“EXILE IS HELL”: BLACK INTERNATIONALISM AND ROBERT F. WILLIAMS’S ACTIVIST NETWORK IN THE COLD WAR, 1950-1969

By

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ABSTRACT

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The precarious positions of African American political exiles provide an instructive window into the fluctuations of international support for the black freedom struggle. "Exile Is Hell" examines the strategies used by Robert F. Williams's activist network to survive and maintain their involvement in the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement from outside the United States. Expatriates such as Williams, Richard Gibson, Julian Mayfield, and others most plainly bore the vicissitudes of political shifts occurring in the 1960s against the backdrop of the Cold War. "Exile Is Hell" tracks this ebb and flow by foregrounding the day-to-day experiences of Williams, Gibson, Mayfield, and others to reveal their methods of navigating an erratic political climate and capricious activist community. International rhetoric formed an integral component of the Black Power era, yet many activists struggled to forge lasting, transnational coalitions due to the variable politics of the Cold War. Using Williams as the central hub of this activist network, this project contributes a detailed narrative of exile through a collective biography that explores the daily work of expanding the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement to incorporate global ambitions. This research further establishes the impact of changes in international support upon an activist network in order to extrapolate the effects on the African American freedom struggle.

To my parents

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Thank you all.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

CAMD	Committee to Aid the Monroe Defendants
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
Comintern	Communist International, referring to the Third International
CPUSA	Communist Party of the United States of America
CRC	Civil Rights Congress
ECLC	Emergency Civil Liberties Committee
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FPCC	Fair Play for Cuba Committee
HUAC	House of Un-American Activities Committee
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
MDC	Monroe Defense Committee
Mine Mill	International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NOI	Nation of Islam
POC	Provisional Organizing Committee to Reconstitute the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party
PRC	People's Republic of China
PURSC	Partido Unido de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba, United Party of the Cuban Socialist Revolution
RAM	Revolutionary Action Movement
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
SAC	Special Agent in Charge

SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SWP	Socialist Workers Party
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union

INTRODUCTION: "Exile Can Be Dramatic"

"Exile can be dramatic, but there is really nothing glamorous about it, especially when one faces the prospect of being continuously banned from his homeland. Psychologically, my greatest stress came from the fact that I could never forget that I was unjustly forced out of America. If I had left America other than as a fugitive from white supremacy repression I could have easily resigned myself to a contented life in China. In addition to my exile, my wife and two young sons were forced to bear the same isolation from relatives, friends and the Black Psyche that is found only in America. I saw my children grow up more proficient in other languages then in their own native tongue. Environments free of juvenile delinquency, crime and pot were healthy for them, but as far as total identity they were becoming foreigners to the entire world."[1]

—Robert F. Williams, Undated (after his return to the United States)

On April 5, 1965, the exiled and outspoken civil rights activist Robert F. Williams refuted the *Toronto Telegram*'s allegations concerning his involvement in a plot to bomb the Statue of Liberty. Written after living as an expatriate in Cuba for four years, he opened the letter with two simple denials—"No, a thousand times no! I am not a Communist. I am not engaged in any terrorist activity in Canada nor the United States."[2] Williams's commitment to direct action protest had not wavered during his exile, however, as he exclaimed, "Yes, a thousand times yes, I am vigorously opposed to racism and the Ku Klux Klan terror." He closed the letter by asserting that his "only apology is for being too western in my approach to tyranny."[3] Throughout his eight years in exile, Williams engaged in a running battle to have his words and

[1] Robert F. Williams (RFW), "Exile at Home and Abroad," 2-3, Undated, Box 3, Folder "Press Releases (1)," Robert F. Williams Collection (RFW Papers), Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan (BHL-UM).

[2] Robert F. Williams to Editors of *The Telegram*, April 5th, 1965, Reel 2, Frame 69, *The Black Power Movement Part 2: The Papers of Robert F. Williams*, ed. Timothy B. Tyson, microfilm accessed as part of RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[3] Ibid.

ideas faithfully represented. As the powerful musings in the epigraph that begins this chapter intimate, this struggle—a herculean yet underacknowledged endeavor that preoccupied a pivotal phase of Williams's activism—significantly contributed to his life in exile being arduous, psychologically taxing, and, in many respects, most likely not as productive as he hoped. Understandably unaware of what awaited him when he decided to leave the United States, Williams, like other African American expatriates during the twentieth century, faced a range of challenges while living abroad. The use of state power to force his exit consistently influenced his outlook on U.S. foreign policy and his approach to the struggle for black liberation. This study unpacks Williams's largely underexplored life in exile, a complex story that not only reveals Williams's activities in several different countries and the challenges that he faced there, but also how he managed his connections with a network of other African American activists.

Robert F. Williams Reconsidered

In *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (1999), historian Timothy Tyson uncovered Williams's position as a central figure in the civil rights movement and argued that Williams's use of nonviolent direct action along with public endorsements of armed self-defense connected the civil rights and Black Power era. Tyson challenged the commonly held opinion among many historians that the civil rights movement and the Black Power era were distinctly different phases of the larger black freedom struggle and the conventional notion that the former was predominated by an adherence to the philosophy of non-violent direct action whereas the latter embraced self-defense and the rhetoric of violence.[4]

[4] The following works aided in the creation of a civil rights narrative that separated (and reified) the tactics of a "classic" civil rights movement: Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982); David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: W. Morrow, 1986); Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1987); Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-63* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988) and Taylor Branch, *A Pillar of Fire: America in the King Years, 1963-1965* (New

Published twenty years ago, Tyson's study remains the leading biography on Williams, a study that thoroughly details his life from his birth in 1925 until his move to Cuba in 1961. While Tyson's book endures, his is certainly not the "last word" on this important historical icon who is most widely known for his philosophy of armed self-defense as epitomized in his classic book *Negroes with Guns*, a work that became a bible of sorts for the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense. Tyson, for instance, did not probe into Williams's years spent in exile from the United States and summed up that period by stating that the "hard truth for all who admire Williams's courage and leadership in the freedom movement is that, snared in exile, he became less a player than a pawn in the Cold War."[5] This characterization undervalues the significance of Williams's sojourn into the international sphere. While by no means a rebuttal to or step-by-step corrective of Tyson's work, my work portrays Williams as a much more complex activist than previously appreciated by other scholars and historians, including Tyson. Central to this study is the understanding that his fascinating life in exile complicates how we interpret, unravel, and better appreciate the evolution of his complex and fluid identity, worldview, and tactics as a radical black activist. Williams's travels and connections in the United States and abroad throughout the 1960s offers a unique, hands-on insight into the growth of the brand of internationalism that became a hallmark of the Black Power era.

I base this investigation into Williams's life and thought upon a meticulous examination of the Robert F. Williams Collection at the Bentley Historical Library. In addition, this study is informed by time with the Richard T. Gibson Papers at the George Washington University

York: Simon & Schuster, 1998). Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, scholars challenged the model of the civil rights movement from these earlier works, but primarily focused on expanding the conception of a national civil rights movement without as much concern for connections to the Black Power era as seen in the work of Carol Anderson, Mary Dudziak, William Chafe, Robin DG Kelley, and Gerald Horne.

[5] Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 300.

Library, the Julian Mayfield, Vicki Garvin, and Harry Haywood collections at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the Conrad J. Lynn Papers at the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, the Mae Mallory collection at the Walter P. Reuther Library, and the Carlos Moore collection at the Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies.

Scholars have drawn extensively from the Robert F. Williams Collection, but I have conducted in-depth readings and analyses of the day-to-day aspects of Williams's life in exile and how that lived experience influenced his activism. Other scholars have overlooked this facet of Williams's life—whether it is Tyson's focus on Williams's domestic activism or Robeson Taj Frazier's and Cristina Mislán's considerations of his public writings and communication while in Cuba and China. My close reading of Williams's personal correspondence highlights his labor as an activist and reconstructs his ambitions and the intentions for his exile. As the president of the NAACP chapter in Monroe, North Carolina, Williams had garnered national and international attention to a local civil rights struggle that he and his wife, Mabel Robinson Williams, managed. Williams did not have that level of agency while abroad, but his exile needs to be more fully explored for this reason. In this sense, my exploration of Williams's life in exile adds to the historiographical understanding of the varied experiences of African American expatriates during the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement.

Several questions warrant consideration. How did Williams resist his status as a "pawn," the label that Tyson has used to describe Williams in the international realm? What compromises were needed to ensure his and his family's survival? Where and when did Williams refuse to compromise and how did government agents and other activists respond? What were Williams's goals in his attempted international connections? What frustrated these attempts? What was the quality of life for the Williams family in Cuba and China? How did the Williamses respond to

the pressure from foreign governments and the activist community? How did the activist community at home and abroad respond to Williams?

"'Exile Is Hell': Black Internationalism and Robert F. Williams's Activist Network in the Cold War, 1950-1969" examines how Robert Franklin Williams, along with other African American activists within his network, weathered the pressures of the Cold War. Though I focus on Robert F. Williams's life, thought, and activism as a nucleus, this project also explores the lived experiences and thoughts of a select group of underappreciated (by historians, that is) African American expatriates. In addition to Williams, this cohort includes his wife Mabel Robinson Williams, journalists Julian Mayfield and Richard T. Gibson, activists Mae Mallory and Vicki Garvin, and lawyer and activist Conrad J. Lynn. In unpacking and excavating the ideas, activities, and day-to-day struggles of Williams and those in his radical circle, I pay close attention to how black internationalism transformed and adapted to the shifting political relationships within the Cold War. Starting in the 1950s in order to establish the initial impact of the Cold War on African American international activists, the project ends at the initial stages of détente in order to demonstrate how the politics of the Cold War remained contiguous with the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement.[6]

"Exile Is Hell': Black Internationalism and Robert F. Williams's Activist Network in the Cold War, 1950-1969" has three principal objectives. First, using Williams as a focal point, it reveals the experiences and ideologies of a group of African American expatriates during the Cold War from 1950 to 1969. Within the last decade, African American international activists

[6] My use of Civil Rights—Black Power Movement derives from Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin's framework in *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement*. The usage of Civil Rights—Black Power Movement accounts for the distinct ideological trajectories of the two movements while also recognizing the many threads that connect civil rights activism with the Black Power era. See Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, ed., *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 2-4.

have garnered a great deal of attention from historians. The majority of these scholars' works have not focused on the lived experiences and worldviews of these activists as they navigated the complex terrain of the Cold War. At the same time, the works of Carole Boyce Davies—who has illustrated that the African American communist Claudia Jones transformed her deportation from the United States into an opportunity to nurture a diasporic community of West Indies migrants in London during the 1950s—and Kevin K. Gaines—who explored the experience and politics of the African American expatriate community in a recently independent Ghana—have informed my theoretical approach. My work contributes to this historiography of African American expatriates by viewing the expatriate experience through the lens of interactions with their home nation (the United States in all of the cases for this study), their host nation (or the nation in which they sought refuge), and their fellow activists.

The second aim of this study is to reconstruct the day-to-day work of activism through a collective biography of Williams's network of African American activists. In this regard, "Exile Is Hell" is more interested in the practice of black internationalism than the theory. Public memory too often mythologizes the careers of civil rights leaders and trailblazers. The societal status quo amplifies this effect for African Americans and other people of color—as seen with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks—in order to manufacture progressive narratives and defang the political critique levied by past activists.[7] These depictions obscure the toil, frustrations, and difficulty involved in any form of political organizing. They also separate movement leaders from their base: the activist networks and grassroots participants. Though Williams is the undoubted emphasis of the dissertation, I analyze the connections between these

[7] For a discussion of how the image of the civil rights movement has been used to silence dissent, see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91 no. 4 (2005): 1233-1263, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3660172. For coverage of Rosa Parks's lifelong activism, see Jeanne Theoharis, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013).

activists and how his actions reverberated throughout the network. This approach builds upon a rich vein of African American history through its use of a representative, biographical framework to discover efforts towards black internationalism.[8] Simply put, I employ Williams and his network in a similar manner to uncover the intersections of the Cold War with the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement.

The third aim is to offer a re-interpretation of the potential influence of the Cold War on the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement. For the past two decades, scholars have been unpacking this connection with some of the earliest works from Penny Von Eschen, Mary Dudziak, and Brenda Gayle Plummer. Judy Tzu-Chun Wu and Robeson Taj Frazier most recently contributed to this subject with their focus on travel and the connections between the U.S. protest movements in the 1960s. Their particular attention to the effect of Maoist rhetoric amongst radical American activists informs this project. While Frazier focused on African American expatriates who acted as cultural brokers on behalf of China, I extrapolate from these expatriate experiences a broader discussion on the course of the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement. Though it may seem circuitous to monitor domestic struggles through people pushed out of the United States, I argue that these expatriates felt the vicissitudes of the Cold War shifts most plainly. Their precarious positions provide an instructive window into the fluctuations in international support for the black freedom struggle. The paths they traveled were governed by the changing global politics in the wake of African independence and the rise of détente in the early 1970s. As the historian Jeremi Suri has argued, détente emerged from "a convergent

[8] The most pertinent studies for this project are the recent works by Dayo F. Gore, Erik S. McDuffie, and Robeson Taj Frazier. Each has written studies that illuminated the experiences faced by a group of activists during the changing conditions of the Cold War within the United States and abroad. Gore and McDuffie concentrated on the connections between black women activists and radical politics from the 1930s to the 1970s in order to document their actions within the international sphere, the diversity of their politics, and their responses to the Cold War. Frazier investigated the relationship between the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement and the black radical image of China through a study of the media created by African American expatriates in China.

response to disorder among the great powers" as a means to solidify an international status quo meant to trickle down into domestic politics.[9] By covering from 1950 until the end of the 1960s, this dissertation starts the process of plotting this transformation in opportunities for African American activists within the international arena.

Williams and his Activist Network

Robert F. Williams served as the president of the Monroe, North Carolina, chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) from 1955 until 1959. Born in Monroe in 1925, Williams witnessed racial injustice and violence at a young age and, according to Tyson, cited the formative experience of witnessing a white police officer—the father of future U.S. Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC)—beat and drag an African American woman across the ground and into the city jail. What remained with Williams was the crowd of whites who laughed at this display and the African American onlookers who attempted to return to their daily routine.[10] Williams followed his older brother Edward "Pete" Williams to Detroit in 1942 for employment opportunities and, by happenstance, found himself embroiled in the Detroit Race Riot of 1943 when, returning from Belle Isle, he and his companions witnessed the fighting on MacArthur Bridge. Following the riot, Williams sought work in California, returned to Monroe, and moved to New York where he was drafted into the U.S. Army in the summer of 1945. The Army discharged him in November of 1946, and Williams returned to Monroe where he married Mabel Robinson in June of 1947. He traveled in search of work after the marriage—sometimes with his young family—while enrolling in college courses. Desperate for secure employment, he

[9] Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 2, 256.

[10] Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 1-2.

enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1954 but received an undesirable discharge in 1955. He then returned home to Monroe and joined the largely-defunct local chapter of the NAACP.[11]

His tenure with the NAACP ended when the national office suspended him in 1959 due to his public endorsement of armed self-defense. Along with his wife, Williams cultivated a large, mainly working-class NAACP chapter that continued to work with the Williamses after Robert's ejection from the NAACP. The Williamses and other leaders in Monroe organized their community towards strident opposition to racial injustice which clashed with the NAACP's more staid and legalistic approach. For example, in 1958, Williams advocated on behalf of two local African American boys aged 7 and 9 from Monroe after they were arrested for their involvement in a "kissing" game with a young white girl. Williams brought national and international attention to this case after the two boys, David "Fuzzy" Simpson and James Hanover Thompson, were sentenced to reform school until the age of 21. During Williams's campaign, he encountered and received aid from Conrad J. Lynn after the NAACP refused to back his efforts. An established activist and lawyer in New York and a participant in the 1947 Journey of Reconciliation[12], Lynn filed an appeal on behalf of the boys and helped raise awareness of the case. From this initial contact, Lynn remained Williams's lawyer until Williams's return to the United States in 1969.[13] The notoriety Williams received after his expulsion from the NAACP also brought him in touch with a group of more radical activists in the late 1950s and this included Richard T. Gibson. A journalist, co-founder of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC), and eventual source for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Gibson and Williams met in New York where Gibson recruited Williams to join the FPCC. Williams also credited

[11] For an in-depth narrative of Williams's early years, see Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 1-89.
[12] A precursor to the later, more famous Freedom Rides.
[13] Upon his return, Williams relied more on Gaidi Obadele (formerly Milton Henry) who had co-founded the Republic of New Afrika with his brother, Imari Obadele (formerly Richard Henry).

Gibson's contacts in the Cuban government for obtaining Williams an invite to attend the Cuban one-year independence celebration along with a select group of African American activists. Though the last time they met face to face was in 1961, they rekindled an alliance during Williams's time in Cuba. Gibson acted as Williams's advocate in European circles.

Williams's continued work in Monroe during the early 1960s brought activists from throughout the nation to join his cause. Willie "Mae" Mallory met Williams in 1959 during one of Williams's fundraising trips to Harlem. Mallory was a member of the "Harlem Nine," a group of nine mothers that had sued the New York Public School System over the segregated and underfunded schools in Harlem. She also was arrested for her part in the 1961 protests in response to the assassination of Patrice Lumumba at the United Nations Plaza in New York City. She traveled to Monroe in the summer of 1961 to work with William and was thus present for the events that led to Williams's flight from the United States. In August of 1961, Williams permitted the Stegall family, a white couple, to take shelter in his home after they had mistakenly turned onto his street. The tension in Monroe was so thick at this moment that Williams's neighbors had surrounded the car expecting trouble from the white strangers. Williams calmed the crowd and, as he left the scene, the Stegalls followed him into his home seeking his continued protection. After a few hours, the Stegalls left and Williams later received a phone call from A.A. Mauney, Monroe's chief of police. Mauney informed Williams of a warrant out for his arrest for the crime of kidnapping the Stegalls, but that the warrant did not matter since "in thirty minutes you'll be hanging in the courthouse square."[14] With the help of novelist and activist Julian Mayfield, the Williams family escaped Monroe that night while evading police patrols. Mayfield and Williams had first met in 1960 when both were part of the group of

[14] Robert F. Williams, *Negroes with Guns* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1998), 50.

African American activists invited to attend the Cuban independence celebration. In 1961, Mayfield was in Monroe as a reporter who then began to aid the Williamses with their struggle against racial injustice. Mayfield traveled with the family to New York where they parted ways—Mayfield went on to Ghana while the Williamses first traveled to Canada and then Cuba.

Williams provides the central hub of the activist network that I examine in "'Exile Is Hell': Black Internationalism and Robert F. Williams's Activist Network in the Cold War, 1950-1969." Through his travels and activist career, Williams met each member of this cohort stateside and maintained contact with them during his exile. Though all of the people within this group knew of each other, Williams remained the primary reason for their association. However, there are other factors in my consideration of this group. First, the activists under review all worked towards an international vision of the black freedom struggle grounded in the understandings of the Black Power—Civil Rights Movement.[15] With the exception of Lynn, these activists all traveled internationally with extended stays on multiple continents—Williams in Cuba, China, and Tanzania; Gibson in England, France, Algeria, and a few years spent in various locations in southern Africa; and Mayfield in Ghana, Spain, and Guyana. These activists also allow access to different networks across the globe particularly with Gibson's and Mayfield's contacts in Europe and Africa. Second, there is a generational aspect within this group that I will consider. Williams, Gibson, Mallory, and Mayfield were born in 1925, 1926, 1927, and 1928 respectively. Thus, they align with more famous civil rights leaders such as Malcolm X (b. 1925), Medgar Evers (b. 1925), and Martin Luther King, Jr. (b. 1929). This contrasts with the age of the more celebrated Black Power leaders who were generally born in

[15] I have grouped these figures loosely under the title of "expatriate." There has been some recent scrutiny about the political connotations and privilege contained within the usage of the word "expatriate." For Williams and his network, I use the term interchangeably with political exile.

the decade from 1935 to 1945. Following this older age group through the 1960s grants an understanding of how seasoned civil rights activists experienced and largely embraced the international aims of the Black Power movement.

The Scope of "Exile Is Hell"

"Exile Is Hell': Black Internationalism and Robert F. Williams's Activist Network in the Cold War, 1950-1969" is sub-divided into four interconnected chapters and includes an introduction and epilogue. Chapter 1, "Contrary to the Best Interests of the United States': Paul Robeson, Harry Haywood, and Radical Black Internationalism in the 1950s," contextualizes the relationship between the Cold War and African American activism in the 1950s. The first part of the chapter reviews the historiographical outlines of the burgeoning field of black internationalism. This section places this dissertation within the emerging scholarship on how African American activists navigated the climate of the Cold War. To that end, the second part of this chapter uses small case studies to describe how activists handled and tested the new limits placed on radicals and left-leaning activists in the 1950s. The first case study covers the banning of Paul Robeson's passport, the ensuing legal battle surrounding this ban, and the publicity campaign created to support its reinstatement. Harry Haywood's rise within the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) and eventual expulsion provides the next case study.

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 highlight previously under-examined dimensions of Robert F. Williams's life, philosophy, and activism. Though Timothy Tyson has thoroughly covered Williams's life in the United States, and partially in Cuba, I explore Williams's life in exile. Chapter 2, "When you see me in Monroe with those crackers': Robert F. Williams, the Monroe Defendants, and a Split Defense, 1961-1964," introduces Williams and his flight from the United

States. I describe Williams's exit from the NAACP and his route to Cuba before switching focus to the kidnapping trial that occurred in his absence. Two defense committees—the Monroe Defense Committee (MDC) and the Committee to Aid the Monroe Defendants (CAMD)—formed behind Williams and the four other defendants, but the two groups bitterly fought. This battle acquired new dimensions as it transformed into a skirmish between an integrated, Social Workers Party-backed committee and a committee composed of the growing black nationalist communities in New York and Cleveland.

Chapter Three, "Catching Hell': Robert F. Williams's Life in Cuban Exile, 1961-1966," delves into Williams's early travels. The chapter primarily looks at Williams's years in Cuba from 1962 to 1966 and analyzes Williams's experience as an expatriate living in Cuba. Through the use of Williams's extensive correspondence, newsletters and radio broadcasts, I have a window into his day-to-day (more accurately, week-to-week) existence. Williams bore the pressures of his host nation more than most of his compatriots. Pressure from the Cuban government and the CPUSA officials in Cuba motivated his frantic attempts to exit Cuba. This chapter recounts how Williams retained his audience in the United States and his attempts to spread his influence globally with his newsletter and a radio program broadcast into the United States. As Williams's relationship with his hosts soured, the Cuban government continually thwarted his efforts to expand until he and his wife arranged to defect to China.

Chapter 4, "Time absolves me': Activist Feuds and Robert F. Williams's Attempts to Return Home, 1965-1969," focuses on Williams's years in China from 1966 to 1969. This chapter describes the Williamses adjustment to their new host nation as well as how they continued their efforts to return to the United States. I focus on Williams's lengthy efforts to reach Sweden from 1965 until 1968 as a means to explore how changes within the international

sphere affected Williams's opportunities to spread his message. Williams hoped to travel to Sweden in order to reach Western audiences, meet with other African American leaders, and lay the groundwork for his eventual return. At various turns, however, the Cuban, Swedish, and U.S. governments as well as concerns within the activist community frustrated his efforts. The chapter concludes with a look at Williams's return to the United States and his interactions with the federal government.

The Epilogue, "Nothing Glamorous About It," provides a coda on Williams's life in the United States. Using his op-ed in *The New York Times* on China as an opening, I discuss the more tempered tone he adopted upon his return and his years in Michigan. I close the dissertation by considering Williams's legacy and how his international travels fit within the intersection of the Cold War and the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement.

CHAPTER 1: "Contrary to the Best Interests of the United States": Paul Robeson, Harry Haywood, and Radical Black Internationalism in the 1950s

"Inspired by the successes of the world anti-colonialist movement in Asia and Africa, [African Americans] are seeking new, militant leadership which is internationalist in outlook, free from ties of white ruling class patronage."

— Harry Haywood, "For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question"

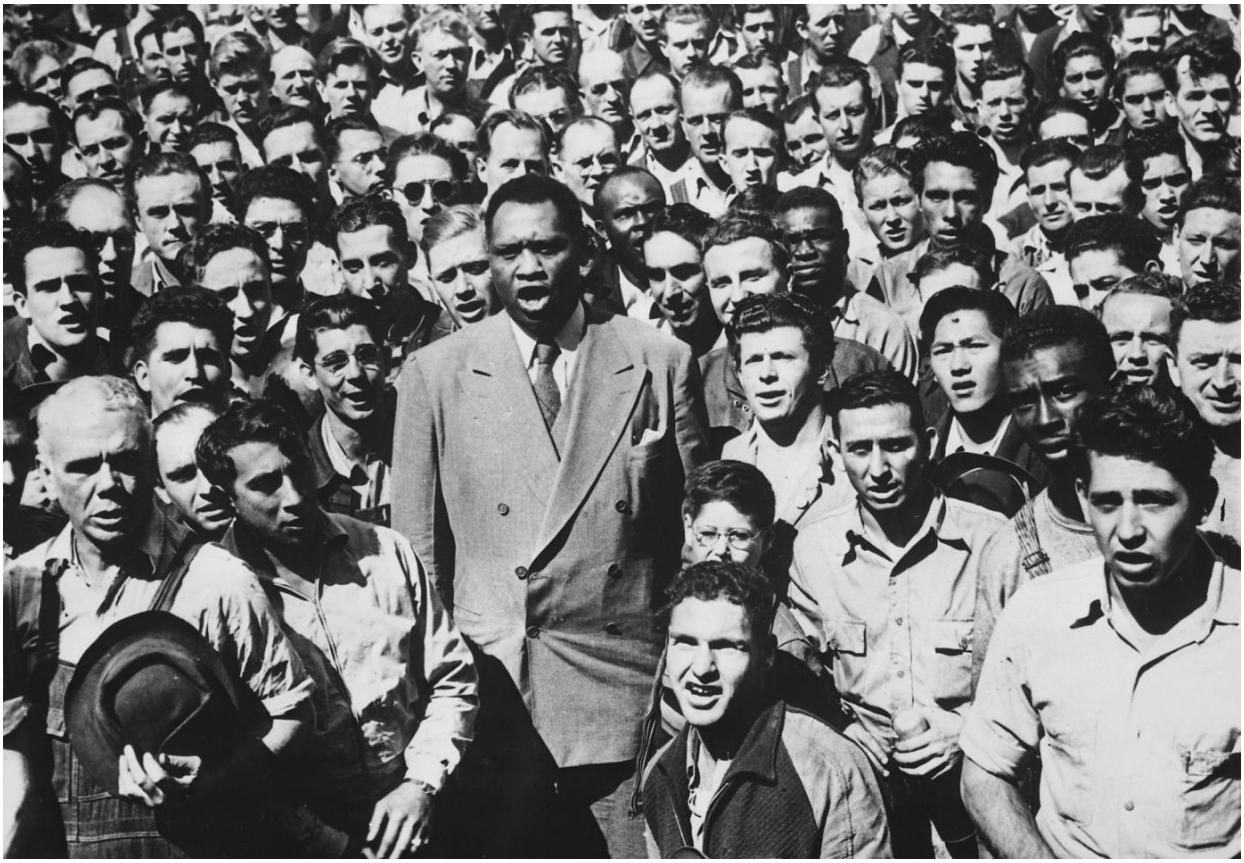

Figure 1: Paul Robeson, world famous singer, leading Moore Shipyard workers in singing the Star Spangled Banner, September 1942. Photo Courtesy of the Office of War Information, Domestic Operations Branch in the National Archives.

On September 12, 1950, the United States Senate passed the Internal Security Act, also known as the McCarran Act, which targeted communist activity within the United States. The proposed law would compel all communist organizations and fronts to register with the U.S. Attorney General and created the Subversive Activities Control Board to review the material from the Attorney General with the additional authority to investigate the registered individuals.

The McCarran Act also restricted expression by banning the picketing of federal court houses; restricted travel by expanding the deportation powers of the government and enabling the restriction of passports for communist-affiliated persons; restricted employment by forbidding any person belonging to a communist organization from working for the federal government or being employed in the certain parts of the defense industry.[16]

Passing through the House of Representatives and joint conference committee with ease, Congress sent the bill to President Harry S. Truman on September 20, who vetoed it two days later. In a lengthy message to Congress, Truman rejected the bill, arguing that the proposed law could damage national security and mocked the provision for communists to catalog their activities for the government as "about as practical as requiring thieves to register with the sheriff." His message to Congress did not shy from labeling communism as a dangerous political ideology or the threat of the Communist Party to the United States, but worried that the vague language of the bill threatened the civil liberties of "loyal citizens."[17] The House of Representatives voted immediately to override Truman's veto and, after a 22-hour debate during which one of the bill's detractors collapsed on the Senate floor after a five-hour filibuster, the Senate did as well.[18] The *Chicago Daily Tribune* described the importance of the bill since it declared the "official American policy that communism is a worldwide revolutionary movement with a totalitarian dictatorship as its target."[19]

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[16] Chicago Tribune Press Service, "Rigid Red Control," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 24 September 1950, Proquest Chicago Daily Tribune (178022255); Internal Security Act of 1950, Pub. L. 81-831, 64 Stat. 987 (1950).

[17] Harry S. Truman, "Veto of the Internal Security Bill," September 22, 1950, The American Presidency Project, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=13628.

[18] C.P. Trussell, "Red Bill Veto Beaten, 57-10, By Senators: Congress Recesses," Special to *The New York Times*, *New York Times*, 24 September 1950, Proquest New York Times (111755322).

[19] Chicago Tribune Press Service, "Rigid Red Control," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 24 September 1950, Proquest Chicago Daily Tribune (178022255).

The Internal Security Act represented neither a watershed moment nor the origins of anti-communist policy in the United States. Its passage through Congress, over a presidential veto, embodied just one instant in the larger trajectory of American fears of communism at home and abroad. Yet, the Internal Security Act is significant for its choice of battleground—the way to combat dangerous ideas and a global communist conspiracy was to hinder travel, police propaganda, and expose the names of communists. The Supreme Court originally upheld this goal, deciding that resident alien communists represented enough of a "menace to the public interest" to deny them bail, holding that joining the Communist Party was a tacit acceptance of the "Party's advocacy of violence," and, in a case related to the 1941 Smith Act, labeling communism "a clear and present danger" to the United States.[20] These measures and rulings had an indelible impact on radical organizing at the onset of the Cold War. Examining the 1960s, historian Cynthia A. Young credited, in part, the development of a U.S.-based Third World Left to the greater license for people of color to travel post-World War II and the eruption of print culture espousing the revolutionary messages of Cuba and China.[21] The Internal Security Act of 1950—and the larger anti-communist panic of the 1950s—sought to repress the budding connections occurring between revolutionary movements around the world by regulating the movement and ideology of the left.

This chapter describes the state of radical black internationalism in the 1950s. As members of an already oppressed minority, African American leftists encountered an even tighter restriction on their civil liberties during the Red Scare of the 1950s. Borrowing the

[20] Carlson v. Landon, 342 U.S. 524 (1952), U.S. LEXIS 2344 (U.S. March 10, 1952), at *29; Galvan v. Press, 347 U.S. 522 (1954), U.S. LEXIS 2660 (U.S. May 24, 1954), at *13; Dennis v. United States, 341 U.S. 494 (1951), U.S. LEXIS 2407 (U.S. June 4, 1951), at *38.

[21] Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 9-10.

concept of "radical black internationalism" that historian Minkah Makalani uses to discuss activism in the interwar period, this chapter explores how, at the onset of the Cold War, "black radicals sought alternative forms of political activism and began to forge links to other African diasporic radicals."[22] Makalani's formulation, similar to intellectual historian Pero G. Dagbovie's exploration of the topic, includes the reminder to contextualize black radicalism in its historical moment.[23] African American activists in the early 1950s developed their perception of the black freedom struggle amidst the domestic and international upheavals brought on by the Cold War. On an international level, they witnessed the United States and the Soviet Union attempting to divide the world's nations into two orderly camps as a response to the process of decolonization.

African American radical organizing faced both internal and external challenges on the domestic front. The crackdown from the U.S. government on leftists—represented by the Internal Security Act of 1950 and other policies—provided external pressure on the advancement of radical black internationalism. The federal government surveilled, threatened, and deported some of the leading voices of the black liberation struggle including William L. Patterson, Louise Thompson Patterson, Paul Robeson, Vicki Garvin, Harry Haywood, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Claudia Jones. Concurrently, these individuals also encountered pressure from past allies as many white leftists abandoned the cause of racial justice. Though often displaying an inconsistent level of enthusiasm, white leftists had partnered with African American activists since the early twentieth century, including the efforts of Hubert Harrison, Chandler Owen, A.

[22] Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 4.

[23] Makalani, 14-15; Pero G. Dagbovie, *African American History Reconsidered* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010). For a broader overview of African American political thought in the twentieth century, see Robin D.G. Kelley's *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (2002) and Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

Phillip Randolph, and Richard B. Moore to disseminate the message of socialism to African American audiences; the concentrated effort to organize African Americans in the south by the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) after General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Joseph Stalin's recognition of the "Negro Question" at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) in 1928; and the CPUSA's participation in defending the Scottsboro boys in the 1930s.[24] In the post-World War II landscape, many white activists and organizations shifted their attention away from issues of race, either to focus on survival in the constricting political environment of the United States under McCarthyism or due to the shifting priorities in the international arena. The mid-1950s witnessed a declining emphasis on racial self-determination after Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's efforts at de-Stalinization and his suppression of the Hungarian Revolution created tensions within the U.S. left. Both actions signaled a potentially weakened commitment to national self-determination which trickled down to the CPUSA's policies leaving many African American activists feeling betrayed.

This chapter sketches the political landscape facing African American radicals at the onset of the Cold War. This background is necessary for this project because it contextualizes the trajectory of Robert F. Williams and his activist network—their experiences and ideas were

[24] For a broad overview of the interactions between African Americans and socialism, see Philip S. Foner, *American Socialism and Black Americans* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977) and Winston James, "Being Red and Black in Jim Crow America: Notes on the ideology and travails of Afro-America's socialist pioneers, 1877-1930" *Souls* 1, no. 4 (1999): 45-63, doi: 10.1080/10999949909362185. For individual considerations of African American socialists, see Jeffrey B. Perry, *Hubert Harrison: The Voice of Harlem Radicalism, 1883-1918* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Cornelius L. Bynum, *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights*, New Black Studies Series (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010); and W. Burghardt Turner and Joyce Moore Turner, eds., *Richard B. Moore, Caribbean Militant in Harlem: Collected Writings, 1920-1972*, Blacks in the Diaspora (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992). For an examination of the CPUSA's attempts to organize African Americans in the South, see Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression*, The Fred W. Morrison Series in Southern Studies (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1990). For an overview of the Scottsboro case, see James Goodman, *Stories of Scottsboro* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994).

shaped by a radical black internationalism that passed through the crucible of McCarthyite repression. I convey this indirect connection through two case studies. The first examines Paul Robeson's efforts to win back his right to travel from the U.S. State Department. Stripped of his passport in 1950 because of his political critiques of the United States while abroad, Robeson fought to continue spreading his message to a global audience. Though Robeson was barred from exiting the United States and Williams was barred from returning, both activists formed international campaigns for their defense and fought legal battles against the federal government. The second case study delves into Harry Haywood's struggles within the CPUSA as the Party quickly backpedaled away from the question of race. As one of the authors of the Black Belt thesis, Haywood—born Haywood Hall—had worked with white communists and leftists for 30 years in the black freedom movement. This case study uses Haywood's 1957 "For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question" and his work with the CPUSA-splinter group, the Provisional Organizing Committee to Reconstitute the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (POC), to document his attempts to place the issue of race at the forefront of the U.S. left's priorities. Williams allied himself with communists and leftists throughout his activism—though he always denied any formal connection or belief in the Communist Party—and increasingly grew disappointed with their support of the black freedom struggle in the United States.

This chapter is divided into four sections. I open with a brief review of how the state has monitored African American travel since the colonial era in the United States. Then, I provide a historiography on 1950s black internationalism that also outlines the opportunities and challenges facing African American activists as the Cold War gripped the United States. The final two sections consist of the previously mentioned case studies. For eight years, Paul Robeson fought to have his passport reinstated by the Department of State through a legal and

media campaign. Harry Haywood sought to correct the CPUSA line on the question of race in the late 1950s after too many compromises and tried to organize a new communist party that mixed the tenets of Marxism-Leninism with the black freedom struggle.

African American Mobility and the State

From the slave codes banning literacy among the enslaved to the requirement of travel passes, the white ruling class in America has sought to restrict the free movement and ideas of African Americans since the seventeenth-century British colonies passed their first laws on slavery. In 2004's *Closer to Freedom*, historian Stephanie M.H. Camp argued for the importance of considering space and mobility since "more than any other single slave activity—such as trading, learning to read, consuming alcohol, acquiring poisoning techniques, or plotting rebellions—slave movement was limited, monitored and criminalized."[25] This emphasis on constraining African American movement continued after Reconstruction as the Jim Crow laws solidified segregation throughout the South. This system not only constructed white-only spaces, but the institution of vagrancy laws restricted the right to travel for African Americans while the ensuing convict lease program tied their labor to the construction of the state's infrastructure.[26] In the urban north and south, city planners and administrators endeavored to segregate cities

[25] Stephanie M.H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 15. See also Daina Ramey Berry, *"Swing the Sickle for the Harvest Is Ripe": Gender and Slavery in Antebellum Georgia*, Women in American History (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010). See Elizabeth Stordeur Pryor's *Colored Travelers: Mobility and the Fight for Citizenship before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016) for a description of the movement restrictions on free African Americans in the north.

[26] For more in-depth coverage of the convict lease system, see Douglas A Blackmon, *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Doubleday, 2008); Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity*, Justice, Power, and Politics (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016); Talitha L. LeFlouria, *Chained in Silence: Black Women and Convict Labor in the New South*, Justice, Power, and Politics (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); and Matthew J. Mancini, *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996).

through formal policy and informal practices such as redlining and blockbusting.[27] Yet, African Americans resisted these efforts throughout American History. One example from historian Robin D.G. Kelley uses the public transportation system in World War II-era Birmingham, Alabama, as a microcosm to understand the interactions between segregation, resistance, and mobility. Describing streetcars as "moving theaters," Kelley asserts the amplifying effect of resistance in public spaces since "whenever passengers were present, no act of defiance was isolated, nor were acts of defiance isolating experiences."[28] The state, to counteract the impact of collective action, targeted the loudest voices in the black freedom struggle.

The case of Marcus Garvey is one of the best examples of how the federal government sought to constrain African American activists through attacks on the freedom to travel. Garvey, a Jamaican native, traveled to the United States in 1916 and promptly transformed his group, the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League, into an international organization devoted to advancing the race. Though he quarreled and feuded with nearly every other African American leader at the time, the United States government emerged as Garvey's most successful opponent. He first came under scrutiny from a young J. Edgar Hoover and the Bureau of Investigation—which later became the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)—after his remarks encouraging African Americans to engage in armed resistance in the wake of the East St. Louis race riots in 1917.[29] Hoover and the Bureau first tried and failed to suppress Garvey during the November 1919 Palmer Raids that deported subversive

[27] Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, Princeton Studies in American Politics (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[28] Robin D.G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 57, 72.

[29] Colin Grant, *Negro With A Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 104.

foreign elements in the United States as part of the First Red Scare. Still, the Bureau continued to monitor Garvey's activities and, through undercover agents and infiltrators, developed a mail fraud case against Garvey that culminated in an indictment in 1922.[30]

Prior to Garvey's conviction in 1923, Hoover had tried measures outside of the courts to subdue Garvey such as the Bureau of Investigation's lobbying of immigration officials to deny Garvey's re-entry visa after his fundraising tour of the Caribbean in 1921—a maneuver that worked for four months until Garvey unexpectedly obtained a visa from the American consul in Jamaica.[31] Hoover revealed his impatience to silence Garvey in August of 1922 when he wrote to a fellow Bureau of Investigation agent asking about the possibility of any "early action upon the prosecution which is now pending, in order that [Garvey] may be once and for all put where he can peruse his past activities behind the four walls in the Atlanta clime."[32] The "Atlanta clime" referred to the United States Penitentiary in Atlanta where Garvey would later reside after the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit ruled against him in February of 1925. Garvey remained imprisoned for two years, but the public clamor for his release led President Calvin Coolidge to commute Garvey's sentence and then deport him from the United States.[33] Garvey's experience demonstrated one method that the U.S. government used to challenge dissident ideologies—target the leadership and, in particular, their freedom of movement.[34]

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[30] Ibid., 150, 157, 221-222, 324-325.

[31] Ibid., 284-285, 295-296. Grant mentions the rumor that Garvey's visa might have been the result of a $2,000 bribe, but he notes there is no evidence of this payoff.

[32] *"Memorandum For Mr. Cunningham" Signed J.E.. Hoover August 10, 1922*, August 10, 1922, FBI Investigation File on Marcus Garvey, Federal Bureau of Investigation Library, *Archives Unbound*, Gale Document Number: SC5000426526; Grant, 338.

[33] Grant, 410-411.

[34] The harassment and jailing of Eugene V. Debs, among others, could also be used to describe the development of the federal government's policing of radical speech. However, Garvey's case elucidates the specific fear of *black* political dissent within the United States government, and the FBI in particular, that reached its apex with COINTELPRO's offensives against civil rights leaders in the 1960s. This anxiety over African American political movements continues to the present with the 2017 revelation that the FBI is monitoring what they have labeled "black identity extremists" as exposed by Jana Winter and Sharon Weinberger, "The FBI's New U.S. Terrorist Threat: 'Black Identity Extremists,'" 6 October 2017, *Foreign Policy*,

These tools were honed and ready by the Civil Rights—Black Power movement for leading activists such as Claudia Jones, Robert F. Williams, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Huey P. Newton.

At the onset of the Cold War, the United States saw dangerous ideologies under every bush and shrub. The rise of the Soviet Union after World War II as a competing global power exacerbated the domestic fears of communism in the United States and influenced foreign policy. This evolved into a program of intervention and containment wherever a trace of communism—broadly interpreted to include anti-colonialism—appeared in the world.[35] Similar to the domestic crackdown, these measures were labeled "*defensive* interventions" with the goal of protecting American democracy as writ large on the nations within the West's growing sphere of influence. This practice solidified after the defeat of the U.S.-backed Chinese Nationalists by Mao Zedong's communist forces in China and the onset of the Korean War in 1950.[36] Historian Odd Arne Westad argues that U.S. strategy "did much to create the Third World as a conceptual entity: seen from America these were areas to be intervened in; and seen from the South, areas that had a common interest in resisting intervention."[37] This solidarity inspired and encouraged African American radicals to identify with the fledgling nations of the Third World and to celebrate the revolutionary ideals promoted by leaders such as Fidel Castro, Patrice Lumumba, Mao Zedong, Ahmed Ben Bella, and Julius Nyerere. The 1955 Bandung Conference and the 1956 International Congress of Black Writers and Artists in Paris provided meeting spaces where African Americans such as the novelist Richard Wright and Congressman Adam Clayton Powell,

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http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/10/06/the-fbi-has-identified-a-new-domestic-terrorist-threat-and-its-black-identity-extremists/.

[35] Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 25-38.

[36] Ibid., 111, 118.

[37] Ibid., 130.

Jr., met with foreign leaders and witnessed the burgeoning, symbolic alliance between Third World nations. These changes in the international order worried the United States officials and the federal government engaged in a plan of rehabilitating its image by downplaying the issues of racial injustice to a global audience while concurrently narrowing the field of acceptable political ideologies for reasons of national security. In this atmosphere, anticommunism became a cudgel to use against African American activists involved in the black freedom struggle with the temerity to publicize the failures of American democracy.[38]

State of the Field: Black Radical Internationalism in the 1950s

The Cold War repression of radical thought reverberated throughout African American activist networks. In historians Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein's 1988 article, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," they propose the "lost opportunity" thesis which contends that the Cold War interrupted prior civil rights efforts by creating rifts amongst the white radical left, unions, and African Americans.[39] This framework argues that the onset of the Cold War formed a crucible for activists that

[38] Gerald Horne, *Black & Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963*, SUNY Series in Afro-American Society (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and Image of American Democracy*, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); and James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961*, The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002). For the development of black internationalism in the first half of the twentieth century, see Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2911); Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism: The Communist International, Africa and the Diaspora, 1919-1939*, The Harriet Tubman Series on the African Diaspora (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2013); Keisha N. Blain, *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom*, Politics and Culture in Modern America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018). Singh's *Black Is A Country*, in particular, delves into the intellectual evolution of a black internationalist vision.

[39] Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *The Journal of American History* 75 (1988) No. 3:792, 796-797, 803-804, 809, 811, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1901530. Big business also contributed to this fracture as part of their postwar campaign against the labor movement, see Elizabeth Fones-Wolf, *Selling Free Enterprise: The Business Assault on Labor and Liberalism, 1945-1960*, The History of Communication (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

produced a narrower message, which allowed the traditional civil rights movement to gain moral authority at the expense of any commitment to significant economic reform or class-based analysis.[40] Yet, any limitations brought about by the suppression of leftists in the early 1950s occurred at the same time that many African Americans recognized the utility of reaching across national borders. These activists sought to expose the hypocrisy of Cold War-era propaganda that promised the liberating influence of American democracy and capitalism by exposing the realities of segregation and systemic racism in the United States. The historiographical debate over the impact of the Cold War on the civil rights movement has centered on this question—whether the international platform provided by the Cold War helped the black freedom struggle or if the early-1950s purging of leftist, economic critiques hindered the movement in the long run. Later studies, starting with Carole Boyce Davies's *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* in 2008, have shifted the focus to the interior lives of Cold War activists. This section charts the historiography of radical black internationalism in the 1950s while also providing an overview of the major actors and attitudes shaping the development of black radicalism and internationalism at the onset of the Cold War.

Black internationalism as a field of study would not exist in its present form without the contributions of historian Gerald Horne. The author of more than 30 books, Horne has dedicated his professional life to demonstrating that the meeting of global politics and domestic conditions was "inhered in the nature of the African experience in North America."[41] By no means will I

[40] Korstad and Lichtenstein, 811. For an alternative examination of how economic activism fit in with the civil rights movement, see Lisa Levenstein, *A Movement Without Marches: African American Women and the Politics of Poverty in Postwar Philadelphia*, The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009) and Gordon Mantler, *Power to the Poor: Black-Brown Coalition and the Fight for Economic Justice, 1960-1974* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

[41] Gerald Horne, "Toward a Transnational Research Agenda for African American History in the 21st Century," *The Journal of African American History* 91, no. 3 (Summer, 2006), 289.

attempt to cover all of Horne's works, but I have selected four books to outline his influence on the field.[42] Horne's first book, *Black & Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War* (1986), set forth one of the foci of his career: "the repressors of Blacks and Reds tended to march in lockstep."[43] Du Bois's role as both a prominent leftist and an African American leader led the U.S. government to harass him through regularly searching his mail, confiscating his passport, constant surveillance, and his 1951 arrest for his refusal to brand his work with the Peace Information Center as steered by a foreign power.[44] Du Bois's international activism particularly galled the U.S. government as Horne reveals that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)—supposedly limited to monitoring foreign adversaries—kept detailed records of Du Bois's activities, both domestic and abroad. *Black & Red* blamed liberal acceptance of anticommunism, as represented by the NAACP's internal purges of radicals like Du Bois, for hindering the larger black freedom struggle. His second book, *Communist Front?: The Civil Rights Congress, 1946-1956* (1988), examines how the Civil Rights Congress (CRC) tried to blend the overlapping interests of the labor movement, the Communist Party, and African American civil rights organizations. Formed from the National Negro Congress, the International Labor Defense, and the National Federation for Constitutional Liberties in 1946, the CRC and its leader William L. Patterson attempted to overcome the "Faustian bargain" made by groups like the NAACP in which they embraced anticommunist rhetoric in exchange for promises of civil rights progress. Resisting the overtures to denounce or disassociate from communists meant "that

[42] For a deeper investigation of Horne's legacy, see the symposium "Gerald Horne: Contributions to African American History and African Diaspora Studies" in *The Journal of African American History* 96, no. 2 (2011).

[43] Horne, *Black & Red*, 2.

[44] Horne, *Black & Red*, 210-218, 151. Du Bois and other leaders of the Peace Information Center had refused to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act since they did not consider themselves agents of a foreign power.

repression would hit CRC with both barrels."[45] The government's war of attrition against the CRC worked when rising legal fees and concerns about the Internal Security Act of 1950 led the group to halt operations in 1956, but Horne argued that the CRC sustained the spirit of black radicalism through the ideological clashes of the Second Red Scare.

Horne has continued to explore this framework throughout his career. In 2000, *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois* provided an in-depth biography of the activist and writer Shirley Graham Du Bois. She married W.E.B. Du Bois in February of 1951 during the fallout from Du Bois's arrest and the couple experienced financial and political pressure throughout the 1950s. While they drew the ire of the federal government, Horne recounts how the Du Boises did not join the mainstream civil rights movement nor did they back away from their allies on the left. Graham Du Bois, according to Horne, celebrated the potential gains from the civil rights movement against *de jure* racism, but she expressed concern about its ongoing failure to develop a significant economic critique by the early 1960s.[46] Horne returned to the topic of the CRC and William Patterson in *Black Revolutionary: William Patterson and the Globalization of the African American Freedom Struggle* (2013). This work was more sympathetic of the NAACP's retreat from the left in the 1950s, but Horne contended that the Cold War era created a "brain drain" within civil rights organizations that robbed them of skilled organizers and ties to the international. For Patterson and his ilk, "domestic forces were insufficient" for motivating government action against institutionalized white supremacy.[47] Patterson's life also provides an example of how the federal government sought to isolate

[45] Gerald Horne, *Communist Front?: The Civil Rights Congress, 1946-1956* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988), 53, 63.

[46] Gerald Horne, *Race Woman: The Lives of Shirley Graham Du Bois* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 145, 161-162.

[47] Gerald Horne, *Black Revolutionary: William Patterson and the Globalization of the African American Freedom Struggle* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 110-114, 4, 12.

radicals from civil rights organizations through Congressional hearings, arrests, passport restrictions, jailing activists on small charges that are frequently renewed, and the work of FBI infiltrators who sowed dissension.[48] Patterson, the CRC, and other leftists who refused to denounce communism became toxic in an environment where anticommunism became "tantamount to patriotism."[49] Horne's scholarship, in total, documents the consequences of radicalism during the Cold War and the ways in which the larger black freedom struggle suffered due to this purge.[50]

Diplomacy and Civil Rights

Historian Brenda Gayle Plummer and Penny Von Eschen explore different aspects of radical black internationalism through diplomatic and intellectual histories. Plummer's *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (1996) challenges the depiction of an African American body politic that was largely unengaged with global issues by implementing a bottom-up methodology towards the history of foreign relations.[51] Rather than focus on the efforts of black radicals, Plummer examines the paradoxical Cold War-era tradeoff between civil rights and civil liberties, highlighting the ways in which government authorities sought to defang the civil rights movement by ensuring it was "detached from radicalism."[52] Plummer argues that they achieved this goal through a carrot-and-stick approach, with the executive branch offering nominal assistance to those who conformed to the anticommunist agenda and greeting any dissent—or publicizing of American racial strife—with the restriction

[48] Ibid., 152, 121-123, 131, 145, 158, 168.
[49] Ibid., 152.
[50] See also, Gerald Horne, *Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1994); Gerald Horne, *Red Seas: Ferdinand Smith and Radical Black Sailors in the United States and Jamaica* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2005); and Gerald Horne, *Mau Mau in Harlem?: The U.S. and the Liberation of Kenya*, Contemporary Black History (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
[51] Plummer, *Rising Wind*, 2-5.
[52] Ibid., 199.

of civil liberties, especially freedom of speech, travel, and privacy.[53] However, this approach failed by the end of the 1950s as rhetorical invocations of civil rights from federal officials fell behind actual, on-the-ground progress while U.S. trepidation towards decolonization and the independence movements in Africa and Asia led many African Americans to "make fervent, if often purely symbolic, expressions of solidarity."[54]

Von Eschen's *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (1997) presents a broader intellectual history on the fading of what she termed "the politics of African diaspora" in the early 1950s. Instead of highlighting the left's response to suppression, Von Eschen focuses on how mainstream African American leaders internalized the Cold War aims of the United States—the debate shifted from an anticolonial agenda centered on social justice in the 1940s towards an attempt to ally with the Truman administration's foreign policy position that colonialism abroad and domestic segregation accelerated the spread of communism.[55] Von Eschen tracks this concession to American Cold War strategy through African American newspapers—such as the Pittsburgh *Courier*'s early 1950s coverage of African independence movements—that emphasized the importance of capitalist development and containing the spread of communism in Africa.[56] The legacy of Nazism and the development of the social sciences—especially psychology and sociology—also transformed discussions of racism into a personal flaw or moral failing as opposed to economic or systemic critiques of policy just as Cold War liberals engaged with the civil rights movement.[57] This redefining of the international and domestic struggle pushed African American elites to accept a narrower promise

[53] Ibid., 4, 183, 194-195.
[54] Ibid., 214, 285.
[55] Penny Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 2-5, 107-112.
[56] Ibid., 152.
[57] Ibid., 153-159.

of civil rights advances that lacked the push for "political, economic, and social rights in an international context."[58] Plummer and Von Eschen inspect the impact of the 1950s on the black freedom struggle through accounting for what was lost due to Cold War censorship—either civil liberties or the power of an international critique. However, Plummer argues that activists overcame the federal government's strategy to limit civil rights advances by the 1960s while Von Eschen asserts that the mainstream leaders' acceptance of American foreign policy robbed the civil rights movement of the ability to address global economic injustice and created a gap between the anticolonial ideologies of the 1940s and the Third World radicalism of the late 1960s.[59]

Historians Mary L. Dudziak and Carol Anderson would continue this exploration of the legacy of 1950s black internationalism. Like Plummer, Dudziak's *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (2000) argues that the civil rights movement "was *in part* a product of the Cold War" as the U.S. attempts to improve its international image did create new opportunities in the black freedom struggle.[60] She recognizes the constraints of Cold War domestic politics, but, by highlighting the global reactions to American civil rights efforts, Dudziak uncovers how the State Department crafted a narrative of progress in American race relations "by acknowledging past problems and emphasizing reforms."[61] The State Department

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[58] Ibid., 186.

[59] Brenda Gayle Plummer and Penny Von Eschen have continued this work in later scholarship. In *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (2004), Von Eschen further examines the partnership between African American musicians and the State Department. She explored how the State Department recruited jazz musicians for diplomatic missions and how those artists promoted African American culture to an international audience. In *In Search of Power: African Americans in the Era of Decolonization, 1956-1974* (2013), Plummer extends her survey of African American responses to American foreign policy with a thorough assessment of the international efforts of the black freedom struggle.

[60] Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, Politics and Society in Twentieth Century America (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 12, 15.

[61] Ibid., 76.

therefore pursued a civil rights agenda—albeit a limited one—that internationally publicized advances such as the *Brown v. Board* Supreme Court decision in 1954 as triumphal moments of American progress.[62] Dudziak notes that some African American activists initially accepted the exchange of an international platform for promises of domestic advances, but the reactionary opposition to civil rights reform on display at Little Rock, Ole Miss, and Birmingham convinced many African American leaders to abandon the State Department's framework.[63] Though much of the world still condemned American race relations according to a 1966 report from the US Information Agency, the same report concluded that these views did not influence the overall opinions of the United States. Dudziak argues that this report revealed that the State Department propaganda had worked—foreign nations now accepted the Department's framing of American racial progress, a development aided by the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 as well as the increasing global attention on the conflict in Vietnam.[64] Ceding ground to the State Department in the early 1950s helped advance the civil rights movement, but the cost was the lack of a concerted counternarrative to State Department gradualism.

In *Eyes Off The Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (2003), historian Carol Anderson examines how the United States constrained the human rights agenda of African American activists and the United Nations. Anderson focuses on the NAACP to demonstrate how a mainstream civil rights organization weathered confrontations with the African American left and conceded ground to the U.S. government to

[62] Ibid., 112-113.
[63] Ibid., 112-113, 118, 154-155, 165.
[64] Ibid., 239-241, 251-253.

pursue a narrower agenda.[65] This study also exposes another layer of State Department activity during the early stages of the Cold War, when it arranged it so that the newly-formed United Nations and the mounting international attention to human rights could not be used against the United States.[66] Working through the bureaucracy of the United Nations, the State Department ensured that the Commission on Human Rights held no enforcement power and could not publicize reports on human rights abuses.[67] The NAACP still tried to submit a petition to the Commission on Human Rights, but feuds with the left and pressures from white liberals like Eleanor Roosevelt—chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights—disrupted the influence of the petition.[68] The election of President Eisenhower and the Senate battle over the Bricker Amendment—a series of proposed constitutional amendments sponsored by Senator John Bricker (R-OH) intended to limit the impact of any international agreements or treaties from the United Nations—effectively painted international concerns over human rights as "un-American."[69] To protect itself from these charges, the NAACP backed away from human rights, which accounted for *de facto* issues of discrimination in "education, health care, housing, and employment," toward the pursuit of civil rights with an emphasis on *de jure* segregation and disenfranchisement.[70]

This group of works from Plummer, Von Eschen, Dudziak, and Anderson reveal the federal government's response to the civil rights movement and black internationalism. Each agency and branch funneled black activism towards a less radical agenda while ameliorating

[65] Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off The Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2, 5, 209.
[66] Ibid., 78-79.
[67] Ibid., 97-98.
[68] Ibid., 112, 150-151.
[69] Ibid., 229, 220, 250-256.
[70] Ibid., 2, 209. See *Bourgeois Radicals: The NAACP and the Struggle for Colonial Liberation, 1941-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015) for Anderson's continued consideration of the NAACP's international aims during the mid-twentieth century.

worldwide criticism of American race relations. The State Department produced propaganda to alter the story of racial progress in the United States for audiences abroad while limiting the travel of dissenting activists and sandbagging the Commission on Human Rights. The Department of Justice and the FBI suppressed African American radical activity through harassment, indictments, and constant surveillance. Though the Supreme Court and lower federal courts started expanding civil liberties after the appointment of Earl Warren as Chief Justice in 1953, court cases move slowly and legal expenses, as covered by Horne, bankrupted organizations like the Civil Rights Congress. Congressional investigations and hearings also drained resources and time from activists while elected representatives used the opportunity to condemn communism and radical politics. This cohort of scholars also expose the disorganization within the federal government. The State Department needed to show racial progress to the world while Southern Democrats in Congress decried desegregation and congressional conservatives attempted to shutter any international agreements. The Warren Court may have expanded civil liberties in the long term, but the federal court system developed into a cudgel against African American activists as they fought against the constraints of the 1941 Smith Act and the 1950 Internal Security Act. For example, the legal campaign to combat the decision within the State Department to restrict access to passports for allegedly subversive Americans lasted over a decade with African Americans having their careers and activism targeted as in the case of W.E.B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson, William Patterson, and William Worthy. These discrepancies did not reduce the federal government's impact on African American activists. Similar to the strands of a net tightening as they are pulled upon, the

interwoven agendas of the federal system constricted to goad the black freedom struggle onto a path safer for the status quo.[71]

Black Nationalism and American Global Reach

The next branch of scholarship examined the mingling of black internationalism and black nationalist politics in the 1950s. These historians emphasized the presence of a burgeoning nationalism in the 1950s that had its roots in earlier movements as seen in the rise of Garveyism and the United Negro Improvement Association. Historian Kevin K. Gaines posited these studies as a response to the declension narrative surrounding the emergence of the Black Power era, which cast militant politics as an aberration and hindrance to the black freedom struggle.[72] Scholars such as Nikhil Pal Singh, Kevin K. Gaines and others placed black nationalist politics in the 1960s as the result of an organizing tradition that, according to Brenda Gayle Plummer, existed "beneath the surface of liberal complacency" that marked the civil rights movement.[73] In

[71] This interpretation of the historiography also is indebted to Thomas Sugrue's contemporaneous study, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (1996). Sugrue's work on urban development in Detroit unveiled the layering of race and federalism through an analysis of the ways in which progressive federal housing policy was distorted by local interest groups and individuals. Sugrue's framework shares a similar focus as the works of these scholars on black internationalism by revealing the interaction of individual and structural power.

[72] Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era*, The John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 8. Historians Jacqueline Dowd Hall and Peniel E. Joseph have contributed similar arguments within their work. Though their respective scholarship often is framed around the "long civil rights movement" or the "long Black Power movement," both Hall and Joseph argue against attempts to view the black radicalism inherent to the Civil Rights—Black Power movement as isolated from the broader black freedom struggle. Their work intertwines in this goal since Hall urges historians to examine efforts to sanitize the image of the civil rights movement while Joseph pushes for historians to reject the use of that sterilized, convenient image as a foil to delegitimize the popular caricature of a violent and reckless Black Power era. See Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *The Journal of American History* 91 no. 4 (2005): 1233-1263, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3660172; and Peniel E. Joseph, "Introduction," in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights—Black Power Era*, ed. Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006).

[73] Plummer, *In Search of Power*, 61. This consideration of black nationalism is also indebted to the works of William Van Deburg, Robin D.G. Kelley, and Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar. Each scholar authored an intellectual examination of black nationalism that mapped the course of black nationalism in the black freedom struggle and helped to legitimize its study as a historical pillar of black politics. Though these scholars were not the first historians to examine black nationalism—earlier scholars such as William Jeremiah Moses, V.P. Franklin, Theodore Draper, and Tony Martin provided important studies—Van Deburg, Kelley, and Ogbar crafted, respectively, a taxonomical breakdown of nationalism in African American communities, an exploration on the reach and aspirations of black radicals, and an examination of the mainstream acceptance of black nationalism. See William L.

Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961 (2002), James H. Meriwether tracks the re-emergence of this black nationalist thought in the 1950s through an examination of how African American viewed and understood African nationalist movements. Using the events abroad to interpret the domestic African American struggle, he describes the growth of an anticolonial politics that influenced both a liberal integrationist agenda that at first adopted anticommunist rhetoric and a black nationalist agenda that emphasized African independence from white control.[74] Ghana's independence in 1957 offers a direct example of a growing "African-centered anticolonialism" among African American activists during the late 1950s that evolved from viewing Africa as a continent in need of uplift to African states as partners in the black freedom struggle. Even the traditional Cold War liberalism of the Black Press was influenced by this turn as the Baltimore *Afro-American* cautioned the Eisenhower administration that, "if the United States was not in Africa to help Africans instead of the colonial powers, then it should stay home."[75] The 1961 assassination of Patrice Lumumba frayed this collective anticolonial shift as it placed in stark relief American interests and a truly independent Africa. As a result, Meriwether argues, African American liberals and nationalists prioritized the struggles of still colonized states that presented less complexity and a common goal around which to organize.[76]

Nikhil Pal Singh's *Black Is A Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (2004) argues for the consideration of a long civil rights movement best understood through a

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Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Robin D.G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2002); Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

[74] Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 3, 89.

[75] Ibid., 150-151, 165. Meriwether cites "Nixon on Africa," Editorial, *Baltimore Afro-American*, 20 April 1957, 4.

[76] Ibid., 209-210.

recognition that American interpretations of concepts like liberalism and universalism have served to further entrench racial discrimination.[77] As the American global presence increased after World War II, Singh—like Meriwether—noted a split forming amongst African American activists in regards to the international role of the United States. Some African American leaders and intellectuals viewed "the U.S. state and social policy as the answer to black mass discontent," while others understood the expansion of American influence as concomitant with the reproduction abroad of American society's "racializing power."[78] Conversely, the broader American political spectrum coalesced around a Cold War liberalism tied together by an international agenda that promoted American values—values that black radicals recognized for their immutable "tendency to update the exclusions of the past in different names and guises." Singh's framing thus clarifies the enormous challenge that black internationalists in the 1950s encountered as they critiqued the spread of U.S. power abroad: they stared down a unified American state and culture. State Department officials and other agents of the state attempted to drown out African American critiques for both the practical reason of safeguarding the realpolitik international goals of the American state and to protect the self-mythologized, ideological underpinnings of U.S. democratic institutions.[79]

Kevin K. Gaines furthers explores the development of black internationalism and black nationalist politics during the 1950s in *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (2006). By using the African American expatriate community in Ghana, Gaines places civil rights history in conversation with other international attempts to disrupt the bipolar structure of the Cold War. Gaines connected the political relevance of these expatriates to their

[77] Singh, *Black Is A Country*, 14, 20.
[78] Ibid., 138, 109.
[79] Ibid., 162-163, 169.

position in Ghana—their view from a newly-independent African state offered "a front-row seat for the consolidation of U.S. neocolonial influence" while Ghana as a symbol helped to revive black nationalist organizing within domestic activist circles.[80] This positionality nurtured a skepticism among this group toward the efforts of the United States government to funnel civil rights activism into the mechanisms of state power, thereby creating "a gradualist and largely symbolic legal and legislative process of racial change managed by the courts, Congress, and policy makers."[81] In this way, Gaines clarifies that these expatriates were not engaged in "political escapism," but rather that Ghana provided a place to formulate a radical political vision—free from the narrowing of the American political spectrum during the early Cold War—which aided the cultivation of their critical assessment of U.S. domestic and international policy. The significance of this political expression is seen in the response from the United States. Referencing Isaac Newton's Laws of Motion, Gaines, like Von Eschen, Dudziak, and Anderson, observed the propaganda efforts of the U.S. State Department and other agencies to counter any and all anti-American messages occurring within the public sphere. These efforts included the CIA's clandestine funding of international think tanks such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom and the State Department closely monitoring the tone of domestic conferences hosting African and African American intellectuals.[82] Overall, Gaines's work, along with Meriwether and Singh, established that the roots of a black nationalist and leftist critique of the civil rights movement emerged in the decade before the Black Power era and, importantly, interpreted the resurgent black internationalism as a part of a response to the United States' increasingly global reach.

[80] Ibid., 12, 14, 11.
[81] Ibid., 14, 6.
[82] Ibid., 8, 14, 19-20, 94-95, 102-103.

Evaluating the Cold War's Impact

The publication of Carole Boyce Davies's *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (2007) is emblematic of another historiographical shift in how historians have assessed the Cold War's impact on the black freedom struggle. This next wave of scholarship largely continues the earlier trend away from formal diplomatic history toward a "history from below" approach that privileges the work of activists, intellectuals, and organizations who endeavored to promote black internationalism. However, these scholars have transcended the framework of the Faustian bargain between some civil rights advocates and the American state—including the ensuing debate over the successes and failures of that strategy—toward a closer investigation into how African American leftists weathered the impact of the Cold War and how this setting in turn shaped their intellectual and political output. In the edited volume *Transnational Blackness: Navigating The Global Color Line* (2008), historian Manning Marable argued for the importance of black internationalism as a project for reconsidering the twentieth century since "'Blackness' acquires its full revolutionary potential as a social site for resistance only within transnational and Pan-African contexts."[83] Highlighting the impact of anticommunism at the start of the Cold War, historians Robbie Lieberman and Clarence Lang recognized that the repression of radical activity and mainstreaming of civil rights served to establish "the scope, shape, and personnel" of the ensuing half-century of black activism. But, responding to earlier works on anticommunism and the burgeoning "long civil rights movement" historiography, Lieberman and Lang document the harassment of activists and intellectuals in order to demonstrate the "human costs of the Red Scare" and to emphasize the specific,

[83] Manning Marable, "Introduction: Blackness Beyond Boundaries: Navigating the Political Economies of Global Inequality," in *Transnational Blackness: Navigating The Global Color Line*, ed. Manning Marable and Vanessa Agard-Jones, Critical Black Studies Series (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.

contextual influence of the Cold War on the black radical tradition and, more generally, black internationalism.[84] The groundswell of scholarship that followed—with its focus on closely narrating the lives and ideas of African American activists caught in the spiderweb of anticommunism—is heavily indebted to the scholarship of Gerald Horne with historians Erik S. McDuffie and Charisse Burden-Stelly labeling this framework, respectively, the "Horne thesis" and the "Horne biographical method."[85] However, these studies showed more interest in theory than Horne with McDuffie using "black left feminism" as the tentpole for his work and Carole Boyce Davies using diasporic theory.

In *Left of Karl Marx*, Davies stated her goal as one of recovery: to return the voice and ideas of the political activist and theorist Claudia Jones to the story of American radicalism. The study originated in Davies's recognition that Jones's deportation had effectively removed her contributions to the U.S. political spectrum as part of a larger effort to silence black female activists.[86] Davies begins her excavation by documenting how Jones advocated that African American women should not only supply the base of the CPUSA but that they should lead it. Their experience of "superexploitation" prepared them for work with the CPUSA and that leadership positions within the Party would start the process of reversing this condition.[87] Jones's outspoken advocacy for the Party and immigrant status placed her in a precarious position during the Second Red Scare and ultimately led to her imprisonment and deportation. On the latter

[84] Robbie Lieberman and Clarence Lang, "Introduction," in *Anticommunism and the African American Freedom Movement: "Another Side of the Story"*, ed. Robbie Lieberman and Clarence Lang, Contemporary Black History (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 2, 7, 4.

[85] See Erik S. McDuffie, "Black and Red: Black Liberation, the Cold War, and the Horne Thesis," *The Journal of African American History* 96 (Spring 2011): 236-247 https://www-jstor-org.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/stable/10.5323/jafriamerhist.96.2.0236 and Charisse Burden-Stelly, "Black Radicalism, Repression, and the 'Horne Biographical Method,'" *Black Perspectives*, accessed 10 October 2018, https://www.aaihs.org/black-radicalism-repression-and-the-horne-biographical-method/.

[86] Carole Boyce Davies. *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 2.

[87] Ibid., 43, 40, 51.

point, Davies is particularly clear about American efforts to silence radicalism since "deportation is one of the ways that all states use to construct the citizenship they desire."[88] The revelation from Davies's work derives from her close attention to Jones's response to the political repression of the 1950s, including her experience trying to overcome it, through an analysis of the poems she produced in prison and the activist work she continued after being deported to England. Jones's deportation takes center stage as she refashioned her exile into new forms of activism by transforming the "limbo-like existence of unbelonging" into "the deliberate use of transnational movement to create diaspora." Jones accomplished this feat by founding a carnival celebration of Caribbean heritage and the local black experience in London that would provide the inspiration for the Notting Hill Carnival.[89] This diasporic praxis from Jones led to Davies's main historiographical assertion—that scholars acknowledge the contribution of local contexts to transnational political orientations and vice versa.[90]

In *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (2011), Erik S. McDuffie highlights the tireless and continuous efforts of black women activists throughout the twentieth century. Challenging how other scholars have depicted black women radicals solely as "bridge leaders" and "grassroots organizers," McDuffie emphasizes that these early women held authentic leadership positions.[91] He further argues that it was the "unique interplay between local and global events and their lived experiences [that] brought these women into the CPUSA."[92] This group of black women radicals demonstrated this knowledge—and their political savvy—as they utilized the Comintern and Soviet officials to

[88] Ibid., 162, 133.
[89] Ibid., 162, 170-171, 177.
[90] Ibid., 21-22.
[91] Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 10, 16.
[92] Ibid., 16, 15, 23-24.

criticize and leverage pressure on the, at times, racist and gendered practices of the CPUSA in order to improve local conditions.[93] Rather than engage in a debate over the positive or negative impact of the Cold War, McDuffie notes its onset as simply a shift in black women radicals' activism and outlook. The writings of activists like Claudia Jones and Beulah Richardson exhibited this progression wherein both utilized a "triple oppression" framework and attempted to historicize the relationship between gender and race.[94] As an organization, the Sojourners for Truth and Justice best demonstrated this change. Working with communists, non-communists, and the Christian Left, the Sojourners were able to balance their demands to further their agenda though "the Cold War now required them to frame their political demands in more traditionally gendered terms."[95] McDuffie concludes that the climate of the Cold War may have caused many African American women to leave the CPUSA, but they did not abandon their radicalism.

Dayo F. Gore also examines how African American women weathered the Cold War in *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (2012) by providing a collective political biography of Vicki Garvin, Yvonne Gregory, Beulah Richardson, Esther Cooper Jackson, Claudia Jones, and others who Gore depicts as "political long-distance runners." These African American women maintained a black radical identity from before the 1950s and carried "their ideas, strategies, and lessons from early Cold War activism into a variety of political spaces during the 1960s and 1970s."[96] Gore centers her analysis on the longevity of this activism and the diversity of political paths taken by these activists to challenge earlier works that argued that the Cold War damaged and homogenized the U.S. Left.[97] While

[93] Ibid., 55-57, 118-122.
[94] Ibid., 162-163, 166-173, 168-169.
[95] Ibid., 182-184, 181.
[96] Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 4, 8.
[97] Ibid., 11-12.

McDuffie's work better situated black radical women within an international political landscape, Gore's work excelled at placing them within the context of domestic Cold War politics where, despite the rise of McCarthyism, African American women formed a network of support that proved crucial to their continued radicalism. Gore's coverage of the Rosa Lee Ingram case in particular provides an excellent case study on the spiderweb-like connections that sowed the seeds of an activist community. A black Alabaman sharecropper who had been sentenced with the death penalty for killing a white man in self-defense, organizations and individuals rallied around Ingram's cause. The movement to support Ingram helped launch the previously mentioned Sojourners for Truth and Justice and the Women's Committee for Equal Justice, two organizations that foregrounded the "lived experience" of black women and put an emphasis on Ingram's status as a mother to subvert the dominant discourse on motherhood in service of their cause.[98] Gore further pointed to the gender dynamics of the Cold War and how black women radicals organized into the 1950s with some, albeit limited, impunity since they were "relatively invisible" due to society's "dominant gendering of leadership as male."[99] Gore's work demonstrated the myriad paths forged by activists in their effort to persevere through the politically restrictive 1950s.

Since I began this research, the field of black internationalism has thrived and recent publications have informed this dissertation and will guide the projects beyond. Barbara Ransby's *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson* (2013) and Sara Rzeszutek Haviland's *James and Esther Cooper Jackson: Love and Courage in the Black Freedom Movement* (2015) offer an example for using biography to explore the pressures of the Cold War and, more specifically, how those pressures burdened family life. This consideration of

[98] Ibid., 78-92.
[99] Ibid., 44.

activists's lives steered the direction of my research and, while the final product does not engage with this aspect enough, it will shape the future of this project.[100] Literary scholar Mary Helen Washington uncovers the cultural impact of 1950s anti-communism on African American artists through an examination of their art and how they endured throughout the decade in *The Other Blacklist: The African American Literary and Cultural Left of the 1950s* (2014). However, it is Washington's short epilogue on activist and author Julian Mayfield that provides the most guidance for this project. In Mayfield's semi-autobiographical novel, *The Grand Parade* (1961), Washington notes the stand-in for Mayfield involuntarily exits the CPUSA and is drawn into the civil rights movement. Mayfield's narrative reveals a lesson for scholars of black nationalism, civil rights, and the black international—the emotional turmoil felt by the protagonist of *The Grand Parade*. The literary stand-in for Mayfield felt remorse as he left behind the radical community of the CPUSA, but balanced it against his support for the civil rights movement despite a recognition of its imperfections. This arc neatly sums up the experience of many black radicals while Washington's coverage of Mayfield's account serves as a reminder to account for the human within analyses of the Cold War's impact.[101] John Munro's and Anne Garland Mahler's recent works have advanced the scholarship of black internationalism with Munro tracing the threads of anti-imperialist thought among African American activist-intellectuals and Mahler documents the cultural and political milieu that connected radical movements across the Global South.[102] Nicholas Grant's manuscript, *Winning Our Freedoms Together: African*

[100] See Barbara Ransby, *Eslanda: The Large and Unconventional Life of Mrs. Paul Robeson* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013) and Sara Rzeszutek Haviland, *James and Esther Cooper Jackson: Love and Courage in the Black Freedom Movement*, Civil Rights and the Struggle for Black Equality in the Twentieth Century (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2015).

[101] Mary Helen Washington, *The Other Blacklist: The African American Literary and Cultural Left of the 1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 270-273. See Julian Mayfield, *The Grand Parade* (New York: Vanguard, 1961).

[102] See John Munro, *The Anticolonial Front: The African American Freedom Struggle and Global Decolonisation, 1945-1960*, Critical Perspectives on Empire (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017) and

Americans and Apartheid, 1945-1960, deserves praise because his research in particular straddles "the symbolic and practical ties" necessary for any scholarship on internationalism—in other words, balancing the rhetoric with the outcomes.[103] In *Set The World On Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom* (2018), Keisha Blain tracks black nationalism's growth and permutations from Garveyism until the 1950s and examines the strategies for building, sustaining, and managing the rifts within a movement. The events of the 1950s had an indelible impact on African American activism and scholars continue to mine the decade for further insights into radical black internationalism.

Historian and activist Vincent Harding used the metaphor of a river to describe the black freedom struggle since "it was only in the context of the ongoing movement of black struggle, changing and yet continuing, that we could speak adequately of black radicalism." To stretch that metaphor, the Cold War—in all of its domestic and international permutations—landed like a boulder in the middle of that river of black struggle. Scholars first focused on the immediate ripples of the Cold War and framed its entrance in terms of a cost-benefit analysis for activists and the state. Next, historians endeavored to demonstrate the threads of black nationalism and radicalism that survived, albeit with some alteration, their contact with the Cold War. The current moment has privileged narratives that delve into the lived experience of the Cold War and how those experiences shaped the activism of the ensuing decades. The historiography outlined above also reveals two themes in the 1950s that would influence Williams's and his cohort's path through the 1960s: government repression and the debates occurring within the black activist community over tone, message, and strategy.

Anne Garland Mahler, *From the Tricontinental to the Global South: Race, Radicalism, and Transnational Solidarity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018)

[103] Nicholas Grant, *Winning Our Freedoms Together: African Americans and Apartheid, 1945-1960*, Justice, Power, and Politics (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 11.

Each member of Williams's activist network was—to an extent—shaped by the Cold War's influence. As covered in-depth in the following chapter, the Williamses militant organizing in Monroe led to Robert F. Williams's expulsion by the national office of the NAACP and the public debate that ensued introduced Williams to other black radicals. In the early 1950s, author and activist Julian Mayfield and other African American men formed an informal honor guard for Paul Robeson in Harlem to ensure the singer and activist's safety as the U.S. government targeted him for harassment.[104] Journalist and CIA informant Richard Gibson left the Paris black expatriate community after his entanglement in a scandal—either attempting to discredit another African American resident or himself being tricked in an effort to push the African Americans in Paris to take a position for Algerian independence—and joined the CBS News staff as their first African American reporter until he was fired for his role in organizing the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC).[105] Activist and labor organizer Vicki Garvin continued her activism into the 1950s through her work with the National Negro Labor Council and writing for Paul Robeson's *Freedom* magazine. She faced mounting challenges from left-leaning anticommunists, who formed the competing National Negro Labor Committee in an unsuccessful attempt to purify the labor movement of communist influence.[106] Willie "Mae" Mallory joined with other parents in Harlem, labeled the "Harlem Nine," to decry the poor conditions of the *de facto* segregated schools in New York City and started to endorse more confrontational activism. Mallory and others fully displayed this mindset at the 1961 United

[104] Julian Mayfield, "Walking with Paul," Box 1, Folder 11, "Walking with Paul' (Robeson)," Julian Mayfield Papers, Sc MG 339, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

[105] James Campbell, *Exiled In Paris: Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Samuel Beckett, and Others on the Left Bank* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 280-285; Van Gosse, *Where The Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left*, The Haymarket Series (New York: Verso, 1993), 146-148, 168n36. Gibson provides his version of events in Paris in "Richard Wright's 'Island of Hallucination' and the 'Gibson Affair,'" *Modern Fiction Studies* 51 (2005): 896-920, 979-980.

[106] Gore, *Radicalism At The Crossroads*, 117-127.

Nations protest after the assassination of Patrice Lumumba where, according to Amiri Baraka, she resisted the police's attempts to arrest her with such ferocity that they "were sorry that they ever put their hands on her."[107] A civil rights and civil liberties lawyer, Conrad Lynn joined with Williams's call for a more radical approach to the civil rights movement going so far as to help organize a counteroffensive against the NAACP's national leadership that planned to censure Williams at the 1959 national convention.[108] The Afro-Cuban scholar and intellectual Carlos Moore joined the FPCC in 1960 at seventeen years old—hiding the fact from his parents—before returning to Cuba the next year out of fear that the FBI would arrest him for his part in planning the 1961 demonstration at the United Nations building.[109] Each of the above activists encountered the growing government repression and the changing discourse on the left as the Cold War gripped America. This chapter will now move to explore the government's and the left's responses to black radicalism in the 1950s through case studies on Paul Robeson and Harry Haywood.

A "Diplomatic Embarrassment": Paul Robeson's Passport Struggle

On July 28, 1950, two federal agents acting on behalf of the State Department demanded that Paul Robeson turn over his passport. Robeson, the famed singer, actor, athlete, activist, and international traveler, refused. After this refusal, the State Department released information about the cancellation of Robeson's passport to the press on August 4, 1950. They also announced that

[107] Adina Black, "Exposing the 'Whole Segregation Myth': The Harlem Nine and New York City's School Desegregation Battles," in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980*, ed. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 70; Amiri Baraka, *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones* (1984; repr., Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1997), 267. See also Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 41; Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 237.

[108] Conrad J. Lynn to RFW, 29 June 1959, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence 1959," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to Earl B. Dickerson, Esq., 29 June 1959, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence 1959," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Tyson, 151-165; Williams, 28-29; Cohen, 127-131.

[109] Carlos Moore, *Pichón: A Memoir: Race and Revolution in Castro's Cuba* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2008), 101-102, 153-163.

all U.S. border officials were instructed to block any attempt by Robeson to exit the United States. When Robeson and his attorneys pursued the issue, the Department of State responded "that Paul Robeson's travel abroad at this time would be contrary to the best interests of the United States."[110] This initiated an eight-year struggle between Robeson and the federal government over the fate of his international travel—a struggle that he would share with others such as William Patterson and W.E.B. and Shirley Graham Du Bois. As a black radical with an international audience, Robeson experienced the full force of Cold War repression as the U.S. government worked to rehabilitate American race relations on the global stage.

Robeson's trip to Hawaii in 1948 revealed the extent of the FBI's investment in documenting any perceived subversive activity by the famed singer and activist. On March 13, 1948, the Los Angeles office of the FBI forwarded an urgent message to Washington, D.C. in order to document a conversation between Robeson and an individual whose identity was redacted from the released file. The conversation about Robeson's trip to perform in Honolulu ensued as follows:

> Identity Redacted: "I know what you are doing."
> Robeson: "How did you find out."
> Identity Redacted: "I have my spies."

The agent filing the report cited this as an example that Robeson's trip might serve "possible intelligence activities." This resulted in a number of memos and radio messages between Los Angeles, Honolulu, and Washington, D.C. The final report on the trip, filed in June, found no evidence of Robeson acting as an agent of the CPUSA.[111] However, this episode reveals the level

[110] Provisional Committee to Restore Paul Robeson's Passport "Facts of the Case" sheet from 1955, Box 9, Folder 7, Paul Robeson Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, accessed through the microfilm holdings at Michigan State University Library; Brief for Appelant in *Robeson v. Acheson*, Box 9, Folder 2, Paul Robeson Collection.

[111] U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *FBI File on Paul Robeson* [microform edition], Section 3, Telemeter from Los Angeles office to Director in Washington, D.C., 13 March 1948 (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1987); *FBI File on Robeson*, Section 3, J. Edgar Hoover (Director) to

of attention the FBI assigned to Robeson's every move. A seemingly innocuous joke about "spies" created a situation in which multiple regional offices of the FBI devoted time and resources in an attempt to "catch" Robeson.

In April of 1949, Robeson delivered a speech in Paris at the Congress of the World Partisans of Peace that created an outcry among some of Robeson's critics and more liberal supporters. Robeson and his allies asserted that this speech contained a commitment to peace using the following language: "Our will to fight for peace is strong. (Applause.) We shall not make war on anyone. (Shouts.) We shall not make war on the Soviet Union. (New shouts)." The *Associated Press*, as a wire service, delivered the following and alleged misquote—including allusions to the United States as the heirs to the policies of Adolf Hitler—to news outlets throughout the United States: "It is unthinkable that American Negroes would go to war on behalf of those who have oppressed us for generations against a country [the Soviet Union] which in one generation has raised our people to the full dignity of mankind."[112]

Robeson's biographer, Martin Bauml Duberman, argues that, while Robeson was likely misquoted, the attributed quote was not uncharacteristic of Robeson's rhetoric nor that of other black radicals. However, the rising tensions of the Cold War and Robeson's increasingly antagonistic stance toward the federal government rendered him vulnerable to charges of treason in white newspapers while mainstream African American leaders distanced themselves from the remarks. The frontpage of *The New York Times* highlighted baseball star Jackie Robinson's dismissal of Robeson's statements writing, "Negroes and others have too much invested in the

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Special Agent in Charge (SAC) Honolulu, 18 March 1948; *FBI File on Robeson*, Section 3, SAC Honolulu to Hoover, 2 June, 1948.

[112] Martin Bauml Duberman, *Paul Robeson: A Biography* (New York: Ballatine, 1989), 341-342. Duberman cites the quote from Alphaeus Hunton's translation from the French transcript located in the Robeson Family Archives at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. The transcript from the *Associated Press* dispatch used by Duberman is also located in the Robeson Family Archives, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

country's welfare 'for any of us to throw it away because of a siren song sung in bass'" though Robinson also noted that the singer correctly criticized racial injustice in America.[113] Paul Robeson refused to allow the public furor to deter his outspoken activism and he faced further controversy in August at a concert in Peekskill, New York. Robeson was scheduled to appear in Peekskill on August 27, but members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion, a local Catholic high school, and individuals from the surrounding area—in a demonstration of anti-communism—invaded the picnic grounds hosting the concert to disrupt the event and instigated several altercations with Robeson's supporters. With encouragement from New York-based and local organizations, a makeup concert was held on September 4 with 20,000 attendees. The veterans' organizations organized a "protest parade" of about 8,000 participants that ended at the concert venue. As the concert dispersed, members of the parade and police officers descended on the concertgoers in a violent mob that resulted in an estimated 200 injuries. Still, an adamant Robeson joined W.E.B. Du Bois, William Patterson, and other prominent African American communists to deliver a birthday message to Joseph Stalin in December. Though the FBI had investigated Robeson throughout the 1940s, these three events in 1949 brought Robeson underneath closer scrutiny by the federal government, which culminated in the State Department's cancellation of his passport in July 1950.[114]

The revocation of Robeson's passport, along with other alleged communists, unveiled a new tactic of the State Department. As historian Alan Rogers has argued, the State Department's

[113] Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 342-343, 360-361; C.P. Trussell, "Jackie Robinson Terms Stand of Robeson on Negroes," Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES, *New York Times (1923-Current File*), 19 July 1949. Proquest Historical Newspapers (105815174).

[114] Barbara J. Beeching, "Paul Robeson and the Black Press: The 1950 Passport Controversy," *Journal of African American History* 87 (Summer, 2002), 341-342. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1562482; Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 341-342, 364-70, 383; Jordan Goodman, *Paul Robeson: A Watched Man* (New York: Verso, 2013), 128; U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *FBI File on Paul Robeson Sr.*, FBIHQ File 100-12304 Section 5 June 1950-April 1951, FBI NY 100-25857 report to FBI Headquarters on Paul Robeson, 11 June 1950, Archives Unbound (SC5000000577).

new policy towards passports emerged out of concerns arising from Cold War anxieties. With Congress' passing of the Internal Security Act in 1950, the State Department had the authority to reject the passport application of any member of "any Communist-action organization, Communist-front organization, or Communist-infiltrated organization." In short, anyone suspected of Communist affiliations or sympathies. The Supreme Court also weighed in with their decision in *Dennis v. United States* in which Chief Justice Fred Vinson affirmed that the Communist Party of the United States represented "a clear and present danger."[115] Robeson battled within this political climate as he fought to reacquire his passport and this contest predominantly occurred within the federal court system. The banning of his passport actually predated a 1952 announcement from Secretary of State Dean Acheson about the new State Department policy. As Rogers notes, Acheson attempted to legitimize the earlier "arbitrary" practices of the Department's Passport Division and, in particular, the actions of Ruth B. Shipley who had run the Passport Division as a personal fiefdom for the past twenty-four years.[116] He first filed suit against the State Department in December of 1950 for violating his First and Fifth Amendment rights. In April of the following year, the U.S. District Court of Washington, D.C. ruled that it held no jurisdiction in the case. Three days after this decision, Robeson and his lawyers submitted an appeal which was brought to trial in February of 1952. The State Department's case, in part, rested on the assertion that "the diplomatic embarrassment that could arise from such a political meddler…is easily imaginable." The State Department clearly desired to muzzle Robeson's political speech. The U.S. Court of Appeals then ruled that Robeson did not have standing to sue the State Department since his passport had expired. Robeson applied for a

[115] Alan Rogers, "Passports and Politics: The Courts and the Cold War," *The Historian* 47, no. 4 (1985): 499, 497, 498, 497. ProQuest (1296468933).

[116] Ibid., 500.

passport three times in the next two years and connected each application to specific acting and singing engagements in England and Israel to aid his case. Yet, each application was denied.[117]

A major turning point occurred in 1955 when another American denied a passport underneath the Internal Security Act, Otto Nathan, had his passport reinstated when a U.S. District Court Judge ruled that Nathan did not have to submit to a State Department hearing before receiving his passport. On June 23, 1955, Robeson's case seemingly won another significant victory when the U.S. Court of Appeals affirmed in *Shachtman v. Dulles* "that the 'right to travel is a natural right' which cannot be restrained except by due process of law."[118] Robeson and his lead attorney, Leonard Boudin, agreed to meet with top officials of the State Department in the wake of the *Shachtman* case in 1955. Boudin pushed the State Department to recognize the rulings in *Shachtman* and the Nathan case. The State Department had awarded Shachtman his passport to avoid conducting an open hearing governed by due process of law. Nathan was issued a passport to remove his legal standing in order to protect the State Department's policies regarding passports. Boudin sought a similar exception for Robeson. The officials still refused to grant it, repeating their insistence that they "would not restore the passport until Robeson filed an affidavit stating his relationship to the Communist Party," a request he resisted for the entire 8 years of the passport case. Boudin and Robeson then pressured the representatives of the State Department to lift the ban on Robeson's travel to Canada—a trip that did not require a passport. Boudin was informed on the following day that the State Department would lift the restriction on Robeson's travel to Canada.[119]

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[117] Provisional Committee "Facts of the Case" 1955, Paul Robeson Collection, Box 9, Folder 7.
[118] Ibid.
[119] *FBI File on Paul Robeson*, Section 11, SAC Washington Field Office to Hoover on 21 July 1955; Rogers, "Passports and Politics," 503-504; Laurel Sefton MacDowell, "Paul Robeson in Canada: A Border Story" *Labour/Le Travail* 51 (2003), 184, http://www.lltjournal.ca/index.php/llt/article/view/5299/6168.

To backtrack slightly, Robeson should not have needed a passport to enter Canada. According to the scholar Jordan Goodman, the crossing at the U.S.-Canadian border in 1952 "involved not much more than stating your name, place of birth and purpose of visit." Thus, Robeson did not expect trouble when he accepted an invitation from the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers (shortened to Mine Mill) to perform a concert in Vancouver on January 31, 1952. On January 22, 1952, the Seattle office of the FBI contacted the New York and D.C. offices in order to request more information about Robeson's travel plans to Vancouver. The information had been passed to the FBI from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in Seattle. Though the Bureau had no information to furnish the INS, Robeson was turned back from the U.S.-Canada border at Blaine, Washington, on January 31, 1952.[120]

This refusal created a unique opportunity to protest the violation Robeson's rights. Together, Robeson and Mine Mill conceived of a concert at Peace Arch Park near Blaine—an area of neutral ground between the U.S.-Canadian border that "Americans and Canadians can enter…without reporting to either immigration service." This first concert, held on May 18, 1952, had an estimated attendance of 40,000 Robeson supporters and was intended as a direct protest of the U.S. government's actions towards Robeson. This concert series continued until 1955 when, as mentioned previously, the State Department allowed Robeson to travel to Canada. Robeson then traveled to Canada twice in February of 1956. With the success of these two performances, he and his staff considered a Canada-wide tour. Unfortunately, Canada's Department of Citizenship and Immigration balked at the notion of Robeson's extended tour—

[120] Jordan Goodman, *Paul Robeson*, 187; *FBI Files on Paul Robeson*, Section 6, SAC Seattle to New York and Hoover, 22 January 1952; *FBI File on Paul Robeson*, Section 6, Hoover to SAC Seattle, 28 January 1952; *FBI File on Paul Robeson*, Section 6, V.P. Kary to A.H. Belmont, January 30, 1952.

they banned Robeson from reentering Canada. The charge was a familiar one: Robeson's supposed Communist affiliation. Even with the State Department lifting its ban, six years of branding Robeson a Communist had effectively completed their initial task—Robeson was once again confined to the United States.[121] An undaunted Robeson still sought to undermine the terms of his confinement. On May 26, 1957, he performed a concert for a crowd at St. Pancras Town Hall in London via a transatlantic telephone cable. The London Paul Robeson Committee organized the concert as a protest against the ban on Robeson's travel. Historian Martin Duberman described the stage of St. Pancras as presenting three items: an American flag, the flag of the United Kingdom, and a photo of Robeson. The six songs performed by Robeson represented an important moment in the history of telecommunications by providing a sonic challenge to state power. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover wrote to inform the Director of the Office of Security at the State Department, E. Tomlin Bailey, of the concert with a promise to keep Bailey informed of any further developments.[122]

The climax of Robeson's passport struggle occurred during his famous "You Are the Un-Americans" speech before the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in June of 1956. Robeson had been called as part of an investigation labeled "The Unauthorized Use of United States Passports." Robeson quarreled with the congressional committee to such an extent that its members unsuccessfully attempted to cite Robeson with a charge of contempt of

[121] Goodman, 194-195, 195-197; MacDowell, "Paul Robeson in Canada," 181-182; Goodman, 223-226.

[122] Duberman, 449-450; U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *FBI File on Paul Robeson Sr.*, FBIHQ File 100-12304 Section 14 April 1957-February 1958, John Edgar Hoover to E Tomlin Bailey, 10 June 1957, Archives Unbound (SC5000000232). The London Science Museum recently celebrated Robeson's call-in concert with a multimedia article, "Robeson Sings: The First Transatlantic Telephone Cable," https://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/robeson-sings-first-transatlantic-telephone-cable. For another example of Robeson's music providing a challenge to state power, see Nicholas Grant's discussion of South Africans using records of Robeson singing during anti-apartheid protests in Grant, *Winning Our Freedoms Together*, 89-90.

Congress.[123] The last two years of Robeson's passport case presented a sort of denouement. On March 3, 1958, Robeson initiated a suit against the Secretary of State for the last time. As the court date approached, the Secretary of State avoided an open trial by awarding Robeson his passport on June 25, 1958. Two recent rulings of the Supreme Court, *Briehl v. Dulles* and *Kent v. Dulles*, pushed the Department of State to finally issue a passport to Robeson. Still, the FBI planned to closely monitor Robeson's travels in collaboration with the Department of State and the CIA.[124] Even after an eight-year struggle, federal agencies did not plan to let Robeson travel hassle free. The State Department further revealed this commitment in 1962, when officials at the U.S. Embassy in Ghana undertook steps to ensure Robeson did not receive an appointment as a professor of music at the University of Accra from President Nkrumah. These members of the U.S. Embassy requested permission from the FBI to pass background information on Robeson to individuals who could impede his employment.[125]

The targeted harassment of Robeson reflected the intersection of anti-communism and the efforts of State Department officials to rehabilitate the global image of American race relations. Each branch of the U.S. government intervened to restrict Robeson's mobility. The executive utilized its expansive administrative power, gifted to it by Congress in legislation such as the Internal Security Act of 1950, to undermine and frustrate Robeson's attempts to travel even to destinations that did not require a passport such as Canada. His only recourse lay within

[123] Goodman, 229, 245-247. For a narration of the hearing, see Goodman, 227-242.

[124] *FBI File on Paul Robeson*, Section 17, Report on *Paul Robeson v. John Foster Dulles*, 8 August 1958; FBI File on Paul Robeson, Section 17, Hoover to SAC New York, 26 June 1958; *FBI File on Paul Robeson*, Section 17, Hoover to E. Tomlin Bailey and Director of Central Intelligence Agency, 1 July 1958.

[125] U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *FBI File on Paul Robeson Sr.*, FBIHQ File 100-12304 Section: Referrals Returned To The FBI For Release, April 1956-February 1967, John Edgar Hoover to Legal Attaché London, 10 June 1957, Archives Unbound (SC5000001143). According to a further report, Robeson turned down the position, see U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *FBI File on Paul Robeson Sr.*, FBIHQ File 100-12304 Section: Referrals Returned To The FBI For Release, April 1956-February 1967, FBI NY 100-25857 report to FBI Headquarters on Paul Robeson, Undated (1962), Archives Unbound (SC5000001142).

a federal court system often unsympathetic to the free speech of communists and, even in the best scenarios, moved at a glacial pace that could grind collective action between the gears of bureaucratic procedure and mounting legal fees. Beyond crafting laws to circumvent the civil liberties of left-leaning Americans, Congress also orchestrated the political theater of prominent African Americans such as Jackie Robinson criticizing Robeson and, though it perhaps backfired in the long run, interrogating Robeson on a national stage for his Soviet sympathies. Silencing Robeson supplied the motive for these actions—or at least relegating him to a nonthreatening role—as his popular appeal and international audience challenged U.S. ambitions abroad that relied upon extolling a fabricated image of American progress and democracy. The result for Robeson was a form of "internal exile."[126] The travel ban separated him from the rising tide of black internationalism while also denying him a necessary source of income since many American venues and concert halls proved unwilling to book a singer condemned by the State Department.[127] The FBI and other federal agencies had learned, from Marcus Garvey to Paul Robeson, that policing black radical behavior entailed circumscribing the target's mobility. For Harry Haywood, the challenge arose from his putative allies.

For A Revolutionary Position: Harry Haywood and the CPUSA

Harry Haywood devoted much of his life to the CPUSA and the right of self-determination for African Americans. He followed his brother, Otto Hall, into the black freedom struggle when Otto invited his younger brother to join the African Blood Brotherhood for African Liberation and Redemption, a clandestine black radical organization founded by the political activist Cyril Briggs. Recruited in 1925 along with nine other African Americans,

[126] Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana*, 71

[127] For an examination of Robeson's attempts to tour and earn a wage during the early years of his confinement, see Duberman, *Paul Robeson*, 381-445.

Haywood attended the Communist University of the Toilers in the East—a school founded by the Comintern that concentrated on training political activists from colonized nations—and graduated to the International Lenin School in 1927. He received instruction on the national question during his time abroad from the co-founder of the Japanese Communist Party Sen Katayama and Nikolai "Charlie" Nasanov who served as a specialist on Africa and colonization and had met Haywood as part of the Young Communist International.[128]

In *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist*, Haywood described his initial resistance to the idea of African Americans representing a separate nation within the United States, but he came to embrace the idea after reflecting on the power of the Garvey movement. Spotting the organizing potential in nationalism while denouncing Garvey's plan of returning to Africa as "utopian," Haywood crafted an argument for the African American right to self-determination grounded in the historical experience of American race relations. The argument rested on the revolutionary potential of the Black Belt region of the American South which, for Haywood, represented the most potent tragedy of Reconstruction—the failure of reformers to embrace a revolutionary redistribution of land for the displaced African American population. The sharecropping system that predominated in the Black Belt region created and

[128] Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 48, 62. For a detailed narrative of Haywood's early life, see Harry Haywood, *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist* (Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978). For a review of how American Communists theorized the question of race before and after the Sixth Congress of the Communist International, see Jacob A. Zumoff, *The Communist International and U.S. Communism, 1919-1929*, Historical Materialism Book Series (Boston: Brill, 2014), 287-364 and Oscar Berland, "The Emergence of the Communist Perspective on the 'Negro Question' in America: 1919-1931 Part Two," *Science & Society* 64, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 194-217. ProQuest (216144948). For a consideration of the role of self-determination in African American History, see V.P. Franklin, *Black Self-Determination: A Cultural History of the Faith of the Fathers* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill, 1984) and Michael C. Dawson's *Black Visions* (2001). For a critical discussion of *Black Bolshevik*, see V.P. Franklin, *Living Our Stories, Telling Our Truths: Autobiography and the Making of the African-American Intellectual Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

sustained the epicenter for American economic and racial disparity: "the semi-slave relations in the Black Belt continually reproduce Black inequality and servitude in all walks of life."[129]

The CPUSA, within this framework, must then target African Americans in the South for recruitment in order to eradicate this nucleus of racial injustice. Further, a successful effort would initiate a parallel struggle with industrialized workers across the nation against the international power of capitalism.[130] Though Haywood illustrated his organic trajectory to accepting the national question, his support added a needed African American voice—Joseph Stalin had earlier failed to convince Otto Hall of the legitimacy of the national question—to the proposals of Nasanov and other Soviet officials on American race relations.[131] Haywood and Nasanov collaborated on a resolution to submit before the Negro Commission at the Sixth Congress of the Communist International in 1928. Over the course of a vigorous debate two truths emerged: that the Comintern favored the principle of national self-determination for African Americans and that the African American members of the Negro Commission—who, except for Haywood, all rejected the national question as a framework—supported the Comintern's commitment to a concentrated organizing program amongst the African American population even if they questioned the underlying theory. At the close of the Sixth International, scholar Mark Solomon summarized the consensus, "The new line called for full racial equality, for the Party to draw closer to black proletarians, for a fresh organizing start in the South."[132] The CPUSA followed this instruction and engaged in an ambitious campaign of outreach among

[129] Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 229-234, 232.
[130] Ibid., 232-234.
[131] Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 234; Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*, 62-63; Mark Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity: Communists and African Americans, 1917-36* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), 70-72.
[132] Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity*, 73-77, 81; Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*, 62-65. For an analysis on the debates held and the votes cast, see Solomon, *The Cry Was Unity*, 77-81.

southern African American workers and farmers though Party priorities did shift with the implementation of the Popular Front strategy.[133]

The right of self-determination for African Americans remained the Party line over the next 25 years, even if enthusiasm wavered as the Party responded to global events such as the Great Depression and World War II as well as internal, factional struggles against the leadership of Jay Lovestone and Earl Browder. As the CPUSA National Committee entered its the 16th National Convention in 1957, the first national convention in seven years, the Party sought to contend with the domestic battles arising from the continued impact of government repression in the form of show trials before HUAC, the lengthy and expensive fights with federal courts over prosecutions stemming from the Smith Act and other restrictive legislation that had jailed members of the Party, deportations and passport confiscations, the cultural backlash represented by the Hollywood blacklist, and the rise of a mass movement of African Americans against segregation. From the international sphere, the Party had to reckon with the revelations from Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" that detailed the crimes and misconduct of Joseph Stalin and the violent Soviet responses in 1956 to the Poznán uprising in Poland and the Hungarian Revolution. The domestic struggles wore down the Party's reserves, but the implications of Soviet actions re-ignited older debates within the CPUSA between domestically-focused reformers and those dedicated to a traditional Marxist-Leninist approach within a global movement.[134]

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[133] For an examination of the CPUSA's activities in the South, see Robin D.G. Kelley's *Hammer and Hoe* (1990), Mark Solomon's *The Cry Was Unity* (1998), Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore's *Defying Dixie* (2008), and LaShawn Harris, "Running with the Reds: African American Women and the Communist Party during the Great Depression," *Journal of African American History* 94, no. 1 (2009): 21-43. JSTOR (https://www-jstor-org.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/stable/25610047).

[134] James R. Barrett, *William Z. Foster and the Tragedy of American Radicalism*, The Working Class in American History (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 252-255. For a review of the larger debates within the historiography of American communism that includes the role of the international Party, see Maurice Isserman, "Three Generations: Historians View American Communism," *Labor History* 26, no. 4 (1985): 517-545. Taylor & Francis Online (https://doi-org.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/10.1080/00236568508584815).

The debates at the 16th National Convention revealed four factions: a deeply reformist group led by *Daily Worker* editor John Gates that wanted to restructure the CPUSA toward more liberal policies; a group led by the General Secretary of the National Committee Eugene Dennis that encouraged a debate about reworking Party policy while warning against sectarianism and orthodoxy; a group led by Party Chairman William Z. Foster that acknowledged past mistakes but sought to stay the Party's course and remain tied to the Soviet Union as the source of policy; and the self-described "ultra-left" that included Haywood and advocated against the Party's embrace of a "peaceful, parliamentary, and constitutional transition to socialism" in favor of continued revolutionary action.[135] In *Black Bolshevik,* Haywood described his experience at the National Convention arguing for the right of self-determination with fellow black communist James Jackson who supported scaling back the national question in favor of joining existing civil rights organizations. Haywood and other more radical attendees at the convention reached a compromise with Foster's group that, according to Haywood, rested in part on a promised future meeting to resolve the Party's official stance on the African American question. This concession —and the failures of the reformists to unite behind a single leader—allowed Foster to retain tenuous control of the Party, with Gates and many others resigning from the CPUSA and Haywood's increasing disillusionment as a follow-up national conference on self-determination never materialized.[136]

Haywood responded to the National Convention with the publication of his pamphlet, "For A Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question." He hoped to answer what he termed "the

[135] Barrett, *William Z. Foster*, 258-265; Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 612.

[136] Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 608-618. On Foster's leadership during the National Convention, see Barrett, *William Z. Foster*, 260-267. Gerald Horne covers the experience of Foster's ally and African American communist Ben Davis during this time in *Black Liberation/Red Scare*, 271-304. For an analysis of James Jackson's approach to the civil rights movement, see Sara Rzesutek Haviland, *James and Esther Cooper Jackson*, 153-185.

universal problem of reform or revolution." To that end, he targeted the arguments of those he contended with at the 16th National Convention including Ben Davis, Eugene Dennis, James Jackson, and in particular James Allen's attacks on the national question. Characterizing the new Party position as "slightly warmed over liberal gradualism," Haywood applied Marxist-Leninist theory to the economic and political conditions of the South. Haywood asserted that Jackson and Allen erred in two areas: trusting the continued industrialization of the South to eradicate segregation and to follow the lead of the NAACP and other civil rights organizations in the struggle for integration.[137] Haywood cited the inadequacy of the first point since it diagnosed segregation as a "superstructural hangover" from the outmoded economic model of plantation slavery instead of a product of imperialistic capitalism. He elaborated:

> In claiming that the Negro question is being solved under imperialism as a result of "long range economic trends", the proponents of "direct integration" ascribe to U.S. imperialism a progressive role. Indeed, at bottom, they believe that the main driving force in freeing the Negro people is not anti-imperialist struggle but, on the contrary, the expansion of capitalism. They thereby embrace the hackneyed liberal-reformist remedy, doctored up with pseudo-Marxist phrases.[138]

This analysis was grounded in census reports and economic data about the Black Belt region that revealed that industrialization and mechanized agriculture in the South had created industrial positions predominantly for white workers while increasing the precarity of African American farmers.

His second impulse involved castigating the reformist desire to back the NAACP in the battle for equality. Cloaked within a class-based examination of the African American population—focusing on splits within the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeois—Haywood labels the

[137] Harry Haywood, "For A Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question," transcribed by Paul Saba from the Third Printing (1959) by the Provisional Organizing Committee on the Negro Question, Marxist Internet Archive, accessed on 2 February 2019, https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/1956-1960/haywood02.htm.

[138] Ibid.

NAACP as a gatekeeper or chokepoint for African American mass action. Falling in step with the NAACP's strategy of legal battles and civil rights would forgo the political and economic advances that Haywood viewed as intrinsic to the fight for self-determination. Abandoning the national question left activists with only "an impotent appeal to the conscience of humanitarian instincts of the country and the world."[139] On the other hand, maintaining the Party's past revolutionary emphasis on self-determination provided a path to political power and Haywood reaffirmed his contention from the Sixth International that the treatment of African Americans in the Black Belt reverberated throughout the rest of the nation. He warned that a fainthearted approach to the region might avoid "the nasty, political upheavals" that worried the reformist members of the CPUSA who supported a peaceful transition to socialism, but a path to full equality was not guaranteed without endorsing a revolutionary position on the national question.[140]

While much of Haywood's article upheld the positions he had campaigned for since the 1920s, the document also reveals an astute analysis of the African American freedom struggle as it would progress over the following decade. He acknowledged the long road ahead with the teasing question, "But what kind of Marxist bases himself upon what exists at present without taking into account what is developing and approaching?"[141] And "For A Revolutionary Position" did detect the enthusiasm for autonomy and the development of an international outlook within African American communities. The growing nationalist strain that fully emerged during the Black Power era did not follow Marxist orthodoxy and, as discussed in the following chapter, many adherents viewed the white left with skepticism and disdain. Yet, while Black

[139] Ibid.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid. This question is perhaps a touch hypocritical given his frequent dismissal of his opponents as trapped in utopian fantasies.

Power is often regarded as a northern movement, two of the catalysts that facilitated its growth into a national phenomenon occurred in the Black Belt region through the work of activists in Lowndes County, Alabama, who organized the Lowndes County Freedom Organization and when Stokely Carmichael's first called for "Black Power" in Greenwood, Mississippi.[142] The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, in its mission to politically organize in the South and especially the rural areas, indirectly reached a conclusion similar to Haywood's emphasis on the need for autonomous political power for African Americans in the Black Belt.[143] On the international question, Haywood perceived the attempt of the United States to convey a progressive story of American race relations to a global audience. He noted the tension within this agenda because "[the Eisenhower administration] is forced to make tactical concessions on the Negro question in order to save face in the world in view of its stance as 'leader of world democracy'. And, at the same time, these very concessions further aggravate the crisis with regard to the Negro question." He connected this approach to the contemporaneous U.S. policy toward the newly independent, formerly colonized nations saying that imperialistic powers embrace "concessions under threat of revolution—but no fundamental change." Thus, the

[142] For coverage of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization and its place within the history of Black Power, see Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009). For a consideration of the various ideological strands that influence the Black Power movement, see William Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965-1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour* (2006); and Rhonda Y. Williams, *Concrete Demands: The Search for Black Power in the 20th Century* (New York: Routledge, 2015). For an example of political organizing in the South, see Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995). Historian Donna Murch connected the development of a Black Power ideology to the migration of African American families form the South in the first half of the 20th century, see Donna Jean Murch, *Living For The City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

[143] Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton sketched out a similar theory of political power in *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967). For a historical analysis of self-determination, see V.P. Franklin's *Black Self-Determination* (1984). For a discussion of the larger political trends in African American History as they relate to self-determination, see Michael C. Dawson, *Black Visions*, 85-134, 172-237.

gradualist approach toward integration accepted by the CPUSA and used by groups like the NAACP promised a version of equality that offered no change to the overlying economic and social structure—a total failure underneath a Marxist-Leninist approach, in other words.[144]

Others agreed with Haywood's assessment in the New York and Philadelphia area and he soon joined a group of predominantly African American and Puerto Rican disaffected members of the ultra-left faction of the CPUSA in order to form the POC. His membership with the POC did not last long though as the group devolved into a series of sectarian struggles with Haywood accused of attempting to undermine the leadership of Armando Roman, General Secretary of the POC, in September of 1958. Haywood responded to Roman's charges with a formal response delivered to the New York Steering Committee that, among other requests, called for the POC to allow a committee to evaluate all correspondence and files about the past factional splits advocated for by Roman to determine their validity. Instead, Haywood and his wife Gwendolyn Midlo Hall were expelled from the POC in October.[145] Haywood then exchanged a series of letters with Cyril Briggs, the venerable African American communist who founded the African Blood Brotherhood. Briggs started the dialogue with a letter expressing his support of Haywood's position on the national question, his dismissal of James Jackson's approach to the freedom struggle, and his commitment to "do some of the educational work that should have been done by the Party long ago" on the question of self-determination.[146] Haywood would learn

[144] Haywood, "For A Revolutionary Position."

[145] Harry Haywood, "Report made to the New York Steering Committee on Sept. 18, 1958 by Harry Haywood," 18 September 1958, Box 2, Folder "CPUSA: Prov. Org. Committee – Haywood's Report to NY Steering Committee, September 1958," Harry Haywood Papers, Sc MG 398, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library; Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 621-623. For an overview of the POC, see Noel Ignatin, "The POC: A Personal Memoir," transcribed by Paul Saba from *Theoretical Review* 12 (1979), Marxist Internet Archive, accessed on February 2, 2019, https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/1956-1960/ignatin01.htm.

[146] Cyril Briggs to Harry Haywood, 3 November 1958, Box 1, Folder "CPUSA: Cyril Briggs Correspondence, Nov. 3, 1958 – Dec. 9, 1962," Harry Haywood Papers, Sc MG 398, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

from a third party in 1959 that the CPUSA had also formally expelled him. In looking back on this era of his activism, Haywood regretted his decision to split with the CPUSA because it "played directly into the hands of the revisionists, who were able to isolate us even further from the rank and file."[147] Haywood's experience of Party politics in the late 1950s reflected the white left's acceptance of integration, the changing international situation as represented in the ascension of Nikita Khrushchev, and a growing attachment to nationalism fermenting within the civil rights movement.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the internationalist activism of black radicals during the 1950s to reveal the pressures they endured within activist networks and from government agencies. Starting in slavery, state power in the United States has fixated on policing the movement and ideas of African Americans whether in the form of intricate pass systems, laws banning literacy, or white supervision of religious services. These efforts intensify during the mass movements within the African American freedom struggle as seen during Garvey's campaign and the Civil Rights—Black Power era. Considerations of government interference and reactions also have dominated the historiography of radical black internationalism as it considers the intersection of the Cold War and the civil rights movement. These studies fit within three waves of scholarship: works of diplomatic history that examined the role of the state in limiting or promoting civil rights struggles; works of political and intellectual history that traced the development of internationalism and nationalism within African American communities; and works of social history that investigated the daily lives and aspirations of African American activists. The collective lesson from this historiography has mapped out the contours of the impact of the Cold

[147] Haywood, *Black Bolshevik*, 624, 622.

War on the African American freedom struggle and, in particular, the initial stages of the civil rights movement. The two case studies in this chapter further illustrate the influence of Cold War politics. With Paul Robeson, federal agencies identified his political positions as a threat to U.S. interests abroad and summarily revoked his right to travel. Robeson did not suffer this indignity quietly, but each branch of government cooperated to undermine and stall his efforts. With Harry Haywood, the divisions in the left that deepened with the new adversarial role of the Soviet Union refracted back into CPUSA policy as elements of the Party sought to reassess past strategies. The search for a less controversial and provocative Party line—which included reducing the commitment to the right of self-determination for African Americans—caused the furthest left members of the CPUSA to search out new spaces and populations to organize.

The following chapter picks up these threads through a recounting of the partisan struggle between two legal defense committees, where one was integrated and socialist-backed and the other promoted a nascent black nationalism. The second chapter also introduces Robert F. Williams and marks the start of my recreation of Williams's years abroad, the heart of this project. As mentioned above, Williams and his cohort all passed through the fires of the McCarthyite 1950s and bore those scars into the 1960s. In Williams this manifested into his lack of concern with dogmatic ideology or Party lines or, as Robyn D.G. Kelley labeled him, "something of an intellectual dabbler and autodidact."[148] Pragmatism and praxis guided Williams throughout his tenure as an activist, but his entrance onto the global stage and the growth of disputes over tactics on the home front thrust Williams into areas where ideology and dogmatism ruled all.

[148] Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*, 70.

CHAPTER 2: "When you see me in Monroe with those crackers": Robert F. Williams and the Monroe Defendants, 1961-1964

"But Rob escaped to Canada,
And then to Mexico.
And now he stays in Cuba
Where the F.B.I. can't go"
~Malvina Reynolds and Pete Seeger, "The Story of Old Monroe", 1963

Figure 2: Petition signed in Cuba by supporters of the five Monroe Defendants, Undated.
Photo Courtesy of Robert F. Williams Collection, Bentley Historical Library

On the night of August 27, 1961, Robert F. Williams and his family escaped from Monroe, North Carolina, hours before a seemingly inevitable armed showdown between Williams's followers and the authorities. At first on foot, Williams, his family, and a few allies evaded the local and state police barricades encircling Monroe before driving without rest to New York City. Racial tensions in the area had steadily escalated since 1955 when Williams assumed the leadership of the local NAACP chapter. The situation reached its climax with the arrival of a group of Freedom Riders to the town the week prior to the Williamses' exit. A violent white mob besieged the Freedom Riders' nonviolent, weeklong picket of downtown Monroe on August 27. Whites descended upon the picketers that afternoon until the police sheltered the activists in the town's police station while also summarily arresting the group for inciting a riot. The incident downtown proved to be an epicenter for violent activity as gunfire erupted throughout Monroe. Phone calls inundated the Williams home over the next few hours with reports of state police, National Guard, and Ku Klux Klan caravans pouring into Union County. In an attempt to defuse the situation and avoid considerable bloodshed, Williams and his family left Monroe that night. Within a few weeks, Williams became an international fugitive.[149]

The following three chapters explore the life of Williams in exile from the United States. All three chapters highlight previously under-examined dimensions of Robert F. Williams's life, philosophy, and activism. I analyze Williams's time in exile through an extensive use of his correspondence in order to excavate his day-to-day interactions with the press, legal system, and government of the United States; the same aspects of the Cuban government; and the activist

[149] Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 271-280; Robeson Taj Frazier, *The East Is Black: Cold War China in the Black Radical Imagination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 119-127; Robert Carl Cohen, *Black Crusader: A Biography of Robert Franklin Williams* (Secaucus, NJ: Lyle Stuart, Inc., 1972), 178-187; Robert F. Williams, *Negroes With Guns* (New York: Marzani and Munsell, 1962), 46-53.

community. This view of the expatriate experience is lacking from the current historiography. This chapter focuses on two protracted legal cases. In the first, Williams clashed with the NAACP prior to his exit from the United States. Convicted of criminal trespassing after engaging in a sit-in protest in the spring of 1960, Williams's increasingly radical politics goaded the NAACP into distancing itself from Williams. In the second, Williams and four other defendants faced fabricated kidnapping indictments after the events of August 27. Two organizations formed to aid Williams and the others, but partisan quarrels undercut their efforts. Both cases demonstrate the widening divide between civil rights activists and advocates for the less gradual, more militant tactics embodied by the Black Power era later in the 1960s. The next chapter considers Williams's life in Cuba and his disputes with members of the Cuban government. The last chapter on Williams describes the feuds amongst his supporters and his attempts to mount an international campaign to return to the United States during his residence in China.

Timothy Tyson, Williams's leading biographer, places Williams firmly in the history of the civil rights movement through his coverage of Williams's activism until 1961. In 1958, Williams defended two young African American boys, aged 7 and 9, who were sentenced to reform school until the age of 21 for their participation in a kissing game with a white girl. His campaign garnered international condemnation for U.S. race relations against the backdrop of Cold War propaganda that celebrated the virtues of American democracy. In 1959, the NAACP suspended his presidency of its Monroe chapter for his public endorsement of armed self-reliance. This expulsion created a debate on the merits of his self-defense philosophy on the floor of the NAACP National Convention that same year, even if many members condemned his views. In 1960, he traveled to Cuba as part of a group of influential African American activists

and writers to document how Castro's regime advanced race relations in Cuba. According to Tyson, his mixture of civil rights tactics and Black Power rhetoric demonstrates that the civil rights and Black Power movements "emerged from the same soil, confronted the same predicaments, and reflected the same quest for African American freedom."[150]

However, Tyson overlooks how Williams's brand of activism furthered the growing fractures between organizations driven by a traditional civil rights agenda and the reemerging black nationalism of the Black Power era. Historian James H. Meriwether contends that the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in 1961 marked an important turn in the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement. In *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, he presents Lumumba and the independence movements in Africa as a Rorschach test for African American activist circles. Gradualists perceived "racialist nationalism"; liberals supported African independence in theory, but, in practice, were cautious due to Lumumba's politics; and radicals saw him as "a black nationalist hero."[151] These splits are also revealed in the bickering between the Committee to Aid the Monroe Defendants (CAMD) and the Monroe Defense Committee (MDC). Both organizations formed in the wake of Williams's exit from the United States in September of 1961 when authorities in Monroe brought kidnapping charges against Williams, Willie "Mae" Mallory, Richard Crowder, Harold Reape, and John Lowry. CAMD offered a leftward-leaning civil rights program focused on integration, alliances with predominantly white organizations, and a broad

[150] Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 3.

[151] James H. Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 244, 209-210. Patrice Lumumba served as the first prime minister of the newly independent Congo in May 1960. Following the secession of Katanga into an independent state and deposed through a coup led by Joseph Mobutu, Lumumba was sent to Katanga where he was executed with the complicity of the Central Intelligence Agency. Interestingly, the historian Brenda Gayle Plummer notes how intelligence reports to Eisenhower, in the lead up to the assassination, attempted to demonstrate that Lumumba was mentally ill. In a similar way, the FBI diagnosed Robert F. Williams with schizophrenia *in absentia* after he fled the United States in August of 1961. See Brenda Gayle Plummer, *In Search of Power*, 89-91, and Metzl, *The Protest Psychosis*, 121-122.

political ideology. The MDC, on the other hand, embraced an organizational ethos based on black autonomy and its members included prominent black nationalists such as Mallory, the poet and activist Amiri Baraka, the journalist Daniel H. Watts, and the historian John Henrik Clarke. The MDC and CAMD shared the overall goal of overturning the false kidnapping charges against the Monroe defendants. Yet, the two groups competed over resources, membership, and, most significantly, message from 1961 to 1964. By April of 1962, physical distance and conflicting legal strategies created a further split that resulted in the MDC focusing its efforts on Mallory while CAMD campaigned for Crowder and Reape (Lowry retained an outside attorney and existed outside the dispute for the most part). The two committees almost did merge multiple times over the course of the three-year legal battle, but personal animosity and separate ideologies prevented all but the most superficial cooperation. The presence of the MDC and CAMD caused confusion, distrust, and strained the available assets within the activist community.

This chapter primarily examines the build up to the Williamses' exit from the United States and its aftermath. I reconstruct the events leading to the Williamses' departure including his increasing alienation with the NAACP. Even as Williams engaged in a lengthy legal case over a sit-in conviction, the NAACP distanced itself from his rhetoric and politics. Before delving into the fight between the MDC and CAMD, I cover Williams's shifting narrative surrounding his entrance into Cuba to demonstrate his caution even after he returned to the United States. The remainder of the chapter surveys the dispute between the MDC and CAMD by delving into both organizations' origins, prominent members, legal strategies, and philosophical differences. Williams watched this free-for-all closely from Cuba. If he returned to the United States as he desired, he would face charges similar to Mae Mallory, Richard Crowder,

Harold Reape, and John Lowry. The deep-seated divisions amongst his core supporters at home also boded poorly for his chances to wage an effective crusade against racial injustice upon his return. Reaching out to Mae Mallory on July 18, 1962, Williams promised, "No matter what anyone else says, when you see me in Monroe with those crackers, then, and only then, you can believe that I advised you to return, because I never ask anyone to do anything that I wouldn't do myself."[152] In what follows, I document the internal struggles within civil rights organizations that Williams experienced prior to his exile and, later, provoked his hesitation toward returning to the United States.[153]

Robert F. Williams's Exit From the NAACP

Robert F. Williams served as the president of the Monroe branch of the NAACP from 1955 until 1959. His tenure ended abruptly in 1959 when the NAACP National Office suspended him due to his public endorsement of armed self-reliance. Along with Mabel Robinson Williams,

[152] Robert F. Williams (RFW) to Mae Mallory, 18 July 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962", RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[153] For more on Williams see Marcellus C. Barksdale, "Robert F. Williams and the Indigenous Civil Rights Movement in Monroe, North Carolina, 1961," *The Journal of Negro History* 69, no. 2 (1984): 73-89. *JSTOR* (doi:10.2307/2717599); Cohen, *Black Crusader*; Pero G. Dagbovie, "God Has Spared Me to Tell My Story': Mabel Robinson Williams and the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement," *The Black Scholar* 43 (2013): 69-88; Frazier, *The East Is Black*; Frazier, "Thunder in the East: China, Exiled Crusaders, and the Unevenness of Black Internationalism," *American Quarterly* no. 4 (December, 2011): 929-953; Jonathan Metzl, *The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009); Cristina Mislán, "On Writing in Exile: Absolving and Implicating Cuba and China in Robert F. Williams' Crusader," *Journalism Studies* 17, no. 6 (2015): 781-797, Taylor & Francis Online (http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2015.1006902); Mislán, "In the Spirit of '76 Venceremos!": Nationalizing and Transnationalizing Self-defense on Radio Free Dixie," *American Journalism* 32, no. 4 (2015): 434-452, Taylor & Francis Online (https://doi-org.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/10.1080/08821127.2015.1099265); Bill V. Mullen, "Transnational Correspondence: Robert F. Williams, Detroit, and the Bandung Era," *Works and Days* 20 nos. 1,2 (2002): 189-215; Walter Rucker, "Crusader in Exile: Robert F. Williams and the International Struggle for Black Freedom in America," *The Black Scholar* 36, no. 2/3 (2006): 19-34, *JSTOR* (http://www.jstor.org/stable/41069202); Ronald J. Stephens, "Narrating Acts of Resistance: Explorations of Untold Heroic and Horrific Battle Stories surrounding Robert Franklin Williams' Residence in Lake County, Michigan," *Journal of Black Studies* 33, no. 5 (May, 2003): 675-703; Stephens, "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition': Robert F. Williams' Crusade for Justice on Behalf of Twenty-two Million African Americans as a Cuban Exile," *Black Diaspora Review* 2, no. 1 (2010): 14-26; Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*; Tyson, "Robert F. Williams, 'Black Power,' and the Roots of the African American Freedom Struggle," *The Journal of American History* 85, no. 2 (1998): 540-570, *JSTOR* (doi: 10.2307/2567750); Williams, *Negroes with Guns*.

Williams had cultivated a large, mainly working-class NAACP chapter that continued to work with the couple after Williams's ejection from the NAACP. The Williamses and other leaders in Monroe organized their community towards strident opposition to racial injustice. This program clashed with the NAACP's more staid and legalistic approach. For example, in 1958, Williams advocated on behalf of David "Fuzzy" Simpson, age 7, and James Hanover Thompson, age 9, as part of what came to be known as the "Kissing Case." Despite the national office of the NAACP's refusal to assist the young boys, Williams toured the United States and Canada condemning the sentencing of Simpson and Thompson, raising money for their legal defense, and gaining contacts that proved essential during his exile.[154]

Roy Wilkins, the executive secretary of the NAACP, censured Williams on May 7, 1959, after Williams, a few days earlier, publicly announced a need to "meet violence with violence."[155] Williams uttered this statement, and refused to retract it in the following weeks, after four incidents of state legal systems failing to adequately prosecute white assailants of African American victims. The shocking lynching of Mack Charles Parker in Poplarville, Mississippi, and the brutal rape of Betty Jean Owens in Tallahassee, Florida, by four white attackers both garnered national headlines during the spring of 1959. The federal government declined to press charges in the Parker case while the perpetrators in the Owens case received light sentences in comparison to the magnitude of the crime. Two local cases in Union County, North Carolina, from that spring further convinced Williams of the inability or the unwillingness of state agencies to protect African Americans. First, a white railroad engineer physically assaulted an African American hotel maid named Georgia White for interrupting his sleep. He finished his attack by throwing White down a flight of stairs. The second incident involved a

[154] Williams, *Negroes with Guns*, 21-24; Tyson, 92-93, 101-102, 109-136; Cohen, 111-122, 195.
[155] Williams, *Negroes with Guns*, 26.

white mechanic invading the home of Mary Reed, a mother of five, and attempting to rape her. Both men were acquitted and these events contributed to Williams expressing his support of armed self-reliance minutes after the Reed case was dismissed.[156]

The dispute between Williams and the national leadership of the NAACP boiled over at the NAACP's national convention in mid-July of 1959. Hosted in New York, supporters of Williams attempted to push the NAACP into a more militant direction with Williams's dismissal as a rallying cry. This group included the civil rights lawyer and activist Conrad Lynn who had represented the young boys during the "Kissing Case." However, this loose coalition of advocates could not stand against Wilkins' concerted effort to denounce Williams, his ideology, and his methods. The convention ended with Williams's continued suspension from the NAACP. Williams's views on armed self-defense and black self-determination would continue to insulate him from more conservative and conventional groups.[157]

The estrangement between Williams and the NAACP deepened over the following year after the famous Greensboro, North Carolina, sit-in of a Woolworth's department store on February 1, 1960. On March 11, 1960, Williams and a group of black youths initiated a similar sit-in campaign against the segregated eateries of Monroe. Williams and about 12 young allies engaged in a mobile protest from lunch counter to lunch counter in Monroe's downtown. The group's traveling sit-ins and an irregular schedule frustrated the attempts to impede their efforts by local authorities. This tactic possibly developed, in part, due to Williams's arrest after the first sit-in at Gamble's Drug Store—Williams had lingered at the drug store after the protest and was

[156] Tyson, 143-151; Cohen, 122-125. The historian Danielle L. McGuire argues for the importance of the trial of Betty Jean Owens, the young victim in Tallahassee. Though her four assailants did not receive the full criminal sentence for their crime, it did mark the state's recognition of "black women's bodily integrity." See Chapter 5 of McGuire's *At the Dark End of the Street*, especially 169, 181-182, 186.

[157] Conrad J. Lynn to RFW, 29 June 1959, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence 1959," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to Earl B. Dickerson, Esq., 29 June 1959, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence 1959," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Tyson, 151-165; Williams, 28-29; Cohen, 127-131.

arrested on the sidewalk. His violation of this segregated space created a legal situation that Conrad Lynn would describe enthusiastically as being "impossible to get a better test case than yours."[158] Williams planned to rely on his supporters and the NAACP for assistance with the sit-in trial. However, members of the NAACP proved less enthusiastic in reopening a relationship with Williams.

The North Carolina state office of the NAACP attached two local lawyers to Williams's case, W.B. Nivens and T.H. Wyche. This legal team served Williams through the lower court trial on the sit-in conviction. In early May of 1960, Williams received the choice between hard labor and a fine. However, this ruling contained a two-year suspended sentence with the stipulation that he would serve the full prison term if he displayed any disruptive behavior. Williams reasoned this provision was intended to curtail his civil rights activity. As he prepared to appeal his case to the Superior Court of North Carolina, W.B. Nivens informed Williams that he received a call from an NAACP official who directed Nivens and Wyche to disengage from the appeal. Williams and Conrad Lynn immediately investigated this claim, but both the national office and state office of the NAACP denied pulling support from the Williams case. The exchanges between Williams and the NAACP representatives grew more heated and Robert L. Carter, who succeeded Thurgood Marshall as the general counsel of the NAACP, alleged that Williams "seems intent on trying to place the responsibility on this office, no matter what the true facts happen to be."[159]

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[158] Tyson, 217-219; State v. Robert Williams, 253 N.C. 804; 117 S.E.2d 824; N.C. 1961 LEXIS 455; Lynn to Robert F. Williams, 3 March 1960, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Conrad J. Lynn Papers, Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center, Boston University (HGARC-BU), Boston, MA.

[159] Tyson, 218; Lynn to RFW, 13 May 1960, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; RFW to Lynn, 18 May 1960, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Robert L. Carter to Lynn, 27 May 1960, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

A day after Carter challenged Williams's grasp on reality, Nivens and Wyche failed to appear for the early hearings of the Superior Court. In a letter to Kelly M. Alexander, the President of the North Carolina NAACP State Conference of Branches dated May 28, 1960, Williams perceived a sinister motive on the part of Alexander and the NAACP:

> If Mr. Lynn had not been here, no doubt, I would have had to spend a night in jail as a possible lynch victim. In fact, Mr. Lynn saved the day by being in court on time and not exposing me to the mercy of a court of white supremists[sic] who would stop at nothing to get rid of me.[160]

Williams and Alexander had clashed previously due to the former's brazen and audacious leadership of the Monroe branch of the NAACP. Thus, he responded to Williams in an equally blistering letter two days later. According to Alexander, the North Carolina office withdrew support from the case because Williams insisted on Conrad Lynn's leadership of the legal team. This violated an organizational policy against the use of outside counsel along with attorneys retained by the NAACP. Alexander then mocked Williams's accusation that the NAACP planned to collaborate with the state of North Carolina quoting Williams's misspelling of "white surpemists" as he refuted his membership amongst them. Williams accepted this censure until he learned from T.H. Wyche that the state legal staff of the NAACP could approve Conrad Lynn as Williams's counsel at any time; they neglected to perform this action.[161]

Still, Lynn advised Williams to stick with the NAACP attorneys. The Superior Court of North Carolina upheld the lower court's ruling on Williams. As Nivens and Wyche prepared to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court of North Carolina, Lynn warned Williams to watch carefully to ensure that both NAACP lawyers filed the appeal correctly and on time. If Nivens

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[160] RFW to Kelly M. Alexander, 28 May 1960, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

[161] Kelly M. Alexander to RFW, 30 May 1960, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; RFW to Lynn, 6 June 1960, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

and Wyche failed to do so, "the first thing you would know about it would be when you were arrested and hauled off to jail."[162] Nivens and Wyche did fulfill the requirements of the North Carolina Supreme Court, but the Court ruled against Williams's appeal on January 20, 1961 finding no error in the trial procedure of the lower court. After this ruling, Williams's attorneys informed him that the NAACP apparently planned to withdraw from the case. T.H. Wyche provided Williams with a copy of a letter sent to Gloster B. Current, the Director of Branches for the NAACP. Nivens and Wyche complained that "upon the insistence and authority of [Current's] office as Mr. Williams was a controversial figure, the Legal Defense Fund did not sanction our appearance for him and only offered token compensation for our appearance in the Supreme Court [of North Carolina]." They further revealed that the NAACP had yet to inform them as to whether to file a petition for writ of certiorari and thereby appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.[163] This failure could prove disastrous for Williams since the Supreme Court only accepts petitions filed 90 days after the original ruling of the lower court, in this case the January 20, 1961, ruling of the North Carolina Supreme Court. Time was a factor for his appeal. The national and North Carolina offices of the NAACP did appear to soft-pedal his case, but, on the other hand, Williams's radical endorsements of Cuba and armed self-defense after the sit-in conviction somewhat forced the NAACP's hand.

Williams and the Radicals

If the NAACP hoped public censure and a legal battle would temper Williams's rhetoric, they were disappointed. His expulsion from the NAACP only elevated Williams in the eyes of

[162] Lynn to RFW, 8 June 1960, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Lynn to RFW, 26 August 1960, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

[163] T.H. Wyche to Gloster B. Current, Undated, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU. Though undated, this letter likely was sent sometime within the last 10 days of January as Lynn and Williams began searching for alternate legal resources by 31 January 1961.

other radical activists and forged him into a cause célèbre for black nationalists in early 1960s. A life-changing moment occurred when Williams was asked to be one of thirty founding members of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC) in the spring of 1960 by Richard Gibson. As noted in the Introduction, Richard Gibson played an instrumental role in the founding of the FPCC and would later serve the CIA as an informant. Gibson viewed the FPCC as a vehicle to not only combat the growing negative image of Fidel Castro's leadership in Cuba, but also to challenge racial injustice in the United States. Williams's work with the FPCC earned him an invitation to tour Cuba in June of 1960. Upon returning to the United States, Williams then traveled back to Cuba in July. The FPCC also organized this trip and invited a select group of African American writers and activists to accompany Williams in attending Cuba's 26 July celebrations.[164] These trips to Cuba allowed Williams to form a personal relationship with Castro and likely influenced Williams's decision to try to reach Cuba as well as the efforts of the Cuban government to protect him.[165]

Williams vociferously supported Castro and the Cuban government to U.S. media outlets during and after his visits. His popularity in Cuba and with African American audiences led the FPCC to recruit Robert for a national speaking tour for the fall 1960 that extended into 1961. The sit-in conviction almost halted this trip. After the North Carolina Supreme Court's ruling, Conrad Lynn notified Williams on January 31, 1961, that, with the NAACP's inactivity, he needed a stay of execution on the court's ruling while they appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Otherwise, the lower court's sentence of probation would go into effect and would result in the restriction of his

[164] The July 26 celebrations celebrate two failed attacks on the Batista regime in the Oriente province of Cuba. Though the revolutionary forces were defeated, the Cuban government recognizes it as the formative moment for the insurrection against Batista.

[165] RFW to Thomas Ericsson, 1 April 1968, Box 2, Folder "Correspondence Undated (5)," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Tyson, 223-228; Cohen, 138-145.

mobility. This court action would tether Williams to the state of North Carolina and end his speaking engagements for the FPCC. Lynn then scrambled to secure additional legal support, chastised members of the NAACP for failing to support Williams, and advised Williams to petition the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee (ECLC) for assistance. In his letter to the ECLC on January 28, 1961, Williams revealed that the NAACP had bundled his case with several college students, but a newspaper account on the cases omitted his name. The article also reported the other students had received stays of execution. Williams asserted, "No legal work what-so-ever is being done on my behalf while time is swiftly running out" to file an appeal to the Supreme Court. The ECLC voted to accept the case in February 1961, but the NAACP then decided to represent Williams again. Lynn complained to Williams on February 3, 1961, that the ECLC "would carry through your appeal to the Supreme Court with the proper Political and Publicity build-up that it merits. The NAACP will do its best to minimize the case." He then offered the opinion that it was time for Williams to publicly split with the National Office of the NAACP.[166]

Tellingly, the NAACP held a similar opinion of Williams. On April 3, 1961, Gloster B. Current complained that FPCC pamphlets and literature blatantly touted Williams's former leadership in the NAACP. Current, as Director of Branches, disavowed any relationship between the FPCC and the NAACP after fielding inquiries about the relationship due to Williams's involvement. His letter then asked Williams to announce publicly his split with the NAACP and formally resign, stating, "By so doing you will no longer make it possible for your personal

[166] Tyson 235-240; Lynn to RFW, 31 January 61, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Lynn to T.H. Wyche, 1 February 1961, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; RFW to Clark Foreman (of ECLC), 28 January 1961, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Cohen, *Black Crusader*, 140; Lynn to RFW, 3 February 1961, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

activities to be confused with those of the NAACP." Williams did discontinue the NAACP's legal counsel from his sit-in case the next day in a letter to Roy Wilkins on April 4, 1961. Only a month and a half earlier, Lynn reported that Williams received a job offer from the NAACP in order to remove him from Monroe and the South. Supporters of Williams viewed this as an attempt to silence Williams "since he is an embarrassment to [the National Office of the NAACP] in their collaborationist policy." The NAACP likely saw Williams's potential relocation as a win-win situation—his recruitment would silence one of their most vocal African American critics and it would defuse the increasingly violent situation in Monroe. Williams remained in Monroe with his family and, as the summer of 1961 approached, he faced four attacks on his life.[167]

However, Williams was away from Monroe for much of 1960 and 1961 as he traveled on fundraising and speaking tours. Mabel Robinson Williams carried on the campaign in Monroe and also helped as a local coordinator for Williams's legal defense while he spread publicity about the case. And his absence did not always defuse local tensions. On Williams's second trip to Cuba in July of 1960, Mabel Williams and their two children received a death threat over the telephone after a Ku Klux Klan rally near Monroe. The poet and activist Amiri Baraka, with Williams on the trip to Cuba, later stated that Williams stormed into the U.S. Ambassador's office after Monroe's chief of police failed to take any action to protect his family. Armed with a holstered pistol, he loudly informed the ambassador that either the federal government would intervene in Monroe or he would call upon armed members of the local African American

[167] Gloster B. Current to RFW, 3 April 1961, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; RFW to Roy Wilkins, 4 April 1961, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Lynn to Richard Gibson, 14 February 1961, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

community to act.[168] In his unpublished autobiography, Williams further recalled telling the ambassador, "That if anything should happen to my family that I would kill Americans in Havana and that he would be the first to go." In a later interview with historian Timothy Tyson, Baraka confirmed this version of events.[169]

Mabel Williams also assisted Conrad Lynn in preparing for Williams's legal case. With 50 days remaining to file an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court for the sit-in conviction, Lynn still waited on the necessary court documents from the courts in North Carolina. Williams was away on a tour for the FPCC and Lynn suspected the North Carolinian officials of intentionally dawdling on his request. He asked Mabel Williams on February 28, 1961, to investigate and ship the court papers to him if she was able to acquire a copy. She visited the courthouse and gathered copies of the needed rulings from the North Carolina Supreme Court, but noted how the court officials attempted to deter her. She explained, "I am not at all sure these are the complete documents that you asked for because you know how these white people are down here. They said they 'guess' this was a Judgement. Anyway, it looked right to me." In spite of the bureaucratic dithering, she did procure the correct documents and her visit may have pushed the North Carolina legal officials to send copies to Lynn. He received matching documents from the North Carolina Supreme Court soon after her package arrived.[170] Also, during the summer of 1961, the Williamses again prepared to fight the Monroe City School Board in an effort to

[168] Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 229; Amiri Baraka, *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones* (New York: Freundlich Books, 1984), 245.

[169] Robert F. Williams, "While God Lay Sleeping: The Autobiography of Robert F. Williams," unpublished, 1996, 128 quoted in Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 229; Amiri Baraka, interview with Timothy Tyson, 9 April 1998 quoted in Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 229.

[170] Conrad Lynn to "Mable" Williams, 28 February 1961, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Mabel R. Williams to Lynn, 4 March 1961, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Lynn to Mabel Williams, 6 March 1961, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

integrate Monroe's East Elementary School with their children Robert F. Williams, Jr. and John C. Williams. The Williamses had fought the school board since 1958, but the events of August 27, 1961, forced the Williamses' from Monroe before they could resume this fight.[171]

Robert F. Williams's Exit From Monroe, North Carolina

Williams organized on a local, national and international level to counter the violent, segregationist forces in North Carolina. The "Kissing Case" and his expulsion from the NAACP brought outside activists to Monroe—some sought to work with Williams while others thought to countermand his influence. Willie "Mae" Mallory, an example of the former, met Williams in 1959 while he was in New York raising money for Monroe. Mallory went on to advocate for Williams in Harlem. An accomplished civil rights activist, she had participated in an effort to sue the New York Public School System over the segregated and dilapidated schools in Harlem. She also participated in an invasion of the United Nations Conference Building in New York as part of a 1961 protest against the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. Mallory then traveled to Monroe in the summer of 1961 to assist the Williams family during a visit from a group of Freedom Riders in August.[172]

The arrival of the Freedom Riders in August provided the catalyst to Monroe's simmering racial tensions. Lynn and other supporters in New York already were pushing for Williams to relocate his family to the North at the beginning of August. He reminded Williams that the movement had outgrown Monroe and that he now represented something "primarily

[171] Robert F. Williams and Mrs. Robert F. Williams to the Monroe City School Board, 6 June 1961, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Tyson, 98-99.

[172] Tyson, 189-191, 203-204, 237; Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*, (New York: Henry Holt, 2007), 39-41; Komozi Woodard, *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 57-59; Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans*, 218-238.

international." On the same day that the Freedom Riders arrived in Monroe, Lynn asked Williams for an answer about whether he planned to stay in Monroe. Recognizing that his followers in Monroe wanted him to remain, Lynn's letter advised that Williams "not only must think politically but in terms of the immediate needs of your family." Still, the Williamses' remained to greet the Freedom Riders on August 17, 1961.[173] The Reverend Paul Brooks, a civil rights leader affiliated with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and James Forman, soon-to-be executive secretary for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), led the Freedom Riders' expedition to Monroe. Brooks, Forman, and their group of seventeen young demonstrators picketed in downtown Monroe until August 27, 1961, at which time the tensions spilled over into the previously mentioned riot. By 5:00 p.m., the town of Monroe settled in for a fight.[174]

Williams's followers fortified either end of Boyte Street, where Williams and his family lived, while local and state police established blockades on the streets leading into the black neighborhood of Monroe. Groups of African American followers had gathered outside the Williamses' home to await direction when Mabel and C. Bruce Stegall turned onto Boyte Street. A white couple from out of town that was either lost or perilously curious about the recent commotion, the Stegalls found their car surrounded by African Americans hostile to their ill-timed incursion. Williams intervened to break up the crowd and the Stegalls took shelter in his home as tempers cooled. While the Stegalls were present, Williams placed a call to the police station to inquire about the fate of the jailed picketers. The contents of that call are unclear, but the Monroe chief of police, A.A. Mauney, later claimed that Williams threatened to kill the

[173] Lynn to RFW, 1 August 1961, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Lynn to RFW, 17 August 1961, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

[174] Tyson, 268, 262-265, 271-280; Cohen, 170-182.

Stegalls while Williams countered that Mauney threatened to have Williams lynched. The Stegalls left the Williamses' home without any confrontation after a few hours. By this time, though, Williams had received phone calls from around Union County describing an invasion of the surrounding area by everything from caravans of KKK night riders to the National Guard. As intermittent gunfire rang throughout Monroe, Williams and his closest followers decided that the Williamses' exit was the only option to avoid an armed showdown. The Williamses and a few followers then slipped past the police cordons and drove north.[175]

On the drive to New York, reports broadcast on the radio informed the travelers that the search for Williams had extended beyond North Carolina. On August 28, 1961, the family learned, to their surprise, that Williams faced kidnapping charges for the incident with the Stegalls. The FBI soon joined the hunt for Williams alleging that he had crossed state lines to avoid indictment for kidnapping. The attention of the FBI altered the Williamses' plans. They had originally intended to stay in New York for a few weeks and return to Monroe once tensions had eased. Since the authorities were searching for a family, a plan formed to smuggle Robert and Mabel Williams into Canada while their two children remained behind in New York with a friend. Another friend took to the streets of Harlem to raise money for the Williamses' journey collecting around $400 in donations after a few hours. The Williamses stayed in a Toronto safehouse for several weeks until the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) announced its intentions to search for Williams in Canada upon the request of the U.S. Department of Justice. He then traveled to Montreal while Mabel Williams remained in Toronto. In Montreal, Williams made plans to journey to Cuba once he learned the government of Cuba would shelter him.[176]

[175] Tyson, 271-283; Frazier, 119-127; Cohen, 178-187; Williams, *Negroes With Guns*, 46-53.

[176] RFW to Constance Lever, 19 December 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence October-December 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Tyson, 283-285; Frazier, *The East Is Black*, 126-127; Cohen, 188-199.

Different versions of the above events have emerged since the Williamses' flight to Cuba, yet Robert F. Williams's entrance into Cuba remains the most secretive part of his journey. Across four public accounts of the trip, different methods have surfaced. In an interview on August 22, 1970, Williams refused to provide any details of the trip. In two other accounts, including Williams's testimony before a subcommittee of the U.S. Senate in February of 1970, Williams claimed to have traveled across Canada to Vancouver, then followed the western coast of the United States to Mexico where he arranged a flight to Cuba. Those two stories differ, though, on Williams's means of transportation. Describing the trip in an interview to his biographer Robert Carl Cohen in 1968, Williams claimed to have boarded a plane in Seattle bound for San Diego, crossed over into Tijuana, Mexico, and then did not specify how he reached Havana, Cuba, from Tijuana. Before the U.S. Senate, Williams declared that he traveled mainly by bus through the United States. He maintained that he crossed the border at Tijuana, but further specified that he then traveled to Mexico City where he flew to Havana on Cubana Airlines.[177] With access to Williams's unpublished autobiography, Timothy Tyson, in *Radio Free Dixie*, provided another variation of the story that is probably the most accurate and least complex—Williams traveled to Gander International Airport in Newfoundland and traded places with an Afro-Cuban about to board a flight to Cuba.[178]

Robert F. Williams had a number of reasons for obfuscating the details of his trip to Cuba. In his 1968 interviews with Cohen, Williams was preparing for his return to the United States and viewed Cohen's project as a means to help garner support for his cause. The two

[177] Robert F. Williams, interview by Thomas Mosby, 33, 173-179, August 22, 1970 (second interview), Transcript, Ralphe J. Bunche Oral History Collection, RJB 588, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.; Cohen, 199-200; U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, *Testimony of Robert F. Williams: Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary* pt. 1, 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 108.

[178] Tyson, 285; Robert F. Williams, "While God Lay Sleeping: The Autobiography of Robert F. Williams," unpublished, 1996, 185-187 quoted In Tyson, 285.

interviews in 1970 occurred after Williams came home to the United States and was engaged in a drawn-out extradition battle with the state of North Carolina. This certainly factored into his testimony before the Senate. Williams's unpublished autobiography has perhaps the only version of events not crafted under duress. Williams partially explained his rationale for these revisions in his 1970 interview with the Civil Rights Documentation Project when he refused to provide details of the trip. He stated, "I'm the only one who knows it and the reason I don't want to disclose it because this makes it easy for the man to pick people off." Of note is that this interview occurred roughly a week after the famed activist and scholar Angela Y. Davis was indicted for her alleged role in the death of Judge Harold Haley. For this accusation, Davis received a spot on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted Fugitive List. Williams mentioned Davis by name as he described his reticence to discuss his methods of escape.[179]

Williams honed his survival skills during the following eight years while in the precarious position of exile. Before leaving the United States, Robert and Mabel Williams created a large, domestic support network throughout North America, but Monroe had remained their base and home because of the strong, local connections built through years of collective activism. The Williamses' network prior to 1961 quickly expanded because Robert carefully managed his cause. He never allowed a political party line to trump his message and, at the same time, would accept aid from any political party or group that offered help in good faith. In a letter, a friend credited Williams's philosophy to the fact that African Americans faced enough challenges that they "had to be free to accept whatever help would come." The Williamses' expatriacy put this policy to the test. Even though the Williamses maintained many followers while abroad and likely gained more supporters on the international scene, they lacked the same

[179] U.S. Senate, "Testimony of Robert F. Williams," pt. 1, 16 February 1970, 23; Robert F. Williams, interview by Mosby, 175.

foundation they had constructed in Monroe. Their followers were diffused across the globe. For this reason, the Williamses continued their policy of not turning away any well-intentioned offers of support. A fellow expatriate termed it as, "We must never turn our backs on anyone without absolutely good cause….Living abroad as we do, we must develop every refinement of diplomacy in order to serve our cause and to survive in the midst of the great contradictions that rend the international arena." The Monroe kidnapping case strained this commitment.[180]

Monroe Defense Committee or the Committee to Aid the Monroe Defendants?, 1961-1964

The authorities in Monroe remained unaware of Williams's exit until the afternoon of August 28, 1961, when they raided the Williamses home. State and local police found an empty home and recovered no weapons. With the assistance of the FBI, they spread their search to include his neighbors and found guns squirreled away throughout Boyte Street including a case of dynamite buried beneath the Williamses' doghouse.[181] The Monroe Police Department and North Carolina State Highway Patrol indicted Williams on kidnapping charges and, in his absence, spread the charges of accessory to kidnapping to four other individuals: Mae Mallory, Harold Reape, Richard Crowder, and John Lowry. Reape and Crowder were Monroe youths who had shown leadership among the more active young locals, though Crowder was not a supporter of Williams. A white New Yorker, Lowry arrived in Monroe with the Freedom Riders and expressed his intent to continue the picketing after Williams's departure. Mallory exited Monroe

[180] Julian Mayfield to Mrs. Johnson, 23 September 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Tyson, 114-115; Richard Gibson to RFW, 8 September 1967, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September 1967," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[181] An FBI document from February 1, 1963, revealed that Williams never faced federal charges for the weapons and explosives found on or near his property because Williams faced a kidnapping charge in North Carolina state court. The U.S. Attorney's office recommended that they decline prosecution of the National Firearms Act since the charge stemmed from the kidnapping charge and was unlikely to ever appear before a U.S. District Court. See *FBI Files of Robert F. Williams*, Recommendations from U.S. Attorney, Asheville, 1 February 1963, Box 8, Folder "Section 7 – 1963", RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

on night of the 27th, possibly with the Williams family, and traveled to Cleveland. When she was located, North Carolina initiated an effort to have her extradited.[182]

The events of August 27 also led to a separate but related indictment. Albert Rorie, 17 years old, was charged with shooting a police officer around 4:30 PM as the riot in downtown Monroe escalated. Rorie had driven toward the downtown area with two other young African American men who were armed. They exited the car within walking distance of the picket and 2 to 4 Monroe police officers stopped the youths. A firefight started between the two groups and, according to police testimony, Rorie shot an Officer J.W. Rushing in the thigh. Conrad Lynn represented Rorie and attacked Rushing's testimony on two fronts. First, the prosecution provided no evidence of the officer's wound. Second, another officer searched Rorie at the scene, found no weapon, and released him. The jury convicted Rorie anyway.[183] In September of 1961, two organizations formed to support the Monroe defendants: the Monroe Defense Committee and the Committee to Aid the Monroe Defendants.

The next three years witnessed a bitter fight between the MDC and CAMD. The organizations shared a goal but allowed ideological and personal differences to undermine any attempt at coordination. Williams watched the legal developments for the Monroe defendants closely with a simple motive: the outcome for the four defendants determined whether he could return to the United States as a free man since the decision in these trials would likely extend to his own indictment. Using letters between Williams and his associates, I recount the events

[182] United Press International, "Integrationists 'Passive' Resistance Plan Explodes," *Chicago Defender (Daily, 1956-1975)*, 29 August 1961, *Black Studies Center*, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bsc:&rft_dat=xri:bsc:rec:newspaper:HNP_68423_19610829_0029; Claude Sitton, "Leader of Carolina Pickets Flees Home—Freedom Riders in Monroe Vow to Continue Fight on Segregation," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, 29 August 1961, Proquest New York Times (115417193); Cohen, 190-191; Tyson, 285.

[183] "Monroe, North Carolina: The Setting", Legal Brief, Box 31, Folder "Rorie Appeal," Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; "Testimony of Albert Rorie," Box 31, Folder "Rorie Appeal," Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

leading to the acrimony between the two organizations. This narrative provides crucial insight into Williams's experience abroad for two reasons.

First, the events surrounding these trials reveal Williams's interactions with the U.S. government and media. Even in his absence, the federal government and North Carolinian authorities remained hostile to Williams and his supporters. The inflation of the Stegall incident to kidnapping charges for Mallory, Crowder, Reape, and Lowry certainly appeared punitive. In addition, FBI agents visited many of Williams's associates in Monroe and New York pressing them to testify against his tactics or reveal his whereabouts. The Royal Mounted Canadian Police raided one of Robert and Mabel's former safe houses and informed the residents, "We'll send him back to the States in a pinebox." The harassment reached such an extent that Williams held a press conference near the end of September 1961 to announce his presence in Cuba. He then formally requested asylum in Cuba on October 2. Still the harassment continued. In one case, the FBI, months after Williams's announcement from Cuba, appeared at the funeral parlor hosting the wake of Williams's aunt. The FBI questioned the mortician about Williams's whereabouts and left a wanted poster of Williams on his aunt's casket. As the two committees battled and the court dates were continually delayed, the pressure from the Monroe kidnapping case helped hold the Williamses' in exile.[184]

[184] Lynn to RFW, 3 February 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-February 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Lynn, 27 February 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-June 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Dr. Albert Perry to RFW, 21 October 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence October-December 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; William Worthy to RFW, 29 September 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; William Worthy, "The f.b.i. in peace and cold war," *The Realist* no. 31 (February 1962), 2 http://www.ep.tc/realist/31/index.html also in Tyson, 284; "Believe Cuba is Harboring U.S. Fugitive: May Portray Him as Political Martyr," *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*, 30 September 1961, Proquest Historical Newspapers (183032917); RFW to Minister of Foreign Relations Cuba, 2 October 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence October-December 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; William Worthy, "A Visit from the FBI," *The Realist* no. 32 (March 1962), 10; RFW to John F. Kennedy, undated, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence Undated (1)," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

An examination of the fight between the MDC and CAMD also provides an insight into the political infighting occurring within the domestic activist community. If Williams returned to the United States to face criminal charges, he would require a unified organization supporting him. Instead, the committees bitterly opposed each other and vied for Williams's public endorsement. The ideological struggle between the two committees also revises the historiographical argument Timothy Tyson fashioned around Williams: "'the civil rights movement' and 'the Black Power movement' emerged from the same soil, confronted the same predicaments, and reflected the same quest for African American freedom."[185] The core of Tyson's contention rested on Williams's use of civil rights tactics in Monroe, such as sit-ins, mixed with an ideology that more resembled the Black Power movement's emphasis on self-determination. For Tyson, Williams embodied both movements and served as a connector between the two. This argument arose from a specific historiographical moment—linking civil rights and Black Power activists challenged the declension narrative attached to the Black Power movement after decades of political misrepresentation. Yet, this trend extended too far with scholars Sundiata Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang critiquing the "long" movement framework because it "collapses periodization schemas, erases conceptual differences between waves of the [Black Liberation Movement], and blurs regional distinctions in the African American experience."[186]

The civil rights and Black Power movements certainly emerged from the black radical tradition, but Williams is an inappropriate vehicle for the comparison. Though not the only factor, Williams provided a wedge, rather than a bridge, between civil rights tactics and the

[185] Tyson, 3.

[186] Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies," *The Journal of African American History* 92 (Spring, 2007) No. 2: 265, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20064183.

demands of Black Power advocates. The fight that developed between the MDC and CAMD offers a microcosm of these competing ideological undercurrents as tactics shifted in the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement. The MDC maintained a more black nationalist stance by refusing to operate under the auspices of any established political party while the organizers of CAMD worked closely with the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).[187]

The Formation of the Two Committees, 1961

The MDC and CAMD formed in New York during September of 1961 with the express purpose of aiding the Monroe defendants by establishing and funding their legal defense as well as raising money for bail. CAMD first met on September 7, 1961, and named Williams's longtime ally and partner in Monroe, Dr. Albert Perry, as the chairman.[188] The driving force behind CAMD, though, was its white secretary Berta Green, an employee of the SWP who worked fulltime to support CAMD. The involvement of the SWP and Green was not new—they had assisted Williams and Perry during the 1958 "Kissing Case." The SWP backing CAMD proved essential to its spread around the country as strong chapters quickly developed in Los Angeles and Detroit. Calvin Hicks announced the formation of the MDC on September 20, 1961, and posited its status as "the only committee with a broad enough base and a strictly non-sectarian position that can rally the necessary support for the Monroe defendants." The

[187] Harold Cruse provided comments on this fight in his *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1968). Cruse used this fight to discuss the interactions occurring amongst "interracialism," black nationalism, leftist political ideology, and Harlem intellectuals. Cruse described the entire endeavor as "a graphic lesson in the frustrating politics of interracialism" as the group of burgeoning nationalists in the MDC learned they needed to fund their own organizations. For Cruse, it also served as an object lesson in how white Marxists co-opt African American issues for their own ends. See Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: Morrow, 1968), 368-370, 354-402.

[188] There is dispute over whether the MDC or CAMD formed first as both groups claimed to be the original. I view CAMD's assertion as the more probable as the organization called on Williams's lawyer, Lynn, and a Monroe local, Perry, who worked closely with Williams. An internal summary of CAMD activities also states they formed on September 7, 1961, thirteen days before the MDC released a press statement on 9/20/61 that announced their formation. However, it is also credible that the MDC began its operations prior to publicly announcing its formation.

announcement listed an impressive collection of sponsors including James Baldwin, John Henrik Clarke, Richard Gibson, Amiri Baraka, Julian Mayfield, Bayard Rustin, Daniel H. Watts, Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis, Frank Moore, and Maya Angelou. Though the flyer declared that no ideological consensus existed among the sponsors, figures like Clarke, Angelou, Gibson, and Watts shared a commitment to black nationalism that distressed traditional civil rights groups such as the NAACP. Calvin Hicks acted as the executive secretary of the MDC. As a journalist for the *New York Age*, he had gained prominence in New York's activist circles over the course of 1961. Along with Mae Mallory, he participated in the February demonstrations at the United Nations and the photograph of his arrest appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*. After Mae Mallory's capture in Cleveland, Ohio, in October of 1961, a member of the Workers World Party in New York traveled to Cleveland and formed a strong satellite branch of the MDC there to better organize Mae Mallory's defense.[189]

The committees started in direct competition without even an initial phase of cooperation. In a letter to Hicks on September 30, 1961, Dr. Perry set out the four major ideological and practical differences between the two groups which had already appeared after each had existed for less than two weeks. The racial makeup of the committees created the first and main point of contention. The organizers of the MDC originally pushed for a committee solely supported by the black community before reducing this stipulation to only allowing African Americans to serve on the executive board. With Berta Green as its secretary, CAMD nominally supported an

[189] Dr. Albert Perry to Calvin Hicks, 30 September 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Tyson, 112-115; Calvin Hicks, 20 September 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Joseph, 41-42; Yie Foong, "Frame up in Monroe: The Mae Mallory Story," Order No. 1485014 (Master's Thesis, Sarah Lawrence College, 2010), *Proquest Dissertation Services*, 44; U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *FBI Investigation File on Communist Infiltration of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference*, 100-438794, Section 24, Internal report on activities of Martin Luther King Jr. in Cleveland, 29 July 1965, *Archives Unbound*, http://go.galegroup.com.proxy2.cl.msu.edu/gdsc/i.do?&id=GALE%7CSC5100056040&v=2.1&u=msu_main&it=r&p=GDSC&sw=w&viewtype=Manuscript.

interracial leadership. Perry urged Hicks to reconsider this position as the MDC had done earlier "regarding the sponsors' list, namely that whites should not arbitrarily be barred, to the composition of the executive committee" since then "the biggest issue dividing us would be solved." The second difference, according to Perry, existed over the MDC's wish to downplay the presence and role of the Freedom Riders in Monroe. Since one of the defendants was a Freedom Rider, Perry found this request ludicrous and stated that their absence from the narrative distorted the truth of what happened in Monroe. He also pushed to include the Freedom Riders in the publicity campaign since their fame helped bolster support for both committees.

The third issue concerned terminology. The MDC wanted all press announcements and statements to avoid the word "Negro" and instead use "Afro-American." Perry pointed to a practical problem in mandating "that the word Negro be banned from use in writing or speaking" by either committee. This policy would invalidate many of the statements gathered by the committees since so many people still used the term "Negro." The last area of disagreement arose over the question of whether or not the fulltime staff of the committees should draw a salary. The MDC argued for a paid staff while Perry, representing CAMD, argued that all money should be put towards the defendants and families in Monroe. Perry viewed this stipulation as a direct attack on Berta Green since she operated as a volunteer for CAMD. The objections to Green derived from her close associations with the SWP and, possibly, her being white. Conversely, Perry perhaps included this issue over the pay for secretaries as a cutting remark directed at Hicks who, as the secretary of the MDC, would draw a salary.[190]

The first three disagreements represented a fundamentally different organizational ethos. The MDC confirmed their commitment to self-determination and self-definition through their

[190] Dr. Albert Perry to Calvin Hicks, 30 September 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

efforts to craft an all-African American executive board, reject the integrationist Freedom Riders, and mandate the use of "Afro-American." Even more, the MDC understood the court battle as a chance to raise awareness about the black freedom struggle through the formation of a larger political movement. CAMD, on the other hand, focused their efforts on securing and sustaining the legal defense for the defendants. On a smaller scale, the fight between CAMD and the MDC reflected the ideological fissures occurring between the legalistic approach of organizations like the NAACP and the political agitation used by groups like SNCC.

Beyond the philosophical differences in methods, members of the MDC and CAMD also engaged in personal attacks and internecine sniping within the first week of the groups' coexistence. On September 23, Julian Mayfield, a novelist and activist who worked with Williams in Monroe and according to some accounts escaped on August 27 in the same car as the Williams family, wrote to Ethel Azalea Johnson, one of Williams's staunchest supporters and a driving force behind the Williamses' newsletter, *The Crusader*. He advised Johnson to accept help from both committees since CAMD did not have the resources to support the Monroe community on its own. On September 25, the civil rights activist Paul Dietrich asked that his name be removed from the public list of CAMD sponsors. Dietrich cited a host of reasons for his withdrawal: CAMD's affiliation with a "leftist" political party could divert attention away from the needs of Monroe; the distribution of propaganda by CAMD attempting to categorize the MDC as a wholly black nationalist organization; and that the existence of two committees manufactured "artificial misunderstandings concerning legal representation." Both organizations quickly turned to Williams for an endorsement. The MDC seemed particularly eager to have Williams's support, even asking him to become the honorary chair of the MDC. The attacks between the two organizations developed into personal insults as well. One such account arose

from an unidentified caretaker of the Williamses' children, still separated from Robert and Mabel in September 1961. This person reported that Conrad Lynn functioned as an operative of the SWP, accused him of sowing dissent between the committees, and that he appeared to be "a pretty sick person emotionally."[191] Compromise between the two committees remained a distant prospect while the citizens of Monroe continued to suffer.

Several months after the August 27 riot, the authorities in Monroe blatantly invented an indictment against JayVan Covington. The 19-year-old Covington had participated in the demonstrations throughout the summer of 1961 as a member of the Monroe Non-Violent Action Committee. In March of 1962, he was arrested and held for twenty days without access to his attorney or family. On the twentieth day of his imprisonment, a guard named J.B. Eller shot Covington who supposedly had attempted to escape his illegal incarceration. The Monroe police department then announced Covington "was charged with breaking and entering, conspiracy to break and enter, larceny, resisting arrest and trying to escape." A Union County judge sentenced him with 7 to 10 years. According to Conrad Lynn, the African American community of Monroe widely assumed that Covington's isolation was an attempt to have him testify against Mallory, Crowder, Reape, and Lowry. These allegations had precedence since Howard Stack, a prisoner in Monroe's jail, offered testimony to Conrad Lynn about the conditions in the jailhouse in early October 1961. Stack claimed that a Monroe police officer offered him a deal—to lessen the charges against him if Stack agreed to assault Richard Griswold, one of the Freedom Riders also in the jail. He proceeded to savagely beat Griswold, but Stack received no benefit and his

[191] Julian Mayfield to Azalea Johnson, 23 September 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Paul Dietrich to Conrad Lynn, 25 September 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Ana Livia Mayfield and Calvin Hicks to RFW, undated, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence Undated (3)," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Gerald Quinn to RFW, 14 October 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence October-December 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Unknown to RFW and Mabel Robinson Williams, 30 September 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

sentence was never reduced. Stack then approached CAMD with his statement. Lynn contacted the Department of Justice over these matters, but, after an investigation, they found no reason to prosecute the police department of Monroe.[192]

Meanwhile, persecution and racial violence escalated against African American citizens in the area. These incidents included the arrest and sentencing of a young African American man for 30 years on the charge of rape even after his alleged white victim provided testimony that he was innocent; the murder of another young African American male by a white male assailant who was released on a $2,000 bond after claiming he caught the young man "peeping"; and, after jumping into the yard of a white home to avoid a reckless driver, another African American man was shot in the hip, charged as a "peeping tom" by the local authorities, and then sentenced to serve two to five years in a penitentiary. The MDC and CAMD tried to alleviate these conditions—the latter group in particular proved proficient at raising funds for bail and finding attorneys for the young men—but factional struggles between the organizations, at times, overshadowed the day-to-day conditions in Monroe.[193]

Conflicting Legal Strategies, Internal Divisions, and the New York MDC's Collapse, 1962

The MDC and CAMD also bickered over the direction of the legal strategy for the Monroe Defendants. Paul Dietrich offered an insightful critique when he posited that the presence of two groups would create errors surrounding the legal representation of the Monroe defendants. Working with CAMD, Conrad Lynn represented Richard Crowder and Harold Reape

[192] "CAMD Secures Release on $10,000 Bail of Another Monroe Defendant", CAMD, 31 October 1962, Lynn Papers; "Monroe, North Carolina: The Setting", Legal Brief, Lynn Papers; Lynn to Robert F. Kennedy, 5 October 1961, Box 38, Folder 279 "Misc. Unfiled Corresp., 1954-1971", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Lynn to Robert F. Kennedy, 6 April 1962, Box 38, Folder 279 "Misc. Unfiled Corresp., 1954-1971", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; J. Edgar Hoover to Lynn, 30 August 1963, Box 16, Folder 107 "Freedom Now – Black Political Party organized by Lynn – Correspondence and Printed Material, 1961-64", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

[193] "Monroe, North Carolina: The Setting", Legal Brief, Lynn Papers; Detroit CAMD, "What Really Happened in Monroe, North Carolina," Undated, Box 3, Folder "Papers concerning Monroe, North Carolina 'Kidnapping'", RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

as well as Albert Rorie and JayVan Covington. Lynn also planned to represent Mallory during her extradition process from Ohio. The SCLC provided John Lowry with a lawyer, William Kunstler, who planned to avoid the issues raised by the civil rights movement during the trial. The day after the FBI captured Mae Mallory in Cleveland, Lynn viewed the distribution of legal representation as an indication of the MDC's ineffectiveness—"She is one of the most militant members of Hicks' group. Yet, we have to furnish the lawyer for her." However, unease existed in both committees since Mallory later confided in Williams, "I can't and don't trust Conrad."[194] The MDC then obtained the services of Len W. Holt to represent Mallory. Similar to Lynn, Holt possessed an extensive history with civil rights cases and causes and Lynn expressed enthusiasm over their collaboration. On October 21, 1961, Holt hit the ground running by attempting to have the initial hearing for the case delayed from its original date of October 30. He did not consult Lynn or Kunstler prior to this action and his unilateral move further split the already fractured group.[195]

Lynn immediately conveyed his annoyance to Holt because it interfered with his plans for the trial. On the other hand, Kunstler remained upset that, earlier, Holt had filed as attorney of record for John Lowry. To counteract such steps in the future, Lynn informed Superior Court Judge A.H. Gwyn that Holt had no authority over Crowder and Reape—the family of the defendants had retained the services of Lynn, not those of Holt. By October 30, Holt had withdrawn his services from the initial hearings for the Monroe defendants. Williams received a letter from Lynn explaining the situation. Holt was unable to appear for the October 30 date after

[194] George Weissman to RFW, 30 September 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence October-December 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to Albert Perry, 13 October 1961, Box 38, Folder 279 "Misc. Unfiled Corresp., 1954-1971", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Mae Mallory to RFW, 16 August 1962, Box 3, Folder "Corr., 1962-1965 and undated", RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[195] Lynn to Len W. Holt, 18 October 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence October-December 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Holt to Judge A.H. Gwyn, 21 October 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence October-December 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

all parties involved rejected his petition to move the trial date. At this time, Lynn refused to work with Holt until the two defense committees merged and they were able to coordinate on a legal strategy. Holt expressed a similar opinion a few months later when he informed Lynn, "I am unable to get involved in the internecine struggle of the Committees. It is hoped the better judgement of the leaders of both Committees will prevail." The disputes continued when Lynn complained about a legal strategy proposed by the MDC that, according to his letter to Williams, involved an unspecified "secret turnover by a party." Lynn refused to cooperate with this strategy and deemed it damaging to his clients. The competition between the MDC and CAMD upset Lynn and he complained, "So much time is taken up on this controversy that I find it difficult to carry on my normal practice." Rather than coordinating, the two committees continued to block each other.[196]

Preparation for the trial proceeded despite the bickering of the committees. CAMD successfully lobbied the State Department and the North Carolina court system to receive permission to gather testimony from Robert and Mabel Williams in Cuba. Though reluctant to take the trip, Lynn recognized the importance of the Williamses' statements and agreed to visit Cuba in early February 1962. By this time, the United States and Cuba had ceased diplomatic relations, but Lynn managed to obtain a flight from Miami to Havana. Lynn awoke the morning

[196] Lynn to Holt, 23 October 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence October-December 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to Judge A.H. Gwyn, 23 October 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence October-December 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 10 November 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence October-December 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Holt to Lynn c.c. Calvin Hicks, 1 February 1962, Box 10, Folder 70 "State vs. Crowder, N. Carolina Kidnapping Case, 1961-62", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU. An odd occurrence within these events is that Williams attempted to have Holt and his law partners invited to Cuba by the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) on 19 December, 1961. Throughout the events detailed, Williams remained in touch with Lynn and his support did not appear to waver beyond some questions over Berta Green's involvement and the strategy of the case. It is possible Williams sought to explore other legal options with Holt. In the above letter to Williams from Lynn, Lynn mentions that Holt and Leonard Boudin had a plan for the case. Through a long legal career, Boudin had articulated a message on the right to travel for U.S. citizens particularly during his defense of Paul Robeson. Williams perhaps had an interest in working with Boudin and Holt. See RFW to ICAP, 19 December 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence October-December 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

after arriving in Miami to two members of the FBI knocking on his hotel room door. They informed him that they already had searched his luggage and now planned to search his personal briefcase. Lynn acquiesced and the two agents found an unlabeled vinyl record—an unnamed mutual friend of Williams and Lynn had asked him to deliver the recording to Williams in Cuba. The representatives of the FBI informed Lynn that he would be barred from travel to Cuba unless the agents listened to the record. Lynn, without much recourse, grudgingly accepted their terms. They traveled to a music store, listened to part of what turned out to be a blues album, and the agents, embarrassed, turned off the record player before it finished. Now unimpeded by the FBI, Lynn traveled to Cuba for five days. He gathered the Williamses' testimony, attended political events as a guest of the Cuban government, and met with a few other Americans in Cuba at the time. As Lynn prepared to return home, Cuban officials warned Lynn against traveling directly back to the United States because his entrance could be flagged as an illegal entry—the cessation of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States meant that the U.S. State Department might not recognize Lynn's travel documents from Cuba as legitimate.[197] These officials arranged for Lynn to travel to Gander, Newfoundland, in order to receive a "clean" travel document and then reenter the United States. However, a Canadian official met Lynn at Gander International Airport and was tasked with confiscating Lynn's passport under the orders of the U.S. government. Lynn threatened legal action and contacted Leonard Boudin, the foremost attorney on passport restrictions in the United States. The U.S. and Canadian officials backed

[197] A week before, Lynn's ally and friend William Worthy, a well-known African American journalist, was arrested and jailed for entering Miami from Cuba. Though Worthy had not traveled with U.S. authorization, his case demonstrated the legal ramifications of reentering the United States without valid paperwork. I discuss Worthy's case more in-depth in Chapter 3.

down though HUAC summoned Lynn to testify on his travel to Cuba during the following year.[198]

The battle between the two committees caused confusion and consternation amongst people who sought to help the Monroe defendants throughout the winter and spring of 1962. Patrons offering financial support were unsure which committee deserved backing. Williams still received requests from both organizations asking for his endorsement. On February 27, 1962, Williams clarified his position to Lynn in a letter—Berta Green's prominence in CAMD created some obstacles among the white American expatriates in Cuba due to her membership in the SWP. Fidel Castro recently had declared himself a "Marxist-Leninist" and, as the United States imposed increasing sanctions on Cuba throughout the early 1960s, white members of Communist Party United States of American had traveled to Cuba to assist El Partido Comunista de Cuba (the Cuban Communist Party). This group objected to the SWP since it followed the philosophy of Leon Trotsky as opposed to the CPUSA-endorsed Marxist-Leninist position. Yet, Williams reiterated his distaste for partisan politics. He only wanted two outcomes from the Monroe kidnapping case: to be able to return to the United States a free man and for the other defendants to share in that same freedom. To assist in this goal, Williams publicized the case through his *The Crusader-In-Exile* newsletter, his *Radio Free Dixie* radio program, and reaching out to world leaders and congressmen in the United States.[199]

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[198] Lynn to Albert Perry, 30 January 1962, Box 10, Folder 70 "State vs. Crowder, N. Carolina Kidnapping Case, 1961-62", HGARC-BU; Lynn to James A Dickerson, 11 February 1962, Box 10, Folder 70 "State vs. Crowder, N. Carolina Kidnapping Case, 1961-62", HGARC-BU; Conrad Lynn, *There Is A Fountain: The Autobiography of a Civil Rights Lawyer* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1979), 172-176; Lynn to RFW, 11 February 1962, Box 10, Folder 70 "State vs. Crowder, N. Carolina Kidnapping Case, 1961-62", HGARC-BU.

[199] John Boardman to Azalea Johnson, 20 December 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence October-December 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Richard Gibson to RFW, 25 January 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Hicks to RFW, 16 February 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Lynn, 27 February 62, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Cohen, 206-207; RFW to President Achmed Surkano, Undated, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence Undated (1)," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Frank

The two committees nearly merged in March of 1962. Calvin Hicks stated his openness to the notion, but, according to Lynn, had taken no actions towards accomplishing this goal. Berta Green's continued presence in CAMD may have contributed to this delay. In a previous letter, Williams described a pamphlet he received that included a picture of Green with two of the Monroe defendants, Harold Reape and Richard Crowder. Lynn expressed unease since no group picture existed and he suspected foul play in the form of other organizations trying to inflate Green's role. Recognizing the controversy her presence created, Green offered to step down from the secretary position of CAMD, but Lynn advised against this action—Green should only bow out of the committee if and when the MDC joined CAMD. [200]

Attempts at a merger faded in the next month when Calvin Hicks was expelled from the MDC for mislaying group funds. On April 16, 1962, The On Guard Committee for Freedom announced the suspension of Hicks and two other former officers from the organization after Hicks and the others attempted to use organizational funds to bring their wives on a political trip to the World Youth Festival in Helsinki, Finland. Two days prior to the On Guard announcement, Hicks was removed from the executive secretary position of the MDC for his failure to explain discrepancies in the organization's budget. Mae Mallory shared her accusations against Hicks to Williams in August. "Calvin was using black nationalism as a guise to cover up so that he could be head of the Committee to steal every dime he could get his hands on. This he

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Kowalski (House of Representatives, D-CN), 8 March 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Robert N.C. Nix (House of Representatives, D-PA), 8 March 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Robert F. Kennedy to Adam C. Powell (House of Representatives, D-NY), 3 April 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM. For more information on Williams's media apparatus, see Frazier, *The East Is Black*; Mislán, "On Writing in Exile"; Mislán, "In the Spirit of '76 Venceremos!"; Bill V. Mullen, "Transnational Correspondence"; Rucker, "Crusader in Exile"; Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*.

[200] Lynn to RFW, 6 March 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 8 March 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

did, plus, play the big shot." Prior to his ouster, Hicks also had faced internal tensions within the MDC. During the previous month, a woman identified as Mrs. Alexander publicly lambasted Hicks and Daniel H. Watts, another supporter of the MDC, for promoting black nationalism while married to white women.[201]

The poet and activist Amiri Baraka summarized this phase of the MDC in *The Autobiography of LeRoi Jones*:

> We set up a committee, the Monroe Defense Committee, to raise money and put out propaganda about the case. We ran into trouble with the Socialist Workers Party, which wanted to have some grip on the group. I was very naive about sectarian left politics and didn't really understand what was going on. All I knew is that the SWP wanted to put a woman named Berta Greene on the MDC…What was so wild was that some of us were talking about how we didn't want white people on the committee but we were all hooked up to white women and the downtown Village society. Such were the contradictions of that period of political organization.[202]

Concerns over interracial partnerships in radical politics did not originate with the MDC or in the 1960s. Historian Erik S. McDuffie uncovered an internal petition within the Harlem Communist Party authored by African American women in 1938 to ban interracial marriages within the CPUSA. They circumvented the national Party and submitted this request to the Communist International in Moscow. Comintern denied the appeal, but the incident exposed the sexual politics and controversies within African American activist circles as well as "the CPUSA's longstanding discomfort with black nationalism."[203] After Hicks' expulsion, the New York-area branch of the MDC faded from view.

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[201] On Guard Committee for Freedom, "For Immediate Release," 16 April 1962, Box 3, Folder "Press Releases (1)", RFW Papers, BHL-UM; William Worthy to RFW, 18 April 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-June 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 14 April 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-June 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Mallory to RFW, 16 August 1962, Box 3, Folder "Correspondence 1962-1965 and Undated", RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 6 March 1962, Box 38, Folder 279 "Misc. Unfiled Corresp., 1954-1971", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

[202] Amiri Baraka, *Autobiography of LeRoi Jones,* 169.

[203] Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom,* 118-122.

CAMD also encountered internal disputes though not to the extent of the MDC. Conrad Lynn contacted Albert Perry, the chairman of CAMD, about coordinating a national conference in late fall of 1962 to set an agenda for the organization and prepare for the coming trial. The other goal of the conference was to reignite the enthusiasm and support from cities such as Detroit, Cleveland, and Boston. Some of this lethargy stemmed from an internal tension within CAMD on whether the committee existed solely to support the Monroe defendants or if it existed as a means to continue the legacy of Williams's confrontational tactics in Monroe. Berta Green and other members of the executive committee viewed the legal defense of Crowder, Reape, and Mallory as the priority for CAMD. Lynn and other members leaned towards the MDC's overall position—the court struggle served as a symbol for the larger political struggle for African American rights.[204]

Financial matters also troubled CAMD. Lynn threatened to resign from the committee in February of 1962 because he had received no payment for his work on the trials and the Committee's failure to provide any reimbursement for his trip to Cuba to obtain the Williamses' testimony. Lynn remained with CAMD and the Monroe defendants and his threat was blatantly an attempt to receive some deserved compensation. As he informed another civil rights organization a year earlier, "Experience has taught me that the staff of 'cause' organizations feel it possible to make a 'sucker' out of me when it measures my devotion to its purposes."[205] But,

[204] Lynn to Albert Perry, Undated 1962, Box 10, Folder 70 "State vs. Crowder, N. Carolina Kidnapping Case, 1961-62", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Dolores Wilson to Lynn, 16 November 1962, Box 38, Folder 279 "Misc. Unfiled Corresp., 1954-1971", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Lynn to Truman Nelson, 2 December 1962, Box 38, Folder 279 "Misc. Unfiled Corresp, 1954-1971", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Lynn to RFW, 2 December 1962, Box 38, Folder 279 "Misc. Unfiled Corresp, 1954-1971", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Berta Green, "Summary Report on CAMD," 1 April 1964, Box 38, Folder 279 "Misc. Unfiled Corresp, 1954-1971", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

[205] Lynn to Albert Perry, 17 February 1962, Box 31, Folder 211 "Rorie Appeal", Lynn Papers, HGARC; Lynn to Edith Tiger, 19 June 1961, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

CAMD did struggle raising money for the cases in 1962. In the spring, two events produced a disappointing level of funds due to mismanagement and confusion between the two committees. The first, featuring the folksinger Pete Seeger, raised $700 dollars, but Lynn described it as a missed opportunity due to the lack of a concerted effort to collect donations. The second hosted speeches from Malcolm X, the director of the Congress of Racial Equality James Farmer, a reporter from the *New York Post* named Murray Kempton, and the African American journalist William Worthy. They raised at least $500 in donations in addition to the admission charge for the estimated 1,000 people who attended the rally.[206]

Walter Haffner, Mae Mallory's attorney in Ohio, wrote to Lynn after the meeting inquiring about the earnings with the false impression that the demonstration had raised funds for Mallory alone. On May 14, 1962, Lynn explained in a letter to Haffner that the assembly represented all of the Monroe defendants and his own frustrations:

> This affair was sponsored by a committee of individuals listed on the leaflet…Since many people did not want to be identified as choosing between the committees, this program was sponsored in this manner. The individual sponsors received the gross proceeds. None have been turned over to our Committee yet.[207]

Lynn further clarified that CAMD paid all the organizing costs for the gathering including renting the hall and compensating Malcolm X for his travel costs from Los Angeles. These amounted to about $727 in fees. Even if the individual sponsors of the event handed over the full proceeds, Lynn expected to eke out barely $200 in profits. This compared poorly to earlier efforts when CAMD had raised enough cash to secure the bail of Crowder, Reape, and Lowry in October of 1961. Crowder's bail alone was $15,000. Lynn closed his letter with a promise to

[206] Lynn to "Folks", 3 May 1962, Box 38, Folder 279 "Misc. Unfiled Corresp., 1954-1971", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

[207] Lynn to Walter Haffner, 14 May 1962, Box 38, Folder 279 "Misc. Unfiled Corresp., 1954-1971", Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

send the MDC and Haffner the "proportionate" funds if CAMD ever received any of the donations from the assembly.

This moment is instructive about the fundamental problems that arose from the existence of two committees. First, outside forces could manipulate the organizations, whether this took the form of sabotaging fundraising efforts or, as will soon be discussed, the FBI's attempts to disrupt their activities. On the other hand, rumors and misrepresentations spread quickly within the activist community with both organizations willing to imagine the worst of their competitor. Likely referring to the above rally, Mae Mallory wrote to Robert F. Williams a few months later that "as far as money is concerned they used my name but keep the money all except $50 they sent my lawyer."[208] If CAMD did receive $200 in net profits from the assembly, $50 would be the "proportionate" amount owed to Mallory as one of the four Monroe defendants facing trial. Mallory and other members of the MDC rightly found it inconceivable that an event featuring national civil rights figures only garnered $50. But, they attributed this shortfall to fraud on the part of CAMD as opposed to mismanagement or exploitation from external organizers. The folding of the New York branch of the MDC failed to settle the dispute between the organizations when the Cleveland branch of the MDC became the base of operations for the committee. They backed Mae Mallory in Ohio. CAMD remained focused on Crowder and Reape.

Split Defendants, State Surveillance, and Animosity, 1962-1963

The origins for this split in support arose from Mae Mallory's route to escape Monroe on August 27, 1961. Richard Crowder, Harold Reape, and John Lowry were each apprehended in Monroe in the days following the incident whereas the FBI arrested Mallory in Cleveland, Ohio,

[208] Mallory to RFW, 11 September 1962, Box 3, Folder "Correspondence, 1962-1965 and undated", RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

on October 12, 1961, a month and a half after the incident with the Stegalls. North Carolina then sought to extradite Mallory from Ohio while Mallory's legal team lobbied state and federal courts to halt her transfer. Originally released on bail, the authorities in Ohio arrested her in March of 1962 while they arranged for her return to Monroe. Ohio law mandated that defendants in extradition cases could not be freed on bail for sentences of life imprisonment or the death penalty. Thus, Mallory was remanded to the Cuyahoga County Jail for the duration of her legal battle. With Mallory detained in Ohio, the authorities in North Carolina did not advance the Crowder, Reape, and Lowry cases as they attempted to have all four defendants present for the trial. Members of the Cleveland MDC rallied around Mallory's cause with the primary goal of halting extradition. Thus, the MDC branch in New York faltered in April with the ouster of Hicks just as the Mallory case intensified during the same spring.[209]

The Cleveland branch of the MDC flocked to Mallory's aid and took over her defense with Len Holt leading her legal team. Mallory refused the aid of Conrad Lynn and wrote to Robert F. Williams on August 16, 1962, explaining her concerns about Lynn and CAMD—she blamed Lynn for her capture by the FBI. While Mallory was in hiding, Lynn prepared the legal defense for the Monroe Defendants already in custody. He approached Mallory's mother in New York and convinced her to provide a way to contact Mae. Then, he wrote Mallory a letter informing her of a plan to have her transported to New York if she were to give herself up to the authorities. New York posed a safer option for her than the Monroe jail where, as mentioned

[209] Foong, "Frame up in Monroe," 40; "King aids Mallory in extradition fight," *The Afro-American*, 9 December 1961, Google News, https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=M9cmAAAAIBAJ&sjid=xgIGAAAAIBAJ&pg=2746%2C4834173; United Press International, "Racial Victim Fighting Extradiction Gets Bail," *Chicago Defender (Daily, 1956-1975)*, 25 February 1963, *Black Studies Center*, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bsc:&rft_dat=xri:bsc:ft:newspaper:HNP_68423_19630225_0045; "Lawyer Presses Fight to Free Mae Mallory," *Chicago Defender (Daily, 1956-1975)*, 21 August 1962, *Black Studies Center*, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bsc:&rft_dat=xri:bsc:rec:newspaper:HNP_68423_19620821_0012.

earlier, one activist was severely beaten and another was shot under suspicious circumstances. This letter scared Mallory's cousin in Cleveland, who handled her mail, and the cousin's husband reached out to the FBI. The Bureau then captured Mallory outside her cousin's home. She closed her commentary on Lynn by telling Williams that she was not asking him to choose between them since "I know Conrad, as an attorney is much more important to you, than I am as an ordinary revolutionary….He is free and a lawyer, I am in jail and just a worker."[210] Despite this claim, she provided the foundation for the MDC's activism.

Mallory's reputation within the community of civil rights activists offers a perspective on how she grappled with the gendered expectations within the movement. Men within her activist network highlighted her intransigence. In February of 1962, the journalist William Worthy pointed to her "unpredictable" character and, echoing the NAACP's complaint against Williams in 1960, reported an acquaintance's summary of the MDC as "not 'a defense committee but a political group grinding out its line whether it applies to the realities of the situation or not.'" In October of 1962, Mallory playfully acknowledged to Mabel Robinson Williams her awareness that Robert tolerated as he would an "irresponsible child."[211] In his autobiography, Conrad Lynn presented a lengthy description of Mallory:

> She is a very physical woman, a block of granite. Once we were together on a demonstration at the United Nations when the police waded in swinging clubs. She took two policemen and cracked their heads together and knocked them unconscious. I represented her against the assault charge and we won. The police were too embarrassed to admit what a woman had done to them, and their case fell apart.[212]

[210] Mallory to RFW, 16 August 1962, Box 3, Folder "Correspondence 1962-1965 and undated", RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Mallory to RFW, 11 September 1962, Box 3, Folder "Correspondence 1962-1965 and undated", RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[211] William Worthy to RFW, 27 February 1962, Box 7, Folder "Correspondence Anne Olson November 1961-October 1966", RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Mallory to Mabel Robinson Williams, 11 October 1962, Box 3, Folder "Correspondence 1962-1965 and undated", RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[212] Lynn, *There is a Fountain*, 163.

Her appearance, her demeanor, and her politics defied the expectations of men within the civil rights movement. Nor does Mallory fit within sociologist Belinda Robnett's description of African American women leaders in the civil rights struggle as "bridge leaders."[213] Like many of her counterparts, Mallory engaged in the day-to-day work of movement building, but she held many of the formal civil rights organizations in contempt.

In descriptions of herself, Mallory presented a complex figure. In April of 1963, she reached out to Williams to remind him of her loyalty and faith in his message. Possibly referring to concerns over her testifying against Williams for the state, she reassured the Williamses, "Know that you have nothing to fear from me. Death alone can stop me, nothing else." In a June letter to Mabel Williams, she displayed her selflessness when she insisted that the black freedom struggle far outweighed her "personal welfare." She had no desire to die for the movement but recognized that result as the potential cost for fighting racial injustice. Ten years later, when reflecting on the events leading to her imprisonment, Mallory shared a deeper revelation on her commitment to the struggle while conceding how others undervalued her contributions. Though they all relied upon each other in Monroe, "not for one moment did I ever doubt that if Julian [Mayfield] or Robert F. Williams had to sacrifice some one, they both would have willingly sacrificed me. I know this or rather felt this, but willingly involved myself." Mallory contended with sexism in the movement through her brazen resistance against the attempts to relegate women's roles. She perhaps best summed up her complicated character when she explained her role in the events of August 27, 1961, "I was a headquarters helper and no more. That's where

[213] Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long?: African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19-23. For a closer approximation to Mallory's style, see the more diverse representation of women's leadership roles in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* ed. by Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

the guns were and that[‘s] where I was!”[214] Mallory’s dual emphasis on community support and armed self-defense embraced and rejected the gendered tasks of African American women leaders in the civil rights struggle.

With Mallory’s understanding of her own role in the movement, it was little wonder that members of the MDC rationalized their focus on her legal defense since “it has kept the Monroe racists courts from trying to railroad the other boys concerned.” The Monroe authorities sought to delay the trial until Mallory’s successful extradition, but the MDC successfully leveled local, national, and international pressure on the legal system of Ohio in order to halt the attempts to return Mallory to North Carolina. She acted as a shield for the three young men also facing trial. She also attempted to extend the MDC’s coverage to JayVan Covington, the young African American man wrongfully imprisoned and later shot in the Monroe jailhouse. Mallory and her legal team tried to convince Covington to come to Cleveland as a witness to testify on her behalf. Then, the MDC would offer Covington a place to stay in Cleveland so that he did not have to return to Monroe. Covington refused the offer, but Mallory and the MDC’s overall strategy worked. Their vigorous fight against extradition did delay the trials of Crowder, Reape, and Lowry. The authorities in North Carolina sought to prosecute all four defendants in the same trial. Even more, the district attorneys possibly wanted Mallory more than the other defendants since she was present when the Stegalls entered the Williamses’ home. Crowder, Reape, and Lowry were not present when the alleged crime occurred. However, this legal strategy resulted in further split between the committees with the MDC primarily backing Mallory while CAMD

[214] Mallory to Robert and Mabel Williams, 10 April 1963, Box 1, Folder “Correspondence April-June 1963”, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Mae Mallory to Robert and Mabel Williams, 3 June 1963, Box 1, Folder 2, Mae Mallory Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University; Mallory to Ndugu and Comrades, 25 March 1973, Box 6, Folder 5 “Mallorie, Mae, 1969-1977,” Julian Mayfield Papers, Sc MG 339, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library; Mallory to Lynn, 4 September 1962, Box 3, Folder “Correspondence 1962-1965 and undated,” RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

fought on behalf of Crowder and Reape. Nominally, the committees both supported all of the defendants, but their efforts revealed their intentions. The MDC coordinated an active fight against the Ohio authorities while CAMD tread water and tried to find ways to sustain momentum and enthusiasm for the trials. By the spring of 1962, the two committees were separated by organizational ethos, personal vendettas, legal strategy, geography, and the actual defendants represented.[215]

The fractures between the two organizations partially derived from the efforts of state surveillance. As part of its Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO), the FBI viewed attacks on CAMD as an effective method of disrupting the work of the SWP, especially in the area of civil rights. On October 12, 1961, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover requested that each branch faced with local SWP activity submit a short-term program of disruption targeted at the group. He expressed concern over the SWP's recent interest in "strongly directing and/or supporting such causes as Castro's Cuba and integration problems arising in the South." This interest in the SWP arose after the formation of CAMD to help the Monroe Defendants receive a fair trial and close to two weeks after Robert F. Williams announced his presence in Havana after evading the FBI's manhunt. Though Hoover did not explicitly mention Williams or the Monroe kidnapping case, they existed at the heart of why the FBI targeted the SWP.[216]

The Special Agent in Charge (SAC) of the Detroit office of the FBI recommended a plan to Director J. Edgar Hoover on November 2, 1961, that was emblematic of the Bureau's attempts to interfere with the SWP. The SAC emphasized the SWP's involvement in the Fair Play for

[215] Gerald Quinn to RFW, 14 May 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Mallory to RFW, 16 August 2016, Box 3, Folder "Correspondence 1962-1965 and undated," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Mae Mallory to Robert and Mabel Williams, 3 June 1963, Box 1, Folder 2, Mae Mallory Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University.

[216] U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *FBI COINTELPRO,* 100-436291, *Socialist Workers Party*, Section 1, J. Edgar Hoover (Director) to Special Agent in Charge (SAC) New York, 12 October 1961, *Archives Unbound, Gale* SC5000178453.

Cuba Committee and CAMD. To counteract this influence, the agent endorsed a three-pronged attack on the SWP. The FBI based this plan on its successful, in their view, campaign against other CPUSA front organizations—informing unknowing sponsors and donors about the organizations' subversive backing; passing information to halls and other meeting centers about the group's political affiliations in order to disrupt assemblies and rallies; and encouraging newspapers and other media to report on the committees' associations with seditious political parties. The New York office of the FBI engaged in a similar plan when it launched a sustained campaign against CAMD throughout the summer of 1962. For example, they used anonymous calls and letters to consistently notify the NAACP offices that CAMD operated as a front for the SWP; that CAMD broadcast the support of the NAACP to appear "legitimate"; and that association with CAMD damaged the NAACP. By September of 1962, COINTELPRO operatives considered the endeavor a success as the NAACP had pulled funding from CAMD and the activities of CAMD noticeably slowed. The FBI attributed this lull within CAMD to the decreased "value of this front to the SWP with the loss of NAACP support." Members of CAMD confirmed this apparent lethargy near the end of 1962 and it fostered internal disputes within the committee that fully surfaced in 1963.[217]

[217] *FBI COINTELPRO*, 100-436291, *Socialist Workers Party*, Section 1, SAC Detroit to J. Edgar Hoover (Director), 2 November 1961, *Archives Unbound*, *Gale* SC5000178453; U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, *FBI COINTELPRO-Socialist Workers Party,* Section 1, W.C. Sullivan to F.J. Baumgardner, 14 May 1962, *Archive.org*, https://archive.org/details/FBI-COINTELPRO-Socialist-Workers-Party; *FBI COINTELPRO-Socialist Workers Party*, SAC New York to J. Edgar Hoover (Director), 14 May 1962; *FBI COINTELPRO-Socialist Workers Party*, SAC New York to J. Edgar Hoover (Director), 21 September, 1962. For more on FBI counterintelligence programs as it relates to CAMD, see Christopher Phelps, "Herbert Hill and the Federal Bureau of Investigation," *Labor History* 53, no. 4 (2012): 561-570, Taylor & Francis Online (https://doi-org.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/10.1080/0023656X.2012.732757); Baxter Smith, "New Evidence of FBI 'Disruption' Program," *The Black Scholar* 6, no. 10 (July-August 1975): 43-48, JSTOR (https://www-jstor-org.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/stable/41065802); David Cunningham and John Noakes, "'What If She's From the FBI?': The Effects of Covert Social Control on Social Movements and their Participants" in *Surveillance and Governance: Crime Control and Beyond,* ed. Mathieu DeFlem (New York: Elsevier, 2008), 175-197.

Political and Personal Animosity

The FBI waged an effective campaign, but they exploited cracks existing within the movement.[218] Political differences proved an effective fault line for the FBI to target in its efforts to disrupt the MDC and CAMD. The Workers World Party's association with the MDC in Cleveland caused immediate friction with the SWP-backed CAMD. Though both ostensibly Trotskyist in philosophy, the Workers World Party had split from the SWP in 1959 over three issues—the SWP's, at first, tentative support for the Cuban Revolution, the SWP's distain towards Mao and China, and the SWP's critique of the 1956 Soviet intervention in Hungary.[219] Regardless of their doctrinal disputes, both parties were defiantly leftist in the midst of the Cold War crackdown on political ideologies bordering communism. The FBI utilized those connections to discredit the committees particularly with more traditional civil rights organizations such as the NAACP. Distance also factored into the fight between the committees. With several states separating their headquarters, the MDC and CAMD formed two separate power bases with strong, local support. Mallory once boasted to Robert, "Here in Cleveland we have it so the Governor can't get over a hundred Afro-Americans to-gether at one time—half of them are our supporters!"[220] But, a consequence of this distance is that it allowed for rumors to spread easily within the isolated communities.

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[218] COINTELPRO refined these techniques over the course of the 1960s and scholars have demonstrated the myriad of tactics used by the FBI to target the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in particular. See Scot Brown, *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, The US Organization, and Black Cultural Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010); and Robyn Ceanne Spencer, "Repression Breeds Resistance: The Rise and Fall of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, CA, 1966-1982" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 2001).

[219] A. Belden Fields, *Trotskyism and Maoism: Theory and Practice in France and the United States* (New York: Praeger, 1988), 148-150; Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals turn to Lenin, Mao, and Che* (New York: Verso, 2002), 264-265. Fields provides a description of the various Trotskyist factions in the United States as well as their practical and doctrinal disputes. Elbaum's work presents a broader narrative on leftist organizations in the United States from the 1960s until the end of the Cold War.

[220] Mae Mallory to Robert F. Williams, 11 September 1962, Box 3, Folder "Correspondence 1962-1965 and undated," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

These rumors often developed out of personal animosity and misunderstandings. For instance, this transpired when Conrad Lynn and Mae Mallory engaged in a series of criticisms of each other in the summer of 1962 with Robert F. Williams copied on all of their correspondence. The incident arose from an article by John Lowry in *The Realist* magazine that detailed the events in Monroe.[221] Mallory perceived a serious gap in the article as it, and other stories on the Monroe defendants, failed to mention her extradition case. She perceived this as a continuing effort to pinpoint her as "the sacrificial lamb" for the Monroe kidnapping case. Fully rejecting that role, Mallory asked Lynn to remind his client that the Monroe defendants had a stronger case in solidarity. Lynn responded reasonably by countering that Lowry was not his client. He further reassured Mallory that "all of the people in the leadership" recognized the importance of her struggle. Then, Lynn swerved into condescension by attributing her concerns to feelings of vulnerability and abandonment common to those isolated in prison. Mallory took great exception to that accusation and responded, "No Conrad, I do not feel abandoned…. Never have I enjoyed the friendship and support of so many people. If there is any abandonment, it is felt on the part of those that <u>did</u> abandon me." Perhaps also taking offense from Lynn's implication that the "leadership" excluded herself and the MDC, her letter flung the term back at him several times stating that she cared more that the average participant in the civil rights movement knew of her struggle than any of the so-called leaders. The number of people, organizations, and legal teams facilitated the development of these misunderstandings.[222]

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[221] She is referring to John Lowry, "Should Violence be met with Violence," *The Realist*, no. 32 (March, 1962): 1,6.

[222] Mae Mallory to Lynn, 28 August 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to Mallory, 31 August 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Mallory to Lynn, 9 September 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

The different purviews of the MDC and CAMD perhaps lay at the root of many of these quarrels. CAMD formed before Mallory's capture and committed itself to the defense of Crowder and Reape. On the other hand, the MDC's relocation to Ohio created the conditions for Mallory to form the center of their legal strategy. And, the MDC's strategy worked in so far as it delayed the case in North Carolina. Mallory explained the strategy in a letter to Robert and Mabel on June 3, 1963. With Robert in Cuba, Mallory was North Carolina's main target and that a victory for her "would certainly weaken their case against the others." The North Carolina courts' tactics partially proved this observation since it did not move forward with the trial without Mallory. Williams could hardly criticize this stance since it reflected his own position on the kidnapping case—the outcome of the trials determined his fate as well. In March of 1963, Williams conducted an interview with WERE, a radio station in Cleveland. When asked if Mallory's fight against extradition served any purpose, Robert promptly replied, "If she should succeed in her fight not to go back to North Carolina she will have accomplished the preservation of her life." He further clarified that African Americans could not rely on the justice system in Monroe. Fittingly for Williams's past experience as an activist, WERE followed this interview with a discussion between a news broadcaster and the executive secretary of the NAACP in Cleveland, Harold Williams. The NAACP official proceeded to disavow Robert and cast a jaded eye on the actions of whites *and* African Americans in Monroe on August 27, 1961. After the interviewer inquired about the NAACP's stance on Mae Mallory's case, Harold stated that the NAACP had refused "to work <u>for</u>" her organization.[223] He then elaborated on the NAACP's viewpoint:

[223] Mae Mallory to Robert and Mabel Williams, 3 June 1963, Box 1, Folder 2, Mae Mallory Collection, Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University; Lynn to RFW, 27 July 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Robert F. Williams, Interviewed by Norm Mlachak, WERE, 26 March 1963, transcript in Box 3, Folder "Miscellaneous Statements, Press Releases, and other writings (2)," RFW

> The Association's thought over the years that as a responsible organization there are certain kinds of controls which must operate: Proper accounting of funds, the question of sitting down, talking across the table with people before you begin to hit them over the head, the question of mounting a sustained effort and campaign, of education within the community, and *the question of doing so purely on the issues of what's taking place to Mrs. Mallory here, and not worrying about what's taking place all over the world, or in the South, or some other place*.[emphasis added][224]

Like CAMD, the NAACP sought to emphasize the specific context involving Mallory and the other Monroe Defendants as part of a greater legalistic campaign within the civil rights movement. They pushed test cases to set legal precedents in order to expand rights in future cases. *Brown v. Board of Education*, the famous school desegregation case, was built on a decades-long crusade targeting an unequal educational system, and *Brown*'s precedent served as a foundation for future cases challenging racial injustice. But, this approach achieved equality through gradual accumulation rather than revolution. By 1963, organizations such as the MDC and activists like Robert F. Williams, Mae Mallory, and even Conrad Lynn favored a more radical approach. This growing militancy also echoed the words of the scholar W.E.B. Du Bois in 1906: "The Negro problem in America is but a local phase of a world problem."[225] This embrace of black internationalism will be explored in later chapters, but the fight between the MDC and CAMD reveals a portion of this growing transnational consciousness.

Moving Toward the Kidnapping Trial, 1963-1964

Lynn and CAMD also did not want to rush the trials, but this stemmed from their desire to maximize fundraising efforts as the trial continued to stretch into 1963. Yet, an unintended

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Papers, BHL-UM; Harold Williams, Interviewed by Ken Hildebrand, WERE, 26 March 1963, transcript in Box 3, Folder "Miscellaneous Statements, Press Releases, and other writings (2)," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[224] Harold Williams, Interviewed by Ken Hildebrand, WERE, 26 March 1963, transcript in Box 3, Folder "Miscellaneous Statements, Press Releases, and other writings (2)," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[225] W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Color Line Belts the World" in *W.E.B. Du Bois on Asia: Crossing the World Color Line* ed. by Bill V. Mullen and Cathryn Watson (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2005), 33.

consequence of this strategy was that these postponements drained the community of resources and eventually stifled their supporters' devotion to the cause. One extreme case occurred for Amelia Rechel who put forward the $15,000 bail for Richard Crowder in 1961. The trial's perpetual delay caused Rechel's funds to be tied up in the court system for three years. Her attorney pestered Lynn for updates from 1962 until the trial's conclusion in 1964 to the frustration of all involved. An acquaintance of Lynn identified only as Eddie described the inactivity surrounding the trial in Monroe itself—the residents of Williams's hometown registered little enthusiasm in organizing as a community around the case. One resident complained about CAMD's apparent lack of funds, attributing the deficiency to misallocation or negligence "since they'd had two-and-a-half years to get the money up, and hadn't done it." The African American population of Monroe only had one hopeful expectation for the forthcoming trial—the return of Robert F. Williams. According to Eddie, "The biggest thing working in our favor is that people really want Rob to come back, and they realize that winning in an acquittal will make it much easier for him. Otherwise, there seems to be little interest in the case."[226]

CAMD's insistence on emphasizing the specifics of the trial before the movement left the organization without much of a purpose as the trial was continually rescheduled. Dolores Wilson, a member of the Detroit-area CAMD, wrote to Lynn on November 16, 1962, to ask what function could CAMD serve with the prospect of a looming court case on the distant horizon. Wilson charged, "It seems as though the cause resulting in the trials has been forgotten" and her cohort in Detroit threatened to withhold funds until CAMD forged a broader vision.[227] Another

[226] Lynn to J.N. Bloch (attorney for Amelia Rechel), 9 July 1962, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70," Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; "Eddie" to Conrad Lynn, 22 January 1963, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70," Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU. I recorded further examples of these inquiries on 11/7/62, 11/14/62, 3/18/63, and 3/20/63 though I did not complete an exhaustive list of the correspondence.

[227] Dolores Wilson to Lynn, 16 November 1962, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70," Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

unintended consequence of the trial's postponement was that it allowed the MDC and CAMD to become more firmly entrenched in their opposition. Lynn explained in a letter from April 17, 1963, his frustration with the bickering of the committees as he offered observations from several speaking engagements. At one event, the organizers who supported the MDC refused to allow CAMD to distribute literature about the Monroe case. At another, members of CAMD remained conspicuously silent throughout the rally. Lastly, the MDC "flatly refused" to work with CAMD while Berta Green remained in the organization. Lynn finally reached the conclusion that Berta Green must step down from CAMD for the good of the Monroe defendants and the MDC and CAMD could then merge.[228]

Lynn's first comments toward the expulsion Green removed his personal opinions by shrouding it behind the state of the movement. He pointed to "the feeling of black people in America today that they want to run their own organizations." However, his recent experience before HUAC guided his new position on Green's presence. Lynn appeared before HUAC on May 6, 1963, for his travel to Cuba to collect Robert and Mabel's testimony in the kidnapping case. Though the U.S. State Department sanctioned his travel, HUAC sought to further question his association with Williams and leftist organizations. CAMD, according to Lynn, did not exert enough efforts to raise awareness around the hearing. The organization did release a press release after Lynn's subpoena to appear before HUAC. The statement pointed to the harmful and coincidental timing of HUAC hearing—it coincided with the retrial of JayVan Covington and as Ohio's Governor Jim Rhodes considered Mae Mallory's extradition appeal. However, the

[228] Lynn to Berta Green, 31 October 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Lynn, 21 March 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-March 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 26 March 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-March 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 2 December 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 17 April 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

announcement does not indicate any further actions taken by CAMD or its further efforts to publicize the inquiry.[229]

In a letter to Green on May 7, Lynn connected her potential resignation with the HUAC inquiry by positing the benefits of "a black militant in the position of secretary who can write on our side at least as well as the report in *The New York Times* today of the H.U.A.C. inquisitions yesterday." Lynn perhaps favored the Warren Weaver, Jr. article in *The New York Times* since it included his best lines from the hearing. When asked about Williams's escape from the United States, Lynn replied, "We reconstituted the underground railroad and he got out through Canada." Accused of supporting Communist fronts, Lynn offered the rejoinder, "I am definitely on the left. I don't happen to be satisfied with a government that permits the brutalization of the Negroes in Birmingham."[230] Reports from Lynn's friend Truman Nelson, a historical novelist and activist, also may have motivated Lynn to turn against Berta Green. Nelson described conversations with two influential members of CAMD who dismissed the importance of Lynn's appearance before HUAC. Nelson had tried to delay setting an agenda for a CAMD fundraiser until after the hearing to ensure Lynn could attend, but one member of the committee simply "said <u>you</u> can take his place…meaning me. However, you can rest assured that I will never permit this." Stories of this sort persuaded Lynn to ask for Green's resignation. Green countered with her willingness to step down, but that the chairman of the MDC, Clarence Seniors, refused any offer for a merger regardless of conditions. The African American journalist William Worthy had pitched the idea to members of the MDC. Prior to Worthy's offer, a false

[229] Lynn to RFW, 17 April 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to Green, 7 May 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Press Release from CAMD on Lynn Subpoena, 29 April 1963, Box 20, Folder 136 "HUAC, 1961-1964," Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU.

[230] Lynn to Green, 7 May 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Warren Weaver, Jr., "3 New Yorkers Queried on Cuba: They Deny Involvement in Castro Propaganda," *New York Times (1923-Current file*, 7 May 1963, Proquest Historical Newspapers.

announcement from CAMD about the impending merger between the two groups irritated Seniors.[231]

Whether this announcement arose from the rumor mill or COINTELPRO disruption is unclear, but the impact of the gossip firmly closed the door to any merger. Seniors refused to cooperate with any organization including Berta Green and stated:

> There has been and still is no confusion in the minds of the supporters of Mae Mallory during these last two difficult years concerning any other committee. It's clear that The Monroe Defense Committee has led the fight. It's just too bad that the issue of any other committee is being raised publicly now just when Mae is in the greatest danger.[232]

Worthy had mediated an earlier attempt to merge the committees in October of 1962 with similar results. According to a letter to Williams, the personal animosity between Berta Green and the journalist Richard Gibson proved insurmountable. In August of 1962, Gibson bragged to Williams about the ouster of Trotskyists from the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. As acting national secretary of the FPCC, Gibson spearheaded this purge of Fair Play and this sweep included Green.[233] The lingering political differences of members of the MDC and CAMD

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[231] Truman Nelson to Conrad Lynn, 29 April 1963, Box 20, Folder 136 "HUAC, 1961-1964," Lynn Papers, HGARC-BU; Green to RFW, 11 May 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Green to Lynn, 11 May 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Green to Dr. Albert Perry, 9 April 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Clarence H. Seniors to William Worthy, 6 April 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[232] Clarence H. Seniors to William Worthy, 6 April 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[233] The political legacy and influence of FPCC deserves note. As discussed in the Introduction, the FPCC originally formed as a response to the media's negative images of the Cuban Revolution. The group attracted an assortment of leftists including prominent intellectuals, socialists, and black nationalists. Like the Cuban Revolution itself, the FPCC drifted further to the political left and Berta Green and the SWP joined the ranks of the FPCC soon after its foundation. The SWP cemented its ties to the organization after Robert Taber, one of the founders of the FPCC, enacted a purge against members of the CPUSA in the summer of 1960. In consultation with Fidel Castro and Green, Taber then met with the leaders of the SWP "whereby a deal was sealed to throw the tiny party (then numbering only 400 cadre) into organizing Fair Play on a national scale, albeit in a covert and unacknowledged fashion" (Gosse 146). This arrangement continued until Gibson orchestrated a purge of the Trotskyists from the FPCC in August of 1962. Following Taber's earlier exit from the United States, Gibson then fled to Algeria in September of 1962. The FPCC revealed the strains occurring between the American left and black nationalists. See Gosse, "Fair Play!" in *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America, and the Making of a New Left* (New York: Verso, 1993).

perpetuated as a stumbling block for any joint effort. The two committees remained divided as the kidnapping trial approached in January of 1964.[234]

Mallory's extradition fight ended after more than two years of legal battles and several stays in jail including a thirteen-month period. Mallory's legal team petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court a third time to halt her extradition in December of 1963. This effort failed and Mallory was extradited on the night of January 12, 1964 in what the MDC termed a "Reverse Freedom Ride." She arrived in Monroe the following morning and the actual hearing for the Monroe kidnapping case was placed on the February docket. All four defendants were finally to appear in a Monroe courtroom after years of legal wrangling. Yet, the trial took an utterly unexpected turn when Mallory, Crowder, and Reape all dismissed their legal counsel—the legal teams of the MDC and CAMD, Lynn and Len Holt, were dismissed. In a letter on February 18, 1964, Lynn designated Mallory as the catalyst for this development as she supposedly convinced Crowder and Reape that both legal teams were attempting to sell out the defendants. This left three of the defendants without legal representation a day before the trial with only John Lowry maintaining his attorney. The four defendants were each convicted of two counts kidnapping with concurrent terms of 16 to 20 years for Mallory; 7 to 10 years for Crowder; 5 to 7 years for Reape, and 3 to 5 years for Lowry. The four initiated the appeals process after the verdicts, but with only one committee backing the candidates. CAMD dissolved by April of 1964 because Mallory, Crowder, and Reape refused to accept any aid originating from that group.[235]

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[234] William Worthy to RFW, 26 November 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Richard Gibson to RFW, 17 August 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM. The letter from Worthy to Williams marked 26 November (with no year) was sorted into a folder of November 1963 correspondence. However, its mention of Gibson in the United States implies that the actual date is 26 November 1962.

[235] United Press International, "Mrs. Mallory Appeals to Supreme Court 3rd Time," *Norfolk New Journal and Guide (1916-2002)*, 14 December 1963, Black Studies Center, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bsc:&rft_dat=xri:bsc:rec:newspaper:HNP_81125_19631214_0123; United Press International,

Conclusion

By February of 1965, the North Carolina Supreme Court cleared the Monroe defendants due to the purposeful exclusion of African Americans from the grand and petit juries in Union County. On February 3, Lynn and Mallory wrote to Williams separately to report on the decision. Lynn optimistically informed him that the indictment against Williams was no longer valid and that he could return to the United States freely. On the other hand, Mallory assured Williams that prosecutors in North Carolina were opening fresh indictments against the defendants and Williams should not return. The sentencing of the Monroe defendants occurred as Williams desperately searched for an exit from an increasingly hostile Cuba. The trial always held the Williamses' interest since it determined the nature of their planned return to the United States. And the family did search for a means to return home throughout their exile. The importance of the case magnified for Williams, though, as his relationship to Cuban officials and white members of the CPUSA in Cuba worsened. Threatened with everything from zealous mail screenings to extradition to the FBI, the outcome of the trial weighed heavily on his options.

The case also offered Williams a window into the activist community at home and its effectiveness to organize on his behalf. Williams offered mercurial opinions in regards to the capricious waves within the movement. In a letter to a young supporter of CAMD a month after the sentencing of the Monroe defendants, Williams viewed the "many splits and splinters" amongst African American activists as a sign of a healthy movement since ideas were debated

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"Return Mae Mallory For Dixie Justice," *Chicago Defender (Daily, 1956-1975)*, 13 January 1964, Black Studies Center, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:bsc:&rft_dat=xri:bsc:rec:newspaper:HNP_68423_19640113_0152; Lynn to RFW, 18 February 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-April 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Associated Press, "4 In Carolina Get Jail in Kidnapping: Mrs. Mallory Sentenced to 16 to 20 Years in Race Case," *New York Times (1923-Current file)*, 29 February 1964, ProQuest Historical Newspapers (115691267); Perry to RFW and Mabel Robinson Williams, 30 April 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-April 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Edward Weber to RFW, 14 May 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-August 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

and tested. The principal danger to the movement was the failure to act, especially against the true enemy—the inequality propagated by white supremacists. Around the same time, Williams stopped just short of calling the whole situation a damned mess in a letter to Julian Mayfield. "If you can understand what you hear, then, you are way ahead of me." While Williams likely adopted a different tone with a young activist as opposed to an old ally like Mayfield, the two comments reveal his attempt to comprehend the ideological fluctuations in the community as represented in the Monroe kidnapping trial. The showdown between the MDC and CAMD provided a glance at the shifting values within the tactics and strategies of the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement.[236]

[236] RFW to Clyde Appleton, 22 March 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-April 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Julian Mayfield, Undated, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence Undated (2)," RFW Papers, BHL-UM. Though the Mayfield letter is undated, its discussion of the kidnapping trials and the dismissal of Lynn places it around the time of February 1964.

CHAPTER 3: "Catching Hell": Robert F. Williams's Life in Cuban Exile, 1961-1966

"There are increasing numbers of Afro-Americans today who can see that the only way our problem in the States is going to be solved is at the world level—or at the international level. America, herself, is not qualified to handle the solving of her race problem. The problem has to be taken before the world. It has to be made into a world problem—or a problem for humanity—not a negro problem or an American problem or one only she has the say-so over."[237]

—Malcolm X, Paris, 1964

Figure 3: Robert F. Williams and Mabel Robinson Williams partaking in a worker's parade in China, date unknown. Photo Courtesy of Bentley Historical Library, Robert F. Williams Collection, Box 14, Folder "China – Informal Groups."

[237] Malcolm X, "The Black Struggle in the United States," *Presence Africaine: Cultural Review of the Negro World* 54 (1965) English Edition 26, 11 in Box 6, Folder "1964-1965", Carlos Moore Papers (CMP), Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies, University of California Los Angeles (RJB-UCLA).

Malcolm X delivered the above remarks at the *Salle de la Mutualité* in Paris on November 23, 1964, as the last stop on his five-month world tour following his expulsion from the Nation of Islam (NOI). His travels clearly had influenced his analysis of race. Moving past the NOI's economically-defined conception of black nationalism, Malcolm envisioned the race problem as transcending America's borders and as "a problem for humanity." His latest stance signaled the growing desire of African Americans to unite their struggle with a global black freedom struggle. Two years prior to the formal declaration of Black Power and its international vision, Malcolm X outlined its central thesis of a global movement against the disenfranchising power of race. And he followed in the footsteps of activists and intellectuals such as Paul Robeson and the Civil Rights Congress, W.E.B. Du Bois, William Patterson, and Marcus Garvey. When questioned after his speech, Malcolm X clarified his position, "To the same degree Africa is independent and respected [African Americans] are independent and respected, but to the degree we are disrespected the Africans are also disrespected. Our origin is the same and our destiny is the same." For a growing number of African American activists, the future of African nations would intersect with their success in combatting racial discrimination in the United States.[238]

Yet, Malcolm X's statements also reflected the tendency for African Americans to filter the global black freedom struggle through the liberation movement in the United States. America remained the battleground even as activists turned towards international rhetoric. Black internationalists such as Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X envisioned a worldwide pushback on the imperial aims of the United States. Reflecting on the 1964 election of President Lyndon B.

[238] Malcolm X, "The Black Struggle," 11, 29, Box 6, Folder "1964-1965", CMP, RJB-UCLA. For more on Malcolm X during his Paris visit, see Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking Press, 2011), 362 and Marika Sherwood, *Malcolm X Visits Abroad: April 1964 – February 1965* (Hollywood, CA: Tsehai Publishers, 2011), 142-143.

Johnson in the same speech, Malcolm revealed his firm belief in the extent of U.S. influence because "when a man is running for President of the United States, he's not running for the President of the United States alone, but he has to be acceptable to every area of the world where the influence of the United States reaches." Many African American activists understood the global black freedom struggle through this lens—to focus the world's attention on limiting the expansion of U.S. power and the concomitant spread of a racism. Thus, Malcolm X praised France as "one of the few countries that has been able to keep from becoming a satellite of the United States" and asked for French support as African Americans brought their complaints before the United Nations.[239]

French authorities delivered a rude awakening to Malcolm X on February 9, 1965, three months after his first visit. Traveling from London, French security forces detained Malcolm on the tarmac at Paris's Orly Airport and ordered him immediately to board a return flight to the United Kingdom. He provided a telephone interview from London to supporters in Paris that evening during which he compared the French government to South Africa, denounced then president of France Charles de Gaulle, and labeled France a "satellite" and toady to the United States.[240] De Gaulle and the French government rationalized their decision to refuse Malcolm X's entrance into France by citing his "violent" rhetoric during his November speech and that de Gaulle himself had labeled his visit as "undesirable." Malcolm blamed the U.S. State Department for this exclusion though documents from the American Embassy in Paris reveal their apparent confusion about the denial. Regardless, Malcolm X returned to London for a few days and returned to New York City where he was assassinated on February 21, 1965. Prior to his death,

[239] Malcolm X, "The Black Struggle," 14, 11, Box 6, Folder "1964-1965", CMP, RJB-UCLA.

[240] Malcolm X and Carlos Moore, Unedited transcript of telephone conversation between Malcolm X and Carlos Moore, 9 February 1965, Box 6, Folder "1964-1965", CMP, RJB-UCLA.

rumors had persisted that groups ranging from the NOI to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) were targeting Malcolm for assassination. This gossip also latched onto the events in Paris from early February—some posited that French security forces had denied Malcolm X entrance into the country because they were informed of a CIA plot to assassinate him on French soil.[241]

Malcolm X's experience with French authorities reveals the erratic shifts that African American activists weathered in the international arena—welcomed in November and then banned in February. As an expatriate, Robert F. Williams grappled with these vagaries to a greater extent than Malcolm X since the United States actively pursued Williams and his family. They did not have a safe haven and, instead, relied upon the generosity of their foreign hosts. This chapter narrates the Williamses' exile in Cuba from 1961 to 1966. I outline three broad phases of his and his family's life in Cuba: initial settlement, mounting tensions, and their resolution to leave. From 1961 to 1963, Williams and his family tested the boundaries and conditions of their exile through attempts to travel, produce media, and maintain their activist network. From 1963 to 1965, Williams, and by extension his family, encountered increasing criticisms from members of the CPUSA in Cuba who lobbied the Cuban government to restrict Williams's movement and outreach. From 1965 to 1966, Cuban government officials and the United States government limited Williams's attempts to leave Cuba and stifled his newsletter and radio program. By July of 1966, Williams and his family managed to escape Cuba and settle in the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Timothy Tyson's award-winning biography of Williams, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (1999), thoroughly explored Williams's life in the United States up to 1961, but skimmed over Williams's time in exile from the United States. Tyson

[241] Marable, *Malcolm X* , 412-413; Sherwood, 187-189; Eric Norden, "The Murder of Malcolm X," *The Realist* 73 (February 1967), 1, 4-5, http://ep.tc/realist/73/index.html.

characterized Williams's experience outside of the borders of his home as a disappointment. "The hard truth for all who admire Williams's courage and leadership in the freedom movement is that, snared in exile, he became less a player than a pawn in the Cold War."[242] Yet, Tyson left this transformation unexplored whereas I contend that the limitations Williams faced in exile are essential to understanding the intersections of the Cold War and the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement.

This chapter explores Williams's life as a black radical in exile following his exit from the United States and his continued activism in Cuba. I analyze his time abroad through an extensive use of his correspondence. This permits an examination of his day-to-day interactions with the Cuban government, a network of African American activists, and the United States government and press. This approach emphasizes Williams's existence in two states of exile. He was exiled *by* the forces of the U.S. government for his radical stance on armed self-defense. He felt exiled *from* the support of other black radicals when Cuban officials and members of the CPUSA in Cuba impeded Williams's contributions to the black freedom struggle. Both resulted in his mounting isolation and frustration with the terms of his status abroad. They also explain Williams's fervent desire to maintain contact with his U.S. supporters and form new activist networks through travel.

This view of Williams is lacking from the current historiography and I argue that the lived experience of expatriacy is an important factor in studying black internationalism. Recent work on Williams, notably from Robeson Taj Frazier and Cristina Mislán, asserts that Williams confounded the restraints placed on him by his host nations and the United States by influencing an attentive African American audience. Frazier delves into how Williams and other African

[242] Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 300.

Americans in the People's Republic of China crafted depictions of "African American–Chinese solidarity as significant, though misleading and erratic, practices of Cold War black radical imagining."[243] Rather than continue to explore the media generated by the Williamses, I foreground the day-to-day facets of their exile with an emphasis on the difficulties they encountered. Through this consideration, shifts in international support for the African American freedom struggle in the midst of the Cold War become apparent. African American expatriates, wholly dependent on the goodwill of their hosts, most visibly bore the weight of any changes within the international scene.

This chapter is split into five parts. The first section offers a brief overview of the post-revolution Cuban government's antiracism efforts and their intersection with the political aims of African Americans. The next four sections provide the bulk of the chapter and each covers a phase of the Williamses' life in Cuba. I document the Williamses' attempts to continue their activism from Cuba from 1961 to 1963. Then, I explore the growing rift between Williams and the CPUSA members in Cuba. To help explain this disagreement, I uncover the impact of the Sino-Soviet Split on Williams's status in Cuba. Lastly, I delve into the actions of the Cuban government to limit the Williamses' abilities to contribute to the black freedom struggle.

Cuba, Williams, and Black Internationalism

Prior to his relocation, Cuban officials and Williams mutually benefitted from their relationship. Williams gained fuel for his propaganda by comparing race relations in the United States to Fidel Castro's rhetorical commitment to eradicating racism in Cuba. The new Cuban regime benefited both domestically and internationally from African American spokesmen such

[243] Frazier, *The East Is Black*, 17.

as Williams extolling the virtues of Cuban social programs.[244] Historian Devyn Spence Benson reminds scholars to incorporate the agendas of both activists and nation-states when analyzing black internationalism:

> A close look at how Cuban encounters with African Americans constituted revolutionary discourses also allows us to push beyond the pattern of celebrating alliances among the aggrieved and begin to see the ways in which marginalized groups exploited one another to increase their respective visibility and further their cause on both a local and global scale.[245]

Benson tears into the triumphal narratives of transnational activism by focusing on the tangible gains from these partnerships. In the cold regard of practicality, activists and state sponsors formed international alliances for transactional purposes with states often offering, at best, a capricious commitment to their allies. Williams originally proved a boon for Cuba's developing antiracist message. However, his privileging of race over class, self-defense over nonviolence, and his preference for the PRC over the Soviet Union worried a Cuban government growing increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union in the 1960s.[246] Williams's experience of exile became entangled in the relationship between the Cuban government, Afro-Cubans, and African American activists.

With the expulsion of Fulgencio Batista on January 1, 1959, Castro and his followers initiated the process of restructuring the government when they entered Havana on January 8.

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[244] For a more thorough examination of the aims and aftermath of the Cuban Revolution, see Carrollee Bengelsdorf, *The Problem of Democracy in Cuba: Between Vision and Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Juan M. del Águila, *Cuba: Dilemmas of a Revolution*, Nations of Contemporary Latin America (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1984); Lillian Guerra, *Visions of Power in Cuba: Revolution, Redemption, and Resistance, 1959-1971*, Envisioning Cuba (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Carrie Hamilton, *Sexual Revolutions in Cuba: Passion, Politics, and Memory*, Envisioning Cuba (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Antoni Kapcia, *Cuba in Revolution: A History since the Fifties* (London: Reaktion, 2008); Thomas G. Paterson, *Contesting Castro: The United States and the Triumph of the Cuban Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Marifeli Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[245] Devyn Spence Benson, *Antiracism in Cuba: The Unfinished Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 156.

[246] Louis A. Perez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 270-272; Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 2nd ed. (1999), 84-90.

Among other reforms, the revolutionary government instituted a bold program by March of that year—the eradication of racism on the island. Acknowledging the legacy of slavery and the segregation that followed the wars for independence, the refashioned Republic of Cuba aimed to enforce equality through state-directed efforts that included land, education, and health care reform.[247] Devyn Spence Benson argues the campaign against racism often followed a convenient ideological path for the revolutionary government. Pro-Castro members of the Cuban press blamed the United States for the legacy of racial discrimination due to the 1898 U.S. intervention in Cuba's war for independence from Spain. These articles also portrayed the revolutionary government of Fidel Castro as fulfilling the legacy of nineteenth-century freedom fighters such as José Martí and Antonio Maceo. Martí's writings and his death fighting the Spanish in 1895 helped to rally many Cubans to the cause for independence while Maceo, an Afro-Cuban, served as the second-in-command of the Cuban forces during the Cuban War of Independence until his death in 1896. In the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution, Martí's writings on a unified, Cuban identity provided an intellectual link to Cuban history for the regime's proposed reforms on racial equality. Maceo, on the other hand, functioned as an example of how Afro-Cubans contributed to the long fight for Cuban independence and as a reminder to Euro-descended Cubans of those contributions. With these connections to the past, Castro and his followers defined the antiracist program as "a problem of access, not attitudes." This framework allowed for symbolic attacks on segregation, without addressing the underlying structures of

[247] For a broader history of Cuba's development, see Aviva Chomsky, *A History of the Cuban Revolution*, Viewpoints/Puntos de Vista: Themes and Interpretations in Latin American History (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2011); Susan Eckstein, *Back from the Future: Cuba Under Castro*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2003); Richard Gott, *Cuba: A New History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); Perez, *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution*, 3rd ed. (2006); Pérez-Stable, *The Cuban Revolution: Origins, Course, and Legacy*, 2nd ed. (1999).

inequality, and Castro's government erroneously asserted their successful elimination of racism by 1961.[248]

Benson demonstrated the rapidity of the transformations surrounding racial discourse in Cuba in 1960 through three events: the boxer Joe Louis' visit to Cuba in January, the Fair Play for Cuba Committee (FPCC) sponsored trip of Williams, and Castro's visit to Harlem in September. Arriving in Havana on New Year's Eve in 1959, Joe Louis negotiated a business venture with Castro's government meant to advertise Cuba as a vacation destination for African Americans. This plan fell through in the summer of 1960 when Joe Louis disassociated himself from the ad campaign due to the increased tensions between the United States and Cuba. However, Afro-Cuban activists utilized the partnership between Louis and the Cuban government by framing their protests on the basis of "asking the government to fulfill its promise to have better race relations than the U.S. South."[249] Benson argues this tactic from the Afro-Cuban population altered the Cuban government's reception of African Americans. Whereas Joe Louis' visit and its importance to race relations received an outpouring of positive media attention from the Cuban press in January, the subsequent visits of Robert F. Williams and the FPCC delegations to Cuba in June and July received little to no coverage in Cuban newspapers. Benson attributes this shift in coverage to how Afro-Cubans turned the regime's rhetoric on race against it.[250]

Fidel Castro and the Cuban United Nations delegation stay at Harlem's Hotel Theresa in September of 1960 irrevocably altered racial discourse in Cuba. The origins for the idea to relocate to are disputed—whether it arose from within the Cuban delegation or the African

[248] Benson, 60-62, 52, 120.
[249] Ibid., 157-167, 162.
[250] Ibid., 170-171. Benson only mentions the June trip to Cuba, but includes Amiri Baraka and Harold Cruse on this trip when both traveled with the July delegation.

American community—as well as the rationale for the move, but Castro's stay in Harlem delivered an indisputable impact on relations between the Cuban goverment and the African American community. At the Hotel Theresa, Castro met with African American leaders such as Malcolm X and heads of state such as Premier Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union and President Gamel Abdel Nasser of Egypt. These meetings centered the Cuban leader's critique of American race relations and foreign policy and the four-and-a-half-hour speech at the United Nations that closed Castro's visit furthered these condemnations.[251] For radical African Americans such as Williams, the Hotel Theresa relocation represented a victory over racial hierarchy in the United States. For Cuban citizens, Castro's move to Harlem dramatically shifted Cuban conversations on race. Castro's symbolic confrontation with segregation in the United States allowed Cuban officials to transform the antiracist struggle—"Instead of talking about how to eradicate racism from the island, revolutionary leaders began to focus on battling global racial injustices." This rhetorical switch closed avenues of protest for Afro-Cubans though their dissent did not disappear. It was subsumed amidst the Cuban state's attempts to position itself as a counterweight to the global spread of racism from the United States.[252]

The Cuban government declared their campaign against racism a success in 1961. In April of that year, Cuba repelled the Bay of Pigs invasion and Castro labeled the Cuban revolution as socialist. By December, Castro announced his adherence to Marxism-Leninism. These events further precipitated the worsening relations between the United States and Cuba though the United States already had broken diplomatic relations with Cuba in January of 1961 and instituted a travel ban against the nation for American citizens. Williams arrived in Cuba in

[251] Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til The Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 35-38; Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left* (New York: Verso, 1993), 149-152; Benson, 173-178.

[252] Benson, 173-178, 178.

September of 1961 after the shift in racial discourse and as Castro's regime embraced the Soviet Union. Over the next five years, Williams endured harassment from the United States, his hosts in exile, and within the activist community in his attempts to create an international black freedom movement from Cuba. The U.S. government, political leaders, and media distorted Williams's public image and interfered with his attempts to travel. In particular, North Carolinian authorities unrelentingly pressed charges against Williams which, in turn, hindered his movements and fomented negative images of him in media outlets. His Cuban hosts, influenced by members of the Communist Party United States of America (CPUSA) hostile to Williams's emphasis on race over class, limited his interaction with the United States and other nations. As some African American activists encouraged Williams's involvement and sought aid for their specific projects, others rejected his pronouncements from Cuba. These factors combined to undermine his efforts to garner international support. Williams entered his exile in 1961 enthusiastically searching for methods of continuing his struggle against racial inequality. Political posturing and inconsistencies on the part of his hosts deterred Williams's attempts and increased his frustration with the international scene.

Settling into Cuba, 1961-1963

After his escape to Cuba, Williams assessed the conditions of his exile in three ways: his ability to spread his message to his supporters in the United States; his ability to travel based on restrictions from the United States and his hosts; and his ability to maintain contact with like-minded activists in the United States and Canada. All three centered on Williams's capacity to connect to the international black freedom struggle from Cuba, though he emphasized the racial struggle in the United States. Williams's most recognizable efforts to retain his audience in the United States occurred through his newsletter, *The Crusader-in-Exile*, and his radio program,

Radio Free Dixie. Originally published as *The Crusader* in Monroe, Robert and Mabel Williams rebranded the newsletter after their relocation to Cuba and released its first issue in October of 1961 as a monthly periodical.[253] The Williamses started *Radio Free Dixie* in July of 1962 through Cuba's *Radio Progresso* station and it developed into an hour-long program broadcast three times a week. The radio reached U.S. airwaves, and, over the years, Williams received reception reports from as far away as Kalamazoo, MI and Sussex, England. Additionally, Williams supplied his version of the events in Monroe with the publication of his short memoir *Negroes with Guns* at the end of October 1962, just weeks after the Cuban Missile Crisis deescalated. With these efforts, Williams disseminated his message to fellow participants in the black freedom struggle.[254]

Other scholars have evaluated the success and influence of the Williamses' efforts, but the day-to-day practice of disseminating their message has received less attention. They learned how to reach the United States often through trial-and-error. This process was most apparent with the distribution of *The Crusader-in-Exile*. First, the Williams established a stable base of operations on the North American continent on April 13, 1962, with the assistance of Vernel and Anne Olson in Toronto.[255] Though hindered by the United States' sanctions on Cuba, the Williamses used the Olsons as their primary distributors of the newsletter, collectors of

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[253] This first issue of *The Crusader* after Williams's flight was not helmed by Williams. Instead, the publication intermittently featured Rob and Mabel until they began to publish regularly from Cuba with the April 1962 edition which featured the rebranding as *The Crusader-in-Exile*. See Mislán, "On Writing in Exile," 7-8 and Rucker, 27.

[254] Frazier, *The East is Black*, 128-139; Mislán, "On Writing in Exile," 5-10; Mislán, "In the Spirit of '76 Venceremos!"; Rucker, 24-28; RFW to Tom Todd, undated 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-April 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to A. Slater, 24 April 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence March-April 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 29 October 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[255] The Olsons were a white couple based in Toronto, Ontario who had met Williams through the Fair Play for Cuba Committee. Rob and Mabel Williams stayed briefly with the Olsons when they escaped the United States in 1961. For more on the Olsons, see Cynthia Wright's chapter, "Between Nation and Empire: The Fair Play for Cuba Committees and the Making of Canada-Cuba Solidarity in the Early 1960s," in the edited volume, *Our Place in the Sun: Canada and Cuba in the Castro Era*.

subscription dues, and couriers for much of the Williamses' incoming and outgoing mail. Freight planes traveling between Cuba and Canada carried packages of *Crusaders* and mail, though customs officials in Canada "will not allow even an American newspaper to be sent to Cuba." The Olsons relied on couriers attached to the freight planes and Cuban officials to transport the goods into Cuba. Both sides of the exchange slowly learned to effectively distribute the newsletter. To better facilitate the transfer of goods, Anne Olson even offered to regularly fly down on a freight plane and return on the next flight to Toronto for each issue of *The Crusader-in-Exile*. The largest shipping hurdle they faced, however, was the bureaucratic aspects of customs.[256]

The Williamses put out their July 1962 issue of the newsletter expecting the shipping and receiving to follow the same pattern as the previous *Crusaders*. Instead, customs officials seized the periodicals at the Montreal-Dorval International Airport on July 26, 1962, and refused to discharge them because they did not bear a country of origin stamp. Vernel and Anne Olson drove to Montreal on July 30, 1962, and personally stamped each issue as "Printed in Cuba" to obtain their release. In a letter dated April 10, 1965, Anne described another incident in which a customs official inquired about how often *The Crusader* was published. Hoping to downplay the impact of Williams's fiery rhetoric, Anne lied that the newsletter "came out at irregular intervals

[256] Cynthia Wright, "Between Nation and Empire" in *Our Place in the Sun: Canada and Cuba in the Castro Era*, ed. by Robert Wright and Lana Wylie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 108-111; Vernel Olson to Robert and Mabel Williams, 13 April 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Vernel Olson to Robert and Mabel Williams, 27 May 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Vernel Olson to Robert and Mabel Williams, 6 June 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

about three times a year."[257] The official stated this was unfortunate. There was no sales tax if it regularly published four times or more a year.[258]

Informal and formal distribution processes also occurred with the spread of *Radio Free Dixie* and taped interviews of Williams. *WBAI*, an FM station in New York City that was part of the Pacifica Radio Network, sent tapes to Williams in Cuba for him to fill with *Radio Free Dixie* programs in order for *WBAI* to rebroadcast them. One supporter of Williams in Los Angeles described his process of raising money for the MDC. Every time he played an interview of Williams, he allowed someone to record it for a fee and sent all the proceeds to the MDC. Williams attempted to insert his voice into mainstream newspapers and periodicals in the United States as well. With the publication of *Negroes with Guns*, Williams telegrammed the editors of *Time* magazine to ask if they had "enough sense of Fair Play" to publicize his version of the events in Monroe as reported in his book. Williams refused to allow distance to silence him.[259]

Second, Williams explored and tested his ability to travel during the first years of his exile in Cuba. By February of 1962, six months into his exile, Williams explained to Conrad Lynn that he sought a return to the United States. Both to aid the Monroe defendants and his family, Williams assessed his legal status in the United States when, on March 8, 1962, he sent a letter to Harlem's representative, Congressman Adam C. Powell (D-NY) asking him to investigate the status of his case. Powell forwarded it to the U.S. Attorney General's office who

[257] Anne Olson to RFW, 10 April 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence March-April 1965," RFW Papers.

[258] Sam Beiner to RFW, 26 July 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962," RFW Papers; Vernel Olson to Robert and Mabel Williams, 27 July 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962," RFW Papers.

[259] Sam Beiner to RFW, 26 July 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Vernel Olson to Robert and Mabel Williams, 27 July 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Richard Elman to RFW, 29 November 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Robert Perkins to RFW, 15 December 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1962," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to *Time* magazine, 11 January 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-March 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

curtly responded that Williams was subject to trial under the Fugitive Felon Act and that they had found no misconduct during their previous investigation of the case. Williams also explored his options in Africa. Writing from Ghana, Julian Mayfield expressed some doubts about Williams's ability to enter Ghana due to a fundamental misunderstanding between the struggle in the United States and the liberation movements in Africa. Raising awareness of Williams and the Monroe defendants proved difficult since the movements in the United States and Ghana were, in some respects, inversed—African Americans fought as a minority against a majority while Ghanaians and Africans across the continent fought a minority, white government. Williams's fellow expatriate and journalist Richard Gibson, based in Algeria, discussed a potential trip to Africa with a great deal more optimism only a few months later.[260] Williams soon reached out to A.K Barden, the chairman director of Ghana's Bureau of African Affairs, for an invitation to Ghana as a way to progress the movement. He listed the famous scholar and activist W.E.B. Du Bois and Mayfield as references and mentioned the delicacy of his case since U.S. authorities still sought to extradite him. Barden's response on February 7, 1963, refused Williams entry until Barden could examine the case more closely.

In September, the Williamses traveled to the People's Republic of China based on invitations from the China Peace Committee. The invitation arrived after Chairman Mao Zedong's statement in support of the black freedom struggle on 8 August 1963. Mao credited Williams in the statement for prompting his remarks. Williams had sent Mao a number of letters and telegraphs urging the Chinese leader—among other world leaders such as Premier Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria, President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Secretary-General of the United Nations U Thant—to condemn the treatment of African Americans in Birmingham, Alabama,

[260] Gibson had played a small role in the MDC/CAMD fight, but, as Williams's exile continued, Gibson became one of Williams's most frequent correspondents.

during Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s campaign in the city.[261] When the Williamses' arrived in the PRC, according to historian Robeson Taj Frazier, they "beckoned their U.S. supporters to recognize the Chinese as their racial siblings."[262] The Williamses' enthusiastic response to the culture and political climate of the PRC, expressed during the 1963 visit and subsequent trips, created lasting connections between the Williams family and the Chinese government even as that bond worsened the Williamses' position in Cuba. This tension would truly flourish in 1964. Still, these early efforts from Williams represented a cautious exploration of the geographical bounds of his exile.[263]

The third aspect of his exile that Williams tested was his ability to maintain contact with fellow black activists in the United States. On May 15, 1963, Williams accepted the position of the Revolutionary Action Movement's[264] (RAM) prime minister as long as they agreed to his nine conditions. These included a focus on "positive action," cooperation with other nationalist groups, and a basic goal to "unite all our people." This call for harmony within the movement seemed appropriate from a man who the NAACP had publicly expelled and someone who, at the time, watched as sectarian differences between the MDC and CAMD undermined the defense of the Monroe defendants. In 1963, Conrad Lynn also attempted to use Williams's status to advance the black freedom struggle. He contacted Williams about arranging invitations to the 10th Anniversary of the 26 of July Movement. Williams was asked to obtain invitations for Lynn,

[261] RFW to Ahmed Ben Bella, 7 May 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, RFW to Kwame Nkrumah, 7 May 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, RFW to U Thant, 7 May 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, RFW to Mao Tse-Tung, 7 May 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers; Bill V. Mullen, *Afro-Orientalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2004), 74.

[262] Frazier, *The East is Black*, 137.

[263] Ibid., 135-137, 143.

[264] RAM was a pre-Black Power era, black nationalist group that advocated armed self-defense. Formed in 1963, the group was largely defunct by 1968. Prominent members included scholars Maxwell C. Stanford, John H. Bracey, Jr., and Ernest Allen, Jr.

James Baldwin, Ossie Davis, and Lorraine Hansberry since the Cubans in New York were "not as well grounded in the content and significance of the black revolution in progress." Furthermore, he argued that Williams should "try to impress the necessary people with the world importance of this struggle."[265]

While these contacts provided Williams with a sense of the activist community in the United States, they also offered him glimpses into the harassment his associates faced from state agencies. Federal agencies in the United States and Canada harassed Williams's associates and demonstrated their fervent desire to capture him. During the earliest phases of the Monroe kidnapping case, Julian Mayfield and others were reportedly approached by North Carolina state officials and the FBI to testify against Williams and the other defendants. After breaking the story of Williams's presence in Cuba in October of 1961, the African American journalist William Worthy was indicted for illegal entry into the United States upon his return from Cuba. He had traveled directly from Cuba to Miami and thus did not have a valid passport upon his reentry due to the State Department's restrictions on travel to Cuba. HUAC subpoenaed Conrad Lynn on April 23, 1963, after he had traveled to Cuba to meet with Williams as described in Chapter 2. Lynn further complained that government officials deliberately tampered with the broadcasts of his testimony: "In Spanish to Puerto Rico and Latin America, it implies that I entered Cuba in 1960 and 1962 as a gov't agent. In English it says I went there to see you as an agent of Communism."

Those helping the Williamses by carrying their mail through Canada became targets for surveillance as well. In June of 1963, the Toronto-area newspaper, the *News-Observer*, published

[265] Robert F. Williams's Conditions to RAM (signed by Robert F. Williams and witnessed by Mabel R. Williams), 15 May 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM. Conrad Lynn to Robert F. Williams, 1 July 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM. The 26 of July Movement honored the beginning of the Cuban Revolution.

the Olsons' address while smearing the couple as "hate-mongers" and "crackpots." While the *Crusader-In-Exile* included their home address since they handled the mailing for the newsletter, Anne criticized the newspaper in a letter to the editor for their baseless attacks on her character and publicizing her role in the newsletter. Anne Olson admitted that she did not fully endorse all of Williams's statements, but she expressed her confidence in the Williamses' right to broadcast their viewpoint. Moreover, she pushed back on the depiction of him as violent Black Muslim—she reiterated Robert F. Williams's call for the right to self-defense.[266] Vernel Olson described another incident in 1963 to Williams in which a young couple enlisted to carry a letter to Williams was followed home from the Olson's apartment and received a visit from the RCMP the next day. The RCMP officer grilled the couple about specific aspects of the conversation the couple held on the previous day's streetcar ride home. Due to the sensitivity of the letter, the couple had evaluated the notion of taping the letter to their body while traveling—the RCMP officer asked specifically about this detail during his interview. The harassment in each of the above examples did not solely stem from the person's association with Williams. Mayfield, Worthy, Lynn, and the Olsons were all engaged in plenty of radical activity. But, their contact with Williams instigated each of these incidents and revealed the state's scrutiny of activities relating to him.[267]

Williams's distance from events in the United States created doubt among some of his supporters as well. Grace Lee Boggs, a prominent member of Detroit's radical community,

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[266] Anne Olson to Frank Rasky (editor-in-chief, News-OBSERVER), 18 June 1963, Box 7, Folder "Correspondence Anne Olson November 1961 – October 1966", RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[267] Albert Perry to RFW, 21 October 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence October-December 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Lynn, 27 February 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; William Worthy to RFW, 29 April 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Conrad Lynn to RFW, 2 May 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 22 May 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Vernel Olson to Robert and Mabel Williams, 14 July 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

criticized Williams's soon-to-be published book *Negroes with Guns* on September 17, 1962. She expressed concern to Conrad Lynn since "the manuscript has all the earmarks of a document written in exile by someone who is out of touch with the Negro masses and addressing himself in a hotel room to some white liberals and radicals who are even more out of touch." She accused Williams of "pussy-footing" around the impact of the NOI and Cuba's defiance of the United States on the African American community. Dismissing Lynn's earlier concerns about white liberals' reluctance to participate in the struggle, Boggs said, "That is to be expected. What worries me is if some like Rob, from whom so many expect so much, falls behind."[268] Boggs requested that Lynn forward her message to Williams. In 1964, Lynn also expressed concern about Williams's relevance while in exile. Writing to a confidant, Lynn accused Williams of being "completely disoriented in thinking that I could do anything affirmative for him against the American [Communist Party]." Lynn closed the letter by stating, "Unless Robert returns to this country his usefulness in the struggle is at an end."[269] Despite his doubts, Lynn continued to assist Williams, but this letter reveals the, at times, utilitarian focus of black international activism.

Williams's conduct in his correspondence from 1961 to 1963 represented an exploration of the constraints of his expatriacy in regard to his ability to reach American audiences, to travel outside Cuba, and to maintain contact with his pre-exile activist network. His letter to the Ghanaian official especially read as a casual probe into the feasibility of any trip. These letters resembled the direct-action protest style that was the hallmark of his career as well. Perhaps reflecting on the MDC/CAMD struggle, Williams's acceptance letter to RAM specifically stated

[268] Grace Lee Boggs to Conrad Lynn, 17 September 1962, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARCH-BU.

[269] Conrad Lynn to Peter, 31 August 1964, Box 37, Folder 270 "Williams, Robert – Correspondence and Legal Papers, 1960-70", Lynn Papers, HGARCH-BU.

his goals for an open organization that collaborated with all "sincere nationalist groups" while striving not to alienate mainstream groups. During his first trip to the PRC in 1963, Williams responded to an article in *Newsweek* that reported on this journey and reiterated his guilt in the kidnapping case. He critiqued the editors of *Newsweek* for accepting the nature of the charges without any independent investigation into the events in Monroe. *Newsweek*'s unsubstantiated claim of his guilt particularly galled Williams since they published the article two months prior to the trial of the other Monroe defendants. He saw the article as an attempt to aid the legal case against him and the others. Williams maintained his protest style in the first three years of his exile while examining options outside of Cuba as a way to continue his involvement in the black freedom struggle.[270]

Mounting Tensions in Cuba, 1963-1964

Williams and his family searched for a means to return safely to the United States from nearly the start of their exile. Conrad Lynn served as Williams's primary adviser on this matter with legal advice and by gauging the alacrity of the activist community. He urged against Williams returning to the United States preemptively. He extended three sensible warnings to Williams on November 27, 1963. First, Williams should make no attempt to return to the United States while federal charges still existed against him. Even if he returned to New York, the FBI or other agencies "could pick you up wherever they found you and take you to the South." No drawn-out extradition fight waited for Williams with the buildup to the trials in Monroe. Second, Mabel Williams should not return to the United States until after the kidnapping trial. Third, the

[270] RFW to Barden, 16 January 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-March 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Robert F. Williams's Conditions to RAM (signed by Robert F. Williams and witnessed by Mabel R. Williams), 15 May 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to the editors of *Newsweek*, 10 November 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

Williamses had the right to file a libel suit in New York, but it was inadvisable due to the case's likely dismissal after Williams failed to appear. He expressed some displeasure at the advice, but that was ameliorated by his enthusiasm for a "roundabout plan for reentry to the states" mentioned in his final letter to Lynn in 1963. But, he felt uncomfortable relating the details of his plan through the mail. He wanted to meet in person with Lynn to go over the details and stated he could trust "no middle person" and this included Berta Green of CAMD. Part of this plan seemed to include placing international scrutiny on Williams's case so that "perhaps in the fall we can put the U.S. Government in an untenable position and force them to pressure the Union County officials to reconsider." Williams did not explain the detail of this plan in his letters, but it continued to be a theme in his correspondence with Lynn in 1964. However, these later letters expressed an urgent desire to leave Cuba.[271]

Robert and Mabel Williams doggedly searched for an exit from Cuba after 1964. Cuban officials and white CPUSA members operating in Cuba increasingly grew dissatisfied with Williams's emphasis on race and armed self-defense. The details of the pressure upon Williams and his family did not initially appear in his letters, but the tone of his letters shifted in 1964 and signified his urgent desire to exit Cuba. In a press release dated May 25, 1964, Williams offered his most explicit criticisms of the Cuban government and its interference in his contributions to the black freedom struggle. First, he complained that Cuban authorities were withholding paper to halt the production of *The Crusader-In-Exile* despite promises from the *Partido Unido de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba* (PURSC, United Party of the Cuban Socialist Revolution),

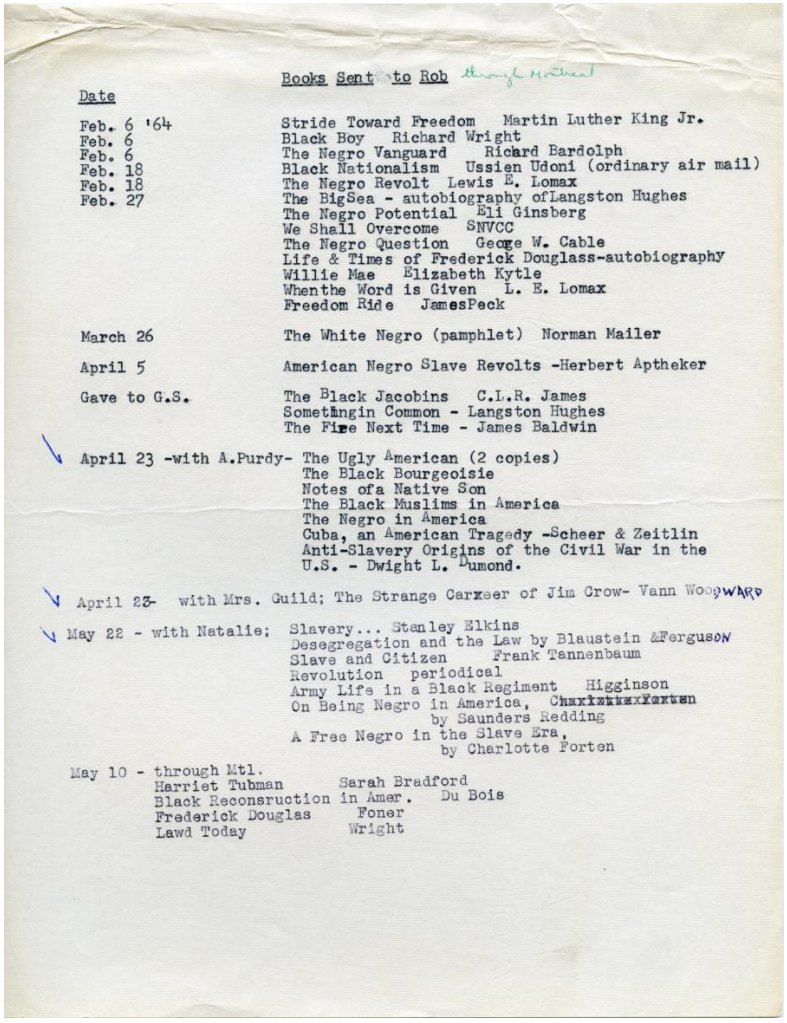
[271] Lynn to RFW, 6 March 1962, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 27 November 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Lynn, 17 December 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM. The libel suit mentioned likely relates to the *Newsweek* article referenced in the previous subsection or a similar story that misrepresented Williams's visit to China and the Monroe kidnapping case.

Cuba's only recognized political party at the time, that a constant supply of paper had been set aside for the newsletter. However, Williams lobbied his main grievance against the apparent interference occurring with his mail. With the Olsons, the Williamses had arranged a regular supply of shipments through workers on the Cubana de Aviación flights between Montreal and Havana. However, a division of the Ministry of Foreign Trade, named CUFLET, took over this route and demanded that the Olsons pay for shipping goods to Williams whereas Cubana de Aviación allowed the Williamses and Olsons to utilize their services for free. The Williamses lobbied PURSC and obtained a guarantee that the Party would pay any bill incurred, but "no packages ever arrived via Cuflet." The Olsons then turned to the Cuban Ambassador in Canada and he agreed to send the packages through diplomatic pouches, but the Williams did not receive any material through this route.[272]

A later letter from the Williamses to Anne Olson explained that they were receiving mail again, but "all hell had to be stirred up before any action was taken." Additionally, they had secured a paper supply for *The Crusader-In-Exile* though the Williamses expressed doubt that either the mail route or the paper would remain viable for long. Interference such as this cut the Williamses off from their activist network and loved ones in the United States. The image on page 145 demonstrates the amount of material Williams received in a given month and illustrates his efforts to stay current on the situation in the United States. Williams blamed this disruption on the influence of white American representatives of the CPUSA in Cuba who sought to undermine his influence in the United States. As an exile, his effectiveness depended on his knowledge of the black freedom struggle. And the list below does not include the newspapers that the Olsons forwarded to the Williams. In December of 1964, Anne Olson explained that,

[272] RFW, Untitled Press Release, 25 May 1964, Box 7, Folder "Correspondence – Anne Olson November 1961 – October 1966", RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

after a few months of buildup, she was sending a 70lb package of newspapers.[273] At this stage, the Williamses' encountered some resistance from Cuban authorities, but they sourced this opposition to the outsized influence of the CPUSA in Cuba. Yet, this pressure provoked the Williamses to engage in a more active search for a new home in exile.



Books Sent to Rob through Montreal

Date	
Feb. 6 '64	Stride Toward Freedom Martin Luther King Jr.
Feb. 6	Black Boy Richard Wright
Feb. 6	The Negro Vanguard Richard Bardolph
Feb. 18	Black Nationalism Ussien Udoni (ordinary air mail)
Feb. 18	The Negro Revolt Lewis E. Lomax
Feb. 27	The BigSea - autobiography ofLangston Hughes
	The Negro Potential Eli Ginsberg
	We Shall Overcome SNVCC
	The Negro Question George W. Cable
	Life & Times of Frederick Douglass-autobiography
	Willie Mae Elizabeth Kytle
	Whenthe Word is Given L. E. Lomax
	Freedom Ride JamesPeck
March 26	The White Negro (pamphlet) Norman Mailer
April 5	American Negro Slave Revolts -Herbert Aptheker
Gave to G.S.	The Black Jacobins C.L.R. James
	Somethingin Common - Langston Hughes
	The Fire Next Time - James Baldwin
April 23 -with A.Purdy-	The Ugly American (2 copies)
	The Black Bourgeoisie
	Notes ofa Native Son
	The Black Muslims in America
	The Negro in America
	Cuba, an American Tragedy -Scheer & Zeitlin
	Anti-Slavery Origins of the Civil War in the U.S. - Dwight L. Dumond.
April 23- with Mrs. Guild;	The Strange Carreer of Jim Crow- Vann Woodward
May 22 - with Natalie;	Slavery... Stanley Elkins
	Desegregation and the Law by Blaustein &Ferguson
	Slave and Citizen Frank Tannenbaum
	Revolution periodical
	Army Life in a Black Regiment Higginson
	On Being Negro in America, by Saunders Redding
	A Free Negro in the Slave Era, by Charlotte Forten

May 10 - through Mtl.
Harriet Tubman Sarah Bradford
Black Reconsruction in Amer. Du Bois
Frederick Douglas Foner
Lawd Today Wright

Figure 4: List of Materials sent to Robert F. Williams in Cuba from Anne Olson. Photo Courtesy of the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Robert F. Williams Collection, Box 7, Folder "Correspondence – Anne Olson."

[273] Robert and Mabel Williams to Anne Olson, Undated, Box 7, Folder "Correspondence – Anne Olson November 1961 – October 1966", RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW, Untitled Press Release, 25 May 1964, Box 7, Folder "Correspondence – Anne Olson November 1961 – October 1966", RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Anne Olson to Robert and Mabel Williams, 8 December 1964, Box 7, Folder "Correspondence – Anne Olson November 1961 – October 1966", RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

After the sentencing of the Monroe defendants and the resolution of the kidnapping trial, Williams and Robinson Williams asked for their absentee ballots from Monroe since they were "born citizens and registered voters." The Union County Board of Elections denied them the right to their ballots since they did not register under the new system instituted in 1962. The letter, signed by the chairman of the board, J. Burns Simpson, added insult to injury through his offer "to discuss registration with you at any time that you wish to appear." With the highly publicized kidnapping trial occurring less than a month prior to this exchange, Simpson was almost certainly aware of Williams. His actions in 1961 had created an uproar in Union County, the rest of North Carolina, and the nation as a whole.[274] The invitation to "appear" probably represented a disingenuous offer to belittle Williams's attempts to exercise his political rights. Two motivations likely fueled their request. First, the application for their ballots continued their method of protest by demanding North Carolina's authorities to respect their rights as citizens. The letter also tested the mood towards the Williams family in Union County. The significance of this request can be ascertained when placed in the context of Williams's other letters from the spring of 1964.[275]

On April 4, 1964, Julian Mayfield inquired about the pressure on Williams.[276] Specifically, he asked Williams to verify the rumors about a showdown with the Soviet Union

[274] North Carolina continued to press its case on Williams in the early 1960s. Not only did they maintain the kidnapping charge against Williams, but a sit-in conviction against Williams from 1961 was being appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1964. Further, Williams received hate mail from white citizens in Monroe from time to time during his residence in Cuba. A "Monroe White" sent one such letter on May 22, 1963. The anonymous sender blamed Williams for the earlier flare ups of racial tension. See "Monroe White" to RFW, 22 May 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[275] Robert F. Williams and Mabel R. Williams to the Chairman of the Union County Board of Elections, 10 March 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-April 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; J. Burns Simpson to Robert and Mabel Williams, 27 March 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-April 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[276] After the events in Monroe and his brief work with the MDC, Julian Mayfield traveled to Ghana. There he worked directly underneath the Ghanaian president, Kwame Nkrumah, as his writer-in-office. Mayfield would leave Ghana after the coup against Nkrumah and eventually returned to the United States in 1967.

that occurred in November of 1963 during Williams's return from Beijing. Upon landing in Moscow, the Williamses were informed of an alteration to their flight plan. Instead of traveling on the direct flight from Moscow to Havana, the couple's flight would be routed through Prague, Czechoslovakia with a stop in Gander, Canada. The Williamses refused to board this plane as they were convinced Williams would be arrested as soon as the plane landed. Two Cubans flying on the direct flight intervened and traded tickets with the Williamses. According to reports, agents of the FBI and RCMP waited for the plane at Gander International Airport. While this level of U.S.-Soviet collaboration was unlikely, Williams clearly perceived that his Soviet hosts and white communists in general considered him a threat. Williams responded to Mayfield's inquiry the following day with a Western Union telegram asserting his "sensitive position" and requested an invite to Africa. Mayfield agreed to campaign in Ghana for Williams to receive a visa, but also instructed Williams to contact the Ghanaian ambassador in Havana.[277]

In a longer, second message to Mayfield, Williams pushed for an "invitation to some (any) African country" since the situation was becoming equivalent to his last weeks in Monroe. The letter attributed this pressure to the CPUSA's presence in Cuba and their disagreements with Williams's race-based message. Williams identified the influence of CPUSA Chairman Gus Hall for the accusations of Williams being a Trotskyite and a black nationalist.[278] The CPUSA of the 1960s rejected both positions since Gus Hall firmly subscribed to the Marxist-Leninist stance

[277] Julian Mayfield to RFW, 4 April 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-April 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Mayfield, 5 April 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-April 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Julian Mayfield to RFW, Undated, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-April 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM. The undated letter was a handwritten note from Mayfield on the back of a copy of the April 4 letter. There is some discrepancy over the date of this incident. According to Cohen's *Black Crusader*, the event at the airport occurred in November of 1964. However, the letters exchanged between Williams and Mayfield were independently marked April of 1964. See Cohen, 288-289.

[278] A case can be made for Williams as a black nationalist. However, Williams as a follower of Trotskyism is less likely. Williams at times shifted his politics depending on his audience, but generally maintained a commitment to democracy and capitalism.

and the Party had backpedaled away from its earlier stance on African American self-determination. Class struggle supplanted racial solidarity within the ranks of the CPUSA in the 1960s. Williams further described his delicate position to Conrad Lynn on May 18, 1964. The CPUSA openly denounced him in Cuba and this included threats from some to transfer him over to the FBI. These detractors also petitioned Cuban officials to terminate *Radio Free Dixie* and *The Crusader-in-Exile*. He believed their hostility to the black freedom struggle arose whenever "[African American activists] refuse to play the part of brainwashed red Uncle Toms." Williams asked Lynn to prepare for his legal defense if certain members of the CPUSA handed him over to the FBI. Due to difficulties with his mail, Lynn sent his response through Selma James, the activist and wife of C.L.R. James.[279] In his letter, he confirmed Williams's suspicions about the CPUSA's plans regarding Williams "since it follows the Krushchev line [sic]" which heightened the Party's emphasis on class while decreasing its attacks on racial discrimination. In regards to leaving Cuba, Lynn stated Robinson Williams could return to New York City, but the best destination for Williams was the People's Republic of China.[280]

After their return from the PRC and the incident in Moscow, the Williamses attempted on multiple occasions to have Mabel Williams return to the United States in 1964 without Williams. The idea first appeared in his correspondence with the aforementioned letter from November of 1963 in which Lynn stated she should not return until after the kidnapping trial's conclusion. The Williamses investigated this option throughout 1964 with two possible goals. The first relates back to Williams's "roundabout plan for reentry," the details of which Williams declined to pass

[279] In a letter from April 27, 1965, Lynn explained that his letters were being delayed in Mexico while the U.S. remarkably did not impede Williams's letters.

[280] RFW to Mayfield, 18 May 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-August 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Lynn, 18 May 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-August 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn forwarded by Selma James to RFW, 4 June 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-August 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM. Harry Haywood's 1957 article "For a Revolutionary Position on the Negro Question" provides a critique of the CPUSA's shift in stance towards African American self-determination.

through a third party. If this plan remained viable a few months later, the Williamses may have wanted Mabel Williams to act as his representative in discussions with Lynn. Furthermore, her presence in the United States would be an invaluable asset in organizing and preparing a defense committee if Williams was turned over to the FBI. A second possible reason the Williamses pushed for Mabel Williams's return was to remove her from any danger in Cuba. The Williamses' would later relocate their children to the PRC in November of 1964 while Mabel Williams remained in Cuba. As the tension mounted between Williams and the CPUSA, it is possible Robert and Mabel Williams wanted to protect her and their children. According to Robert Cohen's interviews with Williams, the couple also believed extracting themselves from Cuba might prove easier if the children were already safe in the PRC. Regardless of the rationale, Lynn approved of Mabel Williams's return following the conclusion of the kidnapping trial as long as she traveled directly to New York City. The Williamses received additional advice from Lynn in September when he suggested that if she returned, Robert Williams should name her as his legal representative for planned litigation against Marzani and Munsell, Inc., the publishers of his book, *Negroes with Guns*. Since the book's release in 1962, the Williamses and Lynn discussed legal action against Carl Marzani for a faulty royalty agreement. The effort to have Mabel Williams return from exile continued into 1965 though she would not return until 1969.[281]

[281] Lynn to RFW, 27 November 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Lynn, 17 December 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-December 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Cohen, 280. RFW to Lynn, 7 May 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-August 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 11 May 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-August 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 7 September 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September-December 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Lynn, 2 April 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence March-April 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 13 April 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence March-April 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 27 April 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence March-April 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM. Not only did this plan fade from Williams's letters, but Lynn and Williams appear to have stopped corresponding through mail for a time. After a flurry of letters in the first four months of 1965, they did not regularly correspond again until October of 1966.

The plan for her to enter the United States also related to a decision from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit during February of 1964. The judicial panel from the Fifth Circuit ruled in *Worthy v. United States of America* that the act of reentry into the United States by an American citizen without a valid passport could not be a crime in and of itself. The case centered on William Worthy's previously mentioned indictment upon his then illegal return from Cuba in October 1961, where he had reported on conditions in Cuba and, incidentally, met with a newly arriving Robert F. Williams. The *Worthy* decision did not affect Williams, though, since he still faced federal charges under the Federal Fugitive Act and Lynn suggested he seek asylum in the PRC in May of 1964. Instead, Williams persisted in his attempt to reach Ghana. Williams declined to mention his reasons for ignoring Lynn's advice, but Ghana's status in 1964 as a haven for African American expatriates certainly weighed into the decision. Another positive for Williams and his family was that Ghana bore no travel restrictions from the United States, unlike Cuba and China.[282]

Around the conclusion of the Monroe kidnapping trial, Williams asked Julian Mayfield about the feasibility of "a real quickie visa" to Ghana with the further clarification that, "Last Monday wouldn't have been too early." It was at this point that Mayfield inquired about the plane incident in Moscow and agreed to look into visas for the Williams family. He investigated the visa situation for Williams into the fall of 1964 and received a response from the Principal Immigration Officer in Ghana who advised that the Williamses must apply for entry visas through the Ghana Embassy in Cuba. Mayfield suggested the family apply in the PRC. It is

[282] Lynn to RFW, 13 April 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence March-April 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Associated Press, "Newsman Upheld in Passport Case: Conviction of Worthy for Going to Cuba is Voided," *New York Times (1923-Current file)*, 21 February 1964, Proquest Historical Newspapers (115546294); "Believe Cuba is Harboring U.S. Fugitive: May Portray Him as Political Martyr," *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*, 30 September 1961, Proquest Historical Newspapers (183032917). For more on Ghana's expatriate community, see Kevin K. Gaines, *American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates and the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

unclear whether Mayfield recommended this course of action because the Williamses were then in the PRC on their second visit or because the Ghanaian embassy in Cuba had failed to respond to the Williamses' earlier attempts. However, it is perhaps significant that Mayfield directly countered the advice of the immigration officer.[283]

Trying to piece together the more secretive aspects of the Williamses' travel plans from their correspondence is complicated by the evidence of coded language. Such an exchange occurred between the Williamses and their Toronto contact, Anne Olson. Responding to a telegram from Williams on July 13, 1964, Anne stated she interpreted Williams's message concerning a conference for distributors of *The Crusader-in-Exile* as a sign to set in motion the plan for Max Stanford, the chairman of RAM, to travel to Cuba. Olson contacted Stanford and he prepared to travel to Canada and, from there, to Cuba. She then asked about the proposed plan for Mabel Williams to return to Canada with the intention of later entering the United States. She wrote, "If you want to say anything regarding this in an ordinary letter you can refer to your mother taking a trip to Canada and I'll know what you mean." The mention of "an ordinary letter" referred to the Olsons' ability to circumvent the postal services of Canada, the United States, and Cuba by sending letters to the Williamses through couriers on the freight planes flying out of Montreal. This provided a more secure line of communication than the mail services which all members of Williams's network found suspect. The Olsons and other friends

[283] RFW to Mayfield, Undated, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence Undated (2)," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Mayfield to RFW, 4 April, 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-April 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Mayfield, 5 April 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-April 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Mayfield to RFW, Undated, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-April 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Mayfield to Robert and Mabel Williams, 24 August 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-August 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; P.K. Apanya to Mayfield, 1 October 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September-December 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Mayfield to Robert and Mabel Williams, 12 October 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September-December 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM. The undated letter in Box 1/ Folder "Correspondence Undated (2)" can be placed around February or March of 1964 with its discussion of Lynn and Holt's dismissal from the Monroe defendants' legal teams.

of Williams observed plenty of episodes to ground their suspicions regarding state surveillance. For example, Stanford was deported from Canada during the above episode since a Canadian immigration officer expressed disbelief in Stanford's claim of vacationing in Canada. Anne Olson acknowledged the possibility of this setback as a coincidence, but also firmly believed that the use of Stanford's name and address in an earlier phone call had alerted the authorities to the purpose of his visit. This level of caution revealed the Williamses' deep concerns about the safety of returning to the United States and receiving a fair trial once relocated.[284]

Unwelcome back home, the Williamses found the international arena increasingly set against their efforts as well. The policies formulated in Moscow and propagated by the CPUSA damaged Williams's ability to interact with the black freedom struggle. While Williams remained in Cuba until the summer of 1966, he continually sought a new home as his hosts and the CPUSA became more hostile. The scholar Robeson Taj Frazier attributed this antagonism to Williams's growing connection to the People's Republic of China. He noted that after the beginnings of the Sino-Soviet Split, "the USSR and China worked to isolate and contain each other's influence among Third World nations." Williams's letters from the time also reflected his belief that his budding relationship with the PRC had soured his opportunities in Cuba. Conrad Lynn expressed similar concerns in a letter to Williams after the latter's exit from Cuba. According to Lynn, "Socialist Cuba is caught in the cross fire between Peking and Moscow…We are in for very difficult times. The Black Radical movement in the United States will be independent of both Russian and Chinese attachment."[285]

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[284] RFW to Anne Olson, 7 July 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-August 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Anne Olson to RFW, 13 July 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-August 1964," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[285] Frazier, "Thunder in the East," 938; Lynn to RFW, 11 October 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence October-November 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM. For more detail on the deteriorating relationship between Williams and Cuba in relationship to the former's connection to China, see Frazier, *The East is Black*, 142-146; Cohen, 266-318.

Williams in the Crossfire: The Soviet Union and the PRC

Conrad Lynn accurately described the impact of the Sino-Soviet Split on Third World nations such as Cuba. Williams's position in Cuba meant that he was at the victim of these international conflicts especially since the courtship between Williams and the PRC—starting in the summer of 1963—occurred just as the split between the Soviet Union and the PRC became public and palpable. One result of the fissure was that the PRC began a campaign to lead and inspire the revolutionary struggles of the Third World while the Soviet Union attempted to muzzle China and keep the appearance of an impermeable communist bloc. Fidel Castro, though publicly impartial and pushing for unity among the communist nations, found his nation increasingly reliant on Soviet Union economic aid in the 1960s after the U.S. embargo of the island. Each of these agendas influenced Williams's exile as he inserted himself into the political fray.

Though rooted in the history of both nations, the Sino-Soviet split arose after the death of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin and his successor Nikita Khrushchev's attempts to reform the Soviet Union.[286] In September of 1954, Khrushchev initiated a world tour that began in China with the aim of setting a new tone for the Soviet Union's foreign policy—one that embraced the Third

[286] For a broader view of the Sino-Soviet Alliance and the Sino-Soviet Split, see *Brothers in Arms: The Rise and Fall of the Sino-Soviet alliance, 1945-1963* edited by Odd Arne Westad, Cold War International History Project (Washington, D.C: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998); *Connecting Histories: Decolonization and the Cold War in Southeast Asia* edited by Christopher E. Goscha and Christian Ostermann, Cold War International History Project (Washington, D.C: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009); Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967*, Cold War International History Project (Washington, D.C.; Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2009); Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World*, Princeton Studies in International History and Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, The New Cold War History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). The seeds for the split existed before Stalin's death and were largely attributable to Stalin's actions in signing a treaty with Chiang Kai-Shek's nationalist government before the success of the communist revolution in China; Stalin's cold and scornful treatment of Mao during the signing of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance in 1950; and Stalin's willingness to prolong the Korean War at the expense of his Chinese and Korean allies. However, the dispute between Khrushchev and Mao—as well as their personalities—defined the development of the rift between the two nations.

World and projected a willingness to accept different paths to socialism than those advocated by Stalin.[287] Khrushchev amplified his critiques of Stalin in the "Secret Speech" of 1956, delivered in a closed session of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, by highlighting Stalin's mistakes in office and his accumulation of power through the cult of personality. To Mao, Khrushchev's attempts at reform created an opportunity to position himself as the elder statesman of global communism. Mao viewed Khrushchev's visit to China in 1954 as a signal for the realignment of power amongst the communist nations. Khrushchev's speech criticizing Stalin also allowed Mao to further advocate his status amongst revolutionary leaders since the denouncement of Stalin freed up ideological space for other leaders to emerge.[288] Historians Chen Jian and Yang Kuisong argue that Mao bolstered his domestic position in the PRC through foreign policy and the fallout from the "Secret Speech" was no different. Mao responded to Khrushchev's speech with his own narrative that recast his conflicts with Stalin in such a way to ensure that he became the fount of "eternal correctness" and therefore the sole protector of revolutionary ideals.[289] As Chen Jian further elaborates in his examination of China's participation in the 1955 Bandung conference, PRC officials viewed international relations as means to serve two aims in the 1950s: channeling "foreign policy challenges into sources of sustained domestic mobilization" to pursue Mao's goal of continuous revolution and to elevate the PRC's status on the world stage.[290]

Conditions continued to worsen in the years following the "Secret Speech" due to the competing interests of Khrushchev and Mao. The former sought to use the threat of a unified

[287] Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 67.

[288] Westad, "Introduction" in *Brothers in Arms*, 15; Westad, "The Sino-Soviet Alliance and the United States" in *Brothers in Arms*, 174-175.

[289] Chen Jian and Yang Kuisong, "Chinese Politics and the Collapse of the Sino-Soviet Alliance" in *Ibid.*, 259-264.

[290] Chen Jian, "Bridging Revolution and Decolonization: The 'Bandung Discourse' in China's Early Cold War Experience" in *Connecting Histories*, 138.

communist bloc—under the leadership of the Soviet Union—to formalize relations with the West through his implementation of "peaceful coexistence."[291] On the other hand, Mao saw no domestic or international benefit in "peaceful coexistence" with Western nations. Stabilizing international relations did not serve the goals of Mao's domestic revolution and his economic reforms. Mao also viewed the failure of the Soviet Union to push the United States for the return of Taiwan as a betrayal while the offer of Soviet assistance for his nuclear program sent mixed signals about the Soviet Union's commitment to deescalating tensions with the West.[292] By 1959, the Chinese leadership suspected the Soviet Union of attempting to interfere in their domestic affairs while Khrushchev and his comrades grew increasingly frustrated with Chinese provocations on the Sino-Indian border and during the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1958.[293] The alliance continued to sour and, in 1960, an agitated Khrushchev decided to remove all of the Russian military and economic advisers in China after the Bucharest Conference during which the contours of the Sino-Soviet became public.[294] In response, Mao blamed the Soviet Union for the failures of his economic reforms contained in the Great Leap Forward, accused them of revisionism, and shifted the PRC's foreign policy towards cultivating an image of the PRC as the ideological leader of the Third World.[295]

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[291] Constantine Pleshakov, "Nikita Khrushchev and Sino-Soviet Relations" in *Brothers in Arms*, 231-232.

[292] Jian, "Bridging Revolution and Decolonization: The 'Bandung Discourse' in China's Early Cold War Experience" in *Connecting Histories*, 165; Westad, "The Sino-Soviet Alliance and the United States" in *Brothers in Arms*, 175; Pleshakov, "Nikita Khrushchev and Sino-Soviet Relations" in *Brothers in Arms*, 232-236.

[293] Pleshakov, "Nikita Khrushchev and Sino-Soviet Relations" in *Brothers in Arms*, 236-240; Westad, "The Sino-Soviet Alliance and the United States" in *Brothers in Arms*, 175-178.

[294] Westad, "Introduction" in Ibid., 25; Westad, "The Sino-Soviet Alliance and the United States" in Ibid., 178.

[295] Westad, "Introduction" in *Brothers in Arms*, 29; Radchenko, 36-37, 72-73, 81-84; Westad, *Global Cold War*, 158-165; Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 211-212. See Chen Jian's "Bridging Revolution and Decolonization: The 'Bandung Discourse' in China's Early Cold War Experience" in *Connecting Histories* for a more in-depth look at the development of Chinese foreign policy towards the Third World.

The Cuban Missile Crisis in October of 1962 precipitated the final moments of the Sino-Soviet Alliance. Prior to the standoff between the United States and the Soviet Union over the Soviet missiles in Cuba, Fidel Castro and the Cuban people's successful revolution had inspired radicals and leftists throughout the world, especially in the Third World and colonized nations. Khrushchev's decision to remove the missiles in the face of U.S. threats afforded Mao the chance to criticize the Soviet Union and gain prestige amongst the communist bloc. As historian Sergey Radchenko argues, Mao used his criticisms of Khrushchev's behavior to mobilize his continuous revolution, exploit the weakened position of the Soviet Union among Third World nations, and cast the PRC as the bulwark against imperialist forces when compared to Khrushchev's wilting against a show of force from the United States.[296] The Communist Party of China, spurred on by Mao, unleashed a torrent of propaganda in November of 1962 that belittled Khrushchev and the Soviet Union for its handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis.[297] This propaganda succeeded on a rhetorical level as Third World nations drew inspiration from the Chinese example, a process aided by the new opportunity for many of the newly independent nations "to tack between the two self-proclaimed centers of Communism and get support from both."[298] Bewildered at first by Mao's actions, Khrushchev countered the Chinese political maneuvering by first courting Fidel Castro through promises of economic and military support as well as directly rebutting Mao's accusations surrounding Soviet behavior.[299] By 1963, the Soviet Union and the PRC were actively competing for the hearts and minds of the revolutionary parties in the Third World.

[296] Radchenko, 36.
[297] Ibid., 33-46.
[298] Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 158.
[299] Radchenko, 39-41.

Figure 5: Mr. and Mrs. Williams with Zhou Enlai, Premier of the PRC, date unkown. Photo Courtesy of the Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Robert F. Williams Collection, Box 14, Folder "China – Informal Groups."

In August of 1963, Robert F. Williams entered into the fray. Williams had written Mao in 1962 as part of a series of letters that he sent to world leaders such as Ben Bella of Algeria, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, U Thant of Burma, Ahmed Surkano or Indonesia, and Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia. This letter inspired Mao to make a public statement supporting the African American freedom struggle in the United States on August 8, 1963, to members of African independence movements visiting the PRC.[300] The timing and venue for this speech revealed Mao's three goals for highlighting Williams's letter and the black freedom struggle. First, the speech emphasized the faulty behavior of the United States and placed the PRC as its moral opposite. Building off his criticism of the United States, Mao's statement also served to

[300] Frazier, *The East is Black*, 130-131. See the folder "Correspondence Undated (3)" of Box 1 in the Robert F. Williams Papers at the Bentley Historical Library for examples of this letter writing campaign.

elevate the PRC's status among Third World nations by offering a more confrontational approach to Western imperialism than Khrushchev's "peaceful coexistence"—it was no accident that Mao's original audience was African delegates.[301] Mao and the Communist Party of China made the connection more explicit over the next few years as they used the language of race to connect the Chinese revolution to the struggles of people of color throughout the Third World. This messaging emphasized the PRC's shared experience of racial oppression to the people of Africa, Asia, and Latin America—and further set them apart from the white nations led by the United States and the Soviet Union.[302]

Williams's timely letter fit within the emerging Chinese foreign policy and, as discussed earlier in the chapter, Williams soon visited the PRC three times in three years. His growing closeness to the PRC became a sour spot for his Cuban hosts who were ostensibly neutral in the Sino-Soviet Split but were also increasingly dependent on Soviet aid.[303] Williams's vociferous support of the PRC posed a challenge to his Cuban hosts and provides one explanation for the restrictions placed on him during his final years in Cuba since Williams's access to a Western audience could potentially undermine the Soviet Union's plans to stifle the political ambitions of the PRC. This pressure only increased after the removal of Khrushchev from office and the new leaders of the Soviet Union took active measures—through "quiet diplomacy" and economic and military aid—to contain Chinese influence in the Third World.[304] The split between the Soviet Union and the PRC had a real effect upon Williams's status in Cuba.

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[301] Radchenko, 81-82. See Robeson Taj Frazier's *The East is Black* (130-136) for a thorough exploration of Mao's 1963 statement, the accompanying propaganda campaign, and its use domestically in the PRC.

[302] Radchenko, 36-37, 81-82. For an overview of how this messaging reached the African American community, see Robin DG Kelly and Betsy Esch, "Black Like Mao: Red China and Black Revolution," *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society* no. 1 (1999): 6-41.

[303] Westad, 176; Perez, 270-272; Pérez-Stable, 84-90.

[304] Radchenko, 164.

Final Push Out of Cuba, 1965-1966

When Williams first entered exile, he tested his ability to contribute to the black freedom struggle in three ways: his access to American audiences, his right to travel, and his contact with fellow black activists. He learned to navigate the restrictions of his expatriacy as seen in his publication of *The Crusader-in-Exile*, the broadcasting of *Radio Free Dixie*, and his travels to the PRC and North Vietnam. Not all of his efforts were successful. For instance, Williams spent a number of years attempting to convince Cuban officials to secure and approve of a trip to Africa. Throughout 1964, Williams experienced pressure from a mixture of Cuban officials and white CPUSA members in Cuba, but he retained his capacity to reach African American activists, traveled on a second trip to the PRC, and suffered little to no interference with his newsletter and radio program. Williams's hosts encroached on each of those activities during his last two years in Cuba. Whereas earlier harassment originated from the CPUSA, members of the Cuban government more directly hindered Williams's activism from 1965 to 1966. By 1966, he halted the production of *The Crusader-in-Exile* and *Radio Free Dixie* and relocated to the PRC in the summer. Before settling in the People's Republic of China, the Williamses continued the search they had initiated in 1964 for a secure exit from Cuba.[305]

Some hope for a safe return to the United States arose in February 1965 after Mae Mallory, Richard Crowder, Harold Reape, and John Lowy were acquitted of the kidnapping charges stemming from the August 27, 1961, incident with the Stegall family. The North Carolina Supreme Court overturned the ruling of the North Carolina Superior Court due to racial discrimination in the petit jury and grand jury selections. On February 3, 1965, Conrad Lynn

[305] Robert and Mabel Williams to Cedric Belfrage, 24 April 1963, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence April-June 1963," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Fidel Castro, Undated, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence Undated (1)," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Castro, 28 August 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

advised that North Carolina could re-indict the defendants with a new jury selection, but he doubted the likelihood of this event due to the logistics of arranging five extradition processes in order to collect all of the defendants.[306] Lynn further informed Williams he could safely return to the United States, and, if they incriminated him for his time in Cuba, "the black struggle here would be lifted to new heights." Since Lynn no longer had a place on the defendants' legal teams, his information was out of date. Two days prior to Lynn's letter, Mae Mallory telegrammed Williams that North Carolina would indict the defendants again. Mallory followed the telegram with a longer note warning against Williams's return even if it was technically safe since the new indictments were not yet in effect. His supporters, according to Mallory, needed more time to prepare and organize for his defense.[307]

The opportunity for Williams to return in February disappeared rather quickly. At the end of the month, a litany of events disrupted any chance for Williams to enter the United States without persecution. First, newspapers in the United States and Canada attached Williams's name to the assassination of Malcolm X and the arrest of four radical activists for a plot to bomb the Statue of Liberty. For instance, The New York *Daily News* named Williams as a conspirator in Malcolm X's death as part of a sectarian struggle between black militant organizations. The Toronto *Telegram* asserted the four defendants in the Statue of Liberty plot were following the orders of Williams. The latter speculation carried more weight as one of the accused conspirators, Robert S. Collier, had traveled to Cuba in 1964 as part of a student group that

[306] From Lynn's letter, it is unclear whether Williams, upon his return, would be the fifth defendant, or if Lynn is referring to Albert Rorie who had been indicted under separate charges after the events of August 27, 1961. See Lynn to RFW, 3 February 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-February 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[307] Lynn to RFW, 3 February 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-February 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Mallory to RFW, 1 February 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-February 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Mallory to Robert and Mabel Williams, 3 February 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-February 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

included other African American militant activists such as Max Stanford, Ernest Allen Jr., Charles Simmons, and General Baker.[308] There, the group met with Williams and discussed the future of the black freedom struggle. A year later, this rumor still held sway as a briefing document prepared for the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee stated Williams's involvement in the Statue of Liberty plot as fact. The report summarized the recent Tricontinental Conference of African, Asian and Latin American Peoples hosted in Cuba in January 1966, and, in describing Collier's meeting with Williams in 1964, characterized the latter's "berserk anti-Americanism."[309]

In February of 1965, Conrad Lynn argued that the falsified media representations described above were part of a larger effort to stop Williams's return to the United States. He cited North Carolina Attorney General T. Wade Burton's attempts to reopen an earlier sit-in conviction against Williams as another effort to uphold the government's harassment of him. The chances for a fair trial narrowed as the federal government and the press further connected Williams to subversive acts. The Williamses followed two courses of action in the wake of the rumors of re-indictment and accusation. First, they revived their efforts to return Mabel Williams to the United States. On April 2, 1965, the Williamses wrote to Lynn about the issuance of a

[308] Stanford and Allen held positions of leadership in RAM. Baker and Simmons would later become prominent members of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. All five of these activists would later enter academia.

[309] Lynn to RFW, 28 February 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-February 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Editors of the *Daily News*, 5 April 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence March-April 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Editors of the *Telegram*, 5 April 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence March-April 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Phil Casey, "Monument Bomb Plot Foiled; 4 Held: Dynamite Also Aimed at Liberty Bell and Statue," *The Washington Post, Times Herald (1959-1973)*, 17 February 1965, Proquest Historical Newspapers (142476325); Edward McCarthy, "Terrorist Shrine Plot Unfolds: Bombs Were Planned for Landmarks Across Nation," *Boston Globe (1960-1984)*, 17 February 1965, Proquest Historical Newspapers (276449920); Peniel E. Joseph, "Black Studies, Student Activism, and the Black Power Movement" in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. by Peneil E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), 261; U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, *The Tricontinental Conference of African, Asian, and Latin American Peoples: A Staff Study prepared for the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act and Other Internal Security Laws of the Committee on the Judiciary*, 89th Cong., 2nd sess., 6-7.

Swiss "protection passport" which allowed her to return to the United States. They wanted Lynn's opinion on the legality of the document which the Swiss assured them guaranteed her entry into the United States. Lynn reassured the Williamses' that she could travel safely, especially in light of the *Worthy* case, and mentioned that her presence in the U.S. would also assist in legal battles over the royalties of Williams's book, *Negroes with Guns*. The second action from the Williamses was characteristic of their protest style: Williams fought the media's negative image of him. To the Toronto *Telegram*, he attributed their negative view to his refusal to meekly submit to racial oppression in the United States. He distinguished his politics from what he described as the Eastern-derived, non-violent tactics of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and stated his "only apology is for being too western in my approach to tyranny." He responded to the New York *Daily News* with a similar message, though, he ended with the more antagonistic message, "If I were a terrorist, I know much better targets than the ones your irrational scandal sheet has selected for me." The tone of the message perhaps revealed exhaustion at having defended his image from abroad for the last four years.[310]

On May 4, 1965, the Union County Superior Court issued arrest warrants for each of the four Monroe defendants and Williams. The authorities planned for a trial in August while Mallory and the other defendants prepared to fight extradition. Perhaps Conrad Lynn's advice from February 1965—that the state of North Carolina would grow unwilling to engage in extradition proceedings for all of the defendants—proved accurate since the August trial never occurred. Yet, rumors of Williams's involvement in domestic, subversive activity continued in

[310] Lynn to RFW, 28 February 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-February 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM. Robert and Mabel Williams to Lynn, 2 April 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence March-April 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 13 April 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence March-April 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Editors of the Toronto *Telegram*, 5 April 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence March-April 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Editors of the New York *Daily News*, 5 April 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence March-April 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

September 1965. Merely seven months after the rumors of Williams's involvement in the assassination of Malcolm X and the Statue of Liberty plot, Senator Thomas J. Dodd (D-CT) of the Internal Security Subcommittee connected Williams to the Watts uprisings of 1965. Williams responded to these allegations by sending Dodd and the subcommittee a letter rejecting any connection to Watts while charging him with "negro redbaiting." The message continued with a recap of Williams's struggles in Monroe. Echoing the dismissal from the Union County Board of Elections, Dodd's short response stated it would be his utmost pleasure to hear Williams's testimony "whenever you find it convenient to come to Washington, D.C., for that purpose." Reports also reached Williams that the French magazine *Paris Match*, called the "French equivalent" of *Life* magazine by an associate of Williams, blamed his rhetoric for the events in Watts. These rumors likely harmed Williams's continued efforts to find a new host for his exile because they depicted Williams as violent and unhinged.[311]

On the Cuban front, Williams continued to encounter pressure from the CPUSA and the local government. On August 2, 1965, in a letter to the journalist Henry Wallace[312], Williams referenced the Ku Klux Klan in his complaint about the "bed sheet mentality" of the CPUSA's political advisors to the Cubans. They described self-defense as "political immaturity" while promoting King's nonviolent tactics since it better fit the CPUSA's emphasis on a class-based struggle. He further explained to another ally his mounting frustration with the "white is always right" mentality that dominated the political right and left. This harassment continued and, on

[311] Clarence Seniors to Walter Haffner, 4 May 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-June 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Walter Haffner to Clarence Senior, 14 June 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-June 1965," RFW Papers; Lynn to RFW, 3 February 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-February 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Sen. Thomas J. Dodd, 21 September 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September-December 1965," 260, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Dodd to RFW, 16 November 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September-December 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[312] Henry Wallace was a civil rights activist and journalist from Kentucky. He publicly supported Cuba and the Cuban Revolution up until his death in 2006.

August 16, 1965, Williams requested an immediate audience with Fidel Castro. In a 26-page open letter to Castro published after his exit from Cuba in 1966, Williams mentioned his nearly constant attempts to contact and meet with Castro. These requests were never granted. The letter went on to recount how the Cuban administration, under the influence of the CPUSA, had weakened the Havana broadcast strength of Williams's radio program, *Radio Free Dixie*, so that it barely reached Florida. Williams contrasted this to the height of the signal's strength in 1964: 50,000 watts. He also accused the Cuban Foreign Ministry of tampering with his mail and retaining various newspaper clippings, writings, and recordings that his supporters had sent to him while in exile. Each of these steps interfered with Williams's ability to reach his American audience as well as maintain contact with his activist network. This intrusion extended into disrupting Williams's travel plans as well.[313]

The Williamses' continued to search for an exit from Cuba throughout 1965. In August, Williams contacted an official of the Tanzanian government about relocating to Tanzania. He wrote to Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu about his desire to carry on Malcolm X's late-life work of internationalizing the black freedom struggle:

> Brother Malcolm's work of bringing the Afro-American to the realization that our struggle is a part of the universal liberation struggle must not be allowed to falter. I feel it is imperative also that the African masses be truly apprised of the plight of their brothers at the hands of the new so-called savior of the world. It is in this spirt that I would like to establish an Afro-American Information office in Africa. I want to move my place of exile to the African Continent, and I am sure the situation is favorable at this time for an intensification of the work started by brother Malcolm.

[313] RFW to Henry Wallace, 2 August 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Sylvester Leaks, 2 August 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Celia Sanchez, 16 August 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM, translated by the author from the original Spanish; RFW to Fidel Castro, 28 August 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

No response from the Tanzanian government appeared in the archive[314] and the point may have been moot as Richard Gibson, a fellow expatriate and a co-founder of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, expressed doubt over Williams's ability to receive an exit visa to anywhere from the Cuban government "unless some big friends in Asia speak loudly on your behalf." Still, Gibson endeavored to find sanctuary for Williams in Europe and beseeched Williams to seriously consider the ramifications and dangers of returning to the United States. The Afro-Cuban expatriate and former announcer on the *Radio Free Dixie* program, Carlos Moore[315], promised to investigate obtaining an invitation to France on January 2, 1966.[316]

Williams investigated the feasibility of a trip to Sweden after he received an invitation from Swedish students to speak at Lund University. On March 17, 1966, he requested an exit visa from the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations in order to travel to Sweden. He connected this request to the larger fight against the United States and asked for immediate support "in-as-much as the Cuban Government is a supporter of all people who struggle for liberty." Williams also confided to an associate that the trip to Sweden offered an opportunity to re-enter Canada and prepare for a return to the United States. However, the Cuban administration appeared to delay his exit visa. On April 27, Williams expressed his frustration in a letter to an official of

[314] The Tanzanian government may have responded without it appearing in Williams's extensive correspondence file. However, another factor may have soured over the behavior in Cuba of D.H. Mansur, a Tanzanian national and supposed official of the Tanzanian government. Williams alleged Mansur stole close to $1500 from him and later was pressured by the Cuban intelligence service to drop the matter. See RFW to Fidel Castro, 28 August 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Cohen, 307-311.

[315] Carlos Moore left Cuba in 1963 and publicly denounced its racial and political policies for decades. He settled in Paris in the mid-1960s and became a part of the expatriate community there. He began a career as a journalist and scholar in France.

[316] RFW to Abdulrahman Mohammed Babu, 5 August 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Gibson to RFW, 20 September 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September-December 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Gibson to RFW, 8 December 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September-December 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Gibson to RFW, 26 December 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September-December 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Carlos Moore, 2 January 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence Undated and January 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

Lund University. As an American citizen, he did not need an entry visa into Sweden, but he did need documents to prove his status as an American citizen and the exit visa from Cuba; the governments of the United States and Cuba were not forthcoming with those documents.[317]

Williams grew increasingly disturbed by the contradictions occurring in the United States and Canada throughout 1966. Mae Mallory's former extradition attorney, Walter S. Haffner, challenged Williams's claim to political exile on December 22, 1965. He declared the charges against Williams nullified and accused him of preferring the Havana weather over engaging in the black freedom struggle. In an undated note from 1966, Williams vented. He derided his fellow activists in the United States for crying out from the slightest pressure from the federal government. The provocation from the CPUSA in Cuba led him to declare, "Mr. Hoover is almost a Sunday school teacher compared to our white comrades." He also doubted the veracity of Haffner's statements regarding his case. This proved somewhat accurate as Haffner later clarified that the criminal charges still existed against Williams, but they would easily be overturned as invalid and unconstitutional. Yet, Williams would have to trust in the U.S. court system to treat him fairly and Williams clearly held reservations on that point.[318]

His misgivings increased in February of 1966 after a false edition of *The Crusader-in-Exile* surfaced labeled as the October 1965 edition. Williams learned of this phony edition when Vernel and Anne Olson received a package of *Crusaders* marked as failed to deliver and addressed to various groups in Africa. These *Crusaders* were printed in multiple languages,

[317] RFW to Ministry of Foreign Relations, 17 March 1966, Reel 2, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence February-April 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Frank More, 17 May 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence February-April 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Sven A. Olsson, 27 April 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence February-April 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Frank, 17 May 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence February-April 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[318] Walter Haffner to RFW, 22 December 1965, Box, Folder "Correspondence September-December 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Unknown recipients, Undated, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence Undated and January 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Walter Haffner to RFW, 21 January 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence Undated and January 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

Olson forwarded a French and Swedish edition to Williams, that fervently denounced the Soviet Union. Though these copies were sent to the Olsons due to faulty addresses, Anne raised the concern as to how many reached their intended targets. In a press release on February 7, 1966, Williams posited the fabrication as an act of sabotage against himself and the People's Republic of China. This *Crusader* was printed on rice paper, contained quotes from Chinese officials, and depicted an African American and Chinese soldier waving a flag on top of a stack of corpses. Historian Robeson Taj Frazier argued, "Through visual argument, the image suggests that black America and China are climbing on the backs of other revolutionary struggles, exploiting Third World Liberation movements and endangering global anti-imperialism." The disruption of the PRC's rising status as the de facto leader, in terms of power and prestige, of the non-aligned nations in the Cold War appeared as the most likely motive for the falsified *Crusader*. Williams vacillated between blaming the United States' Central Intelligence Agency and the Cuban intelligence service, G-2, for the forgery.[319]

The combined result of the delayed exit visa and the forged *Crusader* led Williams, on March 18, 1966, to declare a halt to his "human rights activity after being informed of a plot in which high officials of Cuba's Ministry of the Interior are soliciting reactionary degenerates in a conspiracy to impugn his struggle for Negro rights in racist America." Williams's central complaint related to his inability to maintain contact with American audiences and fellow activists. Cuban officials, according to him, sought to thwart his efforts by holding his news subscriptions, personal correspondence, and refusing entrance to African Americans attempting to enter Cuba. This last point particularly irritated Williams and other African American activists

[319] Anne Olson to Robert and Mabel Williams, 6 February 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence February-April 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW in Press Release, 7 February 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence February-April 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Frazier, *The East is Black*, 142-143; RFW to Conrad Lynn, Undated, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence Undated (5)," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

due to the events of the Tricontinental Conference of African, Asian, and Latin American Peoples hosted in Havana in January 1966. Milton and Laurence Henry[320], attached to the African American newspaper *The Philadelphia Tribune*, found themselves stranded in Mexico City and denied visas into Cuba after weeks of laying the groundwork for their visit. In a letter to Fidel Castro, the Henry brothers expressed their disgust at their treatment since "whites of every description, boasting no African or Asian ancestry, received visas to enter Cuba while we sat warming our heels." Williams conveyed a similar message about the conference and his frustration since it required the intercession of some African delegates for Williams to be admitted.[321]

A second forged *Crusader* then appeared as the April-May edition for 1966 in the months following Williams's self-imposed halt of activity in the black freedom struggle. Whereas the first volume sought to disrupt the connections between the PRC and the non-aligned movement, the second volume repeated those attacks while also directly attempting to sabotage Williams's relationship with the PRC. The second counterfeit *Crusader* disclosed Williams's supposed betrayal by the Chinese officials and their false commitment to global revolution. This forgery emerged firmly after Williams's termination of activities. However, two qualifications should be attached to this cessation of activism. First, throughout 1965, Cuban officials already stripped Williams of his efficacy in reaching his American audience by sapping the strength of the *Radio*

[320] Milton R. Henry, with his brother Richard, would later go on to form the Republic of New Africa in Detroit. Laurence G. Henry was Milton's brother as well and a pastor from Philadelphia.

[321] RFW in Press Release, 18 March 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence February-April 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Milton R. Henry and Laurence G. Henry to Fidel Castro, Undated, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence Undated and January 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Unknown, Undated, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence Undated and January 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Fidel Castro, 28 August 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM. For a broader description of the Tricontinental Conference, see Manuel Barcia, "'Locking Horns with the Northern Empire': Anti-American Imperialism at the Tricontinental Conference of 1966 in Havana," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* 7, no. 3 (2009): 208-217.

Free Dixie broadcast, tampering with his mail, and hindering the production of *The Crusader-in-Exile*. A second reason emerged in a letter to an associate that discussed the suspension of *Radio Free Dixie*. Mentioning the friction generated by the program, Williams added on, "Plus it really couldn't serve any favorable purpose since I am trying to settle some place else." This letter, along with an earlier one, appealed to the associate to assist Williams with his exit from Cuba to an unspecified country. By the spring of 1966, Williams plainly recognized the potential cost of his continued activism.[322]

The cancellation of *Radio Free Dixie* may also relate to the Williamses' near return to the United States in the spring of 1966. In a chapter of his unpublished autobiography, Williams described an encounter with a Canadian official at the Canadian consulate. Based on the official's accent and demeanor, Williams suspected this figure represented the U.S. State Department. The diplomat offered Williams a means of returning to the United States under two conditions: denounce the PRC and endorse Martin Luther King Jr. or another pacifistic civil rights leader. The agent also hinted that Williams might avoid any repercussion from the lingering kidnapping charges under these conditions. In addition to Williams's reluctance to accept these stipulations, he also sensed another attempt to ensnare him. The official raised Williams's suspicions as he started to refer to specific information Williams had passed on to the Cuban intelligence service. The deal never occurred. However, this also could reflect the unwillingness of other federal agencies to accept this arrangement. On an internal report asking for the FBI's feedback on a plan involving Williams, the FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover scrawled,

[322] Frazier, *The East is Black*, 142-145; RFW to Fidel Castro, 28 August 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Cohen, 289-299; Frazier, 142-145; RFW to Frank, 27 March 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence February-April 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Frank, 28 April 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence February-April 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

"We want to have no part in this. It would be the height of absurdity for State Dept to grant visa to Williams."[323] With bleak prospects elsewhere, the couple planned to reach the PRC.[324]

In his testimony before the U.S. Senate's Internal Security Subcommittee in 1970, Williams explained that he orally requested asylum in the PRC during 1966 from the Chinese Embassy in Havana, Cuba. When pressed by the Subcommittee's chief counsel, Williams elaborated that he "asked them to forward my request to Peking, that I was having difficulty in Havana and that I didn't want to stay there."[325] Sydney Rittenberg, a fellow expatriate in China, further explained this process:

> A stratagem was hatched under which North Vietnam invited Williams to come and broadcast to the American troops fighting in South Vietnam. Fidel could not refuse a request from the embattled Vietnamese, particularly when this would have been part of Cuba's support for the Vietnamese war effort.[326]

Thus, Williams was able to leave Cuba and establish himself in the PRC. This episode revealed the importance of reputation within the international community of Communist nations. In order to maintain their status as a revolutionary nation, Castro and the Cuban administration could not publicly challenge Williams's offer to assist the North Vietnamese. His request for an exit visa to Sweden hinted that the Cuban officials needed to support his trip "in-as-much as the Cuban Government is a supporter of all people who struggle for liberty."[327] This request was denied. With Vietnam engaged in an open struggle against the United States, his second request carried more weight—Cuba could not deny Vietnam's request or it would lose its revolutionary

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[323] *FBI Files of Robert F. Williams*, FBI New York to J. Edgar Hoover and FBI Charlotte, Box 8, Folder "Section 8, Serials 468-530, 1964-1969," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[324] "Chapter 13: Neither a Capitalist nor a Socialist Uncle Tom," 449-450, Box 12, Folder "Personal Memoir Manuscript," RFW Papers; Cohen, *Black Crusader*, 299-302; Frazier, *The East is Black*, 142-146.

[325] U.S. Senate, *Testimony of Robert F. Williams*, pt. 1, 91st Cong., 2nd sess., 37.

[326] Sidney Rittenberg, "Recollections of Robert F. Williams," quoted in Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 294.

[327] RFW to Ministry of Foreign Relations, 17 March 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence February-April 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

standing. Williams left Cuba and established himself in the PRC by July of 1966. The difficulties inherent to his expatriacy did not vanish in the PRC. They merely shifted, but Williams remained steadfast in his commitment to shape the black freedom struggle from exile.

The concern over appearance did not just affect nation-states. As an activist attempting to form an international network, Williams had to be very careful with his words. After his exit from Cuba, Williams wrote a 19-page open letter to Fidel Castro that will be covered fully in the next chapter, but Williams used the letter accused Cuba of forcing him into a "second exile." However, the letter opens with Williams thanking Castro for his hospitality and blamed his expulsion on Castro's corrupt administration. Once Williams had reported his difficulties, he closed the letter with, "I cannot conceive of your being aware of this matter and ofall of these things that were going on [sic]."[328] He then branded the letter as a warning to Castro to prevent him from the fate of other overthrown revolutionary leaders like Kwame Nkrumah, Ben Bella, or Sukarno. The political nuances of this letter are notable. On the one hand, Williams praised and thanked the heroes of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro and Ernesto "Che" Guevara. This protected Williams from being labeled a counterrevolutionary or an impediment to the larger struggle against the United States. On the other hand, he publicly damned Cuba and the CPUSA for its non-violent, class-first policies. He also implied that Castro was isolated from the actual events in his nation. Williams carefully walked between camps in the international community.

Conclusion

Robert F. Williams's life in exile from 1961 to 1966 was defined by the pressure he received from the United States and Cuba. Both undercut his efforts to garner support by limiting his outreach to American audiences, his ability to travel, and sabotaging his communications

[328] RFW to Castro, 28 August 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

with the activist community. The United States government and the American press repeatedly asserted Williams's guilt. This not only barred him from returning to the United States, but it complicated Williams's attempts to relocate to another asylum. Williams faced repression from the Cuban administration and the CPUSA officials in Cuba. This took the form of sapping the wattage of *Radio Free Dixie* and limiting his ability to travel by withholding travel documents. His contact with the activist community was weakened by state surveillance and growing rifts within the larger movement. It is little wonder that Williams wrote to Reverend John Morgan of Toronto after the latter publicly defended Williams against the accusations over his involvement in the Statue of Liberty Plot in 1965. After thanking Morgan, Williams explained that he was not becoming a communist, but that "in these times of two sided world crisis objectivity demands that honest individuals position themselves in the middle."[329] By 1965, Williams clearly expressed trepidation towards the international scene.

He credited this wariness to his firm conviction of avoiding the role of mouthpiece for any organization since "I refused to be an Uncle Tom for the capitalists, I also refuse to be one for the Communists."[330] The "middle" he described to John Morgan represented an isolated place. As he described to one associate, "I am, perhaps, the only refugee under attack by the FBI and the [CPUSA] simultaneously."[331] Williams's commitment to autonomy for himself and the black freedom struggle carved out a lonely corner within the international arena. By the end of his time in Cuba, he missed the close-knit activist community he created in Monroe. As he explained in an undated letter to Mae Mallory:

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[329] RFW to Rev. John Morgan, 5 April 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence March-April 1965," RFW Papers.

[330] RFW to Henry Wallace, 2 August 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1965," RFW Papers.

[331] RFW to Dick Bayer, 30 March 1964, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-April 1964," RFW Papers.

> Perhaps you can see more hope by being surrounded by your own people and own kind. But I'm completely isolated by racist imperialists and racist communists. Exile is hell when the country you are exiled in is not concerned with your problems. If one must suffer and if one must fight it is better to suffer and fight where he will, at least, have the fellowship of his brothers and sisters.[332]

This statement perhaps best explains Williams's vehement reactions towards any attempts to constrain or limit his contact with his activist network and the broader African American community. Caught between a hostile U.S. government and his dismissive Cuban hosts, he defended against the encroachments on his speech and travel throughout his time in exile. This represented a fight not only with the larger issue of American racial inequality, but also included his personal struggle to maintain his role within the black freedom struggle. Williams felt isolated in Cuba despite a supportive activist network because of state efforts to relegate his activism. This aspect of expatriacy is a necessary aspect to include in discussions of black internationalism.

[332] RFW to Mae Mallory, Undated, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence Undated (2)," RFW Papers.

CHAPTER 4: "Time absolves me": Robert F. Williams, Activist Feuds, and His Attempt to Return Home, 1965-1969

"*In the past, white liberals and the mass media nullified my charges against the Klan through…whitewash, and sophistry; but time absolves me,"* Robert F. Williams, December 10, 1966[333]

Figure 6: Williams, wearing goggles and a helmet, crouched in front of a Swahili/English sign, date unkown. Photo Courtesy of Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Robert F. Williams Papers, Box 14, Folder "China - Informal Groups."

[333] RFW to People's Platform, 10 December 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence – December 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

Robert F. Williams offered the above observation a few months past the anniversary of his fifth year in exile and around five months after he arrived in China. It is unclear whether Williams consciously echoed Fidel Castro's famous "La historia me absolverá" speech ("History will absolve me"), but Williams clearly felt vindicated watching the shift in the United States from civil rights tactics to the rhetoric and actions associated with Black Power. His commitment to armed self-preservation and black autonomy had progressed from fringe activists to near-mainstream tenets of the black liberation struggle. He noted that, prior to his exile, the authorities in North Carolina accused him of having "created the 'Klan myth' as a fundraising gimmick." But, the events of the past five years, according to Williams, revealed the level of violence used to enforce America's racial hierarchy. Bluntly, he then connected that violence to the escalating conflict in Vietnam and stated no African Americans should serve in the military until the Ku Klux Klan was eradicated at home.[334] Williams's example fighting the Klan and his writings from abroad helped shape the emerging Black Power philosophy. Yet, when Stokely Carmichael introduced the slogan "Black Power" to an enraptured crowd in Greenwood, Mississippi, Robert F. Williams was arranging his surreptitious exit from Cuba.

During his five years abroad, Williams watched many of the pivotal moments of the Civil Rights—Black Power movement from a distance. He missed the assassinations of Medgar Evers, John F. Kennedy, and Malcolm X. He missed the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Freedom Summer, the marches in Selma, and the Meredith March. He missed the bombing in Birmingham, the murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner during Freedom Summer, and the murders of Jimmie Lee Jackson and Viola Liuzzo during the Selma marches. He missed the 1964 uprising in the Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhoods of

[334] Ibid.

New York City following the killing of James Powell, the Watts Rebellion in Los Angeles after a violent traffic stop sparked long-simmering tensions surrounding police brutality and discrimination (though, as mentioned in the previous chapter, some media outlets and a Congressional investigation connected the events in Watts to Williams's fiery rhetoric supporting urban rebellions), and a number of other uprisings throughout the United States. And he missed Malcolm X's endorsement of a self-defense philosophy based on the phrase "by any means necessary" at the founding of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, Carmichael's sloganeering of "Black Power," and the founding of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland.

The previous chapter outlined Williams's efforts to maintain contact and relevancy with African American activists in the United States as well as his attempts to extricate himself and his family from Cuba. Williams continued his activism and outreach through the use of his *Radio Free Dixie* radio program, his *The Crusader-In-Exile* newsletter, and his extensive correspondence with supporters. Furthermore, he stayed informed on events in the United States through a voracious and diverse reading diet largely supported by the Olsons' arrangement with Cubana de Aviación for free freight shipping and the steady stream of left-leaning activists travelling to Cuba from the United States and Canada. The Williamses move to China created new challenges for Williams to preserve the same levels of communication he experienced in Cuba. From a logistical standpoint, he lost the direct pipeline from the Olsons and frequent northern visitors—both routes had also had the added benefit of often bypassing the customs agencies of both Canada and Cuba, though Cuban officials later restricted this method. The route to China often proved more complex such as a shipment of records in September 1966 in which a supporter asked "the U.A.R. Embassy in Ottawa to pass them on through the Chinese Embassy

in Cairo." From a financial standpoint, Williams and others also worried about the cost of communicating—postage and phone rates to China were significantly more expensive than the rates to Cuba.[335] Even before he arrived in China, Williams counseled another activist against life as an expatriate saying, "Life as an exile is not a desirable one and that I do not recommend it to anyone if they are not forced to make the change or if they can possibly stick it out at home."[336]

This chapter explores the challenges the Williamses faced in China, ranging from the internecine squabbles within the activist community to his continued efforts to return to the United States. The fights within Williams's activist network served to discourage his faith in international activism and frustrate his attempts to cultivate a broad-based movement of support. Williams's public split with Cuba and sojourn to China created further ripples within his activist network. Cedric Belfrage, an English writer and friend of his when he first arrived in Cuba, chastised Williams and his supporter Richard Gibson for how they broadcast their complaints against Cuban authorities since the movement had greater priorities. To Gibson, Belfrage complained about the difficulty "to convince many colored people that their problems are not always and necessarily due to racial prejudice on the part of white people." In a later letter, Belfrage warned that Williams should not squander the opportunity his exile offered since "he is in a sense an ambassador of militant Afro-Americans and thus in the position of a diplomat. So he must act like one to create the best conditions for his work."[337] As covered in Chapter 2,

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[335] Richard Henry (representing NOW! Magazine) to RFW, 5 September 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Ernie Mkalimoto Allen to RFW, 24 June 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-June 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[336] RFW to Olive Brewer, 28 April 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence February-April 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[337] Cedric Belfrage to Richard Gibson, 7 December 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence – December 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Cedric Belfrage to Richard Gibson (forwarded to RFW), 14 January 1967, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence – Undated and January 1967," RFW Papers, BHL-UM. Belfrage was simultaneously a fitting and odd conveyor of this message. In early 1962, he exited Cuba after upsetting the authorities there. Further,

Williams entered the sphere of international activism with his support for FPCC and toured the United States and Canada as a speaker for the group. His identity was tied to the cause of the Cuban Revolution. Williams's exit from Cuba created tensions for himself and his activist network. On a broader scale, this fracture reflected the larger ramifications of the Sino-Soviet Split on radical groups within the United States.

Williams's time in China represents one of irony—he gained a world stage while conversely becoming more removed from the black liberation struggle in the United States. Support from Chairman Mao Zedong and the People's Republic of China provided him with access to an audience of millions, but financially, logistically, and geographically separated him from his closest supporters. This chapter examines the difficulties of black internationalism through Williams's experiences within his activist circle, his attempts to travel, and the shifting political landscape of the Cold War. These themes align with both recent and established trends within the field of black internationalism.[338] In particular, I build from Brent Hayes Edwards's work on the barriers within transnational activism, the "unavoidable misapprehensions and misreadings, persistent blindness and solipsisms, self-defeating and abortive collaborations, a failure to translate even a basic grammar of blackness."[339] This chapter emphasizes the day-to-

there still exists a controversy over Belfrage's involvement with the British and Russian intelligence services. See, http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-34012395.

[338] For some examples, see Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA; Harvard University Press, 2003); Robin DG Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011); Carole Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Minkah Makalani, *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917-1939* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Gerald Horne, *Black Revolutionary: William Patterson and the Globalization of the African American Freedom Struggle* (Champaign-Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013); and James Meriwether, *Proudly We Can Be Africans: Black Americans and Africa, 1935-1961* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

[339] Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 5.

day frustrations of Williams's transnational activism and the internecine fights within the activist community. The narrative center of the chapter is Williams's failed efforts to reach Sweden and, though Williams never reached Sweden, his campaign reveals the obstacles in transnational activism. As historian Robin D.G. Kelley reminds scholars in *Freedom Dreams,* the unrealized goals of activists need evaluation in order to fully grasp the influence of a movement.[340] Williams's struggle is instructive because, at its core, movement-building is a transactional process and his distance—both physically and in practical terms of communication—from the domestic struggle limited his reach into the United States. Further rifts between his closest allies and within the global left further constrained his efforts to garner support and create a triumphal return to the United States.

Williams, Feuds, and Black Internationalism, 1965-1967

Throughout his time as an activist, Williams cultivated a practice of accepting good faith assistance from any person or organization, regardless of ideology. He advocated action over dialogue, praxis over theory. He consistently denied his status as a socialist or communist to his many detractors, but he did not disabuse his socialist and communist supporters of their faith in him. In one example from 1967, Williams responded to an in-depth diatribe against revisionism within the socialist movement and the "imperialist millionaire classes" from Ramón Acevedo, who identified as a Puerto Rican manual laborer from Brooklyn. Williams praised Acevedo as "an astute political activist," offered a vague quote from Chairman Mao on the need to "examine things from all sides," portrayed the international scene a mess while expressing his desire to return to the United States, and, in a follow-up letter, asked Acevedo to keep track of any attempts by the Progressive Labor Party to denounce Williams or the Revolutionary Action

[340] Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*, ix.

Movement. He did not engage in a theoretical debate, offer opinions on the benefits of Marxism-Leninism, nor vociferously proclaim the People's Republic of China as the political future of the world. Instead, he asked Acevedo for a favor—building his network of contacts and informers.[341]

Williams did not overthink the theoretical schisms within the global left. In *Freedom Dreams*, Robin D.G. Kelley characterized Williams as "something of an intellectual dabbler and autodidact" which is not far from the mark.[342] Whether these traits stemmed from an unschooled mind or from one grounded in the practical concerns of survival is up for debate, but it remains clear that Williams did not concern himself with ideological litmus tests or debates over doctrine—as long as the person or group offered to assist him or the black liberation struggle more generally.[343] Williams maintained three conceptual constants in his public persona as an activist: the necessity for African Americans to receive fair and equal treatment under the law in the United States (and the near impossibility of this goal under the current system of Jim Crow and discrimination); the right for African Americans to practice armed self-defense; and a willingness to accept aid and support from anyone across the political spectrum if the person or group committed themselves to the black liberation struggle. Williams's friend and fellow activist Julian Mayfield summed up the third aspect of Williams's philosophy stating that the challenges facing African Americans required that they "had to be free to accept whatever help

[341] Ramón Acevedo to RFW, 18 July 1967, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence – July 1967," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Acevedo, 11 August 1967, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence – August 1967," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Acevedo, 22 September 1967, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence – September 1967," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[342] Kelley, *Freedom Dreams*, 70.

[343] Williams represented a pragmatic approach to alliances when it came to material and rhetorical support, but he maintained his commitment to direct action and more confrontational tactics. This is perhaps best exemplified in the events leading up to his exile from Monroe. Williams welcomed the support of other civil rights groups coming to Monroe to advance the cause of the local community. However, he adamantly refused to participate in the nonviolent demonstrations that the Freedom Riders organized because he rejected the philosophy behind them. To extrapolate, this preference for open confrontation helps explain Williams's growing support for Mao in the 1960s as the Chinese leader publicly beat the drum for open confrontation with the United States and provided fervent denunciations of U.S. race relations.

would come." Richard Gibson, a fellow African American exile, codified a credo for expatriates: "We must never turn our backs on anyone without absolutely good cause." Their survival depended upon it.[344] Yet, the following two cases demonstrated the pitfalls of this approach as well as how it jeopardized opportunities for Williams in the international scene.

D.H. Mansur and Cuba in East Africa

In the previous chapter, I discussed the 26-page open letter Williams sent to Castro in August 1966 to explain his defection to the People's Republic of China and to accuse members of the Cuban administration with sabotaging the black liberation struggle. Williams's accusations included the confiscation of his mail, interference with *Radio Free Dixie*, blocking African American radical activists from traveling to Cuba, limiting Williams's travel to other nations, and other allegations. However, 12 of the 26 pages detailed Williams's interactions with a Tanzanian radical, D.H. Mansur, in Cuba. Mansur first traveled to Cuba to partake in the Tricontinental Conference of African, Asian, and Latin American Peoples in January of 1966. A few months later, he returned to Cuba to broadcast in Swahili for Radio Havana programs targeted at East Africa. Williams's interactions with Mansur offer a window into his decision to split with Cuba, but carry a large caveat—the only reference I have found to Mansur is within Williams's archive and writings. This is not to imply that Mansur did not exist since Williams exchanged letters with Tanzanian officials about Mansur's activities. The claims against Mansur, however, are unverifiable from my research. Still, Williams's accusations deserve recounting because Mansur likely served as a justification for Williams's split with Cuba. The allegations

[344] Julian Mayfield to Mrs. Johnson, 23 September 1961, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-September 1961," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Tyson, 114-115; Richard Gibson to RFW, 8 September 1967, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September 1967," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

against Mansur portray a corrupt and unethical Cuban regime willing to sacrifice revolutionary principles to manipulate the nationalist movements in Africa.

Williams's first interactions with Mansur at the Tricontinental Conference proved innocuous enough that Williams entrusted Mansur with a sum of $1,550 and a coded message for delivery to New York. This occurred after Mansur learned of the Cuban authorities' interference with Williams's mail. Mansur offered the use of a Tanzanian official traveling to New York City with diplomatic immunity and Williams provided the money and message for delivery. Mansur left Cuba after the Tricontinental Conference, but returned to Cuba soon after to begin his work broadcasting in Swahili for Radio Havana. Upon his arrival, Williams noticed a change in Mansur's behavior as the latter began to confide in Williams his frustration with the Cuban government. When pressed about this change, Mansur explained to Williams about his disillusionment with Cuba and the Soviet Union after learning of their plans to co-opt Zanzibar from Tanzania as a base of operations for their efforts in Africa. He further explained that the Afro-Cuban ambassador to Tanzania was a figurehead for his white secretary. Thus, Mansur decided to denounce Cuba in his Swahili broadcasts since no one at Radio Havana could understand him.[345]

These confessions baffled Williams. He continued to note Mansur's erratic behavior by describing an incident at the Hotel Capri in which Mansur demanded that the staff of the hotel deliver one of the chorus girls in its shows to his room to render service as a prostitute—a request that Williams alleged members of the Communist Party of Cuba fulfilled.[346] The inclusion of this incident in the letter is odd given Williams's other complaints, however, the

[345] RFW to Castro, 28 August 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[346] Ibid.

accusation corresponds to Williams's worldview. As historian Timothy Tyson notes, Williams's understanding of gender politics developed in a segregated southern society where "the protection of women and the projection of violence both reflected and created the architecture of social hierarchy."[347] In the telling of his life, Williams credited his call for armed self-defense in 1959 to the abuses against African American women in Monroe—he sought to disrupt the impunity with which white men preyed upon African American women.[348] Williams connected protecting women from abuse with manhood and the social contract, and this perspective perhaps explains the presence of Mansur's abuses in the letter to Castro. The scene at the Hotel Capri further vilified Mansur while also condemning the Communist Party of Cuba. Those party officials—according to Williams—permitted Mansur's behavior for political ends since they did not wish to endanger Cuba's outreach efforts in Africa.[349]

After these displays from Mansur, Williams investigated the fate of his money and the coded message only to learn that it had not reached his friends in New York. He confronted Mansur and discovered that the latter had no position in the Tanzanian government and that the money had been passed to a Cuban official who may have worked for the CIA.[350] Williams then reached out to RRL Amanas Swai, an official in the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) and then representative of TANU in Cairo, Egypt. Williams asked Swai, "Do you have any suggestions toward recovering the stolen sum short of beating Mansur to death? If so, I would appreciate hearing from you immediately." He then further threatened to arrange for picketing of the Tanzanian mission to the United Nations in New York if action was not taken. In

[347] Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 140.
[348] Williams, *Negroes with Guns*, 24-26; Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 142-150.
[349] RFW to Castro, 28 August 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.
[350] Ibid.

his response, Swai had no answers about Mansur, but took Williams serious enough to forward his request to the Secretary General of TANU, the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs.[351]

Robert F. Williams's papers do not include any further response from the Tanzanian officials, but Mansur soon offered a means of recourse: they could go to the office of the Associated Press and British Reuters in Havana. Mansur offered to sign a public confession as the recipient of Williams's money and take full responsibility for its repayment. His employment by the two services meant the note "would be a form of collateral or assurance." However, Williams saw a plot forming in which Mansur and others were trying to "portray me as an intermediary of foreign intrigue and subversion." The original message Williams had sent with the money could not be used since Williams had signed it with a code name.[352] When Williams started to denounce Mansur in public and to Cuban officials, two members of the Cuban Intelligence, G-2, arrived at his home. They informed Williams that "Mansur was a 'good revolutionary friend of Cuba' who only 'talked too much."[353]

Williams is the only source for these accusations against Mansur, but his framing of these events is important to consider. Starting in 1963, the Cuban government initiated a campaign to assist African nationalist movements through military training and, in some cases, Cuban troops. The impetus for this operation arose from multiple factors including the failure to foment revolutions in other Latin American nations, self-assuredness after waging their own successful revolution, the attempt to form political bonds with nations impervious to U.S. meddling, Che

[351] RFW to RRL Amanas Swai, 4 March 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence February-April 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RRL Amanas Swai to RFW, 18 March 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence February-April 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[352] RFW to Castro, 28 August 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[353] Ibid.

Guevara's uncompromising commitment to revolutionary action, and a desire to increase Cuba's status among the Third World nations. International relations scholar Piero Gleijeses credits the political isolation imposed by the U.S. embargo and the U.S. pressure on other Latin American states with inspiring Castro's decision to turn to Africa—rather than fight so close to home, "the Cubans tried to avoid the lion's jaw" by shifting U.S. focus to constraining Cuban actions in Africa.[354] The accuracy of Williams's accusations is unverified, but he did correctly identify the importance of the newly independent African nations to Cuban foreign policy.

Gibson, Moore, and Williams's Outreach to Europe

Throughout Williams's exile, his two main contacts in Europe were Richard Gibson and Carlos Moore. Both men knew Williams personally and held him in great respect, but they refused to trust each other. This animosity between Gibson and Moore interfered with Williams's efforts to cultivate a European audience. As discussed earlier in the dissertation, Richard Gibson first met Williams through the Fair Play for Cuba Committee and helped arrange Williams's first visit to Cuba. After exiting the United States in 1962, he spent three years as an editor covering the United States for the French-language radical magazine, *Révolution*, while living in Algeria and then Paris. In 1964, the editor of *Révolution*, Jacques Vergès, printed a short message in the frontmatter of the magazine stating that Gibson was an agent of the American government and that all radical and leftist organizations should disassociate with him. As revealed by the release of documents related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in May 2018, Vergés's accusations were correct—Gibson served as a source for the CIA under the codename

[354] Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976*, Envisioning Cuba (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 98.

"Sugar."[355] Five months later, Gibson and his family exited France to live on the support of his in-laws in London where he reestablished himself as a freelance journalist and reinitiated his contact with Williams.

From an Afro-Cuban family that had settled in Canada to escape the reign of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, Moore established himself as part of the black nationalist movement and the FPCC in New York during the early 1960s. He and his brother Frank returned to Cuba in 1962, but Moore quickly became disillusioned with the racial politics in Cuba and began to speak out against Castro. He endured a short stint in a Cuban prison until Williams interceded and helped him get released. Moore then fled to Paris where he connected with the black expatriate community there and published critiques of Cuban racism. The Cuban government responded by disavowing Moore and denying him access to any paperwork to prove his citizenship while the French authorities authorized his residence on a month-to-month basis.[356] Both men, far from their native country and trying to restart their lives, admired Williams's steadfast commitment to continuing his activism from exile. But, Gibson and Moore detested each other.

On March 5, 1965, Gibson stated that Williams was likely "already wary of those who would like to misuse your name for their own advantage." He then provided the example of Carlos Moore's exploits in Paris. After the recent slaying of Malcolm X, Moore had labeled himself "the Paris representative of Malcolm X" and tried to take up Malcolm's mantle. Gibson refuted any relationship between Malcolm and Moore and stated that it was odd for a "100% black nationalist" like Moore to constantly associate with white Americans in Paris.[357] In July of

[355] Jefferson Morley, "CIA Reveals Name of Former Spy in JFK Files—And He's Still Alive," *Newsweek,* accessed December 10, 2018, https://www.newsweek.com/richard-gibson-cia-spies-james-baldwin-amiri-baraka-richard-wright-cuba-926428.

[356] Moore to RFW, 4 February 1967, Box 3, Folder "Correspondence, 1966-1969," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[357] Gibson to RFW, 5 March 1965, Reel 2, Frames 57-58, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

1965, Gibson detailed Moore's activities in two more letters to Williams. The first, dated July 23, 1965, accused Moore of being a "black fascist" and that his political line likely derived "from a white boss in Washington D.C."[358] Gibson's comments were in regards to an angry message Moore had sent to the African American journalist William Worthy and the South African-born British journalist Lionel Morrison after they had published an article on Malcolm X. Four days after Gibson's original, he sent identical letters to Williams, Worthy, and Morrison to further inform them of Moore's vicious attacks on Cuba. Living in Paris, Moore continually denounced Cuba's treatment of Afro-Cubans and stated "a black man is freer in Harlem that in Havana." According to Gibson, the resultant effect was the creation of "a wedge between revolutionary Africa and revolutionary Cuba….The general trend of this is, of course, to disrupt or destroy any chances of Afro-Asian-Latin American unity."[359]

Gibson recognized the need to step lightly within the international community. In a letter dated September 28, 1965, He offered suggestions for Williams's message to the 1965 Afro-Asian conference held in Algiers:

> The statement itself, I suggest, should be strong, but should not contain any invective aimed at any persons. The statement should be short, in order to be effective, demanding real aid and support for the Afro-American struggle on the part of the Asian and African countries. Point out our role inside the USA, the veritable Achilles heel of U.S. imperialism.[360]

In spite of their hopes, Gibson told Williams that there was little chance of much support in Africa for him. He based these concerns on observations of Julian Mayfield's troubles in Ghana. One of Gibson's sources had relayed that Mayfield was searching for his own exit from Ghana and thus was not in a position to assist Williams. He further remarked, "I know he gets scared

[358] Gibson to RFW, 23 July 1965, Reel2, Frame 214, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.
[359] Gibson to RFW, William Worthy, and Lionel Morrison, 27 July 1965, Reel 2, Frames 227-228, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.
[360] Gibson to RFW, 28 September 1965, Reel 2, Frame 274-275, 275, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

rather easy, unfortunately, and that just paralyzes him."[361] Gibson offered similar critiques on a mutual friend, Toré Hokansson, during the efforts to organize Williams's trip to Sweden.[362] These accusations did not sabotage the movement, but they demonstrated the challenges in attempting to organize across borders. Though Gibson later recanted some of his statements against Moore and continued to support Williams after his split with Cuba, his letters revealed the amount of uncertainty within the community. These international links were highly susceptible to rumor, false charges, and miscommunication.

Though Carlos Moore did not devote as much time to attacking Gibson, he did express concern over the health of the international community. In a letter from January 2, 1966, Moore informed Williams of the number of impostors and false revolutionaries in Paris who openly discussed their status on the "inside." Rather than engage with these pretenders, Moore tried to keep himself "icy cold and isolated from all surrounding happenings."[363] Right after Williams's exit from Cuba in 1966, Moore did accurately accuse Gibson of working for the CIA. His proof came from "the late Brother Malcolm X directly, who even referred to him as 'that CIA agent.'" Though Moore was not as vocal as Gibson, he continued to feed Williams information on the international struggle. And many of the attacks against Moore within the community came after his public denunciations of the Cuban government. Thus, Moore served as an example of the need for caution in the public sphere.

Williams refused to choose a side between his two allies and instead focused on how they could help him reach new audiences in Europe. Beyond asking for assistance in receiving visas, the most direct example of Williams's attempts to utilize his relationship with them was when he

[361] Ibid.
[362] Gibson to RFW, 10 April 1965, Reel 2, Frame 413, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.
[363] Moore to RFW, 2 January 1965, Reel 2, Frame 354, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

asked for their assistance in publishing a book of transcribed *Radio Free Dixie* broadcasts. On June 24, 1966, Williams telegrammed both Gibson and Moore to check in on the whereabouts of the book manuscript. Williams had originally sent the manuscript with Paul Brooks, a friend who was traveling to Europe. He intended for the transcriptions to be passed to Richard Gibson who planned to make use of his literary contacts in an effort to publish them as a book with European presses. However, Brooks left the manuscript with Carlos Moore in Paris.[364] In September, Moore clarified the situation to Williams by explaining that Brooks decided not to travel to London but return home to the United States. When Moore learned that Brooks intended to forward the manuscript to Gibson, he warned Brooks that Gibson was not to be trusted. Unsure of what to do, Brooks gave Moore the manuscript for safekeeping.[365] The delay caused by this episode only amounted to a few days—by June 29 Gibson had received the manuscript.[366] But, the confusion over the manuscript reveals some of the difficulties Williams experienced in trying to access European audiences. Gibson and Moore were not discreet in their attacks upon each other and freely spread allegations to other activists. As will be seen in the next chapter, those rumors did hinder Williams's efforts in Europe.

China, Sweden, and the Return, 1966-1969

Williams's difficulties did not end with his exit from Cuba though they took on a different form. Unlike Cuba, the PRC did not overtly censor Williams or, at least, he did not openly complain about it. However, the problems in collaborating with other activists continued to exacerbate. Part of this might result from his physical location. In Cuba, Williams did not have

[364] RFW to Richard Gibson, 24 June 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-June 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Carlos Moore, 24 June 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-June 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[365] Carlos Moore to RFW, 13 September 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[366] Richard Gibson to RFW, 29 June 1966, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-June 1966," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

to worry as much about building a community and maintaining contact. He had a radio show which, at its peak, broadcast three times a week along the Atlantic Seaboard. His newspaper, *The Crusader-in-Exile* was also publishing on a regular, monthly basis. Across the Pacific Ocean, Williams was further removed, though not at all isolated, from the struggle in the United States. The PRC did have certain advantages over Cuba such as their willingness to support Williams's attempts to bring international attention to racial injustice in the United States. Whereas Cuba was uncooperative in terms of international travel, the Chinese officials endorsed Williams's attempts to go abroad. The struggle became trying to find a nation that would accept his visit.

Williams's four-year attempt to reach Sweden well illustrates his difficulty in traveling abroad. In planning this trip, he was blocked by the Cuban, Sweden, and the U.S. foreign ministries. Williams's hope to reach Sweden originated in a friend he met in Cuba, Toré Hokannson.[367] A Swedish scholar who taught in Havana, Hokannson left Cuba in 1965 due to his worsening relationship with the Cuban government. He returned to Sweden and then contacted Williams in February of 1965 about forwarding to Sweden the personal possessions and papers he had left behind in his haste, including a taped interview between Hokannson and Williams.[368] In June of 1965, Hokannson informs Williams that he has received some of his possessions, thanks Williams for his support, and first mentions arranging a trip to Sweden for Williams. In the same letter, Hokannson asks Williams for a favor—to check in on the family of the young girlfriend he left behind in Cuba, Maria Llerena.[369] This offer piqued Williams's interest and he followed up with Tore about the feasibility of such a trip and if he would be safe

[367] I have chosen the spelling, Toré Hokannson, as that is how it is spelled in the letters between Williams, Gibson, and Hokannson. However, his name has also been recorded as Tore Hakansson and Tore Hokanson.

[368] Toré Hokannson to RFW, 18 February 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence January-February 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[369] Toré Hokannson to RFW, 13 June 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-June 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Toré Hokannson to RFW, 30 June 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence May-June 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

from extradition in Sweden.[370] Hokannson arranged a conditional invite in September of 1965 from a student group at Lund University if other universities participate and he promised to start working on securing those other invites.[371] These early efforts in 1965 fell through rapidly in November of 1965 when Williams wrote to Hokannson that the increasing pressure on him from the Cuban authorities made any foreign travel unlikely. Still, Williams, and Hokannson, and eventually Richard Gibson continued to plan a potential trip to Sweden in the new year.[372]

On March 17, 1966, he requested an exit visa from the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations in order to travel to Sweden.[373] Williams explained his reasons in his monthly newsletter *The Crusader-In-Exile*: he sought to create contacts to distribute his newsletter in Sweden; to help organize the international section of the Revolutionary Action Movement; and to secure funds in a location outside of Cuba for his planned trip home.[374] However, the Cuban government denied Williams his exit visa and he became increasingly exasperated. As an American citizen, he did not need an entry visa into Sweden, but he did need documents to prove his status as an American citizen and the exit visa from Cuba; the governments of United States and Cuba were not forthcoming with those documents.[375]

In a letter from December 15, 1966, Gibson discussed the attempt to have Amnesty International label Williams a "political exile" instead of an American fugitive. The change in status would help with the immigration process. The importance of the trip, according to Gibson,

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[370] RFW to Toré Hokannson, 24 August 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence July-August 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[371] Toré Hokannson to RFW, 8 September 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September-December 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Toré Hokannson to RFW, 25 September 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September-December 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[372] RFW to Toré Hokannson, 23 November 1965, Box 1, Folder "Correspondence September-December 1965," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[373] RFW to Ministry of Foreign Relations, 17 March 1966, Reel 2, Frame 402, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[374] Williams's Senate Internal Security Subcommittee testimony, Part 1, February 16th, 1970, Reel 7, Frame 560, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[375] RFW to Sven A. Olsson, 27 April 1966, Reel 2, Frame 419, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

was "that you will have access to the Western press and be able…to get a powerful message through to the folks back home."[376] Williams then sent a letter to the Amnesty International lawyer, Hans Franck, describing his intentions in Sweden to discuss the "international aspects" of the black freedom struggle. Williams set the conditions of his trip to include "some prior assurance that your government will not bow to racist pressure from the U.S.A. and return me to the Ku Klux Klan and southern lynch justice."[377]

These troubles continued between 1966 and 1968 with many glimmers of hope that were often quickly snuffed out. On March 18, 1967, Gibson sent Williams an optimistic letter about the trip to Sweden. It provided an opportunity to broaden the struggle and, perhaps more importantly, "neutral ground" for Williams to meet with other African American activists. Gibson expressed confidence that the US could not interfere with either Williams or any other leader traveling to Sweden. Indeed, his only concern was the reliability of their activist community and its tendency towards leaking information. In April of 1967, Gibson tried to follow up with Williams on the proposed Swedish tour and asked for a tentative date for the trip. He also broached the subject of using Albania as a meeting place for Williams and other activists since US citizens could now travel to Albania without sanction. Williams decided to postpone the trip to Sweden in April because the Swedish government refused to guarantee his safety from extradition. Williams also spent 1967 studying the political situation in the United States and especially its intelligence gathering services. Through Gibson, he ordered works by Frantz Fanon, Andrew Tully's *Central Intelligence Agency*, David Wise and Thomas B. Ross' *The*

[376] Gibson to RFW, 15 December 1966, Reel 2, Frame 624, 625, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.
[377] RFW to Hans G. Franck, undated 1966, Reel 2, Frame 626, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

Invisible Government, and Ralph Ginzburg's *100 Years of Lynching*.[378] Another hiccup in the Sweden affair occurred in June of 1967. Nils Holmberg, one of their Swedish contacts, heard the rumors of Gibson being a government agent and refused to work with him. Gibson attributed the accusation to the internecine struggles within the activist community and partially blamed Carlos Moore for publishing pieces such as "Richard Gibson or 007?"[379]

Williams and Gibson continued their dialogue in July about the costs and benefits of a trip to Sweden. Williams had concerns about Sweden's political position and worried about becoming a mouthpiece for leftist organizations. Gibson described the utility of Marxism-Leninism while also warning him that he needed the left's support in Sweden to ensure his safety. As he considered a compromised trip to Sweden, Williams also explored his options in the United States. On July 23, he sent a letter to the Clerk of the Union County Superior Court to ask what specific charges he faced in Monroe. The letter explicitly stated his intention to return and inquired about the potential amount of any issued bail bond. Conrad Lynn, who had been copied on the letter, responded with optimism at the prospect of Williams's return. The most exciting aspect for Lynn was that "the State Department told me early this year that it is not in the security interests of the United States to assist you in returning." Given this admission, Lynn viewed Williams's potential return as a significant challenge to US power.

In a letter to Mae Mallory from September of 1967, Williams seemed resolute about his return. Though he admitted that his return might not lead to "big things," he appeared largely fed up with the smear campaigns against him especially from the USCP and the Progressive Labor Party. Williams was most of all tired with the stall tactics coming from the US. It had been two

[378] Gibson to RFW, 18 March 1967, Reel 2, Frames 761-762, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Gibson to RFW, 19 April 1967, Reel 2, Frame 794 to 795, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Gibson to RFW, 23 April 1967, Reel 2, Frame 807 to 808.

[379] Gibson to RFW, 19 June 1967, Reel 2, Frame 898 to 900, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

months since his request to the Union County Clerk for information about the charges he faced with no response. Williams had reached the conclusion that "if I remain afraid of them, they can keep me in exile forever." Gibson discussed the US authorities in more sinister terms by declaring, "The Man wants blood, black blood." He attributed US pressure for Sweden's reluctance to guarantee Williams's safety.[380]

In the summer of 1967, Williams took steps towards a safe return to the United States. He sent letters to all of the supportive contacts he had made over the years. Each letter featured a variant of the following paragraph:

> I am contemplating a return to the U.S. in the future. I am now trying to organize a world-wide movement in support of this. I have the idea of making a massive confrontation that may possibly serve as a precedent and consequently aid in changing the kangaroo pattern of the courts in regards to the legal lynching of our people. I would like to call a conference and a seminar on the abolition of court injustice and legal lynching and use my trial as a starter. The same as people are fighting police brutality, they must be brought to realize that kangaroo legal justice in an even more vicious and extended form of police brutality. Of course my plans at this stage are still in formation but this is the main idea that I have. I would very much like to know your thoughts and opinions on it. Write again soon.[381]

Williams hoped to develop a broad-based support network that would allow him to return home to the United States in such a way that he could combat any lingering charges. While Williams received verbal support from a number of respondents, the actual aid given seemed sparse. Gibson in fact worried that Williams's public intention to return home might sabotage any effort to enter Sweden. The Swedish authorities did not want to create an opportunity for Williams to

[380] Gibson to RFW, 25 July 1967, Reel 3, Frame 44 to 46, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Clerk of Union County Superior Court, 23 July 1967, Reel 3, Frame 54, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 2 August 1967, Reel 3, Frame 64, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Mallory, 15 September 1967, Reel 3, Frame 138-139, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[381] An example: RFW to Ramón Acevedo, 22 September 1967, Reel 3, Frame 171, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

be captured or assassinated on Swedish territory. According to Gibson, many of Williams's allies believed his return indicated his willingness to give up on the black freedom struggle.[382]

But, Gibson and Williams continued to plan the trip. They had to be careful in arranging the logistics of the trip in order to avoid any nation or airline that might impede Williams's path to Sweden. Gibson offered three potential routes to Stockholm: through France, through Pakistan, and through Denmark. Each path contained the possibility of extradition to the US. Gibson also sought to clarify Williams's press policy before he traveled and ensure his trip to Sweden gathered as much press coverage as possible. Gibson wanted to arrange an interview with *Life* or *Newsweek* in order to "give a big push to your world-wide campaign to return home." In a short response, Williams rejected any interviews with the American press and asked Gibson to reinforce that the tour of Sweden would be separate to his eventual return to the US. Gibson agreed, but encountered more obstacles to his efforts. He described the tenuous nature of their position as expatriates in a letter on September 8, 1967 with the previously mentioned advice that "we must never turn our backs on anyone without absolutely good cause….Living abroad as we do, we must develop every refinement of diplomacy in order to serve our cause and to survive in the midst of the great contradictions that rend the international arena." This was sound advice from Gibson, but perhaps also motivated by self-interest—he had been followed by rumors of CIA affiliation for years.[383]

In September of 1967, the US Post Office banned Williams's newsletter, *The Crusader-in-Exile*, from using the US mail service. Williams had distributed his newsletter through the US

[382] Gibson to RFW, 23 August 1967, Reel 3, Frame 95 to 96, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[383] Gibson to RFW, 23 August 1967, Reel 3, Frame 95 to 96, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Gibson to RFW, 8 September 1967, Reel 3, Frame 123 to 125, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Gibson to RFW, 3 September 1967, Reel 3, Frame 117 to 119, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Williams to Gibson, undated, Reel 3, Frame 127, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

Post Office for years. He formally asked the Postmaster General for an explanation on September 19, 1967. Williams became more pessimistic about a successful return to the US after this incident. He revealed some dark humor towards the situation in a letter to his friend and fellow African American expatriate in China, Vicky Garvin. He informed her that his wanted picture had been prominently displayed in post offices throughout the US. The FBI wanted him "returned to the Christian brothers and sisters in North Carolina for the remolding of my black personality." He also mentioned his desire to write a satirical letter asking President Lyndon B. Johnson to allow him to "see America the so-called beautiful one more time before the brothers burn it down." By the end of September, Williams received a response from the US Post Office. They explained that the *Crusader* was banned because its May 1967 issue advised African American troops in Vietnam to revolt against the US. This violated "Title 18, United States Code, Sections 957, 1461, 1717(a) and 2387, among other laws." Timothy J. May, the representative of the US Post Office, then described the ways that the "seditious" material in the May 1967 edition violated each of the statutes.[384] After offering their services to Williams, the American Civil Liberties Union and Conrad Lynn collaborated to sue the US Post Office for banning the *Crusader*.

Williams and Gibson continued to explore the Sweden option after these setbacks to Williams's return to the US. Gibson wrote in October of 1967 on the increasing difficulties Williams faced in international politics. Williams's position was under assault with the banning of the *Crusader* and Stokely Carmichael's endorsement of Fidel Castro. Gibson also charged activists for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) with criticizing Williams's

[384] RFW to Lawrence F. O'Brien (US Postmaster General), 19 September 1967, Reel 3, Frame 148, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Garvin, 23 September 1967, Reel 3, Frame 176, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Timothy J. May (Post Office Representative) to RFW, undated [in response to a letter from 19 September 1967], Reel 3, Frame 199 to 200, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

planned return "as proof you were 'trying to make a deal with Whitey!'" A glimmer of hope for the Sweden trip arose early in November when Williams received a specific lecture date from the Verdandi student group in Uppsala, Sweden. However, Williams still had two obstacles to his trip. First, he now needed to organize the trip in less than a month since Verdandi invited him on November 6 to speak on November 28. More significantly, Williams required a specific speaking date from Lund University in Sweden. Williams then learned on November 9 that the students at Lund had decided to invite Stokely Carmichael instead of him. This did not invalidate the invitation from Uppsala, but undermined Williams's efforts to reach Sweden.[385]

Gibson criticized SNCC and Carmichael throughout his following letters to Williams. While Carmichael's trip to Scandinavia remained unconfirmed, Gibson focused more on critiquing Carmichael's and SNCC's blunders in Africa. On November 16, 1967, Gibson expressed his joy over Carmichael's faux pas in southern Africa. The African National Congress and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) openly denounced Carmichael after a speech he gave in Dar es Salaam. Gibson attributed the attack to SNCC's "dabbling blindly in African politics." Gibson offered a similar critique in January of 1968 after two prominent leaders of SNCC, H. Rap Brown and James Foreman, announced their intention to send African Americans to fight against Rhodesia with members of ZAPU. He considered this an example of "profound ignorance" on every aspect of the African liberation movements.[386] Gibson was not Williams's only source on US activists. He often asked his contacts for information or clarification on militant African American groups in the late 1960s. One example was a letter to Dan Watts,

[385] Gibson to RFW, 18 October 1967, Reel 3, Frame 253, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Ericsson to RFW, 6 November 1967, Reel 3, Frame 293, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Gibson to RFW, 9 November 1967, Reel 3, Frame 304, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[386] Gibson to RFW, 16 November 1967, Reel 3, Frame 318 to 319, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Gibson to RFW, 7 January 1968, Reel 3, Frame 494 to 495, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

editor of *Liberator* magazine, on November 23, 1967. Williams asked Watts for his position on the activities of H. Rap Brown and Stokely Carmichael. Brown seemed to impress Williams since he described Brown as "a fiercely devoted youth honestly groping for the right answers and direction." On the other hand, Williams provided a less judicious opinion of Carmichael—"Do you think he is a Malcolm X or just another pawn of cunning Fidel Castro?"[387]

Williams began the year 1968 with good news. On January 7, Gibson confirmed that the Uppsala students had set a new date for Williams's visit: February 20, 1968.[388] However, the Swedish Aliens Board rejected Williams's application for a visa. On January 24, 1968, Williams sent telegrams to his Swedish contacts asking for their assistance with this setback. Gibson theorized that their refusal arose from US coercion. Williams would have joined around 20 American military deserters that Sweden had granted political asylum to by 1968. Allowing Williams into the country would have invited a US backlash. Gibson also pointed to the rumors surrounding Williams's intention to run for President. The US State Department had the ability to block Williams's entry since they could argue he was "trying to use Sweden as a platform to interfere in U.S. domestic politics." A later letter from Gibson referred to a secret FBI report that had been passed to the Swedish government that portrayed Williams as "a mad dog killer."[389]

In April of 1968, Gibson provided more detail about the denial of Williams's visa. Since Williams supported China, members of the Swedish left worried that Williams "might sharply criticize Moscow and the corrupt elements in Havana and thus 'endanger' the unity of the

[387] RFW to Watts, 23 November 1967, Reel 3, Frame 337, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[388] Gibson to RFW, 7 January 1968, Reel 3, Frame 494 to 495, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Lynn to RFW, 8 January 1968, Reel 3, Frame 498, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Lynn, undated [though in response to Lynn's letter from 8 January 1968], Reel 3, Frame 513 to 514; Lynn to RFW, 24 January 1968, Reel 3, Frame 533, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[389] RFW to Ericsson, 24 January 1968, Reel 3, Frame 529, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Gibson to RFW, 3 February 1968, Reel 3, Frame 564 to 565, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Gibson to RFW, 26 February 1968, Reel 3, Frame 621 to 622, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

Left."[390] Gibson later reported the suspicions of their mutual friend Toré Hokansson who connected the refusal with a U.S. threat to enact a trade boycott on Sweden. Hokansson noted that the Swedish government avoided any and all entanglements that might further damage their relationships with the United States.[391] A month later, Sweden reopened the possibility of a visit from Williams, but the left there insisted it must occur in the late autumn of 1968 after the elections in September.[392]

Williams never made it to Sweden, but this episode reveals the many concerns, troubles, and pitfalls facing an African American expatriate during the Cold War. He most consistently faced the internal struggles within the international activist scene. The allegations of Gibson's involvement with the CIA particularly influenced any of Williams's efforts in Europe. In March of 1968, Williams received a message from his Swedish contact Thomas Ericsson that detailed four reasons why Gibson might be a CIA agent. He cited Gibson's interest in "the internal affairs of different organisations," Gibson's allies in Sweden, and, perhaps most troubling, he had a lot of money.[393] The victim of many accusations himself, Williams mounted a defense of Gibson in a letter from April 1, 1968. Williams noted that Gibson had supported his struggles against the Cuban government and when Williams "broke with them, Gibson sided with me." But, Williams ended the letter with a request that Ericsson forward him any future revelations on Gibson.[394]

Williams's relationship with Gibson appeared to have deteriorated during his attempted return to the United States through England. In a hastily-written note from HM Pentonville Prison, England, dated September 9, 1969, Williams rebuked Gibson:

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[390] Gibson to RFW, 13 April 1968, Reel 3, Frame 742, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.
[391] Gibson to RFW, April 1968, Reel 3, Frame 762, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[392] Gibson to RFW, 9 May 1968, Reel 3, Frame 844, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.
[393] Thomas Ericsson to RFW, March 1968, Reel 3, Frame 683, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.
[394] RFW to Ericsson, 1 April 1968, Reel 3, Frame 694, 695, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

> I hear you are at your Marc Anthony game again by stating the man's case against me then declaring not to personally believe it after the point has been made and the damage done. What a dirty trick to play. I have been carefully observing your sinister role for quite some time. So you call yourself a "close friend." Well friend, I must ask you to drop out of the picture.[395]

His eventual return to the US ended after only a few days in a British jail and he landed in Detroit, MI on September 12, 1969. His return marked the culmination of years of planning and this effort needs to be recognized in Williams's overall story. Conrad Lynn chastised Williams in March of 1968 for trying to ensure a short jail sentence and sufficient bail money before his return. He doomed the African American struggle to failure since "only black people in the U.S. feel that they should be able to carry on revolutionary activities in comfort." Lynn softened the critique at the end of the letter with an even more pessimistic take on the overall movement. With the rising stakes in the United States, Lynn reasoned that "all of us have the responsibility to rethink our positions. Most of us will make a compromise with the power establishment. Life will compel others to opt for the underground."[396] It was within this political climate that Williams made his return in 1969.

His return also offers an opportunity to discuss his reception by the federal government. While Robeson's case featured cooperation between the FBI and State Department, the Williamses return to the United States revealed the, at times, dissimilar agendas between the two departments. After Williams's arrival in Detroit, the FBI and the Department of Justice attempted to aid North Carolina's efforts to extradite Williams from Michigan. On September 24, 1969, the FBI's Crime Records Division asked for approval of a plan to pass William's 1966 public letter to Castro to "friendly news media." They hoped to reveal his deep-seated

[395] RFW to Gibson, 9 September 1969, Reel 22, Frame 62-63, RFW Papers, from FBI Files, BHL-UM.
[396] Lynn to RFW, March 1968, Reel 3, 641, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

commitment to revolutionary politics.[397] On October 9, 1969, assistant attorney general, J. Walter Yeagley, informed North Carolina's attorney general that it fell on North Carolina to prosecute Williams. The Justice Department could not strengthen North Carolina's case though it planned to investigate Williams's time abroad. Still, Yeagley expressed that "it is our hope that Williams will not be freed of these charges and that appropriate authorities in North Carolina bring him to trial."[398]

The State Department had another view of Williams. Outside of the United States, he was a liability. Upon his return, he became a potential asset. The Williamses had used Tanzania as the staging ground for their prepared return to the United States in the last two years of their exile. A report from the U.S. Embassy in Dar Es Salaam from July of 1968 expressed concern over Williams's presence in Tanzania. The officials in the embassy urged the State Department to issue Williams a passport in order to preserve stable relations between the United States and Tanzania.[399] After Williams's return, the State Department sought to use Williams's knowledge of China to their advantage. On January 12, 1970, Williams was interviewed by Harry E.T. Thayer, then Deputy Director of Asian Communist Affairs at the State Department. Thayer wanted Williams to divulge the details of a two and a half hour-long conversation between Williams and the Chinese leader Zhou Enlai before Williams's slated return to the US. However, Thayer complained that Williams "looks at Sino-U.S. relations from Chinese viewpoint, and, commensurately, with only a little sympathy for and understanding of the practical U.S. problems in meeting his prescription for U.S. actions to improve relations." On the other hand,

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[397] G.C. Moore to W.C. Sullivan, 24 September 1969, pg. 23 of 245, *Black Nationalist Hate Groups, 100-448006, Section 13*, COINTELPRO: The Counterintelligence Program of the FBI, Federal Bureau of Investigation Library, *Archives Unbound*, Gale SC5000192625.

[398]. J. Walter Yeagley to Robert Morgan, FBI File, 9 October 1969, Reel 24, Frames 39-40, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[399]. U.S. Embassy Dar Es Salaam to Secretary of State, FBI File, 23 July 1968, Reel 24, Frames 63-64, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

Williams did ask Thayer if the State Department could pressure North Carolina into dropping the extradition charges.[400] The onset of Williams's extradition battle found him caught between the agendas of two federal agencies.

Conclusion

Once in the United States, Williams did not abandon his international struggle. After asking the PRC Chairman Mao Zedong for help in his extradition case, Williams received a note from one of Mao's office secretaries on why the Chinese people could not offer their support on October 2, 1973. Williams had framed his request around the ten-year anniversary of Mao's statement of support for the African American struggle in Birmingham, Alabama. The secretary, Wang His-lin explained that ten years ago "the relation between the governments of the United States and China were in a state of antagonism, the issuance was simply to aid annoyance to the government of the United States." However, in the ensuing decade, the PRC's position in the world had shifted. Now it was important to maintain a relationship with the United States due to the looming threat the Soviet Union posed to the PRC. The message asked that Williams and his followers not to "oppose but comply with the willing for the American government for the time being for the revolutionary benefit of the proletarian." Wang did offer Williams a smidgeon of hope for the future since "once we tide over the currents of difficulties, we will help you."[401] Once China had eliminated the Soviet Union and was in a position to oppose the US, then Williams could expect their full assistance. William had a significant wait ahead of him.

Throughout his attempts to gain international support, Williams consistently encountered the challenges of organizing such a movement. He was undermined by the pressures of his host

[400]. Harry E.T. Thayer, Memo of Conversation, "Williams on China," 12 January 1970, Box 11, Folder "State Department Documents 1961-73 – Includes Report of State Department Interview Re China," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[401] Wang Hsi-lin to RFW, 2 October 1973, Reel 5, Frame 187, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

nations and the United States. The inconsistent and apprehensive nature of the activist community further undercut each of Williams's efforts. The frustrating aspects of his exile clearly had him exasperated by 1969. An uncharacteristic letter to his longtime ally Mae Mallory revealed this irritation. He believed Mallory and some of her African associates helped spread the rumors about him making a deal with the CIA. Williams caustically requested, "Since you have knowledge of such a deal, I wish you would fill me in on the details before you start broadcasting them to everyone but me. You should also, as a friend, inform me as to who has been so generous and helpful to arrange such a deal." Williams continued to chastise Mallory betraying him. He appeared convinced that the CIA had sponsored these rumors to discredit his attempts to gain international support and return home. In an appeal to common sense, he flatly stated, "If I had a deal, I would have already been [in the US]. If I had been the deal making kind I would not have been out."[402]

Rumors of a deal have followed Williams ever since his return to the United States. In Stephens' 2010 article, "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," he concluded that Williams had reached a deal with the US. He argued that Williams traded on "his knowledge of the Chinese government for safe passage home."[403] However, this depiction required more nuance. On January 12, 1970, Williams was interviewed by Harry E.T. Thayer, then Deputy Director of

[402] RFW to Mallory, 21 April 1969, Reel 4, Frame 238, RFW Papers, BHL-UM. It is important to note that this exchange did not mark the first misunderstanding between Williams and Mallory. While the tone was most certainly different, Williams had sent a confused letter to Mallory in 1968. He was responding to a letter from her that "referred to things…that I know nothing at all about. I have not received any correspondence in which you mentioned Cambodia." It is possible that their correspondence had been disrupted by US intelligence services. This may have extended to forgeries such as those COINTELPRO used to sow dissent between Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver. It may also be a sign of poor mail services and lost letters. On August 3, 1969, an associate of both Williams and Mallory sent Williams a letter asking if he had actually written the letter from April 21. He doubted its veracity based on Williams's attack on Mallory. See RFW to Mallory, undated [from 1968], Reel 3, Frame 543 to 544, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; "Jim" to RFW, 3 August 1969, Reel 4, Frame 329 to 330, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[403] Stephens, "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," 25.

Asian Communist Affairs at the State Department. Thayer wanted Williams to divulge the details of a two and a half hour-long conversation between Williams and the Chinese leader Zhou Enlai before Williams's slated return to the US. However, Thayer expressed his frustration with Williams since the former exile continued to offer his own opinion on US-China relations. Especially infuriating was that Williams continued to recommend that the US capitulate to China's international demand. Thayer complained that Williams "looks at Sino-U.S. relations from Chinese viewpoint, and, commensurately, with only a little sympathy for and understanding of the practical U.S. problems in meeting his prescription for U.S. actions to improve relations." On the other hand, Williams did ask Thayer if the State Department could pressure North Carolina into dropping the extradition charges.[404]

Any consideration of Williams's dealings with the US government after his return should consider the intersection of his willingness to help, his unwillingness to surrender his ideals, and his desire to clear the extradition charges. That the extradition charges were not dismissed until 1976 perhaps demonstrates Williams's level of cooperation. Or, at the very least, how he continued to carefully manage his public persona and walk between different political factions. By 1971, Williams had become a master of obfuscation. In his extensive deposition before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, J.G. Sourwine, the chief counsel of the committee, wanted Williams to admit that figures such as Mao Zedong, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Ho Chi Minh were dictators that abused human rights. Williams's response was a well-crafted deflection:

[404] Thayer interview of Williams, FBI File, 12 January 1970, Reel 24, Frame 214 to 221, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

> **Mr. Williams**. That depends on how you look at it, because some people say that the United States, they say that the President of the United States is bloody, and this is what they think about this country. This is why they would ask me, "Why would you go back to a country like that?" But I just judge people on the basis as I talk to them and my relationship to them. Just like in your case. I have heard a lot of things about you, but as far as I am concerned I don't see it. But still from others I have heard about this committee and how bad it was. It may be. But I don't see it. So I wouldn't judge you on the basis of what others say or what I have heard.
> **Mr. Sourwine**. I don't know whether that is a compliment or not….But let us not go into that. I am not the subject of the inquiry.[405]

Throughout the 250-page transcription of the deposition, Williams remained guarded and evasive in his responses. He navigated the realm of national and international politics with caution.

As scholars begin to apply more transnational and global frameworks to the Civil Rights—Black Power Movement, they must continue to recognize the sheer difficulty of these attempts. The rhetoric of the movement was certainly international in scope, but the circumstances Williams faced during his exile reveal the many setbacks and pitfalls these movements experienced. On the other hand, historians should not devalue the importance of these efforts. In his short review of Williams's exile, Timothy Tyson labeled Williams as a "pawn."[406] Williams's exile had downfalls particularly as he became trapped between the tripartite relationship between the Soviet Union, China, and the United States. However, to write off these attempts as failures undervalued their significance. Williams may not have been able to form a lasting international movement. But, he stood against the United States, a Soviet-inspired USCP, and a hostile Cuban government. His detractors observed a danger in his activities that often merited a severe response. Thus, even Williams's "failures" should inform those who want to engage with the international aspects of the Civil Rights—Black Power era.

[405] Williams's Senate Internal Security Subcommittee testimony, Part 2, 24 March 1970, Reel 7, Frame 553, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[406] Tyson, 300.

EPILOGUE: "Nothing Glamorous About It"

Figure 7: Robert F. Williams and Members of the Pan-African Congress in Dar Es-Salaam, Tanzania, date unknown. Photo Courtesy of Bentley Historical Library, Robert F. Williams, Box 14, Folder "Africa and Cuba."

The New York Times published an op-ed from Robert F. Williams on February 21, 1971, seventeenth months after he returned to the United States. The article, entitled "On the Platform With Mao Tse-tung: China Through the Eyes of a Black American Dissident," informed audiences of his time as an expatriate and described China as a nation on the rise that the United States must welcome. Starting the article, Williams acknowledged that upon his exit from the United States, "I had not the slightest concept of the magnitude of the forces that would hew my destiny." He related that China, of all the nations he had visited, impressed him the most and that United States and other Western societies should emulate the PRC's emphasis on "profound human qualities" such as "morality and selflessness." Williams went to great lengths to express the openness and willingness of the Chinese people to connect with Americans. To relate this, he shared stories of his interactions including the example of a young student from Xining who sent his life savings to Williams with a letter asking that Williams purchase and send Chinese texts to

the United States so that Americans could learn about China. He provided another example in which some young children only agreed to have their picture taken by Williams if he agreed to send back images of American children because, "We don't know what they look like either." Williams, never afraid of making his political message explicit, ended the article with this advice to his American readers: "China is not a fearful dragon of plunder requiring isolation and quarantine. She is a plodding dragon making her way towards the top of humanity and she warrants understanding and recognition."[407] This closing sentiment revealed Williams's intention—to push American foreign policymakers to identify China as separate from the Soviet Union's sphere of influence and to reach an agreement with the nation. This advice appeared in *The New York Times* five months prior to National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger's secret visit to China to prepare for President Richard Nixon's 1972 visit to the PRC and the resulting rapprochement.

My goal here is not to depict Williams as the driving force for the negotiations between the United States and China. Rather, I raise this case to illustrate Williams's unique journey. His odyssey abroad ended at the exact moment when the two nations reevaluated each other. As Kissinger and Nixon reassessed their policy towards the People's Republic, the Department of State debriefed Williams about his time in China with the hopes of gaining insights into how to improve U.S.-China relations. As the top echelon of the Communist Party of China considered how to form a new relationship with the West, the Premier of the PRC Zhou Enlai spoke with Williams for two and a half hours regarding his intentions upon returning to the United States in 1969. Williams would later recount in his *New York Times* op-ed that the conversation ended

[407] Robert F. Williams, "On the Platform With Mao Tse-Tung: China Through the Eyes of a Black American Dissident," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, 20 February 1971. Proquest Historical Newspapers (119376288).

with Enlai's message that, "at home I could work for better understanding between the Chinese and American peoples."[408] Similar to his exit from Cuba, Williams again found his personal intentions and ambitions ensnared within the shifting international order of the Cold War.

Yet, historian Timothy Tyson's characterization of Williams as a "pawn" of the Cold War presents too limited of an interpretation or, at least, one that needs more elaboration. Williams remained Williams, and he used his savvy political and communication skills to try and engineer a positive outcome for himself and his family. In his interview with a representative of the Department of State, Williams asked if the State Department could intercede in his extradition case in North Carolina. He also endeavored to maintain his communications with Chinese officials. He sent a request on February 13, 1970, to Zhou Enlai asking the Premier to forward material on China's economic advancement to Williams. The letter also included an appeal to release the information to him before it reached the international press who would "distort it" to disparage the PRC.[409] Perhaps Williams hoped to establish himself as a gatekeeper for knowledge about China, to raise his value to American officials, or to keep his name in the mind of Chinese officials. A subsequent exchange in 1973 revealed an aspect of his intentions more clearly when, as mentioned in the previous chapter, he asked Chairman Mao Zedong for a public declaration of support for Williams's battle against extradition to North Carolina.[410] The op-ed to *The New York Times* also demonstrated Williams's rhetorical skills. In recapping his

[408] Harry E.T. Thayer, Memo of Conversation, "Williams on China," 12 January 1970, Box 11, Folder "State Department Documents 1961-73 – Includes Report of State Department Interview Re China," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Robert F. Williams, "On the Platform With Mao Tse-Tung: China Through the Eyes of a Black American Dissident," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, 20 February 1971. Proquest Historical Newspapers (119376288). For information on the foreign policy of the United States and China as they approached rapprochement, see Jian, *Mao's China* (2001); Westad, *The Global Cold War* (2007); Suri, *Power and Protest* (2003); and Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1994).

[409] RFW to Chou En-Lai, 13 February 1970, Box 2, Folder "February – March 1970," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[410] Wang Hsi-lin to RFW, 2 October 1973, Reel 5, Frame 187, RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

conversation with Zhou, Williams stated the Chinese leader's concern that the United States would either execute or most certainly persecute him upon his return. Williams responded, "I felt that logically the Government would be more interested in what I had to say than in killing or imprisoning me on a racist frame-up. It is now obvious that he had a better understanding of Washington's attitude than I did."[411] Williams had again pitted the legitimacy of American democratic values against the actions of communist regimes the United States sought to vilify at home and abroad.

Williams's effusive praise of China in the op-ed also conceivably served a purpose in his extradition fight. His use of a public platform to extol the PRC's virtues is not dissimilar to the letters he sent to Zhou and Mao. Whether it demonstrated his value as an informal asset or to prove that he had not embraced the foreign policy line of the American establishment, the article's celebration of Chinese advancement appears to communicate Williams's hope that the PRC would view him favorably enough to aid in the publicity campaign against North Carolina's attempts to extradite him. As Mabel Robinson Williams revealed to scholar Robeson Taj Frazier in a phone interview, the expatriate community in China held some awareness to the human rights violations within the PRC and the increased, violent purges that marked the onset of the Cultural Revolution. The Williamses learned, for instance, that their sons' teachers "were paraded down streets by the Red Guard and forced to publically renounce themselves" and debated about whether it was their duty to decry these acts before ultimately deciding, "You can't fight everybody's battles."[412] At the same time, it is not inconceivable that his affection for

[411] Robert F. Williams, "On the Platform With Mao Tse-Tung: China Through the Eyes of a Black American Dissident," *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, 20 February 1971. Proquest Historical Newspapers (119376288).

[412] Mabel Robinson Williams, phone interview by Robeson Taj Frazier, 4 October 2009, quoted in Frazier, "Thunder in the East," 947-948.

the PRC was genuine. Though he grew more reserved with his praise for the PRC over time, he defended Mao's legacy into the 1980s and would later be buried in a suit the Chairman had gifted him.[413] His op-ed to *The New York Times* displays this mixture of contradiction, ambition, and attachment.

Yet, what interests me most about this article is the negotiations back and forth with Harrison E. Salisbury, the assistant managing editor at *The New York Times* that saw it published. The correspondence between Williams and Salisbury started in the summer of 1970 with the latter stating his openness to an editorial from Williams on China or any other topic that would get a rise from the newspaper's readership. Williams provided the paper with a draft of his article, entitled "China: The Plodding Dragon," in October and received edits from Salisbury in November. Though not always the fastest or most diligent correspondent, Williams returned the edits within the week.[414] The assistant managing editor sent another request for edits and for this round pushed Williams to back away from the "theoretical and polemical" observations in favor of sharing firsthand knowledge that he gained from his three-year residency in China. Williams followed up with the draft that became the op-ed published in February of 1971.[415] I highlight these exchanges because Williams's tone throughout the letters delivers a most striking departure from his time in exile. Almost each of the letters ended with some variation of Williams

[413] Robert F. Williams, "De-Maoification Myth Exploded," *Beijing Review* 27, no. 10 (March 1984), 5, accessed through Reel 6, Frame 607, RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 3. For more on how the Williamses managed their private and public discourse in China and considered their role in China, see Frazier, "Thunder in the East," (2011) and Frazier, *The East is Black* (2015). Historian Gerald Horne examined a similar inconsistency in Shirley Graham Du Bois's continued support of the PRC in *Race Woman* (2000).

[414] Harrison E. Salisbury to RFW, 30 September 1970, Box 2, Folder "Correspondence July – December 1970," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Harrison E. Salisbury, 31 October 1970, Box 2, Folder "Correspondence July – December 1970," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Harrison E. Salisbury to RFW, 19 November 1970, Box 2, Folder "Correspondence July – December 1970," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Harrison E. Salisbury, 26 November 1970, Box 2, Folder "Correspondence July – December 1970," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[415] Harrison E. Salisbury to RFW, 10 December 1970, Box 2, Folder "Correspondence July – December 1970," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; RFW to Harrison E. Salisbury, 16 January 1971, Box 2, Folder "Undated, January – February 1971," RFW Papers, BHL-UM; Harrison E. Salisbury to RFW, 26 January 1971, Box 2, Folder "Undated, January – February 1971," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

informing Salisbury to edit and shorten the piece "at your own discretion."[416] This casual approach to the wording and content of his article clashes with the Williams who spent nearly a decade fighting tooth and nail to not only gain access to the Western media but to receive accurate and fair treatment. This dissertation opened with an example of Williams battling a slander against him in a Canadian newspaper and demanding that the newspaper accurately quote him. Here, Williams offered to place his words at the mercy of the editors of *The New York Times*.

There are a host of potential reasons for this change in Williams's demeanor. Williams, as someone who had self-published for years, perhaps simply bridled against the need for revisions and the delays before publication. This attitude also may reflect a lack of interest, engagement, or urgency with the article. Yet, those explanations do not align with his prompt replies and willingness to cooperate through a few rounds of edits. What remains undeniable from this example is that he no longer felt as compelled to quarrel over his message or with those who interpreted it. In other words, his change in location had created a different set of requirements for his life as an activist—he no longer needed an audience to guarantee his relevance, and thus his survival, as he had while an expatriate. I selected the titles for both the introduction and the epilogue from the same quote and they provide an informal thesis for this project: "Exile can be dramatic, but there is really nothing glamorous about it, especially when one faces the prospect of being continuously banned from his homeland."[417] Williams had lived the dramatic—and at times affected—life as an expatriate.

[416] RFW to Harrison E. Salisbury, 26 November 1970, Box 2, Folder "Correspondence July – December 1970," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

[417] RFW, "Exile at Home and Abroad," 2-3, Undated, Box 3, Folder "Press Releases (1)," RFW Papers, BHL-UM.

Upon his return home, he sought a different life. The above anecdote with *The New York Times* is not meant to depict Williams as resigned or tired, but it would be naïve to ignore the toll of his years abroad. He no longer sought a national spotlight and, his 7-year battle against extradition notwithstanding, but not one less steeped in controversy. Williams spent a year at the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Michigan on a Ford Foundation grant to write about his experiences in China and then moved to Baldwin, Michigan, with his family where the Williamses again devoted themselves to community activism. Robert F. Williams, never the most inconspicuous individual, led a series of campaigns in the Lake County area to improve the conditions for the county's African American residents. This work involved protests against local police brutality and mistreatment and included a "one-man social protest" outside the local newspaper offices in 1980 after the paper failed to report or take seriously local activities by the Ku Klux Klan. As described by historian Ronald J. Stephens, the 55-year-old Williams committed himself wholly to the proceedings "wearing a large electric sandwich board, he used a battery pack with a light bulb on the top of the helmet he wore, and he marched back and forward in front of the *Lake County Star* office door speaking and playing a cassette recorder."[418] Mabel also threw herself into community work and became the project director for a local charitable organization that assisted the elderly and poor.[419]

This project has reconstructed the day-to-day aspects of Williams's experience of exile and his collaborations with his activist network. Shaped by the backdrop of the Cold War, Williams's odyssey through the 1960s captured aspects of debates swirling within the African American activist community through the transition from the civil rights movement to the Black

[418] Ronald J. Stephens, "Narrating Acts of Resistance: Explorations of Untold Heroic and Horrific Battle Stories surrounding Robert Franklin Williams' Residence in Lake County, Michigan," *Journal of Black Studies* 33, no. 5 (2003): 675-703, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3180982.

[419] Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie*, 305.

Power era. His status as an expatriate ensnared him within international negotiations and the realignments that transpired throughout the Cold War. As stated in his op-ed to *The New York Times*, his exile had afforded him the opportunity to share a platform with Chairman Mao and address millions. At the same time, his exile had separated him from his home, the African American community, and the ability to have a tangible impact on the black liberation struggle. The increased domestic repression of radical African Americans during the 1950s and the shifting emphases of the white left had set the stage for Williams's exit from the United States in 1961. The struggle between CAMD and the MDC that arose after his escape revealed the rising tensions between the gradualist factions within the African American activist community and those who latched onto the growing sense of black nationalism. From Cuba, Williams fought to remain relevant and battled against the slanders created by the United States and the efforts of his Cuban hosts to silence him. His escape to the PRC provided new opportunities and new challenges to his expatriacy as revealed during his years-long struggle to reach Sweden. Throughout his exile, Williams adapted to his local context as a means to spread a black internationalist message to the United States and abroad.

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