu-
tions of the Black Church to the Civil Rights struggle were
not always listed under the name of the church nor directly
associated with the church. Religious leaders were
frequently responsible for the formation of groups, dis-
tinct from the church, that developed into strong local
and sometimes national Civil Rights organizations. CORE
and SCLC are two such groups.

It was James Farmer, formerly a minister, who

proposed the formation of a new group to stimulate racial equality.[1] This proposal led to the organization of CORE. Farmer, serving as Race Relations Secretary of the Quaker-Pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation, submitted a memorandum in which he outlined plans for a Brotherhood Mobilization.[2] Farmer's proposal, with some modifications, was passed (April 11, 1942) with the resultant organization of CORE.

It was CORE that took the initiative in sustained attempts at desegregating restaurants, theaters, and other public facilities.[3] CORE broadened its base of civil rights action and attacked segregated public schools, public accommodations, and voting practices of the South and unfair employment practices and segregated housing in the North.

Likewise, it was a black clergyman (Martin Luther King, Jr.) who saw the need for an organization to coordinate local nonviolent direct-action protest movements

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[1]James Farmer, "Memorandum to Aid Muste on Provisional Plans for Brotherhood Mobilization," Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century, ed. Francis L. Broderick and August Meier (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1965), p. 210.

[2]Ibid., pp. 211-14.

[3]Congress of Racial Equality, "Cracking the Color-line," (Pamphlet) New York: CORE, 1962, pp. 1-16.

arising in the South.[1] With the cooperation and support

of black preachers, SCLC was formed. There have been few

civil rights groups that have surpassed the contributions

of SCLC to the total civil rights drive.

Black leaders have also been strong supporters of

other civil rights organizations and have frequently

enlisted the cooperation of their congregations in support

of such groups. The financial assistance and moral

encouragement given SNCC by black clergymen of SCLC is an

example of such cooperation. It was to Dr. King and SCLC

that SNCC, in its early days, looked for direction.[2]

Contrary to the claims of many, the influence of

the church is still felt in the Black Community. The

church has been and remains a center for political activity

in many communities.[3] One study reveals that nearly 77 per

cent of Southern Negroes still attend church regularly and

that the black minister is still respected as a leader in

the community.[4]

Many of these ministers advantageously used their

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[1]"This Is SCLC," (Atlanta: Southern Christian
Leadership Conference, 1964), Leaflet.

[2]Francis L. Broderick, Negro Protest Thought in
the Twentieth Century (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill
Co., 1965), p. 273.

[3]Mays and Nicholson, op. cit., pp. 279-80.

[4]Matthews and Prothro, loc. cit.

position and contacts to influence and direct their
parishioners. They have often taken the initiative in
educating blacks to the needs and advantages of political
involvement.[1] James Lawson (Nashville), Matthew McCollam
(Orangeburg, S. C.), Leon Sullivan (Philadelphia), Ralph
Abernathy (Montgomery and Atlanta), Jesse Jackson (Chicago),
and hundreds of other black clergymen have made their
influence felt in local, state, and national politics.[2]

This has often been achieved by (1) supplying a
congregation with information on political candidates,
(2) encouraging qualified blacks to enter the political
arena, (3) pressuring white politicians to modify their
positions and provide for the interest of black constitu-
ents or to suffer the effects of a black bloc vote against
them or (4) simply organizing and supporting voter registra-
tion drives.

Reverend Andrew Young, a spokesman for black
rights and candidate for the U. S. Congress (Georgia)
crystallized the position of many black preachers when he
said, "There comes a time in a democratic society when you
have to do more than just preach. You have to see that
the kingdom of God becomes incarnate in the life of the

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[1]William Robert Miller, Martin Luther King, Jr.
His Life, Martyrdom, and Meaning for the World (New York:
Weybright and Talley, 1968), pp. 30-56.

[2]Ibid., pp. 61-74.

society, and that means politics."[1]

Further evidence of the role that the Black Church
and its leaders play in Black Communities is seen in the
use made of the church in planning Freedom Marches, boy-
cotts, and voter registration drives conducted by SNCC,
CORE, and other civil rights organizations. These groups
often had no established base of operation in many
southern communities. Thus, for a period the church
served not only as a meeting site for blacks, but also as
a sanctuary of immunity from the enemies of the civil
rights movement.[2] This immunity, however, was lost in
many communities as the Black Church became the target of
attack by ruthless whites. The Sixteenth Street Baptist
Church in Birmingham was one of a number of churches that
was bombed by angry whites because it accommodated civil
rights groups.[3]

The Black Church was not only closely connected with
the organizational aspects of the civil rights struggle,
but it was a part of the protest and demonstration activi-
ties as well. It was the Black Church that sparked the
boycotts, marches, and other demonstrations. Ralph
Abernathy and Martin Luther King, Jr. organized the bus

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[1]Newsweek, May 4, 1970, p. 105.

[2]Frew Powledge, Black Power--White Resistance (New
York: The World Publishing Co., 1967), pp. 73-76.

[3]Ibid., p. 285.

boycott that subdued the Montgomery City Lines.[1] The boy-
cott exerted such economic pressure on the bus company
that it faced bankruptcy because of the loss of black
patronage. The boycott also brought to an end the segre-
gated seating practice of the company and paved the way
for the desegregation of public facilities throughout the
city.[2]

Again it was a black clergyman (Fred Shuttlesworth)
who set in motion the Birmingham demonstration.[3]
Shuttlesworth requested the assistance of Dr. King to
organize the drive. Police authorities moved against
demonstrators with dogs and fire hoses. Scores of blacks
were arrested, including Dr. King, his brother, A. D.
King, and Ralph Abernathy. At the height of the demonstra-
tion, 6,000 children had been organized at the Sixteenth
Street Baptist Church for participation in the demonstra-
tion. The fury of the police was vented on the children.
After being attacked by police dogs and being mistreated
by members of the law enforcement agency, more than 950
children were arrested for their participation.[4]

Hundreds of cities and communities throughout the

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[1]William Robert Miller, op. cit., pp. 30-36.

[2]Ibid., p. 57.

[3]Ibid., p. 137.

[4]Ibid., pp. 130-143.

nation felt the impact of freedom marches, demonstrations, boycotts, and sit-ins. Almost invariably black religious leaders and thousands from their congregations were involved in these incidents. With such active participation, the charges of indifference and lack of involvement that have been made against the Black Church from time to time do not appear to be valid. Nor is it likely that the Black Church will cease to function as a viable force in the Black Community.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The Black Power concept, as it was reintroduced in the 1960's, led to increased misunderstanding between many black and white Americans. Even within the two racial groups disagreement over the term was not unusual.

Since that time, however, there appears to have developed a better understanding of the concept. Some of those individuals who originally questioned the philosophy of Black Power and even condemned it have since modified their position and in some instances have even advocated certain elements of the concept.

Some of the components of Black Power that are now thought to be useful may have been present in the Black Church since ante-bellum days. Furthermore, it now appears that these components may have been consciously and success-fully employed by the church in its struggle for survival and in fulfilling its role as a social and religious institution in the Black Community.

The Black Church has often been criticized as being irrelevant to the times and needs of its people. It has been accused of espousing a philosophy that had to do primarily with a future world while there was a disregard

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for the needs and conditions of the present.

Some persons now contend that the Black Church may
not have been as guilty of these charges as at first
thought. It now appears that the church consciously
emphasized black pride and black self-determination and
thus rendered an invaluable service by keeping alive hope
and, to some degree, a measure of human dignity in an
enslaved and oppressed people. The political and economic
power of the church has likewise been evident through the
years and these served to aid the black in his daily
struggle for survival in an often hostile environment.

The presence of Black Power in the church could
partly account for the longevity of the church as a viable
institution in the Black Community. If the church has
employed the Black Power philosophy as it now appears to
have done, then a total re-evaluation of the contribution
of the Black Church may be in order.

Likewise, if through the use of Black Power the
church has been able to remain a force in the Black
Community and if it has been a successful instrument in the
socialization process in Black America, then a wider
employment of Black Power might be recommended.

Many leaders both black and white have suggested
that the only lasting solution to the race problem in
America is the complete integration and absorption of
blacks into the white mainstream. But with the emphasis

that Black Power gives to black pride and a black identity
and the growing acceptance of the whole concept, a question
arises as to the necessity for a total integration and
absorption of blacks into the larger society.

One school of thought that merits consideration
argues that black pluralism is not necessarily inconsistent
with the movement toward equality that is evident today.
If this is true and the complete absorption of blacks is
not vital to racial understanding and peace, then Black
Power could play an important role in helping to fulfill
certain inadequacies that have been felt by the individual
black and seen in the Black Community.

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