

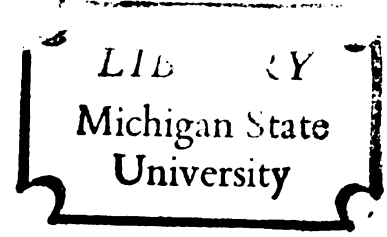
BORN BLACK: THE SPEAKING OF
STOKELY CARMICHAEL

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
FRANCES L. THORNTON
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ABSTRACT

BORN BLACK: THE SPEAKING OF STOKELY CARMICHAEL

by Frances L. Thornton

The purpose of this study was to answer the questions: Who is Stokely Carmichael? What are his political and philosophic ideas? How does Carmichael analyze his audiences with regard to his goals? How does Carmichael deliver a speech? What characterizes Carmichael's style? In what manner does Carmichael appeal to his audiences?

The materials were gathered in interview with Stokely Carmichael, former Chairman, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; Ralph Featherstone, Program Director, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; Robert L. Green, Michigan State University, East Lansing; Charles V. Hamilton, Roosevelt University, Chicago; and Floyd B. McKissick, Chairman, Congress of Racial Equality. Other sources included letters, books, and periodicals.

The study found that Stokely Carmichael is a young leader who has experienced several periods of change in the past several years. Carmichael was among the sit-inners and freedom riders of the early 1960's. He was then the

moderate nonviolent direct-action integrationist.

Carmichael was instrumental in founding the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party which challenged American democracy at the Democratic National Convention in 1964. The democratic system failed to meet the challenge of the MFDP. This act triggered the change in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and ultimately in Stokely Carmichael who later became its Chairman. During the Meredith March in Mississippi in 1966, Stokely Carmichael shouted the phrase "Black Power!" and was immediately thrust into the international spotlight--a different spokesman for a new mood in the civil rights movement.

Carmichael's political and philosophic premises have been, in the main, borrowed from Malcolm X. Black Power speaks to remedying the plight of black America by giving blacks complete control over black political, economic, and social institutions. (Carmichael has incorporated the Third World philosophy which binds all non-white and oppressed peoples on the basis of their oppression. He has also incorporated a philosophy of "peoplehood" for black Americans. This is a pro-black, cultural philosophy.)

Carmichael sees much difference in black versus white audiences and approaches whites with arrogance, and blacks with patience and love.

The speaker's techniques of delivery were learned from southern black ministers and he shows every evidence

of having copied their techniques, especially when he speaks before black audiences. Carmichael is a showman with an excellent sense of timing and use of gesture. His voice is powerful and flexible and is used to evoke desired reaction from an audience. Before both black and white audiences, Carmichael affects nonstandard dialect. He feels that the dialect and language of black America is valid--is "good" English.

Carmichael's style is characterized by his use of black idiom. He uses this language before both white and black audiences, but employs it more with blacks than with whites because it enables him to establish certain esoteric lines of communication which he feels he needs in order to build unity. Carmichael's style is part of a legitimization and perpetuation process. He is the first major black protest speaker to bring the soul quality to the platform.

Carmichael appeals logically to white audiences, usually reading his *Massachusetts Review* article, "Toward Black Liberation." His appeals to blacks are almost entirely emotional, designed to unify blacks and bring them into "confrontation" with the traditional working of white America.

Carmichael's *basic* message is not new. His unique emphasis and his style, however, have combined to inspire a new mood among black Americans.

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of
Speech and Theatre, College of Communication Arts,
Michigan State University, in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Master of Arts degree.

Ted R. Jackson
Director of Thesis

Guidance Committee:

Ted R. Jackson, Chairman
Gordon L. Thomas
William B. Leshon

BORN BLACK: THE SPEAKING OF
STOKELY CARMICHAEL

By

Frances L. Thornton

A THESIS

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Speech and Theatre

1968

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INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

During the course of one year, his term of office as Chairman of the militant activist Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Stokely Carmichael was probably the most controversial young man in the United States.

Writer Lerone Bennett described Carmichael as

the center of a raging controversy that has severed friendships, split civil rights organizations and pushed black and white Americans to a new and ominous stage in their ancient confrontation. . . . No other young man has sparked such an avalanche of hope, fear, anger, and public concern.¹

Elected Chairman of SNCC in May, 1966, Carmichael rose quickly to international prominence. Much in demand as a public speaker, he delivered approximately 250 speeches during his year as spokesman for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.²

Carmichael's public utterances have had profound effects on the American consciousness. This study will probe the basic questions: Who is Stokely Carmichael?

¹Lerone Bennett, Jr., "Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power," *Ebony*, September, 1966, p. 26.

²Telephone interview with Stokely Carmichael, July 10, 1967.

What are his political and philosophic ideas? How does Carmichael analyze his audiences with regard to his goals? How does Carmichael deliver a speech? What characterizes Carmichael's style? In what manner does Carmichael appeal to his audiences?

Through description, analysis, and evaluation, this study will set forth answers to these questions.

Distinctiveness

An examination of "Abstracts of Theses," and of "Graduate Theses: An Index of Graduate Work in Speech," *Speech Monographs*, August, 1965, and of *Doctoral Dissertations, Work in Progress*, 1966, revealed no study of Stokely Carmichael. "Abstracts of Theses," and "Graduate Theses: An Index to Graduate Work in Speech," *Speech Monographs*, August, 1966, revealed no study of this speaker.

Limitations

The extent to which the researcher must rely on secondary source material imposes a limitation on the study.

Materials and Sources

Primary source material was gathered by means of tape recorded interviews with Stokely Carmichael, then

Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; Dr. Charles V. Hamilton, Chairman, Department of Political Science, Roosevelt University, Chicago; Ralph Featherstone, Program Director, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; Dr. Robert L. Green, Professor of Education at Michigan State University and former Educational Consultant to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and Floyd B. McKissick, Chairman of the Congress of Racial Equality. Other primary sources include personal observations, tape recordings of speeches, and letters.

The speeches examined were delivered at the University of California at Berkeley; Morgan State College, Baltimore, Maryland; Michigan State University; the New York Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam; and the Fountain Street Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. In addition, the researcher made use of a tape recording of a speech broadcast over WKNR radio Detroit.

Berkeley

Although Stokely Carmichael rarely speaks extemporaneously to a white audience, the Berkeley speech, delivered on October 18, 1966, before an audience of approximately 15,000 represents Carmichael's extemporaneous approach to a white student audience.

Morgan State

The Morgan State speech is, according to Carmichael, typical of his approach to black students.³ The speech was delivered on January 16, 1967, to an audience of approximately 2,000.

Michigan State

Delivered on February 9, 1967, before a predominantly white audience of approximately 4,000, the Michigan State University manuscript address is the speech Carmichael usually presents to white audiences.⁴

Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam

At the United Nations Plaza in New York City on April 15, 1967, Stokely Carmichael spoke to an estimated 125,000 people at the Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam. The text of this speech incorporates SNCC's moral and philosophic opposition to the war in Vietnam.

Grand Rapids

The speech at the Fountain Street Church, Grand Rapids, was delivered to a black audience of more than 2,000 on May 17, 1967. This speech is in many

³Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1967.

⁴*Ibid.*

respects typical of Carmichael's "grass roots" approach to a black audience.

"An Interpretation of Black Power"

A speech broadcast over WKNR radio's "Project Detroit," was delivered during August, 1967, to a black audience.

CHAPTER I

THE MODERN MOVEMENT: A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- May, 1954 The Supreme Court bans school segregation, asks "all deliberate speed" in integration of all public schools. Deep South resists.
- December, 1955 Mrs. Rosa Parks, a black working woman in Montgomery, Alabama, refuses to give up a seat on a bus to a white passenger. The act touches off the 382 day Montgomery Bus Boycott led by 27 year old minister Martin Luther King, Jr. In November, 1956, the Supreme Court rules bus segregation unconstitutional. Southern Christian Leadership Conference founded.
- October, 1957 Federal troops sent to Arkansas to protect the "Little Rock Nine," black youngsters attempting to integrate Little Rock Central High School.
- January, 1960 Four black freshmen from North Carolina A & T College in Greensboro attempt to eat at a downtown lunch counter. Refused service, the young men returned the next day and sat down. The sit-in movement was launched. Within a year over 70,000 people, black and white, participated in sit-in demonstrations.
- April, 1960 Founded by sit-in participants, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee organized at Raleigh, North Carolina.

May, 1961	Sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality, integrated buses leave Washington, D.C., en route to New Orleans. These first Freedom Riders endured beatings and jailings. Result: Justice Department bans segregation on all interstate carriers.
August, 1961	SNCC voter registration campaigns launched in McComb, Mississippi, to be followed by campaigns in Greenwood, Hattiesburg, southwest Georgia, and Selma, Alabama.
October, 1962	James Meredith enters the University of Mississippi.
March, 1963	SNCC, SCLC, and CORE form Council of Federated Organizations growing out of SNCC-sponsored Mississippi Delta Project (voter registration, community organizing).
May, 1963	Black Birmingham erupts following bombing of home of Rev. A. D. King and other abuses including the deaths of Emmett Till and Charles Mack Parker. Ghetto conditions also contributed greatly to this first of the "long hot summers."
August, 1963	March on Washington for civil rights attracts 250,000 Americans.
Summer, 1963	Ghetto unrest in Cambridge, Maryland, and Brooklyn, New York.
September, 1963	Black Birmingham church bombed. Four children die in bombing, two other children die later.

June 12, 1963	Medgar Evers, Secretary of the NAACP in Mississippi, murdered.
March, 1964	Malcolm X separates from Nation of Islam and announces the founding of a politically oriented black nationalist organization, the Muslim Mosque, Inc., later to become the Organization of Afro-American Unity. Black nationalist element emerges strongly in civil rights movement.
June, 1964	SNCC workers Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, and Michael Schwerner murdered in Philadelphia, Mississippi. SNCC and National Council of Churches sponsor Mississippi Summer Project. Hundreds of student volunteers work with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, register black voters, and run freedom schools.
July, 1964	Civil Rights Act signed. Most powerful civil rights legislation since Reconstruction.
August, 1964	Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party challenges the regular Mississippi delegation at the Democratic National Convention on the grounds that Mississippi blacks are systematically excluded from participation in any phase of Democratic Party action in Mississippi.
Summer, 1964	Harlem and Philadelphia erupt.
January, 1965	Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party challenges Mississippi's Congressional representatives.
February, 1965	Malcolm X assassinated.

March, 1965	Selma to Montgomery march led by Martin Luther King, Jr. Object to effect passage of the Voting Rights Bill. That bill later passed.
June, 1965	Julian Bond, SNCC Public Relations Director, elected to Georgia State Legislature and refused his seat because of his endorsement of SNCC's anti-Vietnam war policy. Bond appeals case to Supreme Court and is seated.
Summer, 1965	Watts and Chicago erupt.
June, 1966	James Meredith shot during early stages of a march in Mississippi. March taken up by Martin Luther King, Jr., Floyd McKissick, and Stokely Carmichael.
Summer, 1967	Newark and Detroit erupt and many other American cities experience widespread arson and looting.
April, 1968	Dr. Martin Luther King, chief exponent of philosophy of nonviolence, assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. Arson and looting hit 132 American cities. Open housing bill passed by Congress.

CHAPTER II

STOKELY CARMICHAEL: FROM PORT-AU-SPAIN TO INTERNATIONAL PROMINENCE

Carmichael's Early Life

Stokely Carmichael was born in Port-au-Spain, Trinidad, West Indies on June 29, 1941.

The population in the West Indies is approximately ninety-five percent black and the blacks are in official positions of power. Carmichael comments that, even as a boy,

it never occurred to me that black people couldn't rule themselves or were inferior, as even many blacks in the United States believe. It wasn't until I left Trinidad that I learned England controlled the economic power of the islands.¹

Stokely's family moved to Harlem in 1952 and, after moving about, finally settled, the only black family, in a white neighborhood in the Bronx.

After a year in Harlem, young Stokely decided that black Americans were not inferior but lacked the political and economic power of blacks in the West Indies. This

¹Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1967.

early awareness was to have a profound effect on the boy's later life.

Carmichael is one of five children; he has four sisters. His father, now deceased, was a carpenter and a taxi driver. His mother worked as a domestic servant. Carmichael's parents lacked formal education, each having attended school to the fourth or fifth grade.² They were, however, very concerned with the quality of young Stokely's education and his mother, particularly, provided encouragement. She thought that, because he was black, Stokely must be "three times as good" in everything he did.³

Stokely, too, wanted to be good. An aunt recalls his early fascination with vocabulary, and, as a child, he proclaimed that he would one day be a "big man."⁴

Young Stokely attended New York's Public Schools 39, 34, and 83, and became involved in street gang activity with the children in his neighborhood. The only black child in the gang, Stokely's speciality was "stripping" cars.⁵

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

⁴Lerone Bennett, Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁵*Ibid.*

Stokely's father thought the white neighborhood was automatically a "good" neighborhood. Stokely never told him anything to the contrary. In the old neighborhood, Stokely felt, the boys had been involved in petty crime. In his "good" neighborhood Stokely learned what crime was and by the time he was in the eighth grade he "knew all about marijuana and pot."⁶

In 1956 Stokely entered the elite Bronx High School of Science.

At Science I was the "gifted black child." When I went to Science I was basically intelligent, that is, smart, above average. But I didn't have an intellectual background. I didn't read the classics or history. I was first-generation college. Huckleberry Finn was our best book. I read it now for the satire on society, but then it was just a wild thing.

When I went to Science I was competing with kids who had *libraries* in their *houses*! I would walk into their homes and they looked like the public library around my corner. Because of this I found myself lacking. If we had to present a paper on basic analytical skills I would be just as good as they, if not better, but in drawing on literature they excelled. I became so aware of this that I decided everything I got my hands on I would read to catch up with them.⁷

His new life at Bronx Science caused Stokely to sever relations with his street gang friends. "They were reading funnies," he said, "while I was trying to dig

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1967.

Darwin and Marx."⁸ At Science, however, Stokely found himself in "another kind of bag." He thought "all those rich kids with their maids" were "getting their kicks" out of him. He began attending parties on Park Avenue and experienced the irony of the situation every time a black maid served him. His mother was also a maid, "making 30 bucks a week."⁹

At one point, while at Bronx Science, Stokely realized that he was ashamed of being black and lost his cultural identity--developed a psychic split.¹⁰ His shame extended to Afro-American cultural forms. He had, for example, always liked Gospel music, but, after beginning at Science, he became "afraid" of Gospel.¹¹

Stokely's interest in civil rights began while he was still in high school. He picketed Woolworth's, participated in a youth march on Washington, D.C., and in May, 1960, picketed the House Un-American Activities Committee. He also read widely and had friends on the left. He was not, however, particularly interested in the sit-in movement. He thought the movement was

⁸Gordon Parks, "Whip of Black Power," *Life*, April, 1967, p. 80.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Robert Penn Warren, *Who Speaks for the Negro?* (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 394.

¹¹Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 396.

"emotional, appealing to conscience," and did not think it particularly politically motivated. He initially thought the sit-in movement was "nonsensical."¹²

I was active in high school. I got associated with the left-wing groups, the Socialists and the Marxists and all those cats. I listened to all their theories and read all I could. I never became a member because, in most cases, they were all white.

I went to Washington, D.C., in my senior year of high school to picket HUAC and while I was there I met some black kids who had also come to picket HUAC. I thought this was just out of the question--finding other black people picketing HUAC. They were kids who were involved in the sit-in movement, so--at least for these kids--there was some type of political indoctrination.¹³

Stokely became so "involved" that he decided to attend Howard University which allowed him to travel into the South and become active in the movement. There was a second reason why Carmichael chose to attend Howard.

At Bronx Science I was receiving a lot of scholarships to Ivy League Schools which I really didn't deserve because there certainly were white kids there who were applying and wouldn't get accepted and I was accepted with scholarships, so it was obvious to me that I was filling their "quota." I didn't want to be part of that. I had pretty much made up my mind to go to Howard but this clinched it.¹⁴

Impressed with the "spontaneity" of the movement, Carmichael was soon deeply involved.

¹²Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1967.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*

Freedom Rider

Howard Zinn, past advisor to SNCC, observes that Stokely, arriving in Jackson, Mississippi, on the first Freedom Ride, gave "the impression he would stride cool and smiling through Hell, philosophizing all the way."¹⁵ Carmichael was met by "an endless mob of howling, cursing people who screamed and threw lighted cigarettes."¹⁶

Carmichael was arrested and spent fifty-three days in Parchman jail, the state penitentiary. There "Stokely almost drove his captors crazy."¹⁷ With unquenchable spirit, Carmichael sang, and "when they decided to take away his mattress . . . he held tightly to it while they dragged it--and him--out of the cell, and they had to put wrist-breakers on him to make him relinquish his grip."¹⁸

Fiercely loyal to six fellow Riders who had been put in solitary confinement, Carmichael "demanded the same treatment, and kept banging loudly on his cell door until his wish was granted."¹⁹ When Stokely and the

¹⁵Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), p. 40.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷Zinn, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*

others left the prison "the sheriff and his guards were somewhat relieved."²⁰

Years later as the much publicized and criticized Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Carmichael talked of those days at Parchman, observing that "the sheriff acted like he was scared of black folks and came up with some beautiful things."²¹ Illustrating the "beautiful things," Carmichael explained: "One night he opened up all the windows, put on ten big fans and an air conditioner and dropped the temperature to 38 degrees. All we had on was T-shirts and shorts."²²

Lamenting the lack of reading matter and infrequent showers, Carmichael walked around for two days and three nights, "going out of your mind, and it getting so cold that when you touch the bedspring you feel your skin is gonna come right off."²³

Howard University: "The Black Body
of Knowledge"

Throughout this period Carmichael managed to remain in school. He elected to major in philosophy at

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Bernard Weinraub, "The Brilliancy of Black," *Esquire*, January, 1967, p. 132.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

Howard and it was here that he found the black body of knowledge for which he had searched.

Howard reinforced my beliefs. I got a wealth of knowledge from black people who the society would not accept, black professors who were so competent that I had never heard of and was amazed. Here were cats who are alive today who were saying these things and nobody could hear them. At all universities there is a cadre of professors and we just surrounded ourselves with those guys. Sterling Brown was there. E. Franklin Frazier, Nathan Hare, . . . They helped develop my thinking and my political philosophy.²⁴

While at Howard, Carmichael earned several scholarships, was vice president of his dormitory, and was a Student Council representative. He was also on the executive committee of a student project--"Awareness"--was a member of the Philosophy Club, contributed to the student newspaper, and received an humanitarian award.²⁵ He also found time, he says, to work with "kids programs in the slums,"²⁶ and was associated with the Nonviolent Action Group, a civil rights organization composed of local college students. A former member of the group recalls that Stokely was then "intense" but "fun."²⁷

²⁴Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1967.

²⁵H. Pettus Randall, ed., *Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges*, Vol. XXX, 1963-64, p. 177.

²⁶Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1967.

²⁷Letter from Jessye Davis Hegeman, August 14, 1967.

Earning his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1964, Carmichael received the offer of a "full scholarship in one of the best colleges, for supervised reading and advanced study in whatever field might interest him."²⁸ He chose instead to work full time with the movement, occupying himself immediately with the Summer Project in Mississippi and with the efforts of the Freedom Democratic Party to unseat the regular Mississippi delegation at the National Democratic Convention in Atlantic City.

Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party Defeat

If Black Power had a genesis it was in 1964, evolving out of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party challenge in Atlantic City. Charles V. Hamilton thinks "this was the last time some black people in this country were giving the system a chance. And Stokely was part of that." It became clear after August of 1964 "that black people were not going to be permitted to operate within or get in to operate, even nominally, in this system."²⁹

Formed in Jackson, Mississippi, in April, 1964, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party established itself as an open political body which would enable

²⁸ Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 390.

²⁹ Interview with Charles V. Hamilton, November 2, 1967.

Mississippi's black population to participate in and make the decisions which would affect them directly.³⁰ The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party attempted a "viable coalition with the so-called liberal forces."³¹ The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was endorsed by a number of state delegations, the United Auto Workers, the Americans for Democratic Action and church groups as well as Reform Democrats.³²

Stressing that it was an open political party; that it supported the platform of the National Democratic party (which the Mississippi regular delegation had rejected); that it would sign loyalty oaths (the state later went to Goldwater) and that it would campaign for the Johnson-Humphrey ticket, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party began intensive lobbying at Atlantic City.³³ The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was rejected as a replacement for the regular delegation and was offered a compromise wherein two of its members would become "delegates-at-large."³⁴ The compromise was rejected and

³⁰ Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 89.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Carmichael and Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

³⁴ Carmichael and Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party returned to Mississippi to campaign for the Johnson-Humphrey ticket.³⁵

SNCC saw the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party defeat as a "cynical" effort to undermine "the efforts of Mississippi's black population to achieve some degree of political representation."³⁶ Disillusioned with the system which excluded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, SNCC began to shift to its present militant activist stance.³⁷

Posture of SNCC Prior to the Mississippi
Freedom Democratic Party Defeat

Prior to the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party defeat, SNCC had been a nonviolent direct-action, passive resistance integrationist organization. Founded in April, 1960, and growing out of the sit-in movement, the student movement

galvanized the older [civil rights] organizations into a new dynamism, won the support of some of the established Negro leaders who quickly sensed that a new wind was blowing, and left far behind those leaders who could not break either old habits of thinking, or old ties with the white elite.³⁸

³⁵ Carmichael and Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

³⁶ Stokely Carmichael, "Toward Black Liberation," *The Massachusetts Review*, Autumn, 1966, p. 640.

³⁷ Interview with Ralph Featherstone, December 22, 1967.

³⁸ Zinn, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

With love as their ideology, they looked to the philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of their purpose and the manner of their action. They believed love to be the central motif of nonviolence; even in the midst of hostility.³⁹ The early SNCC thus had the financial backing of white and black Americans and went into the South as leaders and as teachers. Their achievements (such as the voter registration drives in McComb, Greenwood, and Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and in Albany, Georgia) wrote them into the history of race relations in the Deep South. Lerone Bennett writes:

When, in calmer times, men come to write the history of our raucous era; when they seek the cry that called a New Left, the rasp that twitched the nerves of Negro youths and the image that convulsed American campuses; when they try to set down in words once and for all the forces that pushed America to a desperate confrontation with herself, it seems likely that they will devote a considerable amount of attention to the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. . . .⁴⁰

And Jacobs and Landau in *The New Radicals* concur:

The SNCC ideal will continue to nag and haunt all liberals and liberal organizations, for SNCC has made it much more difficult to

³⁹Francis L. Broderick and August Meier, *Negro Protest Thought in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1965), p. 273.

⁴⁰Lerone Bennett, "SNCC: Rebels With A Cause," SNCC Reprint.

manipulate Southern Negroes. Even if this alone were all that SNCC has so far accomplished--which is far from true--"Snick Kids" would be entitled to a significant place in the history of American democracy. Their ideal and their approach may yet serve to form a broader based movement that will make serious changes in American society.⁴¹

Elected Chairman of SNCC

In May, 1966, in Nashville, Tennessee, SNCC chose Stokely Carmichael to replace John Lewis, its Chairman of three years.

The organization had been steadily drawing away from its early integrationist, passive resistance posture, but it was only after Carmichael's election that the changes in SNCC became public.⁴²

The Meredith March

On June 19, 1966, several days before the Mississippi statewide primary elections, James H. Meredith began a 220 mile march from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi.

Meredith stated that it was his intention to encourage Negroes to go out in the face of danger and become registered voters and, in fact, participate as voters in the upcoming primary election in Mississippi. He also felt that if

⁴¹Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau, *The New Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), p. 26.

⁴²Interview with Ralph Featherstone, December 22, 1967.

he could march through Mississippi without being intimidated, without being shot, the act would indicate to other Negroes, too, that they need not fear Mississippi and Mississippi whites anymore. This was the primary objective, to free Negroes psychologically.⁴³

At Hernando, Meredith was shot by a white man from Memphis. After Meredith's hospitalization, Stokely Carmichael, along with Martin Luther King, Floyd B. McKissick, Robert L. Green, and others, took up the march. Robert L. Green comments:

After Meredith was shot I think most civil rights leaders felt the need to go there and demonstrate support, that is SNCC, SCLC, and CORE. Not so much the NAACP and the Urban League. In fact, the NAACP never officially joined the march. Whitney Young finally did when we were three and a half days from Jackson, Mississippi. He marched the last day and he provided us with money which was needed on that march. In all fairness to the Urban League, they did participate, but the NAACP did not give support, they did not provide funds, officially--the national organization--and did very little marching.⁴⁴

At the outset there was a debate as to what the objectives of the march would be. Floyd B. McKissick strongly advocated that the march encourage Negroes in Mississippi to overcome the fear of whites, saying "our major objective is to get the slave master out of our minds."⁴⁵

⁴³Interview with Robert L. Green, October 20, 1967.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵*Ibid.*

Carmichael argued that the march should attempt to organize rural black counties as it wound its way through Mississippi. "King pretty much supported this point of view."⁴⁶

Of the march leaders, however, only Stokely Carmichael had a singular interest in the march. Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference were preparing for a campaign in Chicago. His interest was therefore divided. Floyd B. McKissick was anxious to return to Congress of Racial Equality fundraising activities.⁴⁷ Both SCLC and CORE, then, were interested in completing the march as quickly as possible. SNCC was not interested in hurrying the march because they needed time to organize blacks along the march and register as many as possible. Ultimately Carmichael and the SNCC marchers realized their objective, for as the march moved along, SCLC and CORE joined SNCC and "put forth a tremendous effort to register Negroes along the march."⁴⁸

The question of nonviolence also became an issue. There were those who wanted to adhere to the principle of nonviolence in the face of attack and there were those

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

⁴⁸*Ibid.*

who, like Carmichael, were not going to answer attack nonviolently. The majority ruled that there was no alternative but not to resort to a violent defensive when attacked by whites.⁴⁹ As the march moved along, many black nationalist activists attached themselves to it. The nationalists were ready to attack whites at the slightest provocation. It was the job of the march leaders to contain this element. Robert L. Green comments:

And this is where I saw a very interesting change come about in Stokely, in the way I saw him function on the march. At the beginning of the march Stokely was militant, in terms of verbal statements made at rallies and at meetings we held at night. But as these youngsters became more militant, Stokely became more conservative, in an attempt to keep these kids down because these were youngsters who were willing to fight back and utilize a violent defensive in regards to whites who were taunting us.⁵⁰

At Canton, Mississippi, the marchers were tear-gassed. Carmichael, who was last to get off a truck which was under fire, was hit in the chest by a canister and received a full dose of the gas. Green recalls that Carmichael was dazed and sobbing but stumbling about screaming for the others to get the children to safety.

Some terrible things happened that night. Negro kids--seven, eight, nine, and ten years of age; girls and boys who couldn't run were

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

lying on the ground crawling from the effects of the gas. I saw Mississippi highway patrolmen clubbing them as they were trying to get away and would run and were stumbling and falling. There were about 2,000 to 2,500 people on that field. I remember especially one white nurse who was helping two little Negro girls off the ground, pulling them along. A white Mississippi patrolman hit her in the back with his gun butt and she fell and when she tried to get up he hit her again . . . and clubbed her until she was unconscious. Tempers were high the next day.⁵¹

It was at Canton that Green developed "a tremendous amount of respect for Carmichael. Even though," Green adds, "the white press writing about the march and about Stokely referred to him as a 'ranting, raving, radical,' Stokely was really the force that kept the real militants in control on that march."⁵² Canton was an armed camp--the black community had 20 to 30 rifles, while the Mississippi highway patrolmen, Canton policemen, Jackson policemen, and deputized white citizens had unlimited firearms. "And they would have welcomed an opportunity to have shot numerous Negroes."⁵³ Carmichael became, "in a sense, a preacher of nonviolence. This side of Carmichael is never told, especially by the white

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³*Ibid.*

press." Green thinks the "lies that have been told about Carmichael are very, very unfortunate."⁵⁴

"Black Power!"

"Freedom Now!" was the civil rights slogan of the early sixties. Green remembers shouting contests on the march with CORE youngsters calling "Freedom Now!" and SNCC people and others answering "Black Power!" One of the militants, Willie Ricks, was actually first to use the term on the March. At a rally Ricks grabbed a microphone from another speaker and shouted, "What we need is some power for us black people! What we need is some black power!"⁵⁵ It was not, however, until Stokely Carmichael decided to use the term that it and the speaker were thrust into the consciousness of America.

At the time of the Meredith March, Stokely Carmichael had been Chairman of SNCC for one month. He had received some, but not a great deal of coverage by the news media. At Greenwood, Stokely used the term that the activists had been mumbling.

Greenwood, Mississippi, is a town whose leading folk hero is a German Shepherd named Tiger. The residents

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ According to Robert L. Green and substantiated by Hamilton and Featherstone.

of Greenwood have enshrined the dog on a plaque for its role in putting down the civil rights demonstrations of 1963.⁵⁶ Greenwood was also the scene of one of SNCC's three Mississippi voter registration drives. Its people knew Carmichael, and Carmichael knew its people.

Greenwood was SNCC country, and the day the march arrived there was Stokely Carmichael's day.

"Today's the 27th time I've been arrested," he cried at a rally, "and I ain't goin' to jail no more. . . . The only way we gonna stop them white men from whuppin' us is to take over. We been sayin' 'freedom' for six years and we ain't got nothin'. What we gonna start sayin' now is 'black power!'"

"Black power!" the crowd echoed.

"Ain't nothing wrong with anything all black," Carmichael shouted, "'cause I'm all black and I'm all good. . . . And from now on when they ask you what you want, you know what to tell them."

"Black power!" the crowd roared. "Black power! Black power! Black power!"⁵⁷

The older blacks in the crowd watched in amazement at the audacity of Carmichael's calling "Black Power" in Greenwood. "If Stokely lives through this march," one whispered, "he'll live forever."⁵⁸

The next day network television reported on the young man and repeated the phrase and Carmichael was instantaneously the most controversial civil rights spokesman in the country.

⁵⁶Nicholas Von Hoffman, "3 Marchers Arrested in Greenwood," *Washington Post*, June 17, 1966.

⁵⁷*Newsweek*, June 20, 1966, p. 26.

⁵⁸Von Hoffman, *op. cit.*

It was public speaking that propelled Stokely Carmichael into the public eye and his public utterances have played a large part in keeping him there.

Listening to Carmichael one night a radical Negro leader said, "He terrifies me and exalts me at the same time. He tells so much truth, but I always feel that he is going to say something in public that he will regret . . . I hope Stokely won't say everything before the event evokes the word."⁵⁹

Carmichael spent the next year traveling throughout the United States, terrifying, exalting, telling his truth. He spoke primarily at black rallies and at black and white colleges and universities. In total, he estimates he delivered approximately 250 speeches.⁶⁰

Returns to Organizing

In February, 1967, Carmichael said that he would not run for a second term as Chairman of SNCC. When asked what he would do, he answered: "Gonna organize me a city. Gon' be a field secretary for SNCC and organize me a city."⁶¹ Carmichael had planned to organize in Washington, D.C., but spent only a few days there in May, 1967, after he was replaced as Chairman, by H. Rap Brown, former SNCC Alabama field secretary.

⁵⁹Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁶⁰Telephone interview with Stokely Carmichael, July 10, 1967.

⁶¹Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1967.

In July, 1967, Carmichael went to London to fulfill speaking engagements. After London he embarked on a world tour, a trip which Floyd B. McKissick calls "very necessary" because "the black struggle in the United States cannot be separated from the struggle of black people around the world." McKissick elaborates: "Carmichael has to see the problems of Africa in order to establish his identity" and in order to "understand other revolutionaries throughout the world. He's in a position of leadership and needs to know."⁶²

Carmichael returned to the United States in December, 1967, and announced plans to live and work as a field secretary for SNCC, organizing the black populace in Washington, D.C.

⁶²Interview with Floyd B. McKissick, October 30, 1967.

CHAPTER III
OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MENTALITY

The Revolutionary Mentality

"It's the conditions that make a man," Floyd McKissick said, "and Stokely is a man that I respect. He is sincere, he's honest and he lives by his convictions."¹ There can be little doubt that "the conditions" created the Stokely Carmichael of today. He was not always the same man. Experiencing great change in a relatively short time, the once-patient nonviolent direct-action conservative is now the outspoken radical who has developed what Charles V. Hamilton calls "a clear revolutionary mentality."² The revolutionary mentality, or revolutionary consciousness, the term preferred by some militants, is the "understanding that you are oppressed and that you must fight for your liberation by whatever means necessary."³

¹Interview with Floyd B. McKissick, October 30, 1967.

²Interview with Charles V. Hamilton, November 2, 1967.

³Interview with Ralph Featherstone, December 22, 1967.

As late as 1965, after the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party defeat, Carmichael wrote that he had "hope for this nation," a hope "not based on the idea of an American consensus favorable to progress; James Baldwin's idea of the Negro as the conscience of the country is closer to the truth."⁴ Carmichael's optimistic "hope for the nation" was to be short-lived.

In an early 1965 interview with Robert Penn Warren he said:

I knew Malcolm X and I told him: "You keep your talk, and you can say what you want. I don't even think you put me in a better bargaining position. You know because you don't say anything. . . . " Everybody is afraid to attack him. The funniest thing was an article by Loren Miller on the West Coast, Vice-President of the NAACP. An article in *The Nation* which was a ridiculous article. He got hopped up with this Black Nationalism, and said goodbye to white liberals--"We don't need you--you don't do anything for us." The NAACP put out reprints and passed them all over the country. Ridiculous. When they were attacked by Malcolm X, instead of standing their ground, they absolved him, and said "We're friends." You know, people just jump on bandwagons.⁵

Carmichael's criticism of the Miller article is a vivid illustration of his early conservatism. His statement offers a study in contrasts with the Carmichael of today.

⁴Stokely Carmichael, "Who is Qualified," *The New Republic*, January 8, 1966, p. 22.

⁵Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

Loren Miller criticized both labor leaders and white middle-class participation in the movement. Though white liberals talked of progress, Miller contended that "the new militants don't want progress, they demand Freedom."⁶ Miller was speaking for young black militants. As of the time of his severe criticism of Miller's ideas, Carmichael had not reached that stage; he was therefore unable to accept the philosophy he was later to adopt.

The young black militants, Miller said, had been "profoundly influenced by the overthrow of white colonialism in Asia and Africa," and that they not only wanted "Freedom Now, but insist on substituting a grand strategy for the liberal tactics of fighting one civil-rights battle at a time. They are determined to plot the strategy and tactics of the campaign."⁷

In a prophetic statement Miller added:

the details of the grand strategy haven't been blueprinted as yet, but in bold outline it calls for . . . as-yet-unheard-of techniques as the occasion demands, with resort to legal action when expedient--all under Negro leadership all calculated to produce immediate results.⁸

Carmichael's early conservatism is again illustrated by his early opposition to Malcolm X who

⁶Loren Miller, "Farewell to Liberals," in Broderick and Meier, *op. cit.*, pp. 333-341.

⁷Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 340.

⁸*Ibid.*

appealed to blacks in much the same manner as Carmichael does today to gain their liberation by "whatever means necessary."

His friend and co-author of Carmichael's *Black Power*, Dr. Charles V. Hamilton, professor of political science at Chicago's Roosevelt University, explains that Carmichael has experienced a "developmental process born out of inability to move. People don't become revolutionaries because that's what they should become. . . . It doesn't make sense to stay at the point where you were in 1964."⁹

Hamilton discussed with Carmichael his 1965 statements to Robert Penn Warren. Carmichael answered, "Well, man, I don't give a damn about that. That's just what I believed then and I don't believe that anymore."¹⁰

While he is deeply committed to what he is doing, Carmichael has had second thoughts. While still chairman of SNCC, he told journalist Gordon Parks: "I'm too young for the job. I don't know enough about the outside world. I need time to read, learn, reflect. I think, perhaps, more than anything else I'd like to be a college

⁹Interview with Charles V. Hamilton, November 2, 1967.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

professor."¹¹ Hamilton calls Carmichael a "fantastically reflective young man. He said that, not for Gordon to write down, because he's said it to me many times. . . . This is to me a very legitimate man. There is a genuineness that I came to terms with. I came to admire the guy."¹²

Carmichael is "warm," and Hamilton thinks that quality contributes to the revolutionary mentality.

People see him frequently as a charmer, as an opportunist . . . but Carmichael has evidenced to me a deep insight and understanding of things I wouldn't expect editorial writers to see, things I haven't seen evidenced by some other national leaders.

There's very little he could do to cause me to think he's a charlatan. That's the word. He is not a charlatan in the way that a lot of other people are, especially in this traumatic business called civil rights.¹³

Hamilton and Carmichael met several years ago during SNCC's Waveland, Mississippi Institute. Hamilton reflects that Carmichael was "rather committed then, although in the traditional kind of civil-rightsy 'protest' vein."¹⁴ Hamilton thinks that "at best all human beings

¹¹Parks, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

¹²Interview with Charles V. Hamilton, November 2, 1967.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Ibid.*

are complicated, but when you talk about a mass public leader at his age, an instantaneous leader, then you've got yourself a bag of complexities."¹⁵

Charles V. Hamilton's label for Carmichael is probably the best estimate of the man. Carmichael is a many-faceted young man.

Pleasant and self-assured, Carmichael, in the words of Gordon Parks, "gives the impression he would stroll through Dixie in broad daylight using the Confederate flag for a handkerchief."¹⁶ Carmichael has a quick smile and a deep hearty laugh. He immediately puts one at ease. He is, in short, charming. There is in his audiences this element of surprise, for Carmichael's charming, easy manner are not evident when, in the throes of emotionalism, his grimacing countenance is seen on television screens.

SNCC associates see Carmichael as a "brilliant guy" who has his "hangups, like everybody else."¹⁷

Whatever Carmichael really is, and it is all but impossible to determine that here, it is certain that the

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶Parks, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

¹⁷Interview with Ralph Featherstone, December 22, 1967.

force of his personality has left few people on neutral ground.

Black Youth and the Masses

Stokely Carmichael is considered, along with W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Malcolm X, a "hero of the black 'now' generation."¹⁸ The "now" generation is black conscious. Probably more sophisticated than any previous black generation they are more aware of black America's contributions to the United States and are generally impatient with gradualism. With an attitude that proclaims black beautiful, they extol the physical being and embrace the cultural lifestyle, particularly the music and speech patterns, of the masses. So does Stokely Carmichael.

Writer Eldridge Cleaver, in an illuminating article pointing up the black generation gap, formed a picture of Carmichael.

The radio was blowing black music. . . . The record "Tell It Like It Is" began playing. This is a soulful song, the blues of the people. When it first came on, Carmichael gave a loud whoop, clapped his hands and began singing with the radio. I wondered how Martin Luther King or Whitney Young or Roy Wilkins would have reacted to the same music.¹⁹

¹⁸Donald R. Hopkins, "Negro Youth in the 'Now' Generation," *Ebony*, August, 1967, p. 111.

¹⁹Eldridge Cleaver, "My Father and Stokely Carmichael," *Ramparts*, April, 1967, p. 12.

Carmichael has a love of Afro-American culture.

He believes this culture is legitimate. He has said:

We are not culturally deprived. We are the only people who have a culture in America. We don't have to be ashamed of James Brown. We don't have to wait for the Beatles to legitimize our culture. . . . Nothing is more artful to me than seeing a fine black woman doing the Dog.²⁰

This is probably the quality which most appeals to the black youth and the black masses, this proud and profound love of all forms of Afro-American culture. Although it is called black consciousness today, the quality has been characteristic of the black American who, in the words of W. E. B. Du Bois, "would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows Negro blood has a message for the world."²¹

Where he was once ashamed of gospel music, Carmichael has now enveloped black American culture. This envelopment of his blackness does not seem to be a pretense. When he was interviewed for this study by a member of his own race, the interviewer initially found the positions of interviewer-interviewee reversed. Carmichael inquired after the city, home address,

²⁰Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

²¹W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Connecticut: Fawcett Publications Inc.), p. 17.

schooling and fraternal affiliation of his interviewer. He was not entirely satisfied that his interviewer was not of the "bourgeoisie" and proceeded to mildly chide her. SNCC associates in the company of Carmichael that day asked that the interviewer not take offense. "That's just the way Stokely is."

Carmichael is probably as upset by black bourgeoisie attitudes as he is by white bourgeoisie attitudes. Although he lives in a "comfortable" home in the Bronx, Carmichael lived for years among the black people of poverty-stricken Lowndes County, Alabama,²² learning their needs in order to speak politically to those needs through the Lowndes County Freedom Democratic Organization which he helped found. In the South and in the North, Carmichael has experienced the pangs of poverty. This is no doubt part of his affinity for the black masses.

Stokely Carmichael understands the black psyche. John Oliver Killens set forth an explanation of the black psyche in 1964. Killens explained that

just as surely as East is East and West is West, there is a "black" psyche in America and there is a "white" one, and the sooner we face up to this

²²Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1967.

social and cultural reality, the sooner the twain shall meet.²³

Killens said time was running out, that a new dialogue was indispensable and long overdue.²⁴ Explaining that the American Negro is an Anglo-Saxon invention which began as an economic expedient and has become "a way of life, socially, economically, psychologically, philosophically," Killens expressed profound displeasure and impatience.²⁵

Part of the philosophy of Stokely Carmichael may be found in Killens' words,

My fight is not *for* racial sameness but for racial equality and *against* racial prejudice and discrimination. I work for the day when my people will be free of the racist pressures to be *white like you*. . . .

If relationships are to improve between us Americans black and white and otherwise, if the country is to be saved, we will have to face up to the fact that differences do exist between us.

.

My fight is not to be a white man in a black skin, but to inject some black blood, some black intelligence into the pallid main stream of American life, culturally, socially, psychologically, philosophically. This is the truer deeper meaning of the Negro revolt. . . .²⁶

²³John Oliver Killens, "Explanation of the Black Psyche," in *Portrait of A Decade: The Second American Revolution*, ed. by Anthony Lewis (New York: Bantam Matrix Publishers), p. 236.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 237.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 238.

²⁶*Ibid.*

No Romance with the Press

Stokely Carmichael came to the public eye as a low ethos figure. Perhaps it is because Carmichael is as he describes himself, an arrogant black man, that he is not tolerated by the white press. Perhaps it is that he laughs at them and tells them to go "dig" some George Bernard Shaw who said "all criticism is an autobiography." Carmichael applies the same verbal shrug to the often critical Negro press which Carmichael calls the "Backward Times." Whatever the reason, the news media has done little to help Carmichael's ethos.

The conflict between Carmichael and the press began during the Meredith March. Renata Adler, who was with the march for several days and wrote what Robert L. Green thinks was one of the best accounts of the march,²⁷ said that the "Associated Press, in particular, made almost daily errors in its coverage--errors that seemed to reflect a less than sympathetic view."²⁸ According to Miss Adler, when Carmichael saw that he was being "continuously"

²⁷Interview with Robert L. Green, October 20, 1967.

²⁸Renata Adler, "Milestone of the Movement," in *The Civil Rights Reader: Basic Documents of the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. by Leon Friedman (New York: Walker and Company, 1967), p. 101.

misrepresented by the press he became "obdurate and began to make himself eminently misrepresentable."²⁹

In a sense created by the mass media, the phenomenon became a target for editorial writers. The American public was fed a steady stream of Carmichael's choicest, most "inflammatory" remarks. When he made his more logical appeals, he was ignored. The relationship between Carmichael and the news media was perhaps best stated by T. George Harris, Senior Editor of *Look*:

Each time he [Carmichael] tries to define his Black Power motto in terms of economic and political development, he finds himself shouting into deaf ears. But when, pacing like a panther, he twists himself into a trance, snarling terror, he makes the evening TV news for millions of very alert people, both races.³⁰

Although the news media rarely presents a favorable picture of Carmichael, SNCC sees even adverse publicity as useful in that it keeps the philosophy of the organization in the public eye.³¹ Carmichael's attitude is simply: "You can't control the press."³² He adds

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰T. George Harris, "Negroes Have Found a Jolting New Answer," *Look*, June 27, 1967, p. 29.

³¹Interview with Ralph Featherstone, December 22, 1967.

³²Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1967.

optimistically, "When we're in a position to control the press we'll use it."³³

From the Masses to the Power Structure

Stokely Carmichael causes positive and negative upset from the black masses to the power structure of the United States.

Although he cannot recall where or when he delivered his first speech as Chairman of SNCC,³⁴ on August 5, 1966, in Cleveland, Ohio, Stokely Carmichael delivered a speech which was the first of many for which representatives of either the Federal or State governments would demand his prosecution.

Cleveland had been the scene of a rebellion in which four persons were killed, several others injured.³⁵ Addressing a "cheering audience of about 600 Negroes,"³⁶ Carmichael is reported to have said:

When you talk of black power, you talk of bringing this country to its knees.

When you talk of black power you talk of building a movement which will smash everything that western civilization has created.

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴Telephone interview with Stokely Carmichael, July 10, 1967.

³⁵"A Black Power Speech that has Congress Upset," *U.S. News and World Report*, August 22, 1966, p. 6.

³⁶*Ibid.*

When you talk of black power, you talk of the black man doing whatever is necessary to get what he needs . . . we are fighting for our lives.

Criticizing U.S. involvement in the war in Viet Nam, the militant "Snick" leader gave Negroes this advice: When Johnson calls, say, "Hell, no, I'm not going."

Any black man who fights in this country's army is a black mercenary.³⁷

After the speech congressional representative Robert Sweeney of Ohio, called to a "cheering House"³⁸ for prosecution of Carmichael under the Universal Military Training and Service Act for "attempting to undermine the policies of the Government with reference to the war in Viet Nam."³⁹

Although no attempt was made to carry out Sweeney's motion, the incident illustrates the considerable effect that Carmichael has on the lawmakers of this country.

Another illustration of Carmichael's effect on the lawmakers is to be found in the passage of legislation forbidding persons to cross state lines to "incite to riot." There can be little doubt that the law is aimed at activist speakers such as Carmichael and his successor H. Rap Brown. Carmichael has frequently said that the

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹*Ibid.*

federal government is attempting to stifle the free speech of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, "one way or another."⁴⁰ Much of the evidence would uphold Carmichael's belief. The new legislation, for example, is a device which permits Congressional control of the freedom of speech. Although it is in clear violation of the first amendment, it is not without precedent. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes was instrumental in setting the precedent for interpretation of the freedom of speech principle. In 1919 and in following years, the Court "has persistently ruled that the freedom of speech of the American community may constitutionally be abridged by legislative action. . . . Congress, we are now told, is forbidden to destroy our freedom except when it finds it advisable to do so."⁴¹ The time at which it came into being indicates that the legislation probably came out of an urgency created largely by Congressional interpretation of news media reports of black activist speakers such as Carmichael.

President Lyndon Johnson, in September, 1967, named the "purveyors of hate," a clear reference to

⁴⁰Speech at Morgan State University, January 16, 1967.

⁴¹Alexander Meiklejohn, *Free Speech and Its Relation to Self-Government* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), p. 29.

black activist speakers, as a major cause of the large-scale rebellions in American cities during the summer of 1967. Representative Wayne Hays, of Ohio, told the House that "Carmichael and his anarchistic group belong behind bars and the quicker we get him there the better off this country will be."⁴²

On "Meet the Press," Roy Wilkins, NAACP Executive Secretary, and a strong opponent of the black power philosophy, was pressed to name Carmichael as a cause of the rebellions.

Question: Mr. Wilkins, you say that organized groups can't do a great deal about stopping riots. What about the other side of the coin, do you think that Stokely Carmichael and the Black Power advocates by their inflammatory oratory have done a lot to start riots?

Wilkins: I would--in the absence of any proof, I would hesitate to say that Mr. Carmichael or anyone has started a riot. I think these groups have been vocal, highly vocal; they have been highly provocative. They have been almost volatile in their assertions and sometimes extremely careless.⁴³

During that same interview, Wilkins touched on what is perhaps the clue to the conflict between the

⁴²"Black Power!" *Newsweek*, June 27, 1966, p. 36.

⁴³Transcript, "Meet the Press," Roy Wilkins, Executive Director, NAACP, July 16, 1967.

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the United States Congress.

Question: Do you think they [the militants] have created the atmosphere conducive to rioting?

Wilkins: I don't know. That depends on the reaction of the white community. If the white community reacts to that resentfully and tends to fight back and put you in your place and to crack down on you and not to find out whether it is an honest depiction of the situation, then of course it does create a riotous situation.⁴⁴

Stokely Carmichael and other militant activists speak to, and largely for, a growing segment of a discontent American minority. It would seem that individual members of Congress, as part of Mr. Wilkins' "white community" became very involved in news media interpretation of Carmichael's rhetoric. Those who call, as did Barry Goldwater, for the hanging or deportation or jailing of Carmichael seemingly lost sight of the fact that Carmichael did not create the conditions precipitous to rebellion, rather the conditions created Carmichael. The speaker is a manifestation of a mood.

Many Minds About Carmichael

Opinions of Stokely Carmichael, his philosophy, and his motives have run the gamut from the label "most

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

charismatic figure in the civil rights movement today,"⁴⁵ to William F. Buckley's attacks. It was Buckley who called Carmichael "the exact opposite number of the Ku Kluxer, and if he were white," Buckley said, "he would no doubt be calling for the lynching of the niggers."⁴⁶

Sometimes favorable, oftentimes not, Carmichael and Black Power have been objects of much critical comment. Among Carmichael's chief detractors are the established civil rights leaders.

Roy Wilkins, Executive Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, although he considers Stokely Carmichael a "leader of the militants,"⁴⁷ has been strongly opposed to Black Power since Carmichael shouted the phrase in Greenwood. Wilkins has said: "No matter how endlessly they try to explain Black Power, the term means anti-white. . . . It has to mean going it alone. It has to mean separatism."⁴⁸ Wilkins thinks this offers a disadvantaged minority little except the chance to shrivel and die."⁴⁹

⁴⁵Weinraub, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁴⁶William F. Buckley, "Negroes Are Pawns of Peacenik Reds," *Detroit Free Press*, April 20, 1967.

⁴⁷Transcript, "Meet the Press," July 16, 1967.

⁴⁸Parks, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*

Whitney Young, Executive Chairman of the Urban League, thinks "there is no dignity in the withdrawal from society that Stokely preaches."⁵⁰ Young feels that Carmichael "gives too many Negroes a chance to escape responsibility."⁵¹ He adds: "We'll have to work hard for what we get. It's better for a black man to reach in his pocket and find a dollar instead of a hole."⁵² Young does feel, however, that Stokely did not create the white backlash but rather "gave them an excuse to come out publicly where they had been hesitant otherwise."⁵³

Wherein other rights leaders seem to think that Carmichael's influence has been more negative than positive, Dr. Martin Luther King, although he expressed confusion about the term, did not denounce either the concept, or Stokely Carmichael.⁵⁴

Bayard Rustin, advocate of coalition politics, thinks Black Power lacks any real value for the civil rights movement.⁵⁵ A. Philip Randolph, President of the

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

⁵¹*Ibid.*

⁵²*Ibid.*

⁵³*Ibid.*

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵"Ahead of Its Time," *Time*, September 30, 1966, p. 21.

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, deplores what he calls Black Power's "assumption of salvation through racial isolation."⁵⁶

Although Black Power has been viewed with general consternation, there has been little personal criticism of Carmichael by the civil rights spokesman, save the general sentiment that the young spokesman is irresponsible. Actually Carmichael *is*, in a sense, irresponsible. Like Malcolm X before him, Carmichael is not tied to the Black Establishment.⁵⁷ He is not therefore responsible to the powerful white administrators who are actually the central figures of the two oldest and probably most respected civil rights organizations. Wherein Carmichael sees black-led organizations, negotiating with whites on black terms only, certain black leaders are responsible to their organizational structure *as it exists*. Given the precepts of the Black Power philosophy and the white-controlled power structure within the largest Negro organizations, the criticism of Carmichael and his philosophy is understandable.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷For a comprehensive discussion of the Black Establishment see Lerone Bennett, *The Negro Mood* (Chicago: Johnson Publications, 1964).

Robert Coles observed that "if Mr. Carmichael only insisted that his people get much more money (and the power that goes along with that money) it is hard to see how he would differ from . . . Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young."⁵⁸ Like other black leaders Carmichael wants jobs and better housing and education for his people. Coles believes, however, that in going about the acquisition of these things Carmichael is "far less a hard line 'materialist' than his critics the 'moderates.'"⁵⁹ Coles sees Carmichael emerging as a

would-be leader of an immigrant group that is, finally, here--even if its more recent point of departure is our own (plantation) soil. His premises, his assumptions about the nature of the Negro's position in American society differ markedly from those of his liberal critics of whatever color. He insists that a new ball game is starting for the Negro, while their reply is that the same old game is going on--only it is in the last and hardest inning.⁶⁰

Coles concludes that SNCC has delivered "hitherto exiled Negroes into the initial confrontation with American society;" and that the difference between Carmichael and other rights leaders is "a matter of substance as well as emphasis or mood."⁶¹

⁵⁸Robert Coles, "Two Minds About Carmichael," *The New Republic*, November 12, 1966, p. 19.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹*Ibid.*

Not Out of Love

What is the force that propels Stokely Carmichael, a young man yet unaware of his own weaknesses? Early in his term as Chairman of SNCC he said:

I used to say that the only way they'll stop me is if they kill me. I still think that's true. What bothers me now is if I live through all this I just hope I don't get tired or give up or sell out. That's what bothers me. We all have weaknesses. I don't know what mine are. But if they find out they'll try to destroy me. It's a question of them finding out what my weaknesses are--money, power, publicity, I don't know. And sometimes . . . sometimes . . . you just get so tired too.⁶²

Although he isn't sure of his weaknesses, he is sure of what drives him on. He very frankly admits he is not in the movement out of love. "I'm in the movement because I hate. I hate racism and I'm out to smash it or it's going to smash me."⁶³ This is the Carmichael with the battle scars of many encounters with the Southern experience and with the Northern system.

I don't go along with this garbage that you can't hate, you gotta love. I don't go along with that at all. Man, you can, you do hate. You don't forget that Mississippi experience. You don't get arrested twenty-seven times. You don't smile at that and say love thy white brother. You don't forget those beatings and, man, they were rough. Those mothers were out to get revenge. You don't forget. You don't forget those funerals. I knew

⁶²Weinraub, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

⁶³*Ibid.*

Medgar Evers, I knew Willie Moore, I knew Mickey Schwerner, I knew Jonathan Daniels, I met Mrs. Liuzzo just before she was killed. You don't forget those funerals.⁶⁴

Floyd B. McKissick has known Carmichael since the Freedom Rides and the days of the Council of Federated Organizations. They were together on the Meredith March and McKissick comments that their "affinity for each other had grown." On the subject of Stokely's "hate," McKissick comments:

It's impossible for a man to live in a racist society without being affected by the racism that he sees and endures. Nonviolence is a mutual doctrine. If you treat me nice, I'll treat you nice, but if you start hitting on me and slapping me then I'm going to respond in kind. For people to characterize Stokely as a person who hates, it's just untrue. They don't know Stokely.⁶⁵

In Mississippi, during the Freedom Rides, there was no "mutual doctrine" of nonviolence. In Jackson, before he was jailed, white policemen rode Carmichael "up and down in an elevator; they kept kicking and using billy clubs and pressing the buttons using their fist."⁶⁶ Carmichael "wanted . . . I just wanted to get my hand on one of them. But like you had to cover your head and . . . and . . . you keep thinking why don't you leave me alone?

⁶⁴Weinraub, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

⁶⁵Interview with Floyd B. McKissick, October 30, 1967.

⁶⁶Weinraub, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

Why don't you just beat your wives instead and leave me alone?"⁶⁷

Carmichael says people have "cracked" in the movement and he experienced an emotional collapse in 1963 on the day of the Selma to Montgomery march. Locked in a hotel room Carmichael saw black people being trampled by police horses and knocked over by water from fire hoses.⁶⁸

Suddenly everything blurred. I started screaming and I didn't stop until they got me to the airport. That day I knew I could never be hit again without hitting back.⁶⁹

"T.C.B.?" Up to the System

Stokely Carmichael wants to change the existing social structure of the United States. He does not, however, want to attempt the change violently except as a last measure.

As a foreword to their book, Carmichael and Hamilton wrote:

This book presents a political framework ideology which represents the last reasonable opportunity for the society to work out its racial problems short of prolonged destructive guerilla warfare. That such violent warfare may be unavoidable is not herein denied. But if there is the slightest chance to avoid it, the politics

⁶⁷*Ibid.*

⁶⁸Parks, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

of Black Power as described in this book is seen as the only viable hope.

When he wrote the book Carmichael felt that violence is a "very useful catalyst for social change, in a strongly crisis-reacting society."⁷⁰

Hamilton speaks to two types of violence--instrumental and expressive.

Instrumental is the organized type, it's with specific goals, the violence with discernible ends. It is also violence with which the system can deal more easily.

The second type is what we call expressive violence. That's like the summer rebellions--no discernible goals, no premeditation necessarily. Right now the system is at the expressive violence stage and I condone it. I'll go on record as saying that if something is inevitable it makes no sense to condemn it, but rather to deal with it. Stokely is at that level. Rap Brown is at that point. Expressive violence is good for catharsis if nothing else. Some people would say wasteful, some people say self-defeating. That sort of evaluation comes out of a particular syndrome which is western white oriented. But it seems to me that it does the black soul some good to knock over the ghetto. That's expressive violence.⁷¹

At some point the seasonal expression of violence, it is theorized, will become instrumental, organized. The revolutionary mentality of Stokely Carmichael may be "at the point of saying 'Well, look the system will not move under acts of expressive violence so it seems clear that

⁷⁰Interview with Charles V. Hamilton, November 2, 1967.

⁷¹*Ibid.*

it must move [in the afterword of the book] by T.C.B.-- whatever means necessary.' But it's not up to Stokely or to black people. The system will determine that."⁷²

Carmichael: "An Indictment of America"

Stokely Carmichael is just one of a large number of courageous young men and women who surrendered themselves to physical and mental brutality in order to enable black Americans to take a step toward dignity and prove that the United States is all it purports to be. He is one of those who has seen enough to think there is nothing to salvage in the American system. James Baldwin thinks that no American has the right to be outraged by Carmichael. Baldwin feels that the American outrage is actually an exhibition of "all the vindictiveness of the guilty. What happened to all those boys and girls, and what happened to the civil rights movement is an indictment of America."⁷³ That Carmichael is now obsessed with Black Power comes as no surprise to Baldwin:

I have never known a Negro in my life who was not obsessed with Black Power. . . . And when a black man whose destiny and identity have always been controlled by others decides and states that he will control his own destiny and rejects the identity given to him by others, he is talking

⁷²*Ibid.*

⁷³James Baldwin, "Baldwin Batting for Carmichael," *The Washington Post*, March 3, 1968.

revolution. In point of sober fact, he cannot possibly be talking anything else, and nothing is more revelatory of the American hypocrisy than their swift perception of this fact.⁷⁴

Baldwin observes the efforts of the federal government to indict Carmichael on charges of incitement to riot but accuses the government itself of this crime.

It is, briefly, an insult to my intelligence, and to the intelligence of any black person, to ask me to believe that the most powerful Nation in the world is unable to do anything to make the lives of its black citizens less appalling.

It is not unable to do it, it is only unwilling to do it. Americans are deluded if they suppose Stokely to be the first black man to say "The United States is going to fall. I only hope I live to see the day." Every black man in the howling North American wilderness has said it, and is saying it, in many, many ways, over and over again.⁷⁵

Baldwin sees America as a society determined that black Americans born into it shall neither learn the truth about it or about themselves. He sees little sense in excoriating Carmichael or any black man who sets about to learn or explain to black people certain truths. Baldwin concludes:

Now, I may not always agree with Stokely's views, or the ways in which he expresses them. My agreement, or disagreement, is absolutely irrelevant. I get his message. Stokely Carmichael, a black man under 30, is saying to me, a black man over 40, that he will not live the life I've lived or be corraled into some of

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵*Ibid.*

the awful choices I have been forced to make, and he is perfectly right.

The Government and the people who have made his life, and mine, and the lives of all our forefathers, and the lives of all our brothers and sisters and women and children an indescribable hell, has no right, now to penalize the black man, this so-despised stranger here for so long, for attempting to discover if the world is as small as the Americans have told him it is.

We have constructed a history which is a total lie, and have persuaded ourselves that it is true. I seriously doubt that anything worse can happen to any people.⁷⁶

⁷⁶*Ibid.*

CHAPTER IV

CARMICHAEL'S CONCEPTIONS OF AUDIENCES AND SPEECHMAKING

Training

Stokely Carmichael's training as a public speaker came with a basic course in public speaking at Howard University, a course which Carmichael thinks was of little value.

As far as I'm concerned, I have never had any formal training in public speaking. I've had a course at Howard in which there were some fifty-seven people in the class and each person was to give three speeches, oral, for the term, and one written.

You really couldn't learn anything. I mean with fifty-seven people in the class, what could you teach anybody, man? We were supposed to give three speeches. One was a demonstrative speech. I demonstrated how to wash windows with paper and water. The second speech was a forensic or argumentative speech, one written and one oral. You wrote one and you delivered one. They had to be different. I wrote one on why the Catholic church shouldn't get any public school funds because at that time the question was raging whether or not public funds should be given to support the Catholic schools. The other one was why ROTC should be banned from campus. The last speech was just on anything you wanted to expound upon. I did one then on the sit-in movement.

I never had any private coaching or preparation for delivery of speeches, except from black ministers whom I listened to in the South.¹

Influences

Carmichael names black abolitionist orator Frederick Douglass among those who have exerted an influence on his speaking. Carmichael thinks Douglass "had an ability to make things sharp." Douglass' speeches, Carmichael feels, are "fantastic" and he quotes Douglass "quite a bit."

Dr. Martin Luther King also influenced Carmichael. He feels that "Dr. King is perhaps one of the best speakers in the world today. And it is because of that old Baptist tradition, the ability to move crowds and sway them and have them involved and believe and wrapped up entirely in what you say."²

Malcolm X has influenced Carmichael's speaking and Carmichael names Adam Clayton Powell, "because Powell has a certain amount of style and charm which people

¹This and subsequent quotations in this chapter are taken from a tape recorded personal interview conducted by the writer on February 9, 1967. The tape is in the possession of the writer.

²It is interesting to note that the only white speakers Carmichael thought worthy of mention are preachers Billy Graham and Oral Roberts.

vicariously want to hook up with." Carmichael hastens to add that Powell has not really influenced his speaking: "I've just watched his style. I think it would be too flashy for me. It's too gaudy, you know." Carmichael is, however, "aware of the fact that black people are attracted to it, even the gaudy part of it."

Speaker's Analysis of Audiences

The audience determines Stokely Carmichael's method of preparation, mode of proof, style, and affects his delivery. Carmichael has definite opinions about his audiences and has a different attitude toward each. On audiences in general he says: "There is certainly a difference between a white and a black audience. Absolutely. And there is a difference between young blacks and older blacks. Obviously."

Carmichael's approach to an older black audience is characterized by humility.

Before an older black audience I am always more humble than I would be before a young black audience. At the very beginning I establish humility. With a hostile black audience I would try to be humble at first. That's always my approach. I try to explain over and over again as best I can because they are important, they have to be won over. Sometimes I would even "Tom" before them!

Humility is not Carmichael's concern when speaking to hostile white audiences. With them he is arrogant and is totally unmindful of the status of the group.

I am never humble before a white audience. Never. Don't care who they are. I feel that I am not out to win over the hostile white audience. I am just out to let them know that there happens to be some black people who know where they are and who won't tolerate their nonsense and they cannot fool. To try and win them over would be to start to be humble.

Carmichael does not seem to have analyzed the white college audience to any degree. He says simply that his aim here is "to establish a level of intellectualism that is needed."

Young black audiences, Carmichael feels, require militancy and aggressiveness. He says: "If it is a young black audience, from the get,³ I establish aggressiveness and a tone of militancy and determination that is needed, I think, inside the young black community.

During the course of his term as Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the bulk of Stokely Carmichael's speaking was divided among black college audiences, rallies, and white college audiences. The latter group probably provided greater numbers of listeners but, from the persuasive standpoint, they are not the people with whom Carmichael is most concerned. Although he prefers extemporaneous speaking, Carmichael generally reads speeches to white audiences.⁴

³The phrase "from the get" is black idiom meaning "from the beginning" or "at the outset."

⁴Carmichael usually reads one of two papers. The reader is directed to: Stokely Carmichael, "Toward Black

I read papers to white audiences, for a number of reasons. If I sit down and write out my thoughts beforehand, the arguments are chiseled away so that they are at their tightest possible presentation and I've answered in writing all the possible questions that could be raised. When you write an article it has to stand for itself, people can't ask you questions.

I prefer extemporaneous speaking. I can't do it very often in front of white audiences, especially if there are going to be questions because when you speak extemporaneously you may leave some thoughts hanging or there may be some loose ends. When I speak before white audiences I find that they don't usually listen to the content of what I say and they are most times incapable of arguing with the content of what I say. What they do is begin to attack me. They ask, "Why do you hate white people?" or "Don't you trust any white people?" That is absolutely irrelevant to the content of what I say. They will ask, "Why are you so angry?" or "Why don't you love people?" but they will not ask questions about the content, so, for them, I have to read the speeches, I think at this point. When the content is as tight as possible they can't argue that so we go ahead and play games with them with their nonsensical questions.

During his opening remarks in the speech at Michigan State University, Carmichael said, substantially, these same things:

I'm going to read an article which I did for the *Massachusetts Review* which appeared in their Fall '66 issue. It deals with the theoretical and philosophical concept of black power. . . . When we have the question and answer period, I know it's really impossible for people to deal with the content of what I say so they usually ask inane

Liberation," *Massachusetts Review*, Fourth Quarter, 1966, pp. 639-651. See also: Stokely Carmichael, "What We Want," *New York Review of Books*, September, 1966. Also published in Leon Friedman, ed., *The Civil Rights Reader* (New York: Walker and Company, 1967), pp. 139-148, as "Power and Racism."

questions about "Do you hate white people? Do you want to tear up the country? Why are you so full of hate?" If people could understand that in SNCC we are articulating a political philosophy, and if they could deal with that, rather than *ad hominem* attacks, maybe the discussion could be fruitful. We have learned that the American society is incapable of dealing with realities.

Although Carmichael usually reads to white audiences, this, as is evidenced by the extemporaneous Berkeley speech, is not a set rule. He does not use a text when speaking to a black audience.

I wouldn't prepare a text for a mass meeting. I wouldn't even prepare an outline to speak to black people. I think it would be an insult to prepare a text for black people about the movement. I would prepare a text about other things, but not about the movement.

Before he delivers a speech in a given area, Carmichael confers with the local SNCC office in order to discover the type of audience with which he will be faced.

Before I speak in each area I sit down and talk with the local director of that office. I ask about the type of audiences with which we will be confronted, what they think the audiences will need to know, what points they think should be emphasized. When I get there I note in terms of male, female, and age. I decide the tone when I see the audience. There usually are others who speak before me and I judge the response to those speakers, keeping in mind what they hit on or missed. The content, then, is decided in discussion with the local project [SNCC] director.

Carmichael's preparation for a talk is not complete until he actually sees his audience. He says, "I may jot down on an envelope or whatever piece of paper I have, just before I talk, what topics need to be hit on

because I like to judge my audience." This practice is obvious to journalists who have observed Carmichael speaking. Bernard Weinraub writes: "Stokely instinctively knows the audience. He stares quickly across the room and then scribbles down notes on the back of an envelope. He rises to warm applause. He smiles."⁵

Although the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee has a research and writing staff, Carmichael writes all of his speeches and articles.

I write all the articles that have my name on them. I feel very strongly that I have to write those myself. We do have a research staff which I use for data and facts which I incorporate into the speeches. We have a writing staff, but they don't write for me. All the speeches are mine.

Carmichael on Speaking

Carmichael has very definite opinions on his speaking and on speaking in general. The following is a transcript of a personal interview.

Question: During preparation are you conscious of organizing a speech into main divisions?

Carmichael: Yes, three. I am conscious of making those.

Question: What do you attempt to accomplish in the introduction?

⁵Weinraub, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

Carmichael: Well, it depends. My main thing is a shock thing. Now, that does not take into consideration the numbers of people who come to see us out of curiosity. You know the papers have built us up as wild eyed rebels yelling and screaming "Black Power" without recognizing anything so that those people who come out of curiosity don't need shock. The answer to the question depends on what the audience is. What I attempt to do in the introduction is to set the *tone* for the type of speech that I will give.

Question: Do you have any favorite sequence or pattern for arranging your main points, such as saving the most important argument until the end, or using your strongest argument first?

Carmichael: What I do is use the counter-arguments first, the ones that the opposition uses. I go through their arguments and tear them down. For example, people say the reason why we can't organize independently is that we are ten percent and ten percent can never establish a third party because third parties have never worked in this country. After having attacked the concept involved, I add why it is necessary, from my point of view, or certainly in terms of Snick's philosophy, for a third party. What we do is listen to all the argument's that become most public, the arguments against what we say, outline them, and reduce them to syllogisms, to their basic logical structure. Then I deal with the argument's validity or invalidity, truth or untruth. For example, when we started introducing the concept of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, the biggest argument against it was that it was to be an all black party. And when King said "anything all black is bad," that hit us hard. Every time we tried to talk to people they said, "Well, I'd be part of it, but it's all black and anything all black is just as bad as anything all white." I knew that wasn't true so I worked it out. The major premise was: anything all black is bad. Minor premise: I am all black. Conclusion: therefore, I am bad. After having done that I worked it out, in Lowndes County,

to people and they began to see. I said, "What you're really saying when you say anything all black is bad, you are saying 'I am bad.'" I told them they could not afford to do that and people began to see it clearly. Most of the arguments that the opposition gives I outline in syllogism so that they then can be attacked logically. Once you have logically attacked an argument then you can have fun with it. You can really blast it and say things that will elicit an emotional response. People will remember those emotional responses and they will hook it up with the logical arguments, so that the logical arguments will be reinforced. I usually have a saying which will produce a lot of laughter. I save that for last, after I have logically built up the argument.

Question: What do you attempt to accomplish in the conclusion?

Carmichael: The main thing, in terms of black audiences, to accomplish is the need to counteract the propaganda which we have been told all our lives. The second thing is to stress the need for black unity and to start thinking in our own terms. With a white audience the conclusion is a political one, we tell them that the country is headed in a certain direction and that they have a decision to make one way or the other, whether to line up with the racists or to start to build institutions inside *their* communities, not inside ours, to fight racism. But then in the major sense, what you hope to accomplish in your conclusion is just a reiteration of no more than three points, because to reiterate a lot of points is just nonsensical. People won't remember them, so you reiterate three major points in your conclusion. You make them what I call simple statements: We need black unity. We cannot afford to go to the war in Vietnam. For the white audience: You need to develop institutions to counteract racism in your communities.

Question: How would you characterize your speaking?

Carmichael: I think by the sharp, cutting remarks, and the subtlety. Mark Twain is my favorite author. He is my favorite author because of his subtlety. He is very, very subtle. I think that would be most important. The nakedness of the things I say is also important, that is to strip things of all their euphemisms and make them as naked as they can be and as true as they can be or as disgusting as they can be to you human beings. Recognizing that human beings do not like to face reality and do not want to confront reality (so that the mere confrontation of reality is sometimes enough) you couldn't give a half hour speech of sheer reality because people would just get sick--you take that reality and you make jokes out of it. You make it humorous so that people can laugh at it but understand it. That I learned from black people because they have been able to do that all their lives.

Question: How would you define the effective speaker?

Carmichael: I would define an effective speaker as one who is able to hold the attention of the crowd, to deliver his main points, and to have the crowd retain his important points after they have left and then to move to do something about it. That is, if they do not become activated after you speak, then I think you haven't done anything. That is, you haven't done anything better than the television.

Question: Then a speech is judged on its effect?

Carmichael: On its ability to activate people. Not just "effect" because "effect" is too loose. On its ability to activate people.

Question: What are the most important personal characteristics of the effective speaker?

Carmichael: I think that the one thing that the black community in this country has never had, certainly to any extent, is a black man who can stick his tongue out at white folks, a black man who dares to say to white folk: "To hell with you!" You know, out loud. I

think that black people, whenever they find these people, vicariously hook up with them because they are expressing what needs to be expressed. Now I contend that SNCC has been doing that for seven years. In the South that has been our ethos. In the North Malcolm was doing that.

Another thing is the recognition that someone can think clearly about the racial situation in this country and be able, logically, to cut down all the major propaganda of white society against the black community. Lastly, the effective speaker has the ability to bring people together, to bring them together and have them involved in the speech, so that when I, for example, give a speech to a black audience, while in the speech I am confronting white society, I draw them in so they are also confronting white society. For me those are the three major points. They would, of course, break down for different speakers.

Question: Do you consider yourself an effective speaker?

Carmichael: (Laughter) Yes. Yes, I consider myself an effective speaker. If I didn't I wouldn't speak anymore.

Question: Did anything happen prior to your entrance into public life which might have exerted an influence on your development as a speaker?

Carmichael: Yes. I was born black.

CHAPTER V

THE INFLUENCE OF BLACK PREACHERS: DELIVERY

The greatest influence on Stokely Carmichael's delivery has been black ministers across the south. When he worked in Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, Carmichael studied those ministers "with congregations of seven to thirty to a thousand people."¹ When he spoke he felt that, in order to get his point across, he had to "imitate" them so that he "captured the audience with their style."²

In his study of Negro preaching, William H. Pipes investigated the African and "slavery time" characteristics of Negro preaching and compared and contrasted those findings with sermons observed and recorded in Macon County, Georgia. He concluded that "the chief purpose of old-time Negro preaching appears to be to 'stir up,' to excite the emotions of the audience and the minister as a means for their escape from an 'impossible world.'"³ He writes:

¹Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1967.

²*Ibid.*

³William H. Pipes, *Say Amen, Brother! Old Time Negro Preaching: A Study in American Frustration* (New York: The William-Frederick Press, 1951), p. 156.

The success of the old-time Negro sermon does not depend entirely on the logical ideas it contains. It is the *manner* in which the sermon is delivered that determines the success or failure of the old-time Negro sermon. Therefore, the preacher places more emphasis on the techniques of delivery than he does on the ideas of his sermon. He knows that one of his purposes is to arouse the emotions of his audience and that *action* instead of *thought* is his most effective tool.⁴

This detailed summary of the delivery of old-time⁵ Negro preachers is included in order to show the influence which has had the greatest effect on Carmichael's delivery and in order to amplify the writer's impressions of Carmichael's delivery. When Carmichael lived in the Deep South, working as a field secretary and as an organizer for SNCC, he studied black preachers because he felt that he could more easily address his grass roots audiences in the manner with which they were most familiar.⁶

What Carmichael probably observed and what he shows evidences of having "copied" is described by Pipes.

1. Appearance is important.
2. The conversational tone creates the proper atmosphere. In all instances the minister

⁴Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

⁵The term "old-time" does not refer to a period in time. It is used as a descriptive term for traditional emotional Negro preaching. Certainly (especially but not exclusively in the South) there is much "old-time" preaching today.

⁶Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1967.

begins his sermon with a conversational type of delivery. This is the calmness which contrasts so startlingly with the turmoil to come later.

3. Intellectual, calm delivery puts the audience to sleep.
4. Old-time delivery is required to arouse the audience.
5. First signs of emotion in the minister are amplified by the audience.
6. Gestures and movement. Macon County preachers perform almost every gesture imaginable in public speaking.
7. The voice is most important. The preachers of Macon County have excellent voices and they know how to use them to achieve the desired effect. The preachers know the power of voice modulation and the effect of change in volume and intensity.
8. Rhythm. The rhythm of the delivery of sermons is always an attribute of the old-time preacher's fervency in delivery. However, the language itself is not always rhythmical, as is true of poetry. But the minister delivers *everything* with rhythm by crowding words together, stretching words out, and at times the complete absence of words (pauses).
9. "Change of pace" for effect. The Macon County minister does this apparently for effect. At one moment the minister is rushing along like a fast train; then suddenly he begins speaking in a quiet, normal voice. The audience bubbles over with excitement.
10. Inarticulate speech accompanies the climax; the audience goes mad. At the climax of the delivery, as well as many other points in the sermon, words become unintelligible, often incoherent.⁷

⁷Pipes, *op. cit.*, pp. 150-153.

Nearly all of these elements are present in the delivery of Stokely Carmichael, to a great degree before black audiences and to a lesser degree before white audiences.

Physically, Carmichael personifies the black power of which he speaks. He is tall, 6'1", virile, very dark, slender, and moves with what has been called a "disciplined wildness."⁸ "He has the build of a basketball guard: a solid chest, slender waist, powerful legs."⁹ Carmichael's well-modeled features set in his black face prompted attorney-writer Len Holt to write that "he is the person sculptors would seek as a model for a statue of a Nubian god."¹⁰

Carmichael has tremendous stage presence. His moves seem almost studied--a controlled yet explosive grace. His body becomes electric, transmitting messages of its own.¹¹

Carmichael is a relaxed speaker. He is just as relaxed before a speech as he is onstage. During the three hours before the address at Michigan State he chatted amiably with friends and granted interviews. He

⁸Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁹Weinraub, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

¹⁰Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹¹Observations of February 9, 1967, and May 17, 1967.

is calm, extremely self-possessed and informal. Onstage he is audacious.

Carmichael has an easy rapport with audiences. At Grand Rapids,¹² just before he spoke, Carmichael introduced Cleveland Sellers. Sellers, who was then Program Director of SNCC, spoke for nearly ten minutes. He was about to refuse the draft and said he preferred going to jail, "to organize the brothers there." Sellers was having obvious difficulty with the lights of the local and network television camera crews. Carmichael removed his everpresent sunglasses from a pocket and, creeping playfully up behind Sellers, put the glasses on Sellers to the delight of the crowd.

Later, when he began speaking, Carmichael himself put the glasses on explaining,

I'm only wearing the shades because the lights are in my eyes and I get tired. If I ask them to leave they'll say I put the press out, but I wish they would put them out. All they're doing really is gathering information. They're getting ready to bring some charges against me.

After he had begun his address Carmichael evidently discovered the glasses needed cleaning. He removed his shirt from his trousers, cleaned the glasses on the shirt, put the glasses back on and rearranged his clothing, all without breaking a phrase or eye contact. The entire

¹²Observations of May 17, 1967.

action was accomplished in such a manner that few in the audience noticed it. In any event, there was no crowd reaction. Although there is the possibility that the action was a device of some sort, watching it, one simply got the impression that the glasses needed cleaning and the shirt happened to be the most convenient means.

After he had cleaned the glasses Carmichael interrupted himself again:

I really wish you would take those lights out so I could see the folk. They'll give it to the editorial twins of America tomorrow. You know the editorial twins of America, Huntley and Brinkley. [laughter] You ever see on T.V. how they judge the whole world and black people with just the flick of a finger? [applause] Today they were on T.V. and they did something I did last night and Huntley said: "It is interesting to note that, with the exception of Britain, is this young man free to run around except the United States." It is interesting to note that the United States is the world oppressor of black people! [applause, cheers] That would be with the inclusion of Britain and France!

At this point Carl Smith, one of the sponsors of Carmichael's appearance, came to the microphone and asked to "have the lights out so the man" could see. Carmichael added "You see, I have asked you nicely, I could just take them out myself." The crowd roared its approval. Carmichael broke into a grin: "Before you incite to riot, why don't you just put the things out? We didn't come to talk to the press. When we do we have a press conference. Young people in the audience began

shouting "Git 'um out!" When the camera crews began dismantling the equipment and leaving there were cheers and thunderous applause as Carmichael made victory signs. He had the crowd. They were completely with him. He calmly continued the speech.

Carmichael's effect on black audiences may be a direct result of what he learned from black ministers. He does not employ "intellectual, calm delivery." Not quite a preacher, but certainly a showman, Carmichael uses his voice and gestures to enhance his delivery and for effect. With an actor's instinct for timing, Carmichael uses broad and subtle visual and auditory cues with considerable effectiveness.

Carmichael habitually begins a speech with a relaxed, conversational tone. At Grand Rapids, Michigan, he was practically inaudible when he began his address.

Carmichael's gestures are many and varied. He nearly always loosens his tie before beginning a speech. He frequently makes "quotation marks" in the air, wiggling the first two fingers of his hands. He points fingers, holds both hands straight out, palms toward the floor, rests his finger tips on the lectern with the wrists in the air and "pounds" the back of one hand with the fist of the other.¹³ On "Black Power!" a CBS Television

¹³Observations of February 9, 1967 and May 17, 1967.

broadcast, Carmichael was shown shoulders hunched, elbows bent, index fingers pointed skyward, his body shaking violently, asking a black audience in very emotional tones "Why *don't* you know J. A. Rogers? Why *don't* you know Claude McKay? Why *don't* you know W. E. B. Du Bois?"¹⁴ At Grand Rapids Carmichael sometimes simply held onto the lectern. Never static for long, however, he was shortly energetically gesticulating.

Carmichael's mobile face consistently contorts, revealing his emotions, actually depicting his opinions and making inferences. Although his eye contact suffers when he reads from manuscript, when he extemporizes it is unwavering.¹⁵

Histrionics are also an important part of Carmichael's delivery. At Michigan State he read from manuscript and seemed hampered by the text. Carmichael, the showman, is not to be hampered for too long by anything, however. He deviated from the text as often as he could, interspersing examples to enrich his arguments. His examples never failed to evoke enthusiastic audience response. At one point he paused at a word. He read

¹⁴"Black Power!" CBS Television, June 11, 1967.

¹⁵Observations of February 9, 1967 and May 7, 1967

"consti--consti--," and looked up with an almost forlorn expression. He explained that he could only say "three fifths of that word." He beckoned to a student who came up and read the word "constitutions" and Carmichael explained that when he "became five fifths" he would be able to say the whole word. After prolonged laughter and applause he continued: "Well, anyway, these organizations had *those things* . . . " carrying the "bit" all the way. This particular bit of histrionics is part of Carmichael's white audience routine.

At Grand Rapids, before a very responsive black audience which interrupted him 134 times during a one hour speech, Carmichael, the showman, was at the top of his form. When speaking of the "editorial twins of America," Huntley and Brinkley, Carmichael became Huntley. Emphasizing and pausing after each word, Carmichael reported: "*Today--Viet--Cong--dirty--rebel--filthy--Communist--forces--threw--Molotov--cocktails--and--wounded--17--civilians.*" Then, changing his tone of voice and ducking his head, he became Brinkley: "In the meantime our *good* GI boys have been *bombing the hell* out of North Vietnam."

Using one of his favorite examples, he explained that Martin Luther King's term "integration" was distorted by "some honkey" who "jumped up" and said [Carmichael grimaced and used the high nasal twang of a backwoodsman] "You want to marry my daughter, don't you?"

When explaining his "annoyance" at "black people who after every rebellion . . . jump up and say [Carmichael widened his eyes, rounded his mouth and shook his head, Uncle Tom style]: "They shouldn't do that, they're bad." He employed this same posture when discussing "black people running around hollering 'Oh, we are so lazy. If we were like white folks, hard working, we would make it, but not us, we're lazy.'" Explaining that "the trouble with black people is that we never define our terms. We always let them define them," Carmichael said, "If you want to win your liberation go to school. OK." Off the podium he grabbed imaginary books and started walking, pivoted rapidly and doubled back. Then quickly he said, "If you want to get freedom go through the courts. OK." He started marching in the opposite direction, pivoted and doubled back. In terms of favorable audience reaction, the pantomime was quite effective.

Whether he was rolling his eyes, breaking into a grin, employing a throat-cutting motion or a double-take, Carmichael's gestures set the Grand Rapids audience into paroxysms of laughter. If he was employing these visual cues to achieve that end he was successful.

It is in the area of voice that Carmichael seems to have been most affected by black preachers. Carmichael's voice is strong, resonant, and flexible.

His quality if a trifle husky, his pitch low, but not exceptionally deep. Carmichael is adept at using hushed, emotion-filled tones and sometimes even whispers.

Like the ministers he studied, Carmichael is a vocal quick-change artist. He uses all levels of volume, always maintaining control. His speaking seems patterned: loud, hushed, whispered, slow, fast. The practice is comparable to Pipes' "change of pace for effect" observance of the delivery of black ministers.

At Grand Rapids, Carmichael very rapidly screamed, "We are the porters and the elevator men in the north, we are the garbage men, we are the ditch diggers, we are the street cleaners, we are the maids, it is *us*! We are the hardest working and the lowest paid people in this country!" Then, very softly, very slowly: "It is not a question of who works hard. It is a question of who *controls*." The same pattern is evident throughout his speaking. Another example. In a fit of impassioned rhetoric he loudly preached, "They have distorted and lied about history! Lied about history!" Then softly, "They have cut us loose from Africa because they know that a people without a history is like a tree without its roots." Then even softer, "And we have been floating for 400 years." Then whispering: "It's time we got us some stable roots and became a big tree and spread out all over."

In another instance Carmichael built to a high emotional pitch, his voice loud, his tone angry, his body trembling, he screamed:

So that white people can't *give* us anything! They have got to *stop* enslaving us! They've got to *stop* denying us our liberation! In other words, they've got to become *civilized*!

Then came the sudden transition, his voice soft, his rate slow, as if explaining something to a child he continued: "If you agree with that then we can move on with some examples."

Stokely Carmichael seems very much aware of the power of his flexible voice. Change of volume and intensity is accomplished with little effort and without loss of control. Carmichael often harangued the Grand Rapids audience, sometimes lulled them, and always charmed them. His black audience, in Pipes' words, "bubbled over with excitement."

Basically "standard," Carmichael's articulation has been influenced by his years in New York City, by the time he spent in the Deep South, and, in his natural rhythm there can be detected traces of his islands background. Carmichael thinks that the nonstandard articulation of the black masses--what he labels "black dialect"--is "valid." In private conversation he uses both patterns at will. This is also his practice before

an audience. Black dialects are characterized by substitution of sounds and distortion of words. It should be pointed out that, except for certain environmental colorations, Carmichael's articulation is generally free of these elements. He can alter his articulation at will and can easily affect that pattern which he calls black dialect. At Grand Rapids he lapsed into the non-standard pattern at high emotional peaks. This was not consistent, however. Carmichael may be, in fact, inconsistent within the course of a single sentence. It is the conclusion of the writer that Carmichael uses the nonstandard pattern for effect, generally to flavor a message with the soul quality. According to writer Claude Brown,

it can be asserted that spoken soul is more a sound than a language. It generally possesses a pronounced lyrical quality. . . . Spoken soul has a way of coming out metered without the intention of the speaker to invoke it. There are specific phonetic traits. To the soulless ear the vast majority of these sounds are dismissed as incorrect usage of the English language and, not infrequently as speech impediments. . . . The white folks invariably fail to perceive the soul sound in soulful terms. They get hung up in diction and grammar . . .¹⁶

The following phonetic transcription, written descriptively and prescriptively, was taken from a tape recording.

¹⁶Claude Brown, "The Language of Soul," *Esquire*, April, 1968, p. 88.

I got up one morning and read a story. They were talking about a cat named Stokely Carmichael. I said he must be a *bad* nigger [Carmichael laughed] 'cause he's raisin' a whole *lot* of sand. [more laughter] I had to get up and look in the mirror to make sure it was me, [assumed tone of anger] 'cause all I said was I'm jus' a po' ole black boy and I think it's time black people [shouting] *stop* beggin' and *take* what belongs to them! [applause] *Take* what belongs to them!

[aɪ gat ʌp wʌn mɔːnɪŋ ən red ə stɔːri/ ðeɪ
wə tɔːkɪŋ əbaʊt ə kæt neɪm stɒkli kɑːmaɪkəl/
aɪ sed hi mʌs bi ə bæd nɪɡə [Carmichael
laughed] kə hi reɪzɪn ə hoʊ lɒt ə sæn/
[more laughter] aɪ hed təv ɡɪt ʌp ɒl lʊk ɪn ðə
mɪrə tə meɪk ʃɔː ɪt wəz mi [assumed tone of
anger] kʌz ɔl aɪ sed wəz ʌm dʒʌsə pɔv ɒl
blæk bɔɪ ʌ dɪŋk ɪts taɪm blæk pipl
stɒp beɪɡɪn ʌ teɪk hwʌt bɪlɒŋz təv
dem/ teɪk hwʌt bɪlɒŋz tə dem/

Evident here is Carmichael's dialectical tendency to affect [n/ŋ] as in "raising," and "begging;" and his tendency to use [d/ð] as in "them." Use of accent for effect is also present ("jus' a po' ole black boy"). The repetition of the phrase "Take what belongs to them!" is characteristic of Carmichael's delivery. He often repeats phrases as many as three times during applause.

Rate and rhythm is used for emphasis of what, to the unattuned ear, might seem the "wrong" word. When Stokely talked of "some brother" moving to "take care of natural business with some honkey cop," he drawled [teɪk keə ə næt treɪl bɪznɪs] with a pause before and after the

first syllable in the word "natural" so that the words "natural" and "business" were uttered as three words.

One of the reasons Carmichael enjoys speaking before black audiences is that he can employ certain esoteric devices which, as Brown has suggested, would probably be lost on white audiences. Carmichael comments: "I don't have to explain things to black people. Black people know what I'm talking about."¹⁷ Carmichael characterizes his speaking partly by its "subtlety." Part of this "subtlety" is to be found in the inferences he makes through word stress. To return to the aforementioned phrase: aside from the stylistic element present (ghetto idiom) there is, given the emphasis Carmichael places on the words, an unmistakeable inference in the statement. Carmichael's "*natural* business" means physical reprisal of a *very harsh* nature. A statement that would probably be vague or totally confusing to white listeners, set the black Grand Rapids audience nodding "amens," because there was no doubt in their minds as to what Stokely was talking about.

Another example of Carmichael's use of stress to infer meaning is to be found in his phrase "We [long pause] don't [pause] have [pause] *none*" when speaking of black

¹⁷Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1967.

economic and political power. Black listeners, interpreting the depth of the nuance, hear age-old truth.

Vocal inferences play a large part in Carmichael's delivery. At Michigan State University, when referring to the Negro leaders he said: "In recent years the answer to these questions which has been given by a most articulate group of Negroes and their white allies, the 'liberals' of all stripes, has been in terms of something called 'integration.'" Carmichael's "group" became [grʒup] an affected pedanticism doubtless indicative of his opinion of the Negro leaders.

Seeming to take great delight in mimicry, Carmichael, at Michigan State University, announced that the President and top officials of the Democratic party met with "almost 100 Negro leaders" from the Deep South to determine that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was "intended to register Democrats, not black people. Nothing was said about changing the policies of racist state parties, nothing was said about repudiating such leadership figures as Eastland and Ross Barnett of Mississippi or George and Lurleen [Carmichael pronounced the name "Loorreen"] Wallace of Alabama. What was simply said was [Carmichael assumed a dictatorial Deep South accent]: Go [goʌ]home [hoʊm] and [ŋ] organize[ovʒənəɪz] your [jʊv] people [pɪpəl]into [ɪntə] the [ðə] local [ləʊkəl] Democratic [dɛmkrætɪk]

party [pɒtɪ] then [ðɛn] we'll [wɪl] see [si]
 about[əbaʊt]poverty[pavəti] money[məni] and [ən]
 appointments [əpɒntmɪnts] my [ma] fellow [fɛlə]
 Americans [mɜːkənz] ."

Whenever he used the phrase "my fellow Americans," Carmichael played on the final nasal continuant. He also did this with the word "Vietnam." It became "Vietnammmmm-dum-dum." Carmichael indulged in considerable inspired (in that it evoked favorable audience response) nonsense. Further examples of this may be found in the fact that whenever he referred to the President his voice assumed an imitation of an ominous quality. Vice President Humphrey became "H. [long pause] H. [long pause] Humphrey."

Another element present in Carmichael's delivery, an element characteristic of the "nitty gritty" style of black speech, is zero copula, the complete absence of words, usually verbs.

Linguist William Stewart explains that zero copula "refers to the absence of an explicit predicating verb in certain dialect constructions, where standard English has such a verb (usually in the present tense)."¹⁸ Carmichael used zero copula before black audiences but did not limit the practice to black audiences. It is more probably

¹⁸William A. Stewart, "Continuity and Change in American Negro Dialects," Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington, D.C., 1968, p. 2.

characteristic of Carmichael's extemporaneous delivery. The first three examples of zero copula in Carmichael's speaking are taken from the speech at Grand Rapids; the fourth is from the speech at Berkeley.

You hear some black people running around holler-
ing "Oh, we are so lazy. If we were like white
folks, hard working, we would make it, but not
us, we're lazy." That's a lot of garbage. *White
people lazy. Look here, they so lazy they went
to Africa to steal us to do their work for them.*

Frantz Fanon is a black revolutionary philosopher
and he is out of sight! Look here, *he so deep*
that Camus and Sartre can't even begin to figure
out what he's talking about.

We don't even have the guts to hustle off the
honkey. Hustling off each other! *You a black
man, I'm a black man and you trying to hustle
me.*

We maintain that whether they like it or not
we gon' use the word "Black Power" and let them
address themselves to that. We are not gonna
wait for white people to sanction Black Power.
*We're tired waiting.*¹⁹

In summary, Stokely Carmichael's delivery is an
all-important aspect of his speaking. Through his delivery
he commands audience attention. This command of the
audience is based on two major factors: (1) Carmichael
is fascinating to hear and watch; and (2) he "handles" an
audience, makes them do what he wants them to. The
audience feels Carmichael's power as a speaker, senses

¹⁹The descriptive passages are as they appear in
the text. The italics are the writer's.

his power as a person and acts and reacts as the speaker sees fit.

Shortly after he was released from prison in Atlanta, Georgia, in September, 1966, Carmichael spoke at black nationalist Reverend Cleage's church in Detroit. A reviewer described Stokely's effect on that audience.

[Carmichael] reminded the people of their historical precedents: "A black man started this country by throwing a brick at the British soldiers." The cats in front of me looked at each other, then one of them said "Crispus Attucks," and "Yeah" from his partner, then shouting "teach us brother!"

Stokely ran down a lot more shit and the audience got more and more into it every minute. ". . . Black people have to put the white man's thing away and get their own thing together. . . . " And the people cheered and cheered. . . . "I don't have to tell no black man to hate white people--the white people do the job themselves everyday. . . . " A lot of madly affirmative hollering and screaming from the audience shot Stokely even deeper into it. . . . "It takes time and energy to love black in this country. . . . " Then I stopped taking notes and started shouting along with everyone else. Stokely just ran it down harder and harder. I saw Kenny Cockrel up front in the speaker's stand jumping up and down and giving hand every five seconds. People were flipping out all over the church. "Stokely's so BEAUTIFUL." [sic] And they were right. "BLACK POWER! BLACK POWER!" And the people came back with him: "YEAH! BLACK POWER! Tell it like it is, baby."²⁰

Having learned his techniques from black ministers whose objective is to arouse the emotions of the audience, Carmichael's delivery is full of feeling and replete with

²⁰John Sinclair, *The Fifth Estate*, October 16, 1966, p. 4.

the soul quality. He tones it down for the white audience and uses it to the fullest for the black audience.

Stokely Carmichael defines the effective speaker, in part, as "one who is able to hold the attention of the crowd." In this respect, he more than meets his own criterion. Possessed of a pleasant, flexible voice, much energy, and a flair for the dramatic, he has perfected a delivery that holds the listener at rapt, or--in the language of black youth--"rapped" attention.

CHAPTER VI

LEGITIMATIZING SOUL: STOKELY'S STYLE

After Stokely Carmichael was arrested at Greenwood, Mississippi, during the Meredith March, Public Safety Commissioner B. A. Hammond, sounding "almost fond" of Stokely, commented: "There was no problem but for Stokely's mouth."¹ "Stokely's mouth," which propelled him into the international spotlight has since been everything but shut. His language, both public and private,² is often vivid, sometimes volatile, and not infrequently vulgar.

Because of the educational and intellectual range of his audiences, Carmichael effected considerable stylistic adaptation. Writer-photographer Gordon Parks, who traveled with Carmichael for four months, noted Carmichael's ability to verbally adapt to widely diversified surroundings. Parks saw Carmichael at grass roots, "dressed in bib overalls," tramping "the backland of Lowndes County, Alabama, urging Negroes in a Southernhoney

¹Von Hoffman, *op. cit.*

²The writer has had the opportunity to observe Carmichael on two separate occasions and has conversed with him at length.

drawl, to register and vote."³ Shortly thereafter Parks watched Carmichael in Harlem "lining up 'cats' for the cause," using their language, "hip and very cool," and then, on the campuses and in the "intellectual salons" speaking with "eloquence and ease about his cause, quoting Sartre, Camus and Thoreau."⁴

Whenever he speaks Stokely Carmichael makes use of what shall be labeled black idiom. More esoteric than familiar slang, black idiom is part of the black culture with which Carmichael proudly identifies. Carmichael has strong feelings about the language he uses.

I feel very strongly that the lingo and dialect of black people in this country is valid and is *good* English, which is what most speech, grammar, and English teachers do not believe. When I speak and no matter to whom I speak, I feel that these slangs must be added.⁵

Carmichael also feels that the "lingo and dialect of black people in this country" should be taught. When asked why black children should be taught what they already know, he answered "because not to teach it implies that it is not valid."⁶

³Parks, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1967.

⁶*Ibid.*

Carmichael taught a speech class at the SNCC Work-Study Institute of Waveland, Mississippi, in 1965. SNCC staffer Jane Stenbridge called "Stokely's speech class" the "most important class."⁷ He began by putting the following sentences on the blackboard:

I digs wine.	I enjoy drinking cocktails.
The peoples wants freedom.	The people want freedom.
Whereinsoever the police- mens goes they causes troubles.	Anywhere the officers of the law go, they cause trouble.
I want to reddish to vote.	I want to register to vote.

To start the class off Carmichael asked: "What do you think about these sentences? Such as--The peoples wants freedom?"

Carmichael's class discussed the sentences at some length, saying such things as: "They won't accept 'reddish.' What is reddish? It's Negro dialect and it's something you eat." And, "You might as well face it, man! What we gotta do is go out and become middle class. If you can't speak good English, you don't have a car, a job or anything."

Carmichael: If society rejects you because you don't speak good English, should you learn to speak good English?

⁷Jacobs and Landau, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

Class: No! [They were] tired of doing what society says. Let society say reddish for awhile. People ought to just accept each other.⁸

The class concluded that "there is something called 'correct' and something called 'incorrect' English"; and that "most people in the country use some form of incorrect . . . English" and that these people are not embarrassed by their language but "it is made embarrassing by other people. . . ." Jane Stenbridge concluded that "people learn from someone they trust, who trusts them. This trust included Stokely's self-trust and trust, or seriousness about the subject matter."⁹

Although Stokely allowed his class to reach its own decisions regarding their use of the language, his own beliefs were strongly evidenced by his students.

SNCC has embraced all aspects of black culture. Ralph Featherstone, present Program Director of SNCC and holder of a Bachelor of Science degree in Speech Correction, feels that there is no reason why "standard" American speech should be used by Afro-Americans. Like Carmichael he feels that the "lingo and dialect" of black Americans is legitimate.¹⁰ SNCC also advocates a separate

⁸Jacobs and Landau, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹⁰Interview with Ralph Featherstone, December 22, 1968.

language for all black Americans, preferably Swahili or one of the African languages.¹¹

Charles V. Hamilton thinks that Carmichael's "precise" understanding of the "multifunction of rhetoric" was one of his stronger points as a speaker.¹²

Carmichael understood that there is one language, but there are many audiences. Frequently, he would turn on¹³ in the idiom, so to speak, "Hey, baby, that's out of sight, up tight, where you giggin' at?" He would do that not because he wanted to show off but simply because he was very much aware that one language has many different audiences and each audience is going to interpret this particular language from their own vantage point of experiences and from their own context. If I say, "Man, we ought to burn this town down tonight," some people would hear that in one way, others would hear it another. So when Willie Ricks and Stokely started articulating black power, it was very clear to those people in Greenwood what they meant. But the little ole lady in Dubuque, Iowa, or the insurance man in Oak Park panicked like hell because they saw *Mau Mau* walking down the streets.¹⁴

For his purposes, because as he saw it, he was addressing himself to black Americans, Stokely Carmichael did not much care about the "little ole lady in Dubuque."

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Interview with Charles V. Hamilton, November 2, 1967.

¹³Hamilton himself is here resorting to the vernacular. The phrase "turn on" means to perform with some degree of excellence.

¹⁴Interview with Charles V. Hamilton, November 2, 1967.

He said "when one builds a movement one appeals to one's people, not to those in the opposing camp."¹⁵

Carmichael characterizes his style by the "sharp, cutting remarks," and by the subtlety. He lends importance to the "nakedness" of the things he says and recognizes that "nakedness" may be disgusting to an audience. Out of a type of sympathy for his audiences ("you couldn't give a half hour speech of sheer reality because people would just get sick") he cushions his language with humor. This portion of the study will focus on these elements of Carmichael's style within the larger context of the use of the idiom which he values.

The examination of style will focus on Carmichael's extemporaneous approach to the black student audiences; his extemporaneous approach to the white student audience; his manuscript approach to the white student audience; his "grass roots" approach; and the reasons for and purpose of Stokely's style.

Extemporaneous Approach to the Black Student Audience

Stokely Carmichael is anxious that black students "stop being ashamed of being black and come on home." His language is direct and forceful. At Morgan State

¹⁵Speech at Michigan State University, February 9, 1967.

University he made considerable use of short declarative sentences:

Our mothers scrubbed floors. Our fathers were Uncle Toms. They didn't do that so that we could scrub floors and be Uncle Toms. They did that so that this generation can fight for Black Power and that is what we are about to do and that is what you ought to understand.

His use of the short declarative sentence was so pervasive in this speech that at times he seemed to establish a teacher-pupil relationship with the audience:

You see you define to contain. That's all you do. I define this as yellow. It means that this is yellow. This is not yellow. So that when I speak of yellow you know what I am talking about. I have contained this.

He continually used phrases such as "you ought to," "you should know that," and "understand that."

Carmichael seemed to have little fear of alienating his audience. In his attempts to make them see their need to "come on home" he continually upbraided them. He told them that the "trouble" with them was that they did not read "too much. If we could get the books like we get the bougaloo we would be up tight." The insult, alleviated with the use of the vernacular "up tight" probably worked to Carmichael's advantage.

Using one of his favorite terms, Carmichael labeled their black debutante balls "nonsensical." In an unveiled criticism of the quality of the school Carmichael asked: "Wouldn't it be better to take that

five hundred dollars and give it to Morgan so that you could begin to develop a good black institution?"

Sarcasm ran deep in Carmichael's criticism of the black fraternity system, traditionally an important part of the social life of black college students. He spoke of "something called Kappas," and of Alpha Kappa Alpha which, he said, was formed "for bluebloods only."

Carried away with his chastisement, Carmichael, in discussing black students' rejection of black beauty standards, set up illogical relationships: "Your campus, the black campuses of this country are becoming infested with wigs and Mustangs and you are to blame for it. You are to blame for it!"

Rhetorical questions were used extensively. At one point Carmichael preached:

What is your responsibility to your fellow black brothers? Why are you here? So that you can become a social worker so that you can kick down a door in the middle of the night to look for a pair of shoes? Is that what you came to college for? So that you can keep the kid in the ghetto school? So that you can ride up in a big Bonnevillle with your AKA sign on the back? Is that your responsibility? Is that your responsibility? What is your responsibility to the black people of Baltimore who are hungry for the knowledge you are supposed to have? Is it so that you can just get over?¹⁶ Do you forget that it is your sweat that put you where you are? Do you know that your black mothers scrubbed floors so that you can get here and the minute you get out you turn your backs on them? What is your

¹⁶Black idiom meaning "to succeed."

responsibility, black students? What is it? Is it to become a teacher so you can be programmed into a ghetto school so that you can get up and say, "It's a shame how our children are culturally deprived?" What is your definition of culture? Isn't it anything man-made? How the hell can I be culturally deprived? You deny my very existence to use that term!

Trite expressions are recurrent in Carmichael's use of the language. The phrase "crystal clear" was used extensively. He frequently used the phrase "lock, stock and barrel." He sometimes resorted to adaptation of well-worn language: "Is it for you now to reason why at a university, but to do and die?" It was in these instances that his style became stilted and often vague.

Not averse to the use of profanity on the platform, at Morgan State Carmichael said:

Do you have the guts to say hell no?

They don't give a damn about the violence among black people.

The Indians would beat the hell out of the white man.

Let one black boy throw one rock at some filthy grocery store and the whole damn National Guard comes into our ghetto.

I will not serve in the army. I will say hell no.

I will go to jail. To hell with this country!

And in a burst of poetic profanity he said: "So now what you try to do when you pick a homecoming queen, you look for the brightest thing that looks light, bright, and damn near white!"

Carmichael sometimes used superfluous language: "You must understand that very, very clearly in your mind." He also habitually began sentences with the unnecessary words "so that."

Clarity is not always one of Carmichael's stronger points. Statements such as: "Sartre writes the introduction to Mr. Fanon's book *The Wretched of the Earth*, who happens to be a black pragmatist-existentialist," were practically unintelligible. Another example: "So that you are now at a vast black university where you have already incorporated in your thinking violence and here you are marching around every Friday or Thursday or whatever it is with your shoes spit shined 'til three o'clock in the morning marching with a gun in your hand learning all about how to shoot."

What Carmichael calls his "subtlety" is much in evidence in this speech. When relating his frequently used cowboy-Indian, massacre-victory example he said: "in a massacre you kill them with a knife and everybody knows that's foul." The inference relates vaguely to a stereotype. When discussing Rudyard Kipling and the "white man's burden" his subtlety became sarcasm: "So they got all these nice white people of good will who wanted to do well." Carmichael's references to the Negro leadership

as "so-called" leaders (also a practice of Malcolm X) is something less than a subtle inference.

Carmichael uses a good deal of ungrammatical language. This is part of the "nitty gritty," "tell it like it is" style. It, along with the use of black idiom, is probably the aspect of his style which appeals most to black youth--and probably evokes the most enthusiastic response from them. When expounding his ideas on the Vietnam issue, with a combination of ungrammatical usage and oral graffiti he said: "Those little Chinese, Vietnamese, yellow people ain't got sense enough to know they want their democracy, we are going to fight for them, give it to them because Santa Claus is still alive!" He warned: "Don't tell me about going to Vietnam to learn nothing!" In a vivid illustration of an impossible situation he said: "If we get robbed you can call the policemen 'til you turn white. He ain't coming." And on the subject of black American self-respect he said: "We have to learn to love and respect ourselves. That's where it should begin. That's where it must begin, because if we don't love us, ain't nobody going to love us."

With black audiences Carmichael's humor is usually at the expense of the white man. When speaking of former President Eisenhower he said: "Dwight wasn't too smart."

In this instance the use of the first name becomes a kind of insult. Carmichael went on to explain: "In our neighborhood, because he talked so well, we used to call him the white Joe Louis."

In another instance when discussing the white man's interpretation of his term Black Power within the context of his "you want to marry my daughter" example Carmichael said: "Later for you!¹⁷ I am master of my own term. If Black Power means violence to you that is your problem as is marrying off your daughter."

Within the context of one speech Stokely Carmichael is apt to run a stylistic gamut. In the same speech in which he refers to individuals as "cats" and uses phrases such as "You dig it?" and "Ain't that a gas?" he ends with eloquence:

When we began to crawl they sent six million people to an oven and we blinked our eyes. And when we walked they sent our uncles to Korea. And we grew up in a cold war immune to humanity. We, this generation, must save the world.

Extemporaneous Approach to the White Student Audience

Carmichael, the phrase maker, emerged at Berkeley. He began his address by telling his audience that it was an honor to be in the "white intellectual ghetto of the

¹⁷The speaker means that he will totally ignore the confusion of white society.

West." Although the comment was applauded, a reviewer found the remark an "insult" to the University.¹⁸ During his opening remarks he informed his listeners that he was not about to be caught up in the "intellectual masturbation" of the question of Black Power. That, he said, was the function of "advertisers who call themselves reporters." Later, in refutation of the concept, he said that for six years the country had been "feeding us a thalidomide drug of integration." Later he referred to white activists as "Pepsi generation liberals who come alive in the black community."

Dealing extensively with stereotypes, both black and white, Carmichael maintained: "The question of whether or not we are individually suppressed is nonsensical and is a downright lie. We are oppressed as a group because we are black, not because we are lazy, not because we're apathetic, not because we're stupid, not because we smell, not because we eat watermelon and have good rhythm." White stereotypes included comments such as: "You, Mr. Jones, do what I tell you to do and then we'll let you sit at the table with us." Another example: "The question is, are we willing to be concerned about the black people who will never get to Berkeley, who will never get to Harvard, and

¹⁸"The Frightened Intellectuals," *Reporter*, November 17, 1966, p. 22.

cannot get an education so you'll never get a chance to rub shoulders with them and say 'Well he's as good as we are, he's not like the others!'" Carmichael satirized black stereotypes with the statement: "Even after rebellion when some black brothers stole some bricks and bottles, 10,000 have to pay for the crime because when the white policemen come in anybody who's black is arrested because we all look alike."

Carmichael's propensity for name-calling was also much in evidence. He referred to Ronald Reagan and Pat Brown as "two clowns who waste time parrying with each other rather than talking about the problems that are facing people in this state." He later suggested that "new institutions" be built to eliminate "all idiots like them." Carmichael asserted that "the men who run this country are sick" and later referred to "a racist named McNamara," "a fool named Rusk," and "a buffoon named Johnson." Robert Kennedy and Wayne Morse were termed "supposedly liberal cats." Hubert Humphrey was referred to as a "political chameleon." The U.S. Congress was "some boys." The Peace Corps was termed "modern day missionaries." The United States, he said, is "a nation of thieves," which has "stolen everything it has, beginning with black people."

Using himself as the personification of all black Americans Carmichael declared: "I am black, therefore I

am. Not that I am black and I must go to college to prove myself. I am black, therefore I am. And don't deprive me of anything and say to me that you must go to college before you gain access to X, Y, and Z." Personification was again evident in Carmichael's statement: "I knew that I could vote and that it wasn't a privilege, it was my right. Every time I tried I was shot, killed or jailed, beaten or economically deprived."

Carmichael dealt with the semantics of the Black Power slogan: "If we said *Negro Power* nobody would get scared. Everybody would support it. If we said *Power for Colored People*, everybody would be for that. But it is the word 'black' that bothers people in this country, and that's their problem, not mine!"

In another instance, when discussing the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, Carmichael played with words:

In Lowndes County we developed something called the Lowndes County Freedom Organization. It is a political party. The Alabama law says that if you have a party you must have an emblem. We chose for the emblem a black panther, a beautiful black animal which symbolizes the strength and dignity of black people. An animal that never strikes back until he's backed so far into the wall he's got nothing to do but spring out. And when he springs he does not stop. Now there is a party in Alabama called the Alabama Democratic Party. It is all white. It has as its emblem a white rooster and the words "white supremacy for the right." Now the gentlemen of the press, because they're advertisers and because most of them are white and because they're produced by

that white institution, never call the Alabama Democratic Party the White Cock Party? It is clear to me that that just points out America's problem with sex and color, not our problem.

The idiom was used frequently. He used phrases such as "trick bag," "politically jiving with our lives," "Ain't that a gas?" and "Get hip to that." Some of Carmichael's "favorite" terms were recurrent. They included the word "nonsensical" and the words "hook up." He also did not neglect profane expressions such as "shoot the hell out of all the white people [in South Africa];" "if the Vietnamese don't want democracy, well damn it, we'll just wipe them the hell out"; and "Hell no!"

Slick humor was frequently employed. When discussing the poverty program Carmichael said: "they come into our ghettos and they Head Start, Upward Lift, Bootstrap, and Upward Bound us into white society." Another example: "The assumptions of this country are that if someone is poor, he is poor because of his own individual blight, or he wasn't born on the right side of town, he had too many children, he went in the army too early, his or her father was a drunk, didn't care about school, and generally was a mistake." A third example: "I look at Dr. King on television every single day and I say to myself 'now there is a man who is desperately needed in this country. There is a man who is full of compassion.' But

every time I see Lyndon on television I say 'Martin, baby, you got a long way to go.'"

As is the case when he speaks extemporaneously to a black audience, Carmichael's style was simple and forceful: "It is ironic to talk about civilization in this country. This country is uncivilized. It needs to be civilized. It needs to have questions of civilization raised. We must urge you to fight now to be the leaders of today, not tomorrow." He frequently used repetition: "Black people cut themselves every night in the ghetto, don't anybody talk about nonviolence! Lyndon Baines Johnson is busy bombing the hell out of Vietnam, don't anybody talk about nonviolence! White people beat up black people every day, don't anybody talk about non-violence!"

In general, Carmichael's extemporaneous speeches before black and white student audiences are quite similar in style. The same stylistic elements: forcefulness, simplicity, and varying degrees of idiomatic usage are present.

Manuscript Approach to the White Audience

At Michigan State University, Carmichael read his "Toward Black Liberation." At the beginning of the speech he addressed himself to several rows of black students

seated together in the predominately white audience: "I'm glad to see you're down front." For the moment the action separated both the speaker and the black students from the white audience. A few seconds later Carmichael addressed himself to the entire audience: "Good afternoon. I'm glad to be here at Michigan State University." Then, alluding to the remains of a record-setting snowfall, he added: "I've come to the conclusion that the first need of Black Power is to get rid of white snow." Carmichael explained that he was going to read an article which he had written; then, attacking his detractors, he accused the American public of being incapable to deal with realities. The American public, he said, could not "deal with SNCC's articulation of its political philosophy and resorted to *ad hominem* attacks." Were this not the situation, Carmichael added, "maybe the discussion could be fruitful."

Illustrating the "continuous record of the distortion and omission" in the "chronicle" of the "dealings" between the white man and "red and black men," Carmichael deviated from the text to provide a frequently-used example.

A good example would be the westerns we see on the idiot box. There is a fight going on between the Indians and the white folks, and the Indians are winning, so they send for the cavalry. Here come the cavalry, all proper, they just got out

of riding class. They shoot up all the Indians and they return to the fort and say: "We had a victory today, we killed all the Indians!" And the women and children run around and clap and kiss the lieutenant and he rides away with the most beautiful chick. Now, when the reverse happens, when the Indians beat *them* up they come back to the fort dragging themselves: "Those dirty Indians, they massacred us today." Now you see that's very important because a massacre is less honorable than is a victory. Everyone knows that because the Indians used to kill them with knives and the cavalry would kill the Indians with guns, and everyone knows that its better to die by a gun than by a knife. So that because white people could define the terms of that they defined a massacre as something dirty, something foul, so the poor Indians couldn't win no matter how they tried.

Relating the "cynically undermined" 1964 Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party defeat, Carmichael deviated from the text to refer to "Batman" [Lyndon Baines Johnson] and his "boy wonder H. H. Humphrey." Carmichael went on to explain that

in the black community we call H. H. Humphrey "Handkerchief Head" Humphrey. That's a despicable yes-man. Did you see him on television during the State of the "Johnson" Message to the country? (I call it the State of the "Johnson" Message because I've never seen a man quote himself three times from his speeches publicly.) But everytime Lyndon said something my man¹⁹ [Humphrey] went *uh-huh*, *uh-huh*, *uh-huh*. In SNCC we call them Batman and Robin because they run a *camp* government.

Criticizing the "hollow mockery" of the House of Representatives "vulgar display of political racism" in

¹⁹The term "my man," as applied to Hubert Humphrey, is ghetto idiom. It does not infer any identification between Carmichael and Humphrey.

not unseating the regular Mississippi delegation "which had been selected through a process which systematically excluded 450,000 voting age blacks," Carmichael added the sentiment: "Yet a month ago they were able to displace Mr. Powell because he spent a lot of money with a lot of style."

When discussing the SNCC concept of institutionalized versus individual racism, Carmichael instructed the audience that the concept was "very, very important." This practice is habitual with Carmichael, and is recurrent throughout texts of his speeches.

Often deviating from his text to briefly insert his thoughts on a given subject, Carmichael, when discussing the "20 million black people comprising ten percent of this nation," added parenthetically, "That's what they tell us. I think they're lying. I think we are more."

When relating news media misinterpretation of the sit-in movement Carmichael provided another frequently-used example.

While we were waging our battles in the south in the early sixties, they [the press] were interpreting it for us. And I used to watch the editorial twins of America, Chuck and what's his name? Huntley and Brinkley. They would say: "Negroes were marching in Mississippi today. They were beaten down by Jim Clark's posse, run across the street, ripped, shot at, but they're still marching to integrate!" The next day I'd see them they'd say: "Negroes have now been joined by their northern Negroes from the north who have come down

to help them march. They were beaten by Ross Barnett, cattle-whipped, horse-whipped, horses running over them, but they're still marching to integrate!" And then I decided, since I had a little work in logic and philosophy that the logical conclusion of that was that I left New York to come to Mississippi to sit next to Barnett's daughter or to hold hands with Jim Clark. Obviously I never did that. I went to Mississippi and Alabama to render those crackers impotent over my land, over my land, over my land!

The formal and scholarly language of "Toward Black Liberation" seems to force Carmichael to want to deviate from it as much as possible. When he does, his language, especially in contrast to that of the text, is strikingly informal. His manuscript style is actually a type of verbal schizophrenia. A good example of this is to be found in the instance in which Carmichael interrupted his discussion of "decrepit, over-crowded, under-staffed, inadequately equipped and funded" black schools. Dealing with "sickening realities," Carmichael said:

And this country tells us that we should focus our attention on the fifteen percent because the eighty-five percent is expendable. You know, in order to get into a white school if you're black and you're going to integrate you have to be an A-student. Did you know that? We can't send the worst of our race to represent us. Besides, white people won't accept the bad ones. We've got to send the ones who they approve of. So they take our best, the best that we have in our schools and send them to sit with animals whose parents throw rocks, bottles, and cigarette butts at them while they walk up to come and sit next to their kids. That's integration in this country. And we have just said we need our best with us, let white society civilize itself, it's *their* problem.

Immediately changing his tone from one of anger to that of the laughing, hip philosopher he added: "They ought to bring their missionaries back from Africa and send them into their own schools to teach them about Love and Jesus Christ. If they ever taught them though, they'd tear up this country, because He was revolutionary." And then in the typically Carmichael manner he asked rhetorically: "Dig it?"

In another instance, when refuting the "only ten percent" argument, Carmichael said he could not understand the relevance of the argument "since no one is talking about taking over the country, because God knows we wouldn't know what to do with this monster."

Throughout the speech Carmichael repeatedly used several of his stylistic hallmarks. They included the terms "so-called Negro leaders," "crystal clear," and "hook-up."

It is interesting to note that throughout the original text of "Toward Black Liberation" the word Negro is used numerous times. During delivery, however, Carmichael automatically used the words "black," "blacks," or "black people," instead of Negro. The only times Carmichael used the term Negro was when discussing the "so-called Negro leaders," or the Negro middle class.

As is a frequent practice Carmichael ended this speech by leaning into the microphone and, in the manner of ghetto youth, saying: "I want to thank you." The same examples and figures of speech used to enliven the manuscript speech at Michigan State were used at white colleges and universities throughout the country.

Carmichael does not come into his stylistic own until the question-answer session of a manuscript talk. This is where he "plays with" a white audience. Although he had expected simplistic questions from the Michigan State audience,²⁰ the queries were generally perceptive. Obviously having a good time, Carmichael let the question-answer period go on even though he was rushing to meet a plane. His replies to questions were direct, thoughtful, and often witty. There were two replies which evoked the most enthusiastic audience response.

When asked what relevance he gave the Moynihan report on the black American family Carmichael answered:

I got a thing about white folks talkin' 'bout my mama--playing the dozens with [he pronounced it "wit"] me, you know. That's what that report was all about.

Carmichael's tone was tough, angry. His language was ghetto idiom. Softening his tone he continued:

²⁰In an interview earlier that day he had instructed the writer to "watch" the simplistic questions asked.

I think that those white cats ought to function on white society and the disruption there. I think that the problems we have are long, social problems but that the real effect comes from the outside community, the white community, which exploits and oppresses us more than from internal because we don't have anything to control anything that exists in our communities so that they can program us so that's what happens.

Becoming vague, Carmichael seemed to grope for the thread which would lead him in the desired direction. He continued:

And they program us so we end up in Vietnam and then they say well, they can't find jobs. Of course they can't find jobs. They don't provide any. And then they tell you, well the best way to enjoy life and equality is in the army on the front lines in Vietnamdumdum.

"Vietnamdumdum" evoked only titters. Carmichael still had not found the thread. He continued:

That's because we're programmed that way. And that's precisely how white society has programmed the ghettos of this country.

Finally hitting upon what he wanted Carmichael rushed enthusiastically into it:

Because any black man in the country who has been aggressive *must* be castrated by white America, *must* be castrated! Check out your history. *All* the black men who were aggressive were lynched, physically in the old days. Then you had the destruction of Du Bois, making it impossible for him to function in this country; Paul Robeson; Richard Wright; check 'um all out. Let's not talk about Marcus Garvey; let alone the *death* of Malcolm X; and then let's bring it down front to aggressive Mr. Powell and finally,

Carmichael was shouting now, running it down:

the *greatest* Muhammad *Ali*!

During the sustained applause Carmichael said, "That's all right, that's all right." It must be assumed that Carmichael was talking about the truth of his statement, not the fact that he had come up with it. He continued:

 Their job has always been to castrate aggressive black men so that the only people left would be the females and then they turn around and blame us for it.

With a wide grin and a slow drawl Carmichael added the crowning comment: "If they wouldn't castrate us, we'd function." This was followed by thunderous applause and laughter. Carmichael had his desired reaction.

On September 6, 1966, in Atlanta, Georgia, a white policeman shot an unarmed black man when he ran to avoid arrest on suspicion of automobile theft. The act took place in Summerhill, an Atlanta ghetto. Summerhill residents had gathered, in an angry mood, at the home of the injured man. Several hours later Stokely Carmichael was persuaded to join them by a news reporter for a local radio station. The people asked Carmichael for assistance and Carmichael agreed to return later that afternoon. During Carmichael's absence, the crowd became more unruly. When a patrol wagon driven by a white policeman struck a pregnant black woman the crowd began throwing rocks and bottles at policemen.

Later that day Carmichael and a number of others were arrested and placed under \$10,000 bond. Network television reported that Carmichael was being held on a charge of insurrection for which the penalty in the state of Georgia is death.

After his release Carmichael brought suit against the mayor of Atlanta. On January 16, 1967, the case of Stokely Carmichael, *et al.*, plaintiffs, v. Ivan Allen, Jr., Mayor of the City of Atlanta, *et al.*, defendants, was decided in favor of Carmichael. The case found four Georgia Code Sections null and void.²¹ At Michigan State, Carmichael was asked what role he played in the Atlanta incident. Almost choking on water he was drinking at the time, Carmichael explained:

It was both an active and a passive role, but the passive role was more powerful. When the rebellion broke out, because a white cop shot a black youth, we went over and told black people, [Carmichael assumed a nitty-gritty attitude] "You don't have to take this *any*-more. Let us *pro*-test."

Carmichael is adept at drawing audience response. The initial response occurred here, in the form of subdued giggles.

So the white police, when they heard that we were gonna protest, came out with their machine guns and they brought out their armed guards with

²¹See *Federal Supplement*, Volume 267, Number 3, p. 985.

their helmets, and they got the people, you know, more upset. And they started to issue orders and the people had just had enough. So they started to riot. Now I was right in the middle of it, didn't throw a rock, didn't throw a brick, stood right by the policeman and said very nicely, "if you want to stop this take your cracker cops out of here. It'll stop." But they didn't listen. Oh they just kept ordering, so the whole thing went. Then they arrested me for inciting to riot.

That remark evoked prolonged laughter and applause during which Carmichael added: "*Put me in jail.*" He continued:

Now here's where my passive role became important, 'cause when I was in jail, that's when they *really* started to riot. They had these signs saying "Get SNCC people out of jail or we will tear up the city." And it spread to the next side. So they came running into jail and *begged* me to get out and I told 'um [pause] "hell, no!"

During the sustained applause Carmichael repeated "hell, no" and continued:

They had a \$10,000 bond on me and the progressive racist sent his lackeys in and they dropped the charge of inciting to riot three days after I was in jail. Your good news media didn't tell you that. And to save face they charged me with something called rioting. Now that's just what we wanted 'cause I wanted to get these white folks on a charge like that because you see after every major rebellion in these cities what happens is that when they've finally quieted down the natives they come running in and they pick up any native they see 'cause we all look alike and they arrest us for rioting and rioting is a very vague term. So when I got out I brought an injunction against the city of Atlanta called Carmichael v. Ivan Allen, *et al.* *Et al* is for the other racists. And we just won that injunction which means that the ninety people they arrested in that rebellion they must let loose, scot free. And that case

now sets a precedent. It means that during a rebellion when the police go in to arrest somebody they cannot arrest them for rioting. They must say "Mr. Jones threw a brick," or "Mr. Johnson beat up a policeman." They must have specific acts so they can't have their mass concentration camps.

After prolonged applause Carmichael added: "The newspapers didn't say that, but you can write to Atlanta and ask them for the case. It was just handed down by a Federal court."

The audience liked Carmichael and Carmichael gave every indication of liking his audience. When there was no more time he seemed reluctant as he said, "Guess that's it," nodded his head and exited to a second standing ovation.

A student newspaper writer observed that Carmichael "made it almost possible to believe that he would make it in spite of everything, almost possible to forget . . . the near impossibility of what he was trying to do."²² Carmichael's easy manner, captivating delivery, and stylistic flair probably had much to do with that impression.

Extemporaneous Grass Roots Approach

At Grand Rapids, Michigan, Carmichael's style ranged from eloquent phrases to ghetto idiom. The outstanding element in this talk was Carmichael's use of

²²Stephen Badrich, *The Paper*, East Lansing, Michigan, February 20, 1967, p. 4.

satire. Through satire Carmichael, often simplistically, characterized the white man and the white man's conception of and treatment of the black man. Throughout the speech runs a heavy strain of Negritude.

At the outset Carmichael was subdued. He calmly outlined his major points, and as he began the speech he only occasionally used terms such as "honkey" and phrases such as "if Niggers get smart, you kill them." He used a type of inversion when he explained that Congress had to pass a civil rights bill of white people "telling them we could move anyplace we wanted to move and don't go to acting and showing your color!"

When discussing his concept of definitions, Carmichael dealt with semantics. He explained that he always says "white western society" and "never western civilization, because that's a misnomer." As an afterthought he added: "As a matter of fact, that's a lie!"

Carmichael's everpresent profanity is in evidence ("bombing the hell out of North Vietnam") as is his use of trite language ("scot free" and "lock, stock, and barrel") and his sarcasm ("our so-called leaders").

When relating the "lies of the white man to the black man," Carmichael denied the stereotype of laziness. The real question was one of power. He said that

black people who believed that working hard would bring success were believing in "a lot of junk." Illustrating his assertion that black people are the "hardest working people in this country," Carmichael said black mothers not only care for their own homes but also "Miss Ann's" [the white woman]. He also employed a humorous figure of speech once used by Malcolm X: "We are the sharecroppers in Mississippi from kin to kin--can't see in the morning to can't see at night."²³

Carmichael thought the white man's "lie" of achieving equality through education was "the biggest trick bag they ever put us in." He then referred to his audience as "man," a term he often uses in private conversation: "We began to believe that, man." Carmichael sometimes used nebulous and peculiar stylistic devices: "We started to send our children to school and all that, boom, boom, boom." He then switched to hip idiom: "And if we had any sense we would have just stopped to dig, you know." And concluded with ghetto idiom: "If I come out of college with a college diploma and a white boy comes out with a high school diploma, he gets a higher paying job from the jump." Playing with words, Carmichael

²³See the Appendix of this volume.

insisted that the only reason the white man wanted the black man to go to school was so that he could "brain, I mean, *whitewash* our minds."

Carmichael frequently uses the word "period" as a means of adding weight to a thought: "Fanon said that an educational system is nothing but the reinforcement of the values and ideas of a given society, period."

Carmichael asked his audience to let him show them what "they have done to us." Explaining how the educational system is geared for blacks to accept white superiority he said: "We send our kids to school and they give them these books, Tom, Dick, and Jane. Little readers." Using repetition for effect he added "Tom is white, Dick is white, Jane is white," and then with a touch of the Carmichael talent for the ridiculous (sufficient to bring laughter from himself as he said it) he added: "even their dog *Spot* is white." In a more sober mood, but very much in the Carmichael manner he said: "They have degraded us to the point where we accept white superiority by definition and black inferiority by looking in the mirror."

To his black audiences Carmichael taught history--with the Stokely touch. This is where Carmichael employed all levels of satire--and where he drew his most enthusiastic response.

Declaring that the white man had "lied" about history, Carmichael told of Hannibal who "beat up the Romans to death." Stokely said Hannibal was never "in the books and when they put him in the movies they got a honkey named Victor Mature playing the part." Carmichael often became so emotional that he seemed to risk offending his audience with phrases such as "if you had any sense."

Continuing the history lesson, Carmichael told of Toussaint L'Overture who "beat up" Napoleon and "sent him back to France crying like a baby." Making use of obscure information Carmichael pictured Napoleon returning to France to a wife who had been impregnated by a pigmy. Carmichael laughed: "We had 'um on both sides!"

Slipping in and out of vernacular usage Carmichael talked of Kwame Nkrumah ("who is a brilliant black man and a beautiful black leader. Don't believe that junk they are telling you about. He is out of sight!"); Christopher Columbus ("nothing was happening until some honkey came along"); and Cecil Rhodes ("stole our gold and our values.")

Carmichael's satirization was not limited to the white man. He also satirized black men and the white man's motives in connection with black men. Carmichael talked of Booker T. Washington, "Super Tom," and George Washington Carver, "*Ignorant* Super Tom." According to Carmichael,

Washington used his mouth for only two things: "to eat and say 'yassuh.'" George Washington Carver

was so stupid he invented the peanut and all the peanut butter factories today are owned by white folks. He loved them so much he *gave* them the patent. And the reason . . . they let us read about him is that if they hadn't I guess white folks would be eating *jelly* sandwiches all their lives.

Carmichael complained that such figures as Frederick Douglass, Dr. W. E. Du Bois, J. A. Rogers, Lerone Bennett, and LeRoi Jones, "the Demark Veseys" and "the Nat Turners" have been excluded from history. He added that the "history books won't even *mention* Malcolm X." Carmichael believes white America has "given us nothing but a bunch of Uncle Toms who bow and scrape and every time white folks say 'jump' they say "how high, boss?'"

Carmichael often purposely used ungrammatical construction as when he said, "Now about fighting back. Ain't no need for anybody to get upset about fighting back anymore because it is already established." This is a means of achieving what is called the "nitty gritty" of black communication. It was invariably followed by a direct, forceful statement such as: "If a honkey lays his hand on one of us, before God gets the news, he's dead."

Another example is to be found in Carmichael's comments on the Vietnam war. He addressed black mothers,

saying: "You cannot send your sons to Vietnam to shoot those cats. They ain't done nothing to you." Then, as is his style, he repeated: "They ain't *done* nothing to you." This was followed by a caution not to "let them bring in an irrelevant issue about communist aggression. Tell them you want to talk about *racist* aggression. That's what we want to talk about!" Slipping into ghetto idiom, Carmichael told blacks that white Americans "won't come in on that issue because they are wrong from the jump."

As he talks to blacks Carmichael, in his zeal, is apt to become almost insulting. He seems to rely on the rapport he has built with the audience to overcome any possible adverse reaction to his comments in these instances. For example, at Grand Rapids he said: "Now what do you know about communism? You don't know what a communist is." Following this type of comment he will use a humorous device. In this instance he said: "If one was sitting next to you--" and concluded with a theatrical gesture (double take).

The ultimate aim of Carmichael's style with black audiences is cohesiveness. He continually refers to all black Americans as forming *the* black community. He sarcastically reminds black audiences that "we all look alike and they can't tell one rioter from the next one." His speeches before black audiences end with a call for black unity.

Legitimatizing Soul

In order to fully comprehend the style of Stokely Carmichael, and certainly necessary to any understanding of the man and what he is trying to do, it is necessary to know something of Afro-American culture and of the history of the black American's rejection and acceptance of his culture.

Richard Wright, in 1937, wrote of the "cultural barrenness" of black Americans.

After I had outlived the shocks of childhood, after the habit of reflection had been born in me, I used to mull over . . . how bare our traditions, how hollow our memories, how lacking we were in those intangible sentiments that bind man to man, and how shallow was even our despair. After I had learned other ways of life I used to brood upon the unconscious irony of those who felt that Negroes led so passionate an existence! . . .

Whenever I thought of the essential bleakness of black life in America, I knew that Negroes had never been allowed to catch the full spirit of Western civilization, that they lived somehow in it but not of it. And when I brooded upon the cultural barrenness of black life, I wondered if clean, positive tenderness, love, honor, loyalty, and the capacity to remember were native to man. I asked myself if these human qualities were not fostered, won, struggled and suffered for, preserved in ritual from one generation to another.²⁴

Wright composed those lines during a great void in black consciousness in America. Marcus Garvey, during the early twenties, preached black pride and dignity and

²⁴Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (New York: The New American Library, 1963), p. 45.

fostered black culture. Garvey was deported in 1927 and it was not until Malcolm X emerged from the Black Muslims in 1964 that any black man again extolled the virtues of black culture and the black lifestyle to large numbers of black Americans. Writer Claude Brown explained that it was Malcolm who caused black people to become "afflicted with his pride. Malcolm X was light-brown skinned and screaming he was black, black, black and would rather die than be otherwise. Integrationist doctors, lawyers, teachers, ministers also began to reclaim the precious blackness."²⁵

Stokely Carmichael followed in the footsteps of Malcolm X. Carmichael is one of those who does not agree with Wright that black life in America is intrinsically "bleak," or that Afro-American culture is "barren." Carmichael is one of those who happens not to believe that blacks should "catch the full spirit of Western civilization" if catching the full spirit means renouncing black culture. Carmichael believes that

[t]he racial and cultural personality of the black community must be preserved and that community win its freedom while preserving its cultural integrity. Integrity includes a pride--in the sense of self-acceptance, not

²⁵Claude Brown, "Nobody Worries About Integration Anymore: A View from Inside the Black World," *Look*, June 27, 1967, p. 28.

chauvinism--in being black, in the historical attainments and contributions of black people.²⁶

Wright speaks of the lack of "those intangible sentiments that bind man to man." The new wave of black consciousness today insists that it is these same intangible sentiments--the love of things black--that indeed *do* bind black men. And a large part of Stokely Carmichael's message and style attempts to instill in blacks a pride--to replace the traditional shame--of their lifestyle.

On Forty-third Street on the South Side of Chicago stands what is termed a "soulful monument" to certain Afro-Americans. It is a wall adorned with the portraits of black Americans who have "steered large masses of black people away from the 'assimilation complex' bag that Du Bois talked about and guided them to the positive course of *digging* themselves."²⁷ Among the black Americans who appear on the Wall of Respect are Du Bois, Garvey, Malcolm X, and Stokely Carmichael. "The real genius of the Wall is that it generates African-American self-pride. No matter what happens to Chicago, the Wall is sure to stand."²⁸

²⁶Carmichael and Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

²⁷Al Calloway, "Soul Heroes," *Esquire*, April, 1968, p. 83.

²⁸*Ibid.*

The *need* for Afro-American self-pride can perhaps only be understood when one fully comprehends that black Americans have always been taught that they have no culture--that they are "culturally deprived." Black children are taught little or nothing of black contributions to the development of this nation. And black culture has traditionally been something of which to be ashamed rather than something in which to take pride.

Stokely Carmichael is one of those who wants his people to realize that Afro-American culture *is* a culture and a valid one. Only one creation of Afro-American culture, jazz, America's only cultural contribution to the world of the arts, has been recognized by white America. Stokely Carmichael wants blacks to feel that all aspects of their culture are valid. And this includes everything from cuisine (soul food) to black language.

Because he believes that, in his words, "the lingo and dialect" of black people is valid and because he is promoting pride Carmichael often uses various strata of this language on the speaker's platform. He is the first major black protest speaker to do so. Although Malcolm X, a man of the masses, had at his command the language of the masses, he chose to use very little of it on the speaker's platform.

In his *Autobiography* Malcolm X wrote of ghetto language:

I knew that the ghetto people knew that I never left the ghetto in spirit, and I never left it physically any more than I had to. I had a ghetto instinct; for instance, I could feel if tension was beyond normal in a ghetto audience. And I could speak and understand the ghetto's language. There was an example of this that always flew into my mind every time I heard some of the "big name" Negro "leaders" declaring they "spoke for" the ghetto black people.

After a Harlem street rally, one of these downtown "leaders" and I were talking when we were approached by a Harlem hustler. To my knowledge I'd never seen this hustler before; he said to me, approximately: "Hey, baby! I dig you holding this all-originales scene at the track . . . I'm going to lay a vine under the Jew's balls for a dime--got to give you a play. . . . Got the shorts out here trying to scuffle up on some bread. . . . Well, my man, I'll get on, got to go peck a little, and cop me some z's--." And the hustler went on up Seventh Avenue.

I would never have given it another thought, except that this downtown "leader" was standing, staring after that hustler, looking as if he'd just heard Sanskrit. He asked me what had been said, and I told him. The hustler had said he was aware that the Muslims were holding an all-black bazaar at Rockland Palace, which is primarily a dancehall. The hustler intended to pawn a suit for ten dollars and attend and patronize the bazaar. He had very little money but he was trying hard to make some. He was going to eat, then he would get some sleep.

The point I am making is that, as a "leader," I could talk over the ABC, CBS, or NBC microphones, at Harvard or at Tuskegee; I could talk with the so-called "middle class" Negro and the ghetto blacks (whom all the other leaders just talked about).²⁹

²⁹Malcolm X (with the assistance of Alex Haley), *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965), p. 310.

In an essay entitled "The Language of Soul," Claude Brown explained that "Spoken Soul" or "Colored English" is an honest vocal portrayal of Black America, the roots of which are more than 300 years old.³⁰ Because the early Black Americans had problems learning English and because the topics of their conversations were restricted by slave owners, the slaves created a "semi-clandestine vernacular in the way that the criminal underworld has historically created words to confound law-enforcement agents."³¹ Brown explains that with the aid of "colloquialisms, malapropisms, battered and fractured grammar, and a considerable amount of creativity, Colored English, the sound of soul, evolved."³²

Today some segments of white society have adopted some of the language of soul. Some of the less esoteric phraseology has even found its way into such publications as *Time* and *Newsweek*. These quickly disappear from the black community, however.

Whenever a soul term becomes popular with whites it is common practice for the soul folks to relinquish it. The reasoning is that "if white people can use it, it isn't hip enough for me." To many soul brothers there is just no such creature as a genuinely hip white person. And

³⁰Brown, "The Language of Soul," *op. cit.*, p. 88.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*

there is nothing more detrimental to anything hip than to have it fall into the square hands of the hopelessly unhip.³³

Brown suggests that perhaps American colleges should offer courses in the "Vocal History of Black America," or "Spoken Soul."³⁴ Carmichael agrees with this point of view.

Summary

There are levels of black language. Indeed, some of it is used today by whites as well as blacks. The more esoteric levels of the language are used only by blacks. For all that he made more use of black language than had any major black protest speaker and never speaks without including it, Carmichael does not make use of the type of language employed by H. Rap Brown, his successor. Brown's language is that of the "true man of the masses."³⁵ Stokely Carmichael operates within certain linguistic boundaries because, as Charles V. Hamilton observed, he understands that there are many audiences to which he has to adapt and although he always uses the language, Carmichael tones it down for white audiences. He plays up

³³*Ibid.*

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 162.

³⁵Interview with Ralph Featherstone, December 22, 1967.

the language with black audiences because he is attempting to effect identification between himself and his black audiences. Carmichael appeals to his people to band together and accept themselves and their culture as he has. On the speaker's platform he chose to use the language of soul as an outward show of acceptance of black culture.

In private conversation Stokely Carmichael is liable to say anything. He habitually calls both males and females "man." During a first interview he called the writer "baby." When asked if he minded showering in a men's dormitory on the day he spoke at Michigan State University, Carmichael answered: "I don't give a fuck where I shower, really." One could only assume that Carmichael actually did not care. Later Carmichael told the Chairman of Michigan State University's chapter of Friends of SNCC that he should have arranged a meeting with Michigan State's black students. When told that there was no place to hold such a meeting, Carmichael suggested: "Somebody's house, man." When told that that was impossible, Carmichael suggested: "A dormitory *room*, brother." When told that he did not understand the reluctance of many black students, an exasperated Carmichael stormed: "Well, fuck 'um. Why should I waste my time?"

In June, 1967, Carmichael was to have granted the writer an interview. On the scheduled date of the interview Carmichael was in the Prattville, Alabama, jail. Reached by telephone a month later he said: "Look here, baby, I'm sorry I didn't make that interview. I was sitting in jail saying 'the honkey sure can mess up a man's program.'"

On the speaker's platform and in private conversation Stokely Carmichael uses the language of the ghetto. Carmichael is one of those black American's who reclaimed his blackness. Like many black Americans, Carmichael had experienced his period of shame of being black. When he reclaimed his culture, he embraced it in total. And when he uses the "lingo and dialect of black people" he is injecting a form of blackness into the American mainstream, saying, in effect, accept us *on* and *with* our terms.

CHAPTER VII

CARMICHAEL'S POLITICO-PHILOSOPHIC PREMISES

As spokesman for SNCC, Stokely Carmichael spent one year voicing that organization's philosophy and objectives to the United States and to the world. His politico-philosophic premises were also SNCC's premises. SNCC believes that the United States is basically racist, exploitative, and imperialistic.¹ The organization sees itself as a resistance movement against "the degrading social, economic and cultural effects of our society."² It was from this position that SNCC devised Carmichael's rhetorical program.³ Within the organization all decisions are made collectively, as such SNCC Chairmen are always spokesmen *for* the organization.⁴ While Carmichael's speech premises were gleaned from a number of persons, he was

¹Interview with Ralph Featherstone, December 22, 1967.

²Letter from H. Rap Brown, December 18, 1967.

³Interview with Ralph Featherstone, December 22, 1967.

⁴*Ibid.*

allowed to be "creative" in his presentation of SNCC's program.⁵

Preparing himself for his year of speechmaking, Carmichael studied

the interaction of people in terms of how they are controlled by definitions. I motivate around the existentialist in terms of a group of philosophers. I have thrown out the social contract theorists as irrelevant, that would be Hobbs, Spinoza, Locke and cats like that. Maybe I would cling a little to John Stuart Mill as a cat who had a philosophy of broad, liberal concepts in terms of interaction of human beings. But the existentialists, cats like Frantz Fanon, whom I consider a pragmatist-existentialist, are very important. In addition to Fanon would be cats like Nkrumah and the people in what we call the Third World and the progressive thoughts we see coming out of them. I add to that my own observations of how black people are controlled in this country.⁶

The Third World Philosophy

Charles V. Hamilton explains that the whole concept of the Third World is that there are interests which can no longer be looked upon as national or parochial. There are international interests which can be defined in "very clear terms" of color--"black, yellow, brown, white." Most non-capitalistic areas would come under the heading of "underdeveloped." The Third World philosophers believe that these non-capitalistic and underdeveloped societies are

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1968.

suffering from the same kinds of oppressive forces as do black Americans. Carmichael sees these forces as either colonial or neo-colonial.

"It is no accident," Hamilton says, "that if they give a guaranteed annual wage to black people in Harlem it will come off the backs of those black people in the South African mines."⁷

The Third World philosophy believes that the same "forces of oppression that play on 125 and Seventh Avenue" also play "in the suburbs of Johannesburg. The same forces that exist at Chase Manhattan in mid-town Manhattan also have lucrative resources in downtown Johannesburg."⁸

In these terms the Third World concept is nothing new.

There's always been a hook-up with the Third World, except that it's hooked up by the Chase Mannhattans. These people have understood this all along. And they've operated on it. The oppressed people, the blacks, haven't understood it. So when we start talking about a Third World hook-up, we're late-comers again, just as we were latecomers with black power.⁹

According to Hamilton, the Third World concept is psychological and political.

⁷ Interview with Charles V. Hamilton, November 2, 1967.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

To SNCC's collective mind and to Carmichael's, the non-white peoples of the world are separate from and have separate strivings than do European or Western whites who operate from a position of power, not of subordination.

The Influence of X

In addition to the Third World philosophers, SNCC, as it exists today has been profoundly influenced by the ideas of Malcolm X. An ex-convict convert to the Nation of Islam, Minister Malcolm spent twelve years spreading the word of Elijah Muhammed, leader of the sect. Suspended from the Nation of Islam (ostensibly because of a remark made upon the death of John F. Kennedy),¹⁰ Malcolm, in March, 1964, announced his complete separation from the Muslim movement. During a press conference he announced his dedication to the black American's struggle for human rights.¹¹ He was then capable of independent action and a more "flexible approach" in his efforts to help his people.¹² Calling his new organization the Muslim Mosque,

¹⁰Malcolm X, *op. cit.*, p. 305

¹¹George Breitman, *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1965), p. 20.

¹²*Ibid.*

Inc., and later renaming it the Organization for Afro-American Unity, Malcolm's black nationalist political and economic philosophy parallels the political and economic aspects of Black Power.¹³ Malcolm's black nationalist philosophy called for black people to control the politics and the politicians of their communities. His economic philosophy would also direct the economic control of black communities into the hands of the people living in those communities. He also developed a social program which called for the destruction of the threats to the moral fiber of the black community.¹⁴

In 1964 Malcolm himself announced that there were growing black nationalistic elements in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Congress of Racial Equality, and in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He urged his followers to join any of them, but if those organizations compromised, he said, "pull out of it because that's not black nationalism."¹⁵ Malcolm himself would work with those who were "genuinely

¹³The reader is directed to George Breitman's *The Last Year of Malcolm X: The Evolution of A Revolutionary* (New York: Merit Publishers, 1967), and to Carmichael and Hamilton's *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*.

¹⁴See "The Ballot or the Bullet," in Breitman, *Malcolm X Speaks*, p. 24.

¹⁵Breitman, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

interested, any where at any time."¹⁶ He was, however, impatient with civil rights leaders who thanked the white man for giving blacks part of what should already have been theirs.¹⁷ His position was: "Give it to us now. Don't wait for next year. Give it to us yesterday, and that's not fast enough."¹⁸

Preaching black unity, Malcolm saw no civil rights struggle, but a human rights struggle¹⁹ in which the black masses would have to be allowed to begin to play a large part. He urged all blacks, however, to take an uncompromising stand: "I don't mean to go out and get violent; but at the same time you should never be nonviolent unless you run into some nonviolence. I'm nonviolent with those who are nonviolent with me."²⁰

By 1965 Malcolm developed a concept of definitions. He reasoned that the people in this country had been at peace because they had not defined what freedom was. Black

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁹According to a letter from H. Rap Brown, SNCC declared itself a human rights organization in May, 1967.

²⁰Breitman, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

people, he said, had let the white man define for them and were at last beginning to define for themselves.²¹

Malcolm saw that certain gains made by the oppressed peoples of the world during 1964 came as a direct result of their realization of the need for power. He had very definite ideas on the subject of power.

Power in defense of freedom is greater than power in behalf of tyranny and oppression, because power, real power, comes from conviction which produces action, uncompromising action. It also produces insurrection against oppression. This is the only way you end oppression--with power.

Power never takes a back step--only in the face of more power. Power doesn't back up in the face of a smile, or in the face of a threat, or in the face of some kind of nonviolent loving action. It's not the nature of power to back up in the face of anything but some more power.²²

Malcolm maintained that power recognized only power and it was by power that gains were to be made.

He compared the gains of black Americans to the gains of other oppressed peoples in 1964 and concluded that black Americans had experienced only a "great doublecross." Calling 1964 the "Year of Illusion and Delusion," the year in which blacks received "nothing but a promise" he discounted the 1964 civil rights bill because it did not help when immediately after its passage the Philadelphia, Mississippi, murderers went free. He

²¹See "Prospects for Freedom in 1965," Breitman, *Malcolm X Speaks*.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 158.

saw the bill as a "vent . . . designed to enable us to let off . . . frustration," as had the 1963 March on Washington. Malcolm thought black Americans had

reached the point where they see that it takes power to talk power. It takes power to make power respect you. It takes madness almost to deal with a power structure that's so corrupt, so corrupt.

So in 1965 we should see a lot of action. Since the old methods haven't worked, we will be forced to try new methods. . . .

Continually in demand as a public speaker, Malcolm spoke on college and university campuses throughout the United States. Not confined to that area, however, Malcolm addressed rallies, forums, and colloquia throughout the world. When not on speaking tours Malcolm addressed his followers at Harlem's Audubon Ballroom where he "agitated, educated and organized . . . to promote black unity and work from freedom 'by any means necessary.'"²³ Just as he had begun to deliver a speech at the Audubon on February 21, 1965, Malcolm X was assassinated.

Of Malcolm's rhetoric John Illo wrote:

The achievement of Malcolm X, then, though inevitable, seems marvelous. Someone had to rise and speak the fearful reality, to throw some light of reason into the hallucinatory world of the capitalist and biracial society that thinks itself egalitarian, that thinks itself humanitarian and pacific. But it was unexpected that the speaking should be done with such power and precision by a

²³*Ibid.*, p. 72.

russet-haired field Negro translated from conventional thief to zealot and at the end nearly to Marxist and humanist.

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He was not an emotionalist or a demagogue, but an orator who combined familiarity with passion, with compelling ideas and analytic clarity, and with sober force of utterance, and with a sense, now usually deficient except when depraved, of rhetoric as an art and a genre. His developing accomplishment in the last year was, as a New York Times reporter exclaimed but could not write, "incredible." The Oxford Union Society, venerable, perceptive, and disinterested because unAmerican, adjudged him among the best of living orators after his debate three months before his death, a pleasant triumph ignored by the American press. Though he may be diluted, or obliterated, or forgotten by the established civil rights movement, which is built into the consensus, Malcolm was for all time an artist and thinker. In the full Aristotelean meaning he was a rhetorician, who, to be such, knew more than rhetoric: ethics, logic, grammar, psychology, law, history, politics; and his best speeches might be texts for students of that comprehensive science and art.²⁴

Although SNCC sees itself as "further advanced," the organization admits it has "built on what Malcolm preached."²⁵

Stokely Carmichael, greatly influenced by the Third World philosophy and philosophers and by the black nationalist doctrine espoused by Malcolm X, and with his own "observations" and "creativity," devised his rhetorical program.

²⁴John Illo, "The Rhetoric of Malcolm X," Columbia University *Forum*, Spring, 1966, pp. 6, 11, and 12.

²⁵Interview with Ralph Featherstone, December 22, 1967.

Black Power

"Reverse racism" is one of the terms most often applied to the concept of Black Power. Most Americans are given only the foundation of a few printed sentences excerpted from a speech, or a fifteen second news shot of Stokely Carmichael as a basis for judging Black Power. It is at best an incomplete judgment.

Black Power appeals to black Americans to develop a concept of "peoplehood." It demands that black Americans solidify themselves, accept the actuality of their blackness, and not think of themselves as inferior. Black Power demands that black people define themselves and their actions according to their own terms, and not labor under white America's definitions of those terms. Black Power demands that black Americans recognize the potential power of the black population, and that they develop separate political, economic, and cultural institutions. The separatist doctrine is based on some demonstrable evidence that coalition between blacks and whites has not historically been to the benefit of the black man. Institutions of black Americans, controlled by black Americans can effect social change.²⁶

²⁶Interview with Stokely Carmichael, February 9, 1967.

Indictment and Condemnation
of the United States

SNCC indicted the United States on the basis that the country is "racist, exploitative, and imperialistic."²⁷ Once indicted the question of condemnation came into being. This is where the philosophical questions raised by philosophers Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre were used. Camus and Sartre raised but did not answer the question: Can a man condemn himself? Black psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon said that a man cannot condemn himself because self-condemnation requires self-inflicted punishment. Since white America could not condemn herself, Carmichael told black audiences "we must do it, we must condemn."²⁸

SNCC saw the war in Vietnam as only one more evidence of United States racist, exploitative and imperialistic policies. SNCC's active opposition to the war began in 1965 when the organization issued a position paper on Vietnam. In part that paper read:

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee has a right and a responsibility to dissent with United States foreign policy on any issue when it sees fit. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee now states its opposition to United States' involvement in Vietnam on these grounds:

²⁷Letter from H. Rap Brown, December 18, 1967.

²⁸Speech at Grand Rapids, Michigan, May 17, 1967.

We believe the United States government has been deceptive in its claims of concern for the freedom of the Vietnamese people, just as the government has been deceptive in claiming concern for the freedom of colored people in such other countries as the Dominican Republic, the Congo, South Africa, Rhodesia, and in the United States itself.

We, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, have been involved in the black people's struggle for liberation and self-determination in this country for the past five years. Our work, particularly in the South, has taught us that the United States government has never guaranteed the freedom of oppressed citizens, and is not yet truly determined to end the rule of terror and oppression within its own borders.

We ourselves have often been victims of violence and confinement executed by United States governmental officials. We recall the numerous persons who have been murdered in the South because of their efforts to secure their civil and human rights, and whose murderers have been allowed to escape penalty for their crimes.

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We recall the indifference, suspicion, and outright hostility with which our reports of violence have been met in the past by government officials.

We know that for the most part, elections in this country, in the North as well as the South, are not free. We have seen that the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the 1964 Civil Rights Act have not yet been implemented with full federal power and sincerity.

We question, then, the ability and even the desire of the United States government to guarantee free elections abroad. We maintain that our country's cry of "preserve freedom in the world" is a hypocritical mask behind which it squashes liberation movements which are not bound, and refuse to be bound, by the expediencies of United States Cold War policies.

We are in sympathy with, and support, the men in this country who are unwilling to respond to a military draft which would compel them to contribute their lives to United States aggression in Vietnam in the name of the "freedom" we find so false in this country.

We recoil with horror at the inconsistency of a supposedly "free" society where responsibility to freedom is equated with the responsibility to lend oneself to military aggression. We take note of the fact that 16 per cent of the draftees from this country are Negroes called on to stifle the liberation of Vietnam, to preserve a "democracy" which does not exist for them at home.

We ask, where is the draft for the freedom fight in the United States?

We therefore encourage those Americans who prefer to use their energy in building democratic forms within this country. We believe that work in the civil rights movement and with other human relations organizations is a valid alternative to the draft. We urge all Americans to seek this alternative, knowing full well that it may cost them their lives--as painfully as in Vietnam.²⁹

Stokely Carmichael gave voice to the organization's opposition to the war in Vietnam. At the Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, held in New York City on April 15, 1967, Carmichael explained why SNCC took its stand in opposition to the war. It was, he said, a racist war and "only the white powers of the West will deny that this is a racist war. When the colored peoples of the world look at that war, they see just one thing. For them, the U.S. military in Vietnam represents international white supremacy."³⁰ Carmichael maintained that because black Americans "have struggled against white supremacy here at home . . . have struggled against U.S. aggression in the

²⁹Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau, *op. cit.*, pp. 250-252.

³⁰This and subsequent quotations are from the Spring Mobilization Speech.

ghettos of the North and South . . . there can be no question of whether a civil rights organization should involve itself with foreign issues."

Answering his critics on this issue Carmichael said "those who attack us for opposing the bombing of mothers, the napalming of children, the wiping out of whole villages, are in fact supporting the war. No neutralism is possible in the face of such acts." He then asked: "Would those same critics have advocated silence when Medgar Evers was murdered in Mississippi? Would those same critics have urged expediency when the four young girls were bombed in a Birmingham church?" He also used SNCC's frequently-quoted words of Frederick Douglass:

Those who profess to favor freedom and yet depreciate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its waters. Power concedes nothing without a demand--it never has and it never will.

SNCC, Carmichael maintained, had "not only a right to speak out," but an "obligation . . . [to] look truthfully at this land of the free and home of the brave, and remember that there is another side to that land--a side better known to the rest of the world than to most Americans. There is another America, and it is an ugly one." Carmichael reviewed the slavery system, the treatment of the American Indian, and apartheid South Africa,

and concluded that the United States was "built on genocide and it continues to wage genocide."

Asserting that genocide was waged in "military, political, economic, and cultural" forms "against the colored peoples of our earth," Carmichael declared: "This nation's hypocrisy has no limits. Newspapermen speak of LBJ's credibility gap; I call it lying." Carmichael asserted that "President Lyndon Baines Johnson talks of peace while napalming Vietnamese children, and I can think of just one thing; he's talking trash out of season, without a reason. Let's not call it anything but that."

Carmichael instructed his listeners not to let mass protest end and to move from words to deeds: "Black people must begin to organize the ghettos for control by the people and against exploitation. Exploitation and racism do not exist only in this nation's foreign policy, but right here in the streets of New York." He instructed whites to "deal with the fundamental problems of this country: racism and exploitation." He instructed them to go into the white community where racism originates: "You must go into the white community where the Vietnam war originated. You must work there, organize there, strike against the American system at its base."

Repeating his famous phrase, Carmichael said: "We must all speak out more strongly against the draft."

Our position on the draft is very simple: hell no, we ain't going." Voicing SNCC's racial opposition to the draft Carmichael said: "The draft says that a black man must spend two years of his life learning how to kill people of his own color and people of his own kind: poor and powerless." He defined the draft as "white people sending black people to make war on yellow people in order to defend the land they stole from red people. The draft must end, not tomorrow, not next week, but today."

Carmichael asked for a direct answer to the question of a planned invasion of North Vietnam. Recalling that "millions of Americans once watched a President speak on television and assure us that there was no planned invasion of Cuba." Directing himself informally to the President of the United States, Carmichael said: "Lyndon, we're listening."

Because he thought the United States a "rapist," Carmichael said the problem was not one of finding a "formula." He asked his audience: "If you were being raped, would you call for negotiation or withdrawal?"

Carmichael theorized that had it not been for dissent, the Vietnam war would have been further escalated. He called for sustained dissent against the Vietnam war, racism, and genocide.

Carmichael's arguments against racism and genocide came from his *Massachusetts Review* article, "Toward Black

Liberation," which later became the foundation for *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America*. These were the arguments heard by the majority of Carmichael's white audiences. His proofs emanated from three topic areas: the dictatorship of definition; the interpretation of consciousness; and the censorship of history. He told whites that his concern for Black Power addressed itself directly to the problem of reclaiming black history and identity. To achieve that end Carmichael said black Americans would have to create their own terms through which to define both themselves and their relationship to the society and have those terms recognized. This, Carmichael thought, was the "first necessity of a free people, and the first right that any oppressor must suspend." To illustrate the fact that this idea did not originate with him, Carmichael used as an example the "white fathers of American racism" who defined the terms of their "dealings with the red and black men" and dictated the history of those dealings. As further illustrative examples, Carmichael reminded white audiences of the "obscured, muddled and misrepresented" record of the Reconstruction period. This was compared to the news media's "fabricated" version of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party defeat at Atlantic City. Calling the MFDP defeat a "vulgar display of political racism," Carmichael maintained that the defeat

"made a hollow mockery of the political rights of Mississippi's blacks when it failed to unseat the Mississippi delegation to the House." The Mississippi regulars had been elected through a process which "methodically and systematically excluded over 450,000 voting-age blacks, almost one half of the total electorate of the state," but when the event was mentioned in print, it was, Carmichael said, "in terms which left the reader with the rather curious impression that the oppressed black people were at fault for confronting the Congress with a situation in which they had no alternative but to endorse Mississippi's racist political practices."

Because of his direct involvement in both the MFDP defeat in 1964 and in the 1965 incident at the House of Representatives, Carmichael said he could see clearly the "discrepancies between what happened, and the versions that are finding their way into general acceptance as some kind of popular mythology." He concluded that the "victimization" of black America occurs in "fact and deed" and in the "official recording of those facts."

Carmichael extended his arguments on the latter issue to the Black Power concept. He said the "white press has been busy articulating their own analyses, their own interpretations, and criticisms of their own creation." As support for this he used the example of the group of

black churchmen who resorted to a paid advertisement to articulate their position on Black Power, "while anyone shouting the hysterical yappings of 'black racism' got ample space.'" He added that it was because of this that the American public has "at best a superficial and misleading account of the very terms and tenor of this debate."

The statement of the churchmen was published in the *New York Times* on July 31, 1966. To white audiences Carmichael quoted the statement at length. The following is the essence of the statement:

We, an informal group of Negro churchmen in America, are deeply disturbed about the crisis brought upon our country by historic distortions of important realities in the controversy about "black power." What we see shining through the variety of rhetoric is not anything else but the same old problem of power and race which has faced our beloved country since 1619. . . . The conscience of black men is corrupted because, having no power to implement the demands of conscience, the concern for justice in the absence of justice becomes a chaotic self-surrender. Powerlessness breeds a race of beggars. We are faced now with a situation where powerless conscience meets conscience-less power, threatening the very foundations of our nation. . . . In short, the failure of American leaders to use American power to create equal opportunity in life as well as law, this is the real problem and not the anguished cry for black power.

This was strongly supportive material and Carmichael used it effectively, playing on phrases such as "powerless conscience meets conscience-less power" to enrich his arguments.

To whites Carmichael explained Black Power quite simply as the organization of a black institution with which to represent black communal needs within the larger society. He said that the "strident outcry" against Black Power could only be understood "by examining the historic relationship between black and white power in this country."

Carmichael contended that traditionally blacks had been defined by two forces "blackness and our powerlessness." The black community, he emphasized, has been excluded "from participation in the power decisions which shaped the society and has traditionally been dependent upon, and subservient to the white community" which has "controlled and defined the forms that all institutions within the society would take." He spoke to the SNCC concepts of institutional and individual racism, gave examples of both, and illustrated America's response to both. The Birmingham, Alabama, church bombing in which five black children were killed was labeled an act of individual racism. Carmichael compared this act to the racism involved "when in that same city . . . 500 black babies die each year because of lack of proper food, shelter and medical facilities, and thousands more are destroyed and maimed physically, emotionally, and intellectually because of conditions of poverty and deprivation in the ghetto." This, he said, was a function of

institutionalized racism. Carmichael was not hesitant to point out that "special interests" in the white community "benefit, politically and economically from the existence of that ghetto." He emphasized the fact that the people in black communities do not control the resources therein and have no voice in political decisions, law enforcement, or living standards. He also pointed out that "physical ownership of the land, houses, and stores lie outside the black community." He concluded that blacks live in these communities because they are "black and powerless."

Carmichael does not believe that the power structure has ever "sat down and designed these black enclaves, and formally articulated the terms of their colonial and dependent status, as was done, for example, by the apartheid government of South Africa, which, he said, "this country supports." Even though he does not believe the ghetto has been formally planned, Carmichael marveled at its similarity from coast to coast. "As one moves from city to city," he said, "it is as if some malignant racist planning unit had designed each one from the same master blueprint." He reasoned that if the ghetto had been deliberately planned the situation would be "somehow less frightening" than the fact of the similarity resulting from "identical patterns of white racism which repeat themselves in cities as distant as Boston is to Watts."

After outlining the facts, Carmichael posed the question: "What kinds of changes are necessary, and how is it possible to bring them about?"

Here he attacked the concept of integration. He said the integration concept was based on the "assumption that there was nothing of value in the black community and that little of value could be created among black people--so the next thing to do was to siphon off the 'acceptable' Negroes into the surrounding white middle class communities." He attacked the goals of the integration movement as simply "middle class goals, articulated by a tiny group of Negroes who had middle class aspirations."

The tactics and organization of the integration movement were also attacked. Carmichael pointed out that the two oldest civil rights organizations have constitutions which prohibit partisan political activity. He explained that integrationists saw themselves as a "kind of liason between the powerful white community and the dependent black one. The dependent status of the black community was unimportant since it was--if the movement was successful--going to blend into the white community anyway." Carmichael pictured the posture of the civil rights movement as that of the suppliant.

After thus attacking the concept of integration Carmichael set forth its major limitation. He said

political alliances based on conscience are "chancy things . . . because . . . political organizations have no conscience outside their own special interests." To Carmichael it was obvious that when the interests of a dependent group conflicted with the interests of the major power, the interests of the dependent group became "negotiable and expendable." To support this assertion Carmichael used an example from the Reconstruction period in which

blacks were allowed to register, vote, and participate in politics because it was to the advantage of a powerful white ally to promote this, notably Tom Watson, that great liberal. But this was the result of a white man's decision, Tom Watson's decision, and it was ended by the same white man's decision before any political base powerful enough could be developed inside the southern black community to challenge that decision.

He reiterated his position that the "painfully limited gains" of the politically dependent civil rights movement would be "revoked as soon as a shift in political sentiments should occur."

Carmichael's opposition to integration was again illustrated to whites by comparing its middle class oriented goals and accomplishments to the conditions of the lower class masses of blacks. He said that a Negro graduating from a given university with a doctorate will have better job opportunities than "even Lynda Bird Johnson," but added that the rate of unemployment in the black community is steadily increasing, while that in the

white community decreases." As a result of recent gains Carmichael pointed out that "more educated Negroes hold executive type jobs in major corporations and federal agencies than ever before," but cited the gap between white income and black income which "has almost doubled in the last twenty years." Carmichael recognized that "more suburban housing is available to Negroes (if they can stand the rocks)," but cited the fact that housing conditions in the ghetto is steadily declining." He said the infant mortality rate of New York city is "at its lowest rate ever in the city's history while the infant mortality rate of Harlem is steadily climbing." On the subject of school integration he said: "There has been an organized national resistance to the Supreme Court's order to integrate the schools . . . less than fifteen percent of black children in the South attend integrated schools; and the black schools, which the vast majority of black children still attend, are increasingly decrepit, overcrowded, understaffed, inadequately equipped and funded." Carmichael expanded this to explain that black teenagers who drop out of school express their "bitterness, hopelessness and alienation in the only means they have, through imitating this society, through violence."

Carmichael explained to whites that as long as people in the ghettos feel they are the victims of the

"misuse of white power . . . we will continue to have rebellions."

To replace the concept of integration and theories of coalition, Carmichael proposed the politics of Black Power. Black Power proposed that the black protest movement "stop pandering to the fears and anxieties of the white middle class of America in an attempt to earn its 'good will' and return to the ghetto to organize those communities to control themselves." Black Power proposed political organization in northern and southern urban cities and in the rural South. Carmichael answered the "only ten percent" argument by saying no one was "talking about taking over the country, because God knows we wouldn't know what to do with this monster, but rather taking control over our own communities." Even though black Americans represent only ten percent of the total population, Carmichael charged that blacks have been deprived of their voting strength and political strength through the process of gerrymandering.

The practices of tokenism and patronage, Carmichael asserted, served only to create a "responsive smaller machine." Establishment-created black leaders were to Carmichael only "vote deliverers, more responsible to the white machine and white power structure than to the community they allegedly represent." This, he explained,

was the manner in which patronage control was substituted for "audacious Black Power."

Carmichael defended the independent political organization aspect of the Black Power program saying that it was not isolationism or reverse racism. He reasoned that "when the black community is able to control local offices, and negotiate from a position of organized strength, the possibility of meaningful political alliances on specific issues will be increased." The difference between this and any lesser alliance, here again was a matter of definitions. Blacks would be able to define the terms of their alliances.

As to the question of the workability of the program, Carmichael said the program must be successful because there are no alternatives. He ruled out the war on poverty as a program "limited to dealing with effects rather than causes," and "another source of machine patronage." He ruled out integration as meaningful to only a chosen few in the black community.

Carmichael then defined the nation's choice, saying that the great cities would soon be populated predominately by blacks. He predicted these areas would become either "concentration camps with a bitter population whose only power is the power to destroy, or organized and powerful communities able to make constructive contributions to the total society." For Stokely Carmichael, that was the choice facing the country.

VIII. "BORN BLACK:" SOME OBSERVATIONS

An American Phenomenon

Lerone Bennett wrote that the history of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee will have to be set down in calmer times. As with the organization, the history of Stokely Carmichael, the man who may prove to be the SNCC's most dramatic figure, will also have to be written in calmer times. It will be the task of future writers, given the benefit of retrospect, to evaluate, to appraise, to pass judgment. Definite conclusions cannot yet be drawn, but certain observations may be made.

Stokely Carmichael is an American phenomenon. An incredibly wealthy yet blatantly discriminatory nation long ago, as part of its history, created the conditions which produced such men as Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Stokely Carmichael.

This study has asked and sought to answer the question, who is Stokely Carmichael? The question might be answered in two words: nobody new. Many black men have attempted and are attempting to accomplish the ultimate goal of Stokely Carmichael: full citizenship for black Americans. Elements of Stokely Carmichael's message

may be found in the speeches of almost all major black protest speakers, past and present. And direct parallels may be drawn, for example, between the rhetoric of Stokely Carmichael and that of Marcus Garvey, the "Black Power" spokesman of the twenties. Carmichael's *basic* message is not different than that of Martin Luther King, Jr.: that black Americans are citizens of the United States and are entitled to the full rights and privileges thereof. Carmichael speaks to remedying the condition of the black masses. He speaks of the actualities of the deprivation of the black masses and the discrimination faced by all black Americans. Carmichael borrowed most of his political and philosophic ideas from Malcolm X. Stokely Carmichael, then, is a young man who suddenly found himself in a position to address himself to the American public.

What *is* different about Stokely Carmichael? Perhaps three factors are most important. Unlike his contemporaries and past black leaders, Carmichael is young. When he shouted "Black Power" in Greenwood, Mississippi, he was twenty-five years old. This was probably a large factor in his rise to importance. The public was fascinated by this exotic-looking, outspoken young black man.

A second factor is that, unlike his contemporaries, Carmichael does not just speak of the conditions of black America; he has lived them. His periods of struggle in

South and in the ghettos of New York and Washington, D.C., taught him to speak from experience.

The third and probably most significant factor is Carmichael's unwavering verbal identification with the black lifestyle. This identification is the pervasive element in his style and delivery whenever he speaks to black people and, to a lesser degree, whenever he addresses whites. Unlike other black protest speakers, Carmichael brings the soul quality to the public. This is why black youth is enchanted with Carmichael's rhetoric. And this aspect of Carmichael's speaking is probably part of the reason for the communication breakdown between Carmichael and white America.

Whatever black and white Americans are able to conclude about Stokely Carmichael, they cannot conclude that he lies. Carmichael has been accurate, if volatile, in his description of racism in America. It has been traditional that the black man who speaks to this issue is simply not tolerated. The *issue* may eventually be understood, but the uncompromising speaker is not. This was the case with Paul Robeson. This was the case with Malcolm X.

The Void Between Rhetoric and Substance

The question of how Carmichael hopes to effect his program should be raised. Unless he believes that the financially-crippled SNCC can perform the massive organizational task required for the formation of independent political parties at local levels, why did Carmichael not appeal to the more moderate organizations and leadership as did Malcolm X in 1964? If Carmichael hopes to accomplish his ends through a re-education of black (and white) youth, does the time factor of the rapid polarization of the races allow for this?

At best these questions can be answered only with conjecture. Probably the most valid answer is that Carmichael does not really see himself or black people alone as capable of effecting any meaningful change. It would seem that Carmichael has set himself up as an agitator advocating change beyond the capabilities of any single organizational structure, not appealing directly to the establishment, rather constantly warning the establishment to move.

As evidence of the agitator theory, consider the fact that Carmichael does not make many different speeches. With black audiences Carmichael repeatedly uses some version of a basic speech--the same proofs. With white audiences he almost always reads one particular speech and interjects the same examples and illustrations. In essence,

Carmichael is not delivering many speeches, he is delivering one of two stock speeches. We do not normally expect this. However, Carmichael's goal is not a normal goal. It becomes clear that Carmichael intends (or, at least during the period covered by this study, intended) to keep the plight of black America rudely in the minds of all Americans. In this regard it can be said that Carmichael is an effective communicator. The term that initially evoked fear and rejection is increasingly being accepted as the means by which black Americans can have voice in the decisions that affect their communities and lives. It is increasingly being accepted as the means by which black Americans can finally achieve the legitimacy of self-determination. Although his slogan and its basic meaning is being accepted, Stokely Carmichael is not.

Premises, Style, Delivery, and Audiences

This study has asked the questions: What are Carmichael's political and philosophic ideas? What characterizes Carmichael's style? How does Carmichael deliver a speech? How does Carmichael analyze his audiences with regard to his goals? In what manner does Carmichael appeal to his audiences?

Carmichael believes that the United States is a racist, exploitative, imperialistic nation. He believes he has a right to speak out against these things. He

believes in the philosophy of the Third World which binds people of all underdeveloped societies on the basis of oppression shared at the hands of European and Western whites. He has also been greatly influenced by the black nationalist doctrine of Malcolm X which called for the involvement of poor blacks (and all blacks) in the decision-making process that affects their lives. Carmichael renamed Malcolm's philosophy "Black Power." Black Power appeals to black Americans to develop a spirit of "peoplehood," solidify themselves and develop a pride in their blackness. Black power calls for black Americans to begin to define for themselves and to act according to their own definitions. Once these things are done, blacks, as have other ethnic groups, can begin to develop strong political, economic, and cultural institutions through which to enter the greater society.

Carmichael's style is outstanding, if for no other reason than the fact it is radically different than that of any major black protest speaker who came before him. Carmichael's style is proving to be a great influence on speakers who follow him. His style contrasts sharply with the plain style of Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young and differs greatly from the florid, almost literary, style of Dr. Martin Luther King. An analysis of the speeches of

Malcolm X¹ shows that Malcolm's style bordered on the classic. Carmichael is at once none of these and all of these. His style exists on many planes. The element that distinguishes it, however, is Carmichael's constant use of black idiom. This is not simply "hip" slang, it is rather the rhetoric of soul; the language of the black lifestyle--a language which depends as much on *sound* as it does on vocabulary. Carmichael is first to employ this style. The style has proved very effective with black audiences and particularly young black audiences. Accounts of Carmichael's appearances before white audiences provide evidence that Carmichael evokes enthusiastic audience response as easily from whites as he does from blacks.

Carmichael chose his style because he feels that black dialect and idiom are valid and that black Americans are not culturally deprived but are the "only people who have a culture in America." His style is thus part of a legitimization and perpetuation process.

Often it is not so much *what* Carmichael says as the *way* he says it that evokes audience reaction. Black audiences, in particular, are moved by the rhythmic flow of Carmichael's words--a flow that contains almost indescribably subtle messages of its own. This is what Carmichael means when he characterizes his speaking by its subtlety.

¹See John Illo, *op. cit.*

He does not mean a subtlety of language because in this respect he is rarely subtle, rather *inferred* meanings that reach the attuned ear by the intonation given certain words.

Before black audiences Carmichael is a very emotional speaker. He makes his more logical appeals to the white audience. A large part of his emotionalism is to be found in his techniques of delivery, learned from black ministers who depend on the manner in which a sermon is delivered, placing more emphasis on technique than ideas; more emphasis on action than thought.

Carmichael's analysis of audiences reflects both his persuasive goals and his weak speech training. For example, he says his aim with white college student audiences is to "establish a level of intellectualism that is needed." Carmichael seems at once aware of the fact that these are not the people with whom he is presently most concerned and at the same time unmindful of the fact that he needs to establish a persuasive goal. Lest he desires to prove to these audiences the fact of his own intelligence, to simply establish a level of intellectualism is not enough. At the conclusion of any speech he attempts to leave the white audience with the knowledge that the country is headed toward polarization. He lets them know that they have the choice of either joining racist whites or fighting racism in their own communities. To effectively impart this knowledge, then, is his persuasive goal with

white audiences and not simply to establish a level of intellectualism.

Carmichael's profound respect for even a hostile black audience is part of his love-black philosophy. His attitude toward a hostile white audience is also understandable given the fact that Stokely Carmichael has witnessed perhaps too much black acquiescence and pleading.

Carmichael: No More Hope for the
Conscience of a Nation

Just over two years ago, on the subject of the "debt" owed black Americans, Stokely Carmichael said: "It's a drip from the Muslims, you know--you owe us dues. I don't know that anybody owes me anything. I can't hold you guilty. And I don't want you to hold me guilty. For what my father did."²

That was in 1965, after the disappointment of the MFDP defeat at the Democratic National Convention. Carmichael was a late-comer to militancy. He was, a few months later, to assume Chairmanship of SNCC and enter the second phase of his development, upsetting the country with his radical rhetoric; the agitation stage, when he traveled the country calling again and again on the same appeals, not the least of these being that black America *is* owed a

²Warren, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

debt. Then came the third phase, that of the revolutionary mentality, in which Carmichael experienced a frustration born of inability to move. Where Stokely Carmichael stands today no one knows. His agitation stage is believed to be over. He was recently reported to have said that he will never again be jailed for what he says, only for what he does. His short-lived hope for the country and black America as the conscience of the country seems dead.

"Born Black"

Could it have been different? Could Stokely Carmichael have been a "responsible" and respected black leader? Probably not. Carmichael could not approach white America as have the moderate black spokesmen. Carmichael has been through that phase and circumstance did not allow him to stay at that point. Had he stayed at that point Carmichael would have become a Robert Moses or a John Lewis, virtually unknown. And white America is not yet ready to listen to a young *culturally* black man who injects a pro-black philosophy, not an assimilationist philosophy, into the rhetoric of the civil rights protest.

When asked if anything had exerted an influence on his development as a public speaker prior to his entrance into public life, Carmichael answered that he had been "born black." Like Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X, Carmichael praises and thunders his blackness, a blackness that goes

deeper than the skin. This is what he means when he says being born black exerted an influence on his development as a public speaker. His message and his state of mind are inseparable. The speaker is the man.

Ultimately the labels which are an historic figure's due will be bestowed on Stokely Carmichael. Ultimately the unanswered questions will be answered. But that will be job of the historian--in calmer times.

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APPENDIX

THE SPEECH AT GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, WITH COMMENTARY

The Fountain Street Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, was the scene of this speech. The date was May 17, 1967. Scheduled to speak at 8:00 p.m., Stokely Carmichael kept the audience waiting 20 minutes. During the wait, local and network television camera crews, including ABC, Chicago, installed lights and microphones and photographed the crowd. The auditorium was crammed with more than 2,000 people, mostly black. The atmosphere could best be described as "electric." The crowd seemed restive, anxious.

When he finally appeared, Carmichael paused for a moment in a doorway in full view of the crowd. A wave of excitement was obvious and a middle-aged black woman remarked: "There he is! That boy is just the cutest thing." The crowd was tailored for Carmichael and he seemed to perceive this immediately.

Seating himself to the left of a group of churchmen and sponsors, Carmichael smiled and looked out over the crowd. In the balcony he spotted a youth wearing a "processed" hairdo. He pointed to the youth indignantly, raised a threatening fist, then pointed proudly to his own Afro-styled hair. The audience applauded.

After an invocation, one of the churchmen began a lengthy introduction. Almost apologizing for Carmichael's presence in Grand Rapids, the speaker related an incident of the previous week when two whites had been caught with an arsenal of weapons. They were allegedly plotting Carmichael's assassination. The speaker then related the anti-Carmichael sentiment in Grand Rapids and cautioned the crowd that there was to be no disturbance of any sort. Throughout these remarks Carmichael sat, legs crossed, chin resting on a fist, watching the crowd. He saw and gestured to the writer to mount the platform. During this motion several of the men seated on the platform stood, obviously guarding Carmichael. Carmichael asked that they be seated, greeted the writer, and held a brief conversation during which he invited the writer to a second meeting to be held with black students later that evening. He seemed weary, almost to the point of detachment.

Following the initial speaker, a second speaker finally introduced Carmichael with the words: "Stokely Carmichael speaks for us all." Carmichael rose to a prolonged standing ovation. When he began speaking he was relaxed and seemed somehow refreshed. He introduced Cleveland Sellers, former SNCC Program Secretary, who spoke for approximately ten minutes. Returning to the microphone, Carmichael, with the support of his audience, succeeded in having the television cameras removed. He spoke extemporaneously using what appeared to be one note card. When the speech was over, an hour later, dozens of well-wishers rushed to the platform to speak with or touch Stokely Carmichael.

Later that evening Carmichael was the subject of a WOOD-TV (Grand Rapids) editorial. Carmichael was severely criticized for ousting the press. Of the speech itself the announcer commented: "Some of it I applauded, some of it I disliked, and some of it made me bleed." The remarks which "drew blood" from a white newsman were cheered by the black audience at Grand Rapids. In the warm auditorium, Carmichael whipped the audience into such an emotional frenzy that the wife of a civil rights worker commented "they" would need to "fumigate the place."

This is the entire speech, reproduced from a tape recording. It is believed typical of Carmichael's black audience approach. It also contains many of his most frequently used proofs. Crowd reaction has been indicated throughout the text.

I want to talk tonight about a couple of things and to move from concepts into reality, because I think that what is happening in this country is that white America is about to commit genocide against black people in this country one way or the other. We have to talk about our survival in this country. We have to talk about survival in this country especially because I don't think they're playing with us anymore.

The last sentence draws Carmichael's audience into the "confrontation." This is done in no uncertain terms. We (black Americans) have to talk about survival (even basic survival) in this country especially (this is a very important aspect of the message) because I don't think they're (white Americans) playing with us anymore. Carmichael has set the tone of his message. He proceeded to "outline" his speech, a common practice of the speaker.

We're going to talk about self-condemnation as a theory; want to move in to differentiate between the concepts of giving one one's freedom, and denying one one's liberation; we want to talk about the importance of

definitions; and we want to talk about violence. And then we want to move pragmatically to see how those theories apply to black people in this country and to counter the lies that this country has told about black people; the shame that they have psychologically made us feel about ourselves and our people; move on to talk about the need for developing the concept of peoplehood in this country, and, finally, the need for instilling in all our people, and especially our young, the will to fight back when touched on by anybody. [applause]

I'm only wearing the shades because the lights are in my eyes and I get tired. If I ask them to put them out, they'll say I put the press out, but I wish they would put them out. All they're doing really is gathering information. They're getting ready to bring some charges against me. [applause, cheers]

This was an appeal to sympathy and it was quite successful. Certain that he had his audience, Carmichael became tough, began to run it down.

As long as there's breath in the black people in this country, especially in SNCC, baby, we gon' tell it like it is! [applause, cheers] The only way they can stop us is to kill us, and these days we're taking them with us when we go. [applause, cheers]

I want to talk about self-condemnation. It is impossible for someone to condemn himself, because if they condemn themselves, they have to punish themselves. Very important concept. We have to understand that. It is impossible for a nation to condemn itself. It is impossible. Let me give you some examples. I really wish you would take those lights out so I could see the folk. They'll give it to the editorial twins of America tomorrow. You know the editorial twins of America, Huntley and Brinkley. [applause, cheers] You ever see on TV how they judge the whole world and black people with just the flick of a finger? [applause] Today they were on TV and they did something I did last night and Huntley said, "It is interesting to note that, with the exception of Britain, is this young man free to run around except the United States." [sic] It is interesting to note that the United States is the world oppressor of black people! [applause] That would be with the inclusion of Britain and France.

It was at this point that Carl Smith, one of the sponsors of Carmichael's appearance in Grand Rapids, interrupted the speech. Smith said, "I'm sorry gentlemen of the press, we'd like to have the lights out so the man can see." This was followed by applause. Carmichael continued.

You see, I have asked you nicely. I could just take them out myself. [applause, cheers] Before you incite to riot, why don't you just put the things out? We didn't come to talk to the press, when we do we have a press conference. [applause, cheers]

Now about self-condemnation. Let us give some examples. After World War II the United States formed the Nuremberg trials with other western societies and they began to bring Nazis to trial. Now the Nazis who committed suicide are the ones who, when they were brought to trial, admitted that they killed human beings. After they admitted they killed human beings then they had to commit suicide. The ones who didn't commit suicide, the ones who allowed themselves to live, were the ones who said, they were rationalizing away their guilt, "I didn't know what was happening in Germany at that time." Listen to the arguments because they sound very, very familiar. "I didn't know what was happening. I didn't know things were so bad." Or they said, "Yes we killed Jews, but they were not human beings, they were sub-human, there's nothing wrong with that." Finally, what they said more sophisticatedly (and what most Americans are saying today) they were just following law and order. Now the ones who said that were able to live. They didn't condemn themselves.

This is the manner in which Carmichael most often made use of his condemnation theory. Note the manner in which he proceeds to relate the theory to the civil rights struggle.

A more immediate example, of course, would be Neshoba County, Mississippi, that's Philadelphia, Mississippi, in 1964. A honkey by the name of Raney, [applause, cheers]

The crowd reacted to the word "honkey." This term (which Newsweek called "Stokelyese" meaning the white man) rarely failed to evoke laughter from the audience.

along with eighteen of his friends, was tried for killing three human beings because they were troubling the status quo. Now, the entire county, Neshoba County, Mississippi, in 1964, cannot indict Sheriff Raney for murder. They can't indict him for murder because he is doing what they want him to do. They elected him to do that. If niggers get smart, you kill them. Period. So they can't indict him because if they indicted him they would themselves be guilty. That's very, very important to understand because we contend in SNCC that white America cannot condemn itself for the brutality and bestiality that she's heaped upon black people as a total community. If she was to do that,

my brother Leroi Jones reminds me, she would have to commit suicide and that might not be a bad idea. So that's very important. What it means is that black people cannot subjugate themselves to the mercy of white America hoping that someday she will admit all the wrongs she has done and thereby grant us our liberation. That's very, very important. A great black man by the name of Frederick Douglass recognized that in 1870 when he wrote: "He who wants his liberation must strike his own blow." [applause]

That leads to the second theory we want to talk about--the difference between giving somebody their freedom and denying somebody their liberation. It's very, very important, perhaps the most important concept we ought to deal with. In the past the civil rights movement was under the assumption that the white community would *give* black people their freedom. That is not true. No man can give any man his freedom. All men are born free. What happens after they are born free is that they are enslaved by other people. Now, black people are born free in this country. They are enslaved by the white people. [applause] So that white people can't *give* us anything. They have got to *stop* enslaving us, they've got to *stop* denying us our liberation. In other words, they've got to become *civilized*. [applause] If you agree with that then we can move on with some examples. If you agree with that then the logical extension would be that any civil rights bill passed in this country, while it might not ease the struggle for black people, it really helps civilize white people and in fact the civil rights bills are for white people, not for us. [applause, cheers] Let me give you an example. I am black; I know that I'm a human being. Now, some honkeys don't know that. [laughter] Now, I know that as a human being there are certain dignities that I'm supposed to have. One of them is that I can enter any public place. So I try to get into a public place, some honkey gets in my way, he shoots at me, beats me up or carries me off to jail if I try to get in his store so the white folks in D.C. got to write a civil rights bill for this honkey telling him that when I come to his store he has to let me in. [applause, cheers] So that I am totally unchanged by the process. I'm the same person. The only person who is changed is this honkey. [laughter]. He has been forced to recognize my humanity. That's the only difference.

Carmichael reasons cleverly. There is no doubt a logical basis for what he says here, but his language is designed strictly to rouse the emotions of his audience. To the delight of the audience he decided to continue on the subjects of voting and housing.

The same thing is true with the Voting Rights Bill. I know that I can vote. Every time I try a honkey shoots me. [laughter] So they got to pass a civil rights bill for the honkeys that says, when I come to vote, get out of my way. You've got to understand the concept because they talk about this old democracy nonsense and they make it sound like we should push for it. We know we can live any place we want to live. Every time we try honkeys go to acting like savages, throwing rocks. [laughter, cheers] So they had to pass a civil rights bill telling them we could move anyplace we wanted to move and don't go to acting and showing your color! [laughter, cheers] If you understand that you really recognize that the Black Power fight in this country has to civilize white America because she is *uncivilized*. [applause, cheers]

Carmichael's concept of definitions is no doubt an offshoot of the concept evolving from Malcolm X just before his death. Carmichael uses the concept as a major philosophic premise. Note the manner in which he employs the concept in the following frequently-used examples.

Let's move into the concept of definitions because they are very important. White western society, and notice I say western *society*, never western civilization, because that's a misnomer. As a matter of fact, that's a *lie*! White western society has been able to define everybody and everything. And because she's had the power to define everybody and everything, she has been able to prescribe their actions. That's very, very important. You've got to understand. Let me give you some examples. Television. The red and the white men are fighting, right?

Carmichael began conducting a type of dialog with the audience. Young people yelled out in answer, "Right!"

The white man beats up the red man. What happens?

The young people answered, "Victory!" They were obviously familiar with this example.

"We beat up all those Indians, we had a victory!" Right? The red man beats up the white man. What happens?

The answer came, "Massacre!"

Those dirty Indians! They *massacred* us! [applause] You've got to understand that concept because what they're saying is that a victory is honorable and a massacre is not, a massacre is dirty. So the poor red man would be always fighting but never win a victory. He would always get a

massacre. The difference is that in a victory you are shot to death and in a massacre you are cut to death and if you're going to die you would rather be shot to death. You can see that today if you ever dig the editorial twins of America. Huntley and Brinkley. They sit up there and say, "*Today--Viet--Cong--dirty--rebel--filthy--Communist--forces threw--Molotov--cocktails--and--wounded--17--civilians.*" Then, flash, they say: "In the meantime our *good* GI boys have been *bombing the hell* out of North Vietnam." [applause] They're defining. So these poor people who are fighting for their country are dirty communists, you know.

And they define us as Negroes. And that means you are lazy, stupid, apathetic, eat watermelon, and got no religion. Well, now, the first right of anybody, or any people is to define themselves as they see fit, define the struggle as what they call it, and to have those definitions recognized by their oppressors. That's the big fight in the country, because what they did in the past was to have us react to their definitions. Let me give you an example. You remember in 1954, Dr. King said, "We want to integrate." In the minds of all black people Dr. King was talking about good schools, good housing, good jobs, and a good way of life. And that's what all black people knew. But some honkey jumped up and said, "You want to marry my daughter, don't you?" [applause, laughter] What happened was that the black man became afraid of his definition of the term integration and started reacting to the white man. "No, we don't want to marry your daughter. We don't want to be your brother-in-law, we just want to be your brother. We don't want to sleep in your bedroom, we just want to sleep in the house next door," all that junk! [applause] What they allowed the white people to do was to define their terms and then react to the definitions of white people. They don't do that with SNCC. They ask us, you know what we tell them? Your daughter--your sister--your *mama*! The white woman is *not* the Queen of the world, she's *not* the Virgin Mary, [applause] she can be made like any other woman, let's move on to something *important*! [applause, cheers]

~~So that we will never allow them to define~~ our terms and have us react to them. That's what they tried to do with Black Power. We said, "Black Power." They said, "You mean violence, don't you?" They *wanted* us to say, "Uh uh boss man, we don't mean violence." When we say Black Power we will define it and you will *shut* your mouth and listen to the *definition of it. Period.* [applause, cheers] Black Power is the coming together of black people to fight for their liberation by any means necessary. *Period.* [applause, cheers] That's very

important because we must be able to define ourselves as we see fit because they have been defining for us and we have been accepting their definitions. We should say, "We're black people, beautiful, strong, intelligent, and aggressive." [applause, cheers]

Following his outline, Carmichael argued emotionally on the subject of violence.

We want to move now to talk about violence, because I'm really upset when I see a black man on television talking about violence. We are the most violent people in this country. We cut and shoot each other more than we do anything else. [applause] But nobody in the country talks about the violence of black people against black people because they don't care about black people. They don't care! [applause] The only time they talk about violence is when some brother moves to get rid of some honkey cop who's been riding his back all his life. You've got to understand that they try to put us in a trick bag. How is Humphrey going to get up there and talk about violence don't get anyone anywhere when he's bombing the hell out of North Vietnam? [applause] They tell us violence doesn't do us any good and by the time we reach 18 they put a uniform on us and send us out to Vietnam to kill people. What they're saying is that violence is o.k. against everybody except the white man. [applause, cheers] And what really annoys me about these black people who after every rebellion (not riot, but rebellion) jump up and say, "They shouldn't do that, they're bad," is that they are being used to condemn their own people. And that's the only power they have, the power to condemn black people. [applause] You never hear them speak out about police brutality. You never hear them speak about white landlords who have been charging us high prices. You never hear them talk about white merchants who charge us high prices for rotten meat. They live out in the suburbs and they only know something is going on when some brother moves to take care of natural business and then they open their mouths. What they're saying is that it's o.k. for you all to shoot and cut each other, but don't you touch that white man. If they cared about nonviolence they would be preaching it in the black community, because we need it *desperately* in the black community. [applause, cheers]

At this point Carmichael rambled, seemed to search for a new approach.

If they cared about nonviolence they would be practicing it in Vietnam. But it's not a question of violence. It's a question of black people moving for their liberation.

And every time we try to move they try to stop us by using our so-called leaders. I just throw that junk out the window about violence because the most violent man in the black community is a white cop. [applause] White policemen kill and have the power to do it scot free. So it's not a question of violence. The real question is who is controlling the violence. That is the question. If I shot 30 yellow men with slanted eyes I would get a medal if I were in Vietnam. If I shot 30 white men who called me nigger in this country I would get the electric chair. [applause] It is a question of power. He who has the power to make that decision. And we don't have *none*! That's why we are where we are because if we had the power we would make our own decisions. And you've got to understand that because that's what they are doing to you in this country. Have you ever read these stories about the kids in Fort Lauderdale, the kids throwing bricks and bottles at policemen? The headlines: "College kids go on spree." [laughter, applause] A brother throws a rock: "Negroes riot!" [applause, cheers]

We're going to incorporate those concepts and I'm not going to discuss violence. It happens to be a way of life of man. The question is who uses it, who controls it. I'm going to control my violence. I'm going to decide who I'm going to kill. I'm not going to let nobody tell me who I should kill. I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to Vietnam to shoot nobody 'cause Lyndon Johnson tells me to shoot him. The Vietnamese ain't never called me nigger. I know who I'm gon' shoot. [applause, cheers]

Carmichael began his attempt to build black unity through counteracting stereotypic "propaganda." He perceives the stereotype as very harmful to the black psyche and it was these that he attacked most vehemently. It was also at this point that he began to employ more black idiom.

If you can begin to accept those four basic premises: self-condemnation; the difference between giving one one's freedom and denying one one's liberation; the importance of definitions in the world today; and violence; we can then move into how we can pragmatically know the people who oppress and suppress us.

Now, what white America has had to do--like Nazi Germany still lies about what she did--what she does is that anything that happens to black people she blames us, because she can't blame herself. Just like the Nazis blamed the Jews. You know, they said they deserved to be killed; they were filthy and they were sloppy and they were trying to take over our country; you know; so they believed those lies. You've got to believe in what you

do. Now, white America has told a lot of lies about us. And she has to believe them because if she ever stopped she'd commit suicide. And that doesn't bother me. What bothers me is that those lies have been so calculated that *some* black people believe them. [applause] That's what we want to talk about. We want to be able to clear the minds of black people who believe the lies that white America has told about us and about themselves.

The biggest lie that white America has told about us is that we are lazy. That's right. You have some black people running around hollering, "Oh, we are so lazy. [applause] If we were like white folks, hard working, we would make it, but not us, we're lazy." That's a lot of garbage. White people are lazy. Look here, they so lazy they went to Africa to steal us to do their work for them! [laughter, applause] It's not a question of being lazy. We *are* the hardest working people in this country! Our *sweat built* this country scot free! [applause] It's not a question of whether you're lazy or not. It's a question of who has the power to control the resources in a given area. That's what counts. We ought to understand we are hard working people.

What is wrong with that and what is supposed to be associated with that is the other idea: if you work hard you will succeed. You know people believe that, man? They do, man. That's a lot of junk, man, 'cause if that was true we would own this country lock, stock, and barrel. [applause] We would own it because we are the hardest working people in this country! Our mothers take care of two houses every single day--our's and Miss Ann's. [applause] We are the sharecroppers in Mississippi from kin to kin--can't see in the morning to can't see at night. [laughter, applause]

This ("kin to kin") was borrowed from Malcolm X. The reader is directed to "The Ballot or the Bullet," in Breitman's Malcolm X Speaks.

We are the porters and the elevator men in the north, we are the garbage men, we are the ditch diggers, we are the street cleaners, we are the maids, it is *us*. We are the hardest working and the lowest paid people in this country. [applause] It is not a question of who works hard. It is a question of who controls.

You have to understand that because what is tied very closely to it is what they finally said to us, "Well, if you want to make it, you've got to get an education." That was the biggest trick bag they ever put on us. We began to believe that, man. We started to send our children to college and to school and all that boom, boom, boom. And if we had any sense we would have just stopped to dig,

you know. If I come out of college with a college diploma and a white boy comes out with a high school diploma, he gets a higher paying job from the jump. [applause, cheers] So that it's not a question of getting an education because we got too many doctors and masters working in the post office. [applause] So that again is not the question. What is most significant about that is that they were telling us that junk so we could go to school so they could brain, I mean *whitewash*, our minds. That's something else we want to talk about. Because what Fanon said--Frantz Fanon is a black revolutionary philosopher, and he is out of sight! Look here, he so deep that Camus and Sarte can't even begin to figure out what he's talking about. Fanon said that an educational system is nothing but the reinforcement of values and institutions of a given society. Period. And they just keep putting it in your minds. You never question it, you just accept it. Let me show you what they have done to us.

Carmichael's attack on the educational system and his black history lesson are highly satirical and seems aimed more to entertain and excite the audience than anything else.

We send our kids to school and they give them these books--Tom, Dick, and Jane. Tom is white, Dick is white, Jane is white, even their dog *Spot* is white! [laughter] And whenever we see ourselves it's on the back, Little Black Sambo, eating watermelon! [laughter, applause] So that the education that we were getting was programmed for us to accept white superiority without even questioning it. That's what we were getting. They have degraded us to the point where we accept white superiority by definition and black inferiority by looking in the mirror. [applause, cheers] That's what they've done to us. And it works.

They have not only done that, they have distorted and lied about history! Lied about history! They have cut us loose from Africa because they know that a people without a history is like a tree without its roots. [applause] And we have been floating for 400 years. It's time we got us some stable roots and became a big tree and spread out all over.

This, too, is borrowed from Malcolm X. The reader is directed to Malcolm X On Afro-American History.

The first university in the world was the University of Timbuctu in Africa! [applause, cheers] But they never print that in their books because they'd have to admit that black people were 'way ahead of them. What do you study in

school? Greece. Rome. What do you know about Africa. They've cut it from history. *Hannibal* was a black man from Carthage, Africa, who crossed the Alps and beat up the Romans to death! [applause, cheers] They never put Hannibal in the books and when they put him in the movies, they got a honkey named Victor Mature playing the part. [laughter, applause] And the reason they do that is because they don't want to instill any feeling of pride in black people because their job is to dehumanize us to the level where we still remain productive. That is the worst thing you can do to any human being. You should kill him first. [applause] They tell you about Greece and Rome but they never tell you about Hannibal, a black man who crossed the Alps and beat up their flourishing white empire. But if you had any sense you would know that Hannibal was black. Have you ever looked at these Italians with brown skin and dark eyes? That's Hannibal. [laughter, applause] If you ever have an Italian cop come up in your face and say something to you tell him: get out my face, I'm your daddy. [laughter, applause]

This was borrowed from Malcolm X. See Malcolm X On Afro-American History.

The education system is geared to make you feel like you're nothing and they're doing it in this very day and age. Making us feel like we're nothing. They tell you about Napoleon Bonaparte. Did they tell you that a black man who was a slave from Haiti named Toussaint L'Overture beat him up and sent him back to France crying like a baby? [applause, cheers] Did you know that? And when he got back to France his wife was pregnant by a pigmy. We had 'um on both sides. [laughter] They don't tell you about that. They must cut it out of the history texts.

But something else. They don't even recognize their racism. They don't. You know what is wrong with white education? They do not recognize the existence of anybody who is not white. Let me give you an example of that. If I said to you that Dr. Kwame Nkrumah (who is a brilliant black man and a beautiful black leader. Don't believe that junk they are telling you about. He is out of sight. If the CIA would leave him alone. [applause] They've got to get his coco so they've got to mess with him.) [applause] discovered England in 1964 you would laugh in my face. But now that was the first time that that black man set foot on England and if we did not recognize the existence of non-black people that's when England would have been discovered.

This is a good example of the degree to which Carmichael can be illogical. Kwame Nkrumah was obviously not the first black man in England. This fact renders the example invalid. Carmichael's point is nevertheless very clear.

If I said Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492, you'd say, "Yeah, that's right." But when he got here there were people already here. He didn't discover it. But what happened is that the white people did not recognize the existence of red people so they said, "Nothing happened until we came." [applause] And white people don't even understand that. If you tell them Columbus didn't discover America they get upset. But that's true. You don't read about anything until white people discovered it. Nothing was happening until some honkey came along! [laughter] There was all of Africa not doing anything until a white man named Cecil Rhodes came and named it Rhodesia and stole our gold and our values. And they say nothing was happening until they came along. That's because they always move with the assumption that they are superior. And they don't even recognize it.

Another example. The white man is felt to be civilized. And it's his job to civilize everybody else because everybody else is savage, dumb, stupid, ignorant, and ain't got no religion and all that junk, you know. And he's God's gift to humanity. Yeah. [laughter] So that when they talked about Africa they talked about their famed blue-eyed, blond-haired, fair boy, Rudyard Kipling who said to the whites, "Go and pick up your half-found friends, half-native, half-savage and half-child and train them how to be good human beings." Because we didn't know see? We were in Africa so we were savages. That's what they called us. You don't ever ask what a savage is or what he does because if you did you would recognize who the *real* savages were. [applause, cheers] A savage shoots, burns, kills, and takes what he wants! That's the United States in Vietnam! So they came to Africa because, you know, we were savages and they were going to tell us what to do. We were running around with our chests out and our breasts were hanging out and they said, "Cover up yourself 'cause I'm excited." [laughter, applause] We were so stupid we thought it was for feeding the young. So obviously the filth must have been in somebody else's mind because we didn't even know it. But be that as it is, the worst thing they could have done was to say to us that they were going to *Christianize* us. Because we had religion. We had different gods. And they said that was not the right way because we were stupid and we had to get the right way and that was one God, Jesus Christ, who we were supposed to worship. And they brought the Bibles. Man,

they came into Africa with Bibles and we had the land and when the honkeys left they got the land and we still got the Bibles! [laughter, applause] They came in there and talked to us about Jesus and we kept our eyes up to sky and they robbed us blind! [applause, cheers]

If you really look at history you will understand that the white man has been whitewashing everybody in the world. And the fight today is for people to do their thinking and recognize their own culture and not think that white people are good because they are white. What they have done is to force their culture on everybody in the world with their guns and their bombs. [applause]

The type of education we get in the schools is geared to keep us looking up to the white man as the great father. The education system in this country is anti-black! It is anti-black! [applause] There are only two black people you can find in any history book in this country: Booker T. Washington, Super Tom, [laughter, applause] and George Washington Carver, *Ignorant* Super Tom. [laughter, applause] They let us read about Booker T. Washington 'cause they want us to be like him, because he used his mouth to do two things, to eat and say "Yassuh." [applause] And George Washington Carver was so stupid he invented the peanut and all the peanut butter factories today are owned by white folks. He loved them so much he *gave* them the patent. [laughter, applause] And the reason I guess they let us read about him is that if they didn't they would be eating *jelly* sandwiches all their lives. [laughter, applause] They do not have in the history books anything about Frederick Douglass, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, J. A. Rodgers, Lerone Bennett, Leroi Jones, and the history books today won't even *mention* brother Malcolm X. [applause] It is as if they did not exist. The Denmark Vesseys are not there, the Nat Turners are not there. They have wiped out a whole race of fighters and given us nothing but a bunch of Uncle Toms who bow and scrape and every time white folks say jump they say, "How high, boss?" [applause, cheers]

When you talk about moving for your true liberation you talk about controlling your school system and giving your children education which makes them know themselves, understand their culture, and be willing to do what anybody else is willing to do. But because the education system is like that we accept what we are told--that white people are God and master and that nothing happens until they come along. And that's why the civil rights movement was the way it was, because they expected the *goodwill* and sanction of white folks to freedom. And white folks oppressing them. Ain't that a gas? [laughter] Jim Clarke was going to wake up one day and free you. [laughter]

Carmichael discussed the subject of beauty and self-acceptance. The acceptance of white beauty standards and the rejection of the black physical being has long been part of the black psyche. Carmichael has been successful in motivating the au naturel look, especially in young black women. The audience was greatly moved by these appeals to pride.

Now what all those lies were meant to do was make us ashamed of ourselves. That's very, very important because they have been able to succeed in doing that and today our job is to change it. They have made us ashamed of each other and ourselves so that what we do is we try to imitate and be as white as we can, physically and mentally. [applause] Since the white folks tell us we never produced anything and since they produced everything we try to be like them. And they tell us the only thing beautiful is white. Every time you pick up a magazine or look at television, beauty is somebody who's got a slender nose, thin lips, stringy hair and white skin. That's right. That's what beauty is. You read the books they give you about *Babbitt* and *Arrowsmith* and all the people are white, looking beautiful, and we don't have those features so we figure, well, if we don't have those features we're ugly. Whenever we try to get a girl who is beautiful we find one who's light, bright and damn near white [applause] because we don't believe that we can be beautiful. And we must have the strength today to say that we are different, as black is different from white. Our nose is broad, our lips are thick, our hair is nappy, we are black and beautiful. [applause, cheers] And that means that our women can throw away the Nadinola jars. [applause, cheers] That means that our young brothers can stop getting their hair slicked down. [applause, cheers] That means that our women can stop wearing wigs and getting their hair messed up. We're so ashamed of our features that we've got to mess it up. You know, people who wear naturals can go outside and the wind and the rain can't do nothing to it. [laughter] Our women pay \$30 a week to mess up their hair so the wind and the rain can also mess it up. We have got to begin to build that strength. We must stop imitating and begin to create for ourselves. [applause, cheers]

The success of the Black Power program depends, to a degree, upon a black solidarity consensus. This consensus is growing, especially among young adults. Carmichael preached the peoplehood concept and related this to the issues involved in the Muhammad Ali decision.

Very closely tied with that is the concept of what we need to do in this country. We need to begin to build the concept of peoplehood. We've got to see ourselves as a people. We can no longer let them make us individuals. They do not oppress us because we are individuals. They oppress us because we are black. We are enslaved because we are black. [applause] You are enslaved because you are black. You live in the ghetto because you are black. You get a bad education because you are black. You get a lousy job because you are black, not because you are an individual who doesn't have a good education, who can't speak good English and all that junk. By the time they see you coming there goes the job. [applause] They don't ask you what you've got going for you. All they want to know is whether you are black, and because we are black we are going to come together and use the power that we have as a group of people to break out of this oppression. [applause] That's the most important thing we can do. We must begin to see ourselves as a people. We must begin to see that if white people oppress one of us because we are black, the next day it's going to be another one of us because we are black. [applause] But because white society has made us ashamed of ourselves we want to run from each other. We walk down the street and we see a honkey cop hitting a black brother up side the head and we know the honkey's hitting him because he's black and we turn our heads and keep on going. [applause] We see the landlords squeeze blood out of a family across the street until they have nothing left to give and put them in the street. Put them in the street. Put their furniture out on the street and we go by there to see what we can steal from them. We will watch each other beat up and not raise our voices. Because we are black. It's time to *stop* that. It's time to *stop* that. It's time to let them know we are all black and when they touch one they touch us all. [applause, cheers] That's going to be our only salvation for survival in this country. That's what they're beginning to recognize because the brothers have let them know across this country. Touch one, baby, and be ready to go to war with all. [applause] We're not going to let you siphon off 30 percent in Vietnam and let the honkey cops shoot the other 30 percent of the young brothers in the ghetto. Uh uh. Uh uh. That was yesterday. [applause, cheers] You touch one, you've got to touch all. That will be our only salvation. That's the only determinant. So that the white man will know that his days of free head-whipping are over. We have watched them beat us up and we stand behind the door and say [whisper] "Did you hear what happened to cousin John? The police beat him up last night. Sh--" That's over. Only as a group can we begin

to move to take the power we have. And as long as we're able to do that they won't be able to siphon off people.

Everybody's out here hustling for themselves instead of recognizing they've got to hustle as a group. We have been hustling and hustling off each other. We don't even have the guts to hustle off the honkeys. Hustling off each other! [laughter] You a black man, I'm a black man and you trying to hustle me. [laughter] Here comes the white man giving out the welfare checks and you won't touch him for what he's got, you're going to mess with me. And the reason you do that is because you know they're not going to do nothing to you if you mess with me. [laughter, applause] But if you mess with him--[throat cutting gesture followed by laughter and applause]. That means that we have to move to reverse that trend--build a community of our own where we will not even begin to talk about crime. The only crimes we will talk about is crimes against black people. You have to understand the reason that we must do that is that white people will punish you for everything except that. You cut your husband on Friday night and the judge lets you out Monday morning, 10 dollars fine. [applause] We know. We know. If you live in the ghetto and your house gets robbed you can call the cops until you turn white, they ain't coming. [applause, cheers] And it's useless to discuss stealing! White people can't say nothing about stealing. They can't say nothing about stealing because their history is nothing but that of a nation of thieves. [applause, cheers] I laugh at them because they really think they own the world and everybody in it. All you have to do is check out examples. How can the white man judge the black man for stealing? The honkey stole me! [laughter, cheers] He's guilty before he even talks about it. You should see them in their courtrooms in the south. The man gets me up there and says, "I charge you for contempt of court." Who's gon' charge you for contempt of *justice*? [applause, cheers] You don't know nothing about it. [applause, cheers]

Look at this example. We have a beautiful black brother name of Muhammad Ali who is out of sight! [applause, cheers] So that you will recognize how dumb and stupid they are--because he won't go to Vietnam they say, "We're going to take his title away." We going to take it away! Like they *gave* it to him in the first place. [applause, cheers] They can't take his title away. The brother got it by getting in the ring and beating up every honkey and Uncle Tom in sight! [applause, cheers] If they want the title why don't they get in the ring with the brother? [applause, cheers] But that never occurs to us. We don't even know the issues. We begin to argue about should they take his title. You don't argue with that because they can't do it. And there is no argument. You

see, that's what white people do all the time. They get you in an argument on some technical garbage and you bargain with them when they had no right to say anything about it in the first place. [applause, cheers]

At this point Carmichael rambled, touching briefly on several points. He developed an argument around the question of fighting back and ended a speech replete with emotional appeals and language on a note of eloquence and commitment.

And they get upset because I talk about Black Power. They ain't got nothing to say about black power. I don't even talk to them about it. Period. I ain't got no say about white power. That's for them.

A nation of thieves. The nation was conceived in thievery. They stole this country from the red man, committed genocide against him. And they called it "taming the west." [laughter] They've got the people on reservations today talking about what's good for them. They decide what's good for everybody else. Who are they? Who do they think they are? They don't own the world. And when somebody reminds them of it they talk about dissent. *Dissent?* Ain't nobody dissenting with them. People are talking about their liberation. They'd better get hip. [applause] I won't even dissent with Lyndon Johnson. As far as I'm concerned he's a buffoon. [laughter, cheers] There ain't no dissent in this country when it comes to black and white. Black people are talking about survival. That's not dissenting. That's not dissenting because when they talk about drafting 30 percent of our brothers to go to Vietnam they're talking about black urban removal. That's not dissenting. Nobody's talking about whether you should or should not dissent. That's not the issue. It's an issue of survival. White people can no longer define the terms under which they would enter the battlefield. It's the people whom they are fighting who will define the terms under which *they* will enter the battlefield. That's very, very important because once you do that you've got a man hooked. That's why they can't win in Vietnam. Never will. Because the Vietnamese decided when to fight. [applause]

The trouble with black people is that we never define our terms. We always let them define them. "If you want to win your liberation, go to school." O.K. [Carmichael's pantomime was greeted with laughter and applause] If you want to get freedom, go through the courts. O.K. [laughter, applause] And all the things they have been telling us have been accepted. No more. We will decide in this day how we will get our liberation. [applause, cheers]

You have to understand these concepts because they are very, very important. Because what I'm saying is that the white man isn't deciding the terms under which I must fight. That's why they can't begin to understand SNCC. Because they can no longer decide the terms under which we fight. So don't let them define for you when to fight. Can you see them sitting up in the United Nations deciding whether or not South Africa should be free? Like they own the world. The blacks in South Africa should pick up guns and shoot the hell out of every honkey who's oppressing them. [applause, cheers]

And we're violent! Did they ever tell you about when England was oppressing them? They picked up guns and fought them! Didn't say a word about it. [applause, cheers] Didn't say a word about it! When they want democracy they define what democracy is. When everybody else wants democracy they decide when to give it to them. And debate the question! A man can never debate the question of his liberation. Either he is free or he is not free. Either he dies fighting for his freedom and gets it, or he listens to his oppressor and he stays where he is.

One quote from a great black man who they don't teach you about. Frederick Douglass. He said, "If a slave wants to remain a slave he should obey the laws of his master." That's deep. That's deep. Because if we want to get free we've got to stop listening to the honkeys and listen to each other. [applause]

Finally, we want to talk about fighting back. Now, whenever you talk about fighting back in this country the first thing the honkey wants to talk about is law and order. [applause] You ain't discussing *justice*, you're discussing law and order. The white man put you in a trick bag again. Again. [applause] This country *has* law and order! It does not have justice! [applause] That's all. Hitler had the most efficient system of law and order in 1941. He did not know how to *spell* justice, unfortunately. Jim Clarke has efficient law and order. George Wallace knows law and order. Ross Barnett and big-headed honkey Maddox [laughter, applause] know law and order. Now, they know about it, so when somebody moves to get some justice they think you're disrupting law and order and everybody starts talking about law and order. But now as religious people we should have read the Bible. And if we've read the Bible we know that Jesus Christ answered the question a long time ago. He said, "I have come to bring the sword, not the shield. I have come to turn son against father, daughter against mother, nation against nation, for where there is injustice there shall be no peace." [applause] So when they raise the question of law and order we are going to tell them, baby, if you ain't got justice in this country then we will burn it down to the ground! [applause]

You can't have law and order unless you've got justice. And that's what people are saying across the country today. And you're arguing about law and order. Later for law and order! People are talking about justice. That's the fight. He ain't coming in on that argument because he knows he's wrong from the jump. He's not even going to talk about that because he's going to get you confused about law and order. And you say, "Oh, yes, you're right, we should have law and order." [applause] You control all the law and order in the country. That's why we should live under law and order. Don't forget brother Douglass: "He who will be a slave listens to his master. He who wants his liberation strikes his own blow, speaks his own peace."

Now, about fighting back. Ain't no need for anybody to get upset about fighting back anymore because it's already established. If a honkey lays his hand on one of us, before God gets the news, he's dead. [applause, cheers] And don't let them pick your heroes. You let your heroes be the brothers and sisters in Nashville, Tennessee, who fought back. [applause] Let them be the brothers and sisters who fought back. Who fought back. We've got to pick our heroes because they pick heroes for us and we listen to them and look where we've been for the last 400 years. We must pick our heroes. And don't let them tell you about these brothers acting like savages shooting back. Baby, for 400 years we have been the recipients of violence in this country. [applause] For 400 years we've been spat upon, burned, lynched, shot, beat up, and didn't anybody do anything about it. Didn't anybody say anything about it. And when some brothers move to take care of it, some other people are going to jump up and say there's another way. They haven't found another way in 400 years! [applause] They control the country. They control us. Why can't they find another way? They are incapable of finding another way because they are trapped by their own racism. Because when the question is white and black they've got to decide the former. [applause, cheers] They have to do it because white people can be intellectually committed to aims of equality, but emotionally they are racist. They have to be if they have lived in this country. We all have to be racist in this country because that's the way the country is. It is *imbued* with racism, not only nationally but internationally. That's why, internationally it becomes so important for us to recognize it. You can watch D.C. They drop bombs on who? Hiroshima. Nagasaki. Who do they napalm? Vietnam. Who do they start the fights with? The colored world. The colored world. And who do they use to fight the wars? Black people. We are being used to fight each other. That's what we have to understand. We cannot be fighting other black people and non-white people around the world because they are being

oppressed by the same people who are oppressing us. [applause] You cannot send you sons to Vietnam to shoot those cats. They ain't done nothing to you. [applause] And don't let them bring in a irrelevant issue about government aggression. Tell them you want to talk about *racist* aggression! That's what we want to talk about! [applause] They won't come in on that issue because they are wrong from the jump. So they're going to talk about communist aggression. Now, what do you know about communism? You don't even know what a communist is? [applause] If one was sitting next to you you wouldn't know it. [applause] You don't know anything until somebody comes along and says, "My fellow Americans, he is a communist, shoot him." And you say, "Wow, he says he's a communist and he's a white man so he must be right, boom, boom." [applause] Wouldn't it be funny if that guy wasn't really a communist? Maybe he was just fighting to control the resources of his country, just like we are fighting to control the resources of our communities. Did it ever dawn on you that you're bombing thousands of churches and schools? And we need schools and houses right here in this country. And 70 percent of the tax money, your money, is being used to kill people. And we need that 70 percent to build schools and houses and get decent jobs for the people in this country. Until you answer those questions then yours will not be to reason why, yours will be to do and die. [applause]

So then, in conclusion, I think that we ought to make it clear, crystal clear, that for all my many black brothers and sisters who feel that somehow they will be immune to this summer: let me tell you that when one simple, slick-head, black-boy throws a molotov cocktail the whole black community is in trouble. [applause] And you had better understand that because in every area in this country after a rebellion they implicate the entire black community. The entire black community. [applause] Because you know we all look alike and they can't tell a rioter from the next one. [laughter, applause]

We had better start coming together and prepare for our survival in this country. And I can speak to the older generation and not to our generation. We sat and watched them make our great grandparents run. We sat and watched them make our grandparents run. We sat and watched them make our parents run. We are out of breath. We are not running anymore.

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