

## Stokely Carmichael (1941-1998)

### Speech at University of California, Berkeley

October 29, 1966

Stokely Carmichael was the brilliant and impatient young civil rights leader who, in the 1960s, popularized the phrase "black power." Carmichael was initially an acolyte of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. and his philosophy of nonviolent protest. Carmichael became a leader in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), but was radicalized when he saw peaceful protestors brutalized in the South.

In the mid 1960s, Carmichael challenged the civil rights leadership by rejecting integration and calling on blacks to oust whites from the freedom movement. Following his arrest during a 1966 protest march in Mississippi, Carmichael angrily demanded a change in the rhetoric and strategy of the civil rights movement. "We've been saying 'Freedom' for six years," Carmichael said. "What we are going to start saying now is 'Black Power.'"<sup>1</sup>

Historian Adam Fairclough writes that King was "aghast" at Carmichael's use of a slogan that sounded so aggressive. "Black Power" was condemned by whites as a motto for a new form of racism. Some whites feared that black power was a call for race war. King urged Carmichael to drop the phrase but he refused.<sup>2</sup> NAACP leader Roy Wilkins condemned the slogan as "the father of hate and the mother of violence," predicting that black power would mean "black death."<sup>3</sup>

Fellow civil rights organizer John Lewis, later a Democratic congressman from Georgia, remembered Carmichael as tall, lanky, and up-front. "He didn't wait to be asked his opinion on anything - he told you and expected you to listen," Lewis wrote. The two became estranged when Carmichael toppled Lewis from the SNCC chairmanship.<sup>4</sup>

In 1966 and 1967, Carmichael toured college campuses giving increasingly belligerent speeches. He coauthored a radical manifesto titled Black Power, in which he argued that civil rights groups had lost their appeal to increasingly militant young blacks. The movement's voice, he wrote, had been hopelessly softened for "an audience of middle class whites."<sup>5</sup>

Carmichael didn't shrink from these views when he addressed mostly white audiences in places like Berkeley. He spoke with a dry sense of humor, a jagged edge of anger, and a confidence described as strutting while standing still. "He became the personification of raw militancy," Lewis said.<sup>6</sup>

In 1967, SNCC severed ties with Carmichael. He became honorary prime minister of the Black Panthers but soon left that group over disagreements on seeking support from whites. Carmichael

moved to the West African nation of Guinea in 1969. He changed his name to Kwame Ture in honor of Sekou Ture, the Marxist leader of Guinea, and Kwame Nkrumah, the deposed independence leader of Ghana. Kwame Ture lived in self-imposed exile for thirty years but returned to the U.S. for speeches and political activity. In 1996, he sought treatment in New York for prostate cancer, still answering the phone, "Ready for the Revolution!" He died two years later at his home in Africa.<sup>7</sup>

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Thank you very much. It's a privilege and an honor to be in the white intellectual ghetto of the West. *[laughter]* We wanted to do a couple of things before we started. The first is that based on the fact that SNCC, through the articulation of its program by its chairman, has been able to win elections in Georgia, Alabama, Maryland, and by our appearance here will win an election in California, in 1968 I'm gonna run for president of the United States. *[applause]* I just can't make it cause I wasn't born in the United States. That's the only thing holding me back.

We wanted to say that this is a student conference, as it should be, held on a campus, and that we're not ever to be caught up in the intellectual masturbation of the question of Black Power. That's a function of the people who are advertisers that call themselves reporters. *[applause]* Oh, for my members and friends of the press, my self-appointed white critics: I was reading Mr. Bernard Shaw two days ago, and I came across a very important quote, which I think is most apropos for you. He says, "All criticism is autobiography." Dig yourself.

*[applause]*

OK. The philosophers Camus and Sartre raise the question whether or not a man can condemn himself. The black existentialist philosopher who is pragmatic, Frantz Fanon, answered the question. He said that man could not. Camus and Sartre does not. We in SNCC tend to agree with Camus and Sarte that a man cannot condemn himself. Were he to condemn himself he would then have to inflict punishment upon himself. An example would be the Nazis. Any of the Nazi prisoners who admitted, after he was caught and incarcerated, that he committed crimes, that he killed all the many people that he killed, he committed suicide. The only ones who were able to stay alive were the ones who never admitted that they committed a crime against people - that is, the ones who rationalized that Jews were not human beings and deserved to be killed, or that they were only following orders.

On a more immediate scene, the officials and the population - the white population - in Neshoba County, Mississippi (that's where Philadelphia is) could not condemn [Sheriff] Rainey, his deputies, and the other fourteen men who killed three human beings. They could not because they elected Mr. Rainey to do precisely what he did; and that for them to condemn him would be for them to condemn themselves.



In a much larger view, SNCC says that white America cannot condemn herself. And since we are liberal we have done it. You stand condemned. Now a number of things that arises from that answer, how do you condemn yourselves? It seems to me the institutions that function in this country are clearly racist and that they're built upon racism. And the question then is, how can black people inside of this country move? And then how can white people who say they're not a part of those institutions begin to move? And how then do we begin to clear away the obstacles that we have in this society, that make us live like human beings? How can we begin to build institutions that will allow people to relate with each other as human beings? This country has never done that, especially around the country of white and black.

Now, several people have been upset because we've said that integration was irrelevant when initiated by blacks, and that in fact it was a subterfuge, an insidious subterfuge for the maintenance of white supremacy. Now we maintain that in the past six years or so, this country has been feeding us a "thalidomide drug of integration," and that some Negroes have been walking down a dream street talking about sitting next to white people. And that that does not begin to solve the problem.

That when we went to Mississippi we did not go to sit next to Ross Barnett, we did not go to sit next to Jim Clark, we went to get them out of our way. And that people ought to understand that. That we were never fighting for the right to integrate, we were fighting against white supremacy.

*[applause]*

Now then, in order to understand white supremacy, we must dismiss the fallacious notion that white people can give anybody their freedom. No man can give anybody his freedom. A man is born free. You may enslave a man after he is born free. And that is in fact what this country does. It enslaves black people after they're born. So that the only act that white people can do is to stop denying black people their freedom. That is, they must stop denying freedom. They never give it to anyone.

Now we want to take that to its logical extension so that we can understand then what its relevancy would be in terms of new civil rights bills. I maintain that every civil rights bill in this country was passed for white people, not for black people. *[applause]* For example, I am black. I know that. I also know that while I am black I am a human being. Therefore I have the right to go into any public place. White people didn't know that. Every time I tried to go into a place they stopped me. So some boys had to write a bill to tell that white man, "He's a human being; don't stop him." That bill was for that white man, not for me. I knew it all the time. I knew it all the time.

*[applause]*

I knew that I could vote and that that wasn't a privilege, it was my right. Every time I tried I was shot, killed or jailed, beaten or economically deprived. So somebody had to write a bill for white

people to tell them, "When a black man comes to vote, don't bother him." That bill, again, was for white people, not for black people. So that when you talk about open occupancy I know I can live anywhere I want to live. It is white people across this country who are incapable of allowing me to live where I want to live. You need a civil rights bill, not me! I know I can live where I want to live.

*[applause]*

So that the failure to pass a civil rights bill isn't because of Black Power, isn't because of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, is not because of the rebellions that are occurring in the major cities. It is the incapability of whites to deal with their own problems inside their own communities. That is the problem of the failure of the civil rights bill.

*[applause]*

And so in a larger sense we must then ask, how is it that black people move? And what do we do? But the question in the greater sense is, how can white people who are the majority, and who are responsible for making democracy work, make it work? They have miserably failed to this point. They have never made democracy work. Be it inside the United States, Vietnam, South Africa, the Philippines, South America, Puerto Rico, wherever America has been, she has not been able to make democracy work. *[applause]* So that in a larger sense, we not only condemn the country for what is done internally, but we must condemn it for what it does externally. We see this country trying to rule the world, and someone must stand up and start articulating that this country is not God and cannot rule the world.

*[applause]*

Now then, before we move on we ought to develop the [concept of] white supremacy attitudes, that we're either conscious or subconscious of, and how they run rampant through the society today. For example, the missionaries were sent to Africa. They went with the attitude that blacks were automatically inferior. As a matter of fact, the first act the missionaries did, you know, when they get to Africa was to make us cover up our bodies, because they said it got them excited. We couldn't go bare-breasted any more because they got excited! *[laughter]* Now when the missionaries came to civilize us because we were uncivilized, educate us because we were uneducated, and give us some literate studies because we were illiterate, they charged a price. The missionaries came with the Bible, and we had the land. When they left, they had the land, and we still have the Bible.

*[applause]*

And that has been the rationalization for Western civilization as it moves across the world, and stealing and plundering, and raping everybody in its path. Their one rationalization is that the rest of the world is uncivilized and they are in fact civilized. And they are uncivilized.



*[applause]*

And that runs on today, you see, because what we have today is that we have what we call modern-day Peace Corps . . . uh . . . missionaries. And they come into our ghettos and they Head Start, Upward Lift, Bootstrap, and Upward Bound us into white society. 'Cause they don't want to face the real problem. Which is a man is poor for one reason and one reason only: because he does not have money. Period. If you want to get rid of poverty you give people money. Period. And you ought not tell me about people who don't work, and you can't give people money without working, because if that were true, you'd have to start stopping Rockefeller, Bobby Kennedy, Lyndon Baines Johnson, Lady Bird Johnson, the whole of Standard Oil, the Gulf Club [Gulf Corporation] - all of them. *[applause]* Including probably a large number of the board of trustees of this university.

*[applause]*

So the question, then, clearly is not whether or not one can work. It's who has power? Who has power to make his or her acts legitimate? That is all. And that [in] this country that power is invested in the hands of white people, and they make their acts legitimate. It is now, therefore, for black people to make our acts legitimate.

*[applause]*

Now we are engaged in a psychological struggle in this country. And that is whether or not black people have the right to use the words they want to use without white people giving their sanction to it. *[applause]* And that we maintain whether they like it or not we gonna use the word "Black Power" and let them address themselves to that. *[applause]* But that we are not going to wait for white people to sanction Black Power. We're tired of waiting; every time black people move in this country, they're forced to defend their position before they move. It's time that the people who are supposed to be defending their position do that, that's white people. They ought to start defending themselves as to why they have oppressed and exploited us.

Now it is clear that when this country started to move in terms of slavery, the reason for a man being picked as a slave was one reason - because of the color of his skin. If one was black one was automatically inferior, inhuman, and therefore fit for slavery. So that the question of whether or not we are individually suppressed is nonsensical, and it's a downright lie. We are oppressed as a group because we are black. Not because we are lazy. Not because we're apathetic. Not because we're stupid. Not because we smell. Not because we eat watermelon and have good rhythm. *[applause]* We are oppressed because we are black.

And in order to get out of that oppression one must wield the group power that one has, not the individual power which this country then sets the criteria under which a man may come into it. That is what is called in this country as integration. "You do what I tell you to do and then we'll let you sit at the table with us." And that we are saying that we have to be opposed to that. We



must now set a criteria and that if there's going to be any integration it's going to be a two-way thing. If you believe in integration, you can come live in Watts, you can send your children to the ghetto schools. Let's talk about that. If you believe in integration then we're going to start adopting us some white people to live in our neighborhood.

*[applause]*

So it is clear that the question is not one of integration or segregation. Integration is a man's ability to want to move in there by himself. If someone wants to live in a white neighborhood, and he is black, that is his choice. It should be his right. It is not because white people will not allow him. So vice versa if a black man wants to live in the slums that should be his right. Black people will let him. That is the difference. And it's the difference on which this country makes a number of logical mistakes when they begin to try to criticize a program articulated by SNCC.

Now we maintain that we cannot afford to be concerned about six percent of the children in this country - black children - who you allow to come into white schools. We have ninety-four percent who still live in shacks. We are going to be concerned about those ninety-four percent. You ought to be concerned about them too. The question is, are we willing to be concerned about those ninety-four percent? Are we willing to be concerned about the black people who will never get to Berkeley, who will never get to Harvard, and cannot get an education so you'll never get a chance to rub shoulders with them and say, "Well, he's almost as good as we are. He's not like the others."

*[applause]*

The question is, how can white society begin to move to see black people as human beings? I am black, therefore I am. Not that I am black and I must go to college to prove myself. I am black, therefore I am. And don't deprive me of anything and say to me that you must go to college before you gain access to X, Y, and Z. It is only a rationalization for one's oppression.

The political parties of this country do not meet the needs of the people on a day-to-day basis. The question is, how can we build new political institutions that will become the political expressions of people on a day-to-day basis? The question is, how can you build political institutions that will begin to meet the needs of Oakland, California? And the needs of Oakland, California, is not one thousand policemen with submachine guns. They don't need that. They need that least of all. *[applause]* The question is how can we build institutions where those people can begin to function on a day-to-day basis, where they can get decent jobs, where they can get decent houses, and where they can begin to participate in a policy and major decisions that affect their lives? That's what they need, not Gestapo troops, because this is not 1942, and if you play like Nazis, we playing back wit' you this time around - get hip to that.

*[applause]*





The question then is, how can white people move to start making the major institutions that they have in this country function the way it is supposed to function? That is the real question. And can white people move inside their own community and start tearing down racism where in fact it does exist? Where it exists. It is you who live in Cicero and stopped us from living there.<sup>8</sup> It is white people who stopped us from moving into Grenada.<sup>9</sup> It is white people who make sure that we live in the ghettos of this country. It is white institutions that do that. They must change. In order ... in order for America to really live on a basic principle of human relationships a new society must be born. Racism must die. And the economic exploitation of this country of non-white peoples around the world must also die. Must also die.

*[applause]*

Now there are several programs we have in the South, mostly in poor white communities where we're trying to organize poor whites on a base where they can begin to move around the question of economic exploitation and political disfranchisement. We know, we've heard the theory several times. But few people are willing to go into there. The question is, can the white activist not try to be a Pepsi generation who comes alive in the black community, but can he be a man who's willing to move into the white community and start organizing where the organization is needed? *[applause]* Can he do that? The question is, can the white society, or the white activist disassociate himself with two clowns who waste time parrying with each other rather than talking about the problems that are facing people in this state? Can you disassociate yourself with those clowns and start to build new institutions that will eliminate all idiots like them? *[applause]* And the question is, if we are going to do that, when and where do we start and how do we start? We maintain that we must start doing that inside the white community.

Our own personal position politically is that we don't think the Democratic Party represents the needs of black people. We know it don't. *[applause]* And that if, in fact, white people really believe that the question's if they going to move inside that structure, how are they going to organize around a concept of whiteness based on true brotherhood and based on stopping economic exploitation, so that there will be a coalition base for black people to hook up with? You cannot form a coalition based on national sentiment. That is not a coalition. If you need a coalition to redress itself to real changes in this country, white people must start building those institutions inside the white community. And that is the real question I think facing the white activists today. Can they, in fact, begin to move into and tear down the institutions that have put us all in the trick bag that we've been into for the last hundred years?

I don't think that we should follow what many people say. That we should fight to be leaders of tomorrow. Frederick Douglass said the youth should fight to be leaders today. And God knows we need to be leaders today, because the men who run this country are sick. Are sick. *[applause]* So that we on a larger sense can begin today to start building those institutions and to fight to articulate our position, to fight to be able to control our universities - we need to be able to do that - to fight to control the basic institutions which perpetuate racism by destroying them and building new ones. That's the real question that faces us today, and it is a dilemma because most

of us do not know how to work. And that the excuse that most white activists find is to run into the black community.

Now we maintain that we cannot have white people working in the black community - and we've made it on a psychological ground. The fact is that all black people often question whether or not they are equal to whites, because every time they start to do something, white people are around showing them how to do it. If we are going to eliminate that for the generation that comes after us, then black people must be seen in positions of power, doing and articulating for themselves. *[applause]* For themselves. That is not to say that one is a reverse racist. It is to say that one is moving on a healthy ground. It is to say what the philosopher Sartre says, one is becoming an "anti-racist racist." *[laughter]* And this country can't understand that. Maybe it's because it's all caught up in racism. But I think what you have in SNCC is an anti-racist racism. We are against racists. Now if everybody who's white see themselves as racist and then see us against him, they're speaking from they're own guilt position, not ours. Not ours.

*[applause]*

Now then the question is, how can we move to begin to change what's going on in this country? I maintain, as we have in SNCC, that the war in Vietnam is an illegal and immoral war.

*[applause]* And the question is, what can we do to stop that war? What can we do to stop the people who, in the name of our country, are killing babies, women, and children? What can we do to stop that? And I maintain that we do not have the power in our hands to change that institution. To begin to re-create it so that they learn to leave the Vietnamese people alone. And that the only power we have is the power to say, "Hell no to the draft." We have to say, *[applause]* we have to say to ourselves that there's a higher law than the law of a racist named McNamara. There is a higher law than the law of a fool named Rusk. There's a higher law than the law of a buffoon named Johnson. *[applause]* It's the law of each of us. The law of each of us.

*[applause]*

It is the law of each of us saying that we will not allow them to make us hired killers. We will stand pat. We will not kill anybody that they say kill. And if we decide to kill, we're gonna to decide who we gonna kill. *[applause]* And this country will only be able to stop the war in Vietnam when the young men who are made to fight it begin to say, "Hell, no, we ain't going."

*[applause]*

Now there's a failure because the peace movement has been unable to get off the college campuses where everybody has a 2S and [is] not gonna get drafted anyway. The question is how can you move out of that into the white ghettos of this country and begin to articulate a position for those white students who do not want to go? We cannot do that. It is sometimes ironic that many of the peace groups have begun to call us [SNCC] violent and say they can no longer support us, and we are in fact the most militant organization for peace or civil rights or human



rights, against the war in Vietnam in this country today. There isn't one organization that has begun to meet our stance on the war in Vietnam. Because we not only say we are against the war in Vietnam, we are against the draft. We are against the draft. No man has the right to take a man for two years and train him to be a killer. A man should decide what he wants to do with his life.

*[applause]*

So the question then is, it becomes crystal clear for black people because we can easily say that anyone fighting in the war in Vietnam is nothing but a black mercenary. And that's all he is. Any time a black man leaves the country where he can't vote to supposedly deliver the vote for somebody else, he's a black mercenary. *[applause]* Any time a black man leaves this country, gets shot in Vietnam on foreign ground, and returns home and you won't give him a burial in his own homeland, he's a black mercenary. *[applause]* A black mercenary.

And that even if we're to believe the lies of Johnson - if I were to believe his lies that we're fighting to give democracy to the people in Vietnam, as a black man living in this country I wouldn't fight to give this to anybody. *[applause]* I wouldn't give it to anybody. So that we have to use our bodies and our minds in the only way that we see fit. We must begin, like the philosopher Camus, to come alive by saying no. That is the only act in which we begin to come alive. And we have to say no to many, many things in this country. This country is a nation of thieves. It has stole everything it has, beginning with black people. *[applause]* Beginning with black people. And the question is then how do we move this country to begin changing this country from what it is - a nation of thieves. This country cannot justify any longer its existence. We have become the policeman of the world. The marines are at our disposal to always bring democracy, and if the Vietnamese don't want democracy, well damn it we'll just wipe them the hell out, because they don't deserve to live if they won't have our way of life.

*[applause]*

There is then in a larger sense what do you do on your university campus? Do you raise questions about the hundred black students who were kicked off campus a couple of weeks ago? Eight hundred? Eight hundred? And how does that question begin to move? Do you begin to relate to people outside of the ivory tower and university wall? Do you think you're capable of building those human relationships as the country now stands? You're fooling yourself. It is impossible for white and black people to talk about building a relationship based on humanity when the country is the way it is, when the institutions are clearly against us.

We have taken all the myths of the country and we found them to be nothing but downright lies. This country told us that if we worked hard we would succeed, and if that were true we would own this country lock, stock, and barrel. *[applause]* Lock, stock, and barrel. Lock, stock, and barrel. It is we who have picked the cotton for nothing. It is we who are the maids in the kitchens of liberal white people. It is we who are the janitors, the porters, the elevator men. We who sweep up your college floors. Yes it is we who are the hardest workers and the lowest paid. And



the lowest paid. And that it is nonsensical for people to start talking about human relationships until they are willing to build new institutions. Black people are economically insecure. White liberals are economically secure. Can you begin to build an economic coalition? Are the liberals willing to share their salaries with the economically insecure black people they so much love? Then if you're not, are you willing to start building new institutions that will provide economic security for black people? That's the question we want to deal with. *[applause]* That's the question we want to deal with.

We have to seriously examine the histories that we have been told. But we have something more to do than that. American students are perhaps the most politically unsophisticated students in the world. *[applause]* In the world. In the world.

Across every country in this world, while we were growing up, students were leading the major revolutions of their countries. We have not been able to do that. They have been politically aware of their existence. In South America, our neighbors down below the border, have one every 24 hours just to remind us that they are politically aware. And that we have been unable to grasp it because we've always moved in the field of morality and love while people have been politically jiving with our lives. And the question is, how do we now move politically and stop trying to move morally. You can't move morally against a man like Brown and Reagan. You've got to move politically to cut them out of business. *[applause]* You've got to move politically.

You can't move morally against Lyndon Baines Johnson because he is an immoral man. He doesn't know what it's all about. So you've got to move politically. *[applause]* You've got to move politically. And that we have to begin to develop a political sophistication, which is not to be a parrot: *[mimicking]* The two-party system is the best system in the world. *[laughter]* There's a difference between being a parrot and being politically sophisticated. We have to raise questions about whether we do need new types of political institutions in this country, and we in SNCC maintain that we need them now. *[applause]* We need new political institutions in this country.

Any time Lyndon Baines Johnson can head a party which has in it Bobby Kennedy, Wayne Morse, Eastland, Wallace, and all those other supposed-to-be-liberal cats, there's something wrong with that party. They're moving politically, not morally. And that if that party refuses to seat black people from Mississippi and goes ahead and seats racists like Eastland and his clique, it's clear to me that they're moving politically, and that one cannot begin to talk morality to people like that. We must begin to think politically and see if we can have the power to impose and keep the moral values that we hold high. We must question the values of this society, and I maintain that black people are the best people to do that because we have been excluded from that society. And the question is we ought to think whether or not we want to become a part of that society.

*[applause]*



And that that is precisely what it seems to me that the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee is doing. We are raising questions about this country. I do not want to be a part of the American pie. The American pie means raping South Africa, beating Vietnam, beating South America, raping the Philippines, raping every country you've been in. I don't want any of your blood money. I don't want it. Don't want to be part of that system. And the question is, how do we raise those questions? *[applause]* How do we raise them as activists? How do we begin to raise them?


We have grown up and we are the generation that has found this country to be a world power. That has found this country to be the wealthiest country in the world. We must question how she got her wealth. That's what we're questioning. And whether or not we want this country to continue being the wealthiest country in the world at the price of raping everybody else across the world. That's what we must begin to question. And that because black people are saying we do not now want to become a part of you, we are called reverse racists. Ain't that a gas?

*[laughter]*

Now then we want to touch on nonviolence because we see that again as the failure of white society to make nonviolence work. I was always surprised at Quakers who came to Alabama and counseled me to be nonviolent, but didn't have the guts to start talking to James Clark to be nonviolent. That is where nonviolence needs to be preached - to Jim Clark, not to black people. They have already been nonviolent too many years. *[applause]* The question is, can white people conduct their nonviolent schools in Cicero where they belong to be conducted, not among black people in Mississippi? Can they conduct it among the white people in Grenada? Six-foot-two men who kicked little black children - can you conduct nonviolent schools there? That is the question that we must raise. Not that you conduct nonviolence among black people. Can you name me one black man today who has killed anybody white and is still alive? Even after a rebellion, when some black brothers throw some bricks and bottles, ten thousands of them has to pay the crime. 'Cause when the white policeman comes in, anybody who's black is arrested because we all look alike.

*[applause]*

So that we have to raise those questions. We, the youth of this country, must begin to raise those questions. And we must begin to move to build new institutions that gonna speak to the needs of people who need it. We are going to have to speak to change the foreign policy of this country. One of the problems with the peace movement is that it's just too caught up in Vietnam, and if we pull out the troops from Vietnam this week, next week you'd have to get another peace movement for Santo Domingo. And the question is how do you begin to articulate needs to change the foreign policy of this country. A policy that is decided upon rape. A policy in which decisions are made upon getting economic wealth at any price. At any price.



Now we articulate that we therefore have to hook up with black people around the world. And that that hookup is not only psychological but becomes very real. If South America today were to rebel, and black people were to shoot the hell out of all the white people there - as they should, as they should - then Standard Oil would crumble tomorrow. *[applause]* If South Africa were to go today, Chase Manhattan Bank would crumble tomorrow. *[applause]* If Zimbabwe, which is called Rhodesia by white people, were to go tomorrow, General Electric would cave in on the East Coast.


The question is, how do we stop those institutions that are so willing to fight against "Communist aggression" but closes their eye to racist oppression? That is the question that you raise. Can this country do that? Now many people talk about pulling out of Vietnam. What will happen if we pull out of Vietnam [is] there will be one less aggressor there. We won't be there. We won't be there. And so the question is how do we articulate those positions? And we cannot begin to articulate them from the same assumptions that the people in the country speak 'cause they speak from different assumptions than I assume the youth in this country are talking about.

That we're not talking about a policy of aid or sending Peace Corps people in to teach people how to read and write and build houses while we steal their raw materials from them. Is that what we're talking about? 'Cause that's all we do. What underdeveloped countries need is information about how to become industrialized, so they can keep their raw materials where they have it, produce them and sell them to this country for the price it's supposed to pay. Not that we produce it and send it back to them for a profit, and keep sending our modern day missionaries there, calling them the sons of Kennedy. And that if the youth are going to participate in that program, how do you raise those questions where you begin to control that Peace Corps program? How do you begin to raise them?

How do you raise the questions of poverty? The assumption for this country is that if someone is poor, they are poor because of their own individual blight, or they weren't born on the right side of town, they had too many children, they went in the army too early, their father was a drunk, they didn't care about school, they made a mistake. That's a lot of nonsense. Poverty is well calculated in this country. It is well calculated. And the reason why the poverty program won't work is because the calculators of poverty are administering it. That's why it won't work.

*[applause]*

So how can we, as the youth in this country, move to start tearing those things down? We must move into the white community. We are in the black community. We have developed a movement in the black community. The challenge is that the white activist has failed miserably to develop the movement inside of his community. And the question is, can we find white people who are gonna have the courage to go into white communities and start organizing them? Can we find them? Are they here and are they willing to do that? Those are the questions that we must raise for the white activist. And we're never gonna get caught up in questions about power. This country knows what power is. Knows it very well. And it knows what Black Power is 'cause



it's deprived black people of it for four hundred years. So it knows what Black Power is. But the question of why do white people in this country associate Black Power with violence, and the [answer] is because of their own inability to deal with blackness. If we had said "Negro Power" nobody would get scared. *[laughter]* Everybody would support it. If we said power for colored people, everybody'd be for that. But it is the word "black." It is the word "black" that bothers people in this country, and that's their problem, not mine. *[applause]* Their problem.

Now there's one modern-day lie that we want to attack and then move on very quickly - and that is the lie that says anything all black is bad. Now, you're all a college university crowd. You've taken your basic logic course. You know about a major premise, minor premise. So people have been telling me anything all black is bad. Let's make that our major premise.

Major premise: Anything all black is bad.

Minor premise or particular premise: I am all black.

Therefore. *[laughter]* I'm never going to be put in that trick bag; I'm all black and I'm all good. *[applause]* Anything all black is not necessarily bad. Anything all black is only bad when you use force to keep whites out. Now that's what white people have done in this country, and they're projecting their same fears and guilt on us, and we won't have it, we won't have it. *[applause]* Let them handle their own affairs and their own guilt. Let them find their own psychologists. We refuse to be the therapy for white society any longer. We have gone mad trying to do it. We have gone stark, raving mad trying to do it.

I look at Dr. King on television every single day, and I say to myself, "Now there is a man who's desperately needed in this country. There is a man full of love. There is a man full of mercy. There is a man full of compassion." But every time I see Lyndon on television, I say, "Martin, baby, you got a long way to go."

*[laughter]*

So that the question stands as to what we are willing to do, how we are willing to say no, to withdraw from that system and begin, within our community, to start the function and to build new institutions that will speak to our needs. In Lowndes County, we developed something called the Lowndes County Freedom Organization - it is a political party. The Alabama law says that if you have a party, you must have an emblem. We chose for the emblem a black panther - a beautiful black animal - which symbolizes the strength and dignity of black people. An animal that never strikes back until he's backed so far into the wall that he's got nothing to do but spring out. And when he springs, he does not stop.

Now there is a party in Alabama that is called the Alabama Democratic Party. It is all white. It has as its emblem a white rooster and the words "white supremacy for the right." Now the gentlemen of the press, because they are advertisers and because most of them are white and



because they are produced by that white institution, never calls the Lowndes County Freedom Organization by its name - but rather they call it the Black Panther Party. Our question is, why don't they call the Alabama Democratic Party the White Cock Party? *[laughter]* It is clear to me that just points out America's problem with sex and color - not our problem, *[laughter]* not our problem. It is now white America that is going to deal with those problems of sex and color.

If we were to be real and honest, we would have to admit, we would have to admit, that most people in this country see things black and white. We have to do that, all of us do: we live in a country that's geared that way. White people would have to admit that they are afraid to go into a black ghetto at night. They're afraid, that's a fact. They're afraid because they'd be "beat up," "lynched," "looted," "cut up," et cetera, et cetera. That happens to black people inside the ghetto every day, incidentally. And white people are afraid of that. So you get a man to do it for you - a policeman. And now you figure his mentality, where he's afraid of black people. The first time a black man jumps, that white man's gonna shoot him. He's gonna shoot him. So police brutality is going to exist on that level, because of the incapability of that white man to see black people come together and to live in the conditions.

This country is too hypocritical; and we cannot adjust ourselves to its hypocrisy. The only time I hear people talk about nonviolence is when black people move to defend themselves against white people. Black people cut themselves every night in the ghetto - don't anybody talk about nonviolence. Lyndon Baines Johnson is busy bombing the hell out of Vietnam - don't nobody talk about nonviolence. White people beat up black people every day - don't nobody talk about nonviolence. But as soon as black people start to move, the double standard comes into being. You can't defend yourself - that's what you're saying. 'Cause you show me a man who advocates aggressive violence that would be able to live in this country. Show him to me.

The double standards again come into itself. Isn't it ludicrous and hypocritical for the political shamelian who calls himself a vice president of this country *[laughter]* to stand up before this country and say, "Looting never got anybody anywhere?" *[laughter]* Isn't it hypocritical for Lyndon to talk about looting, that you can't accomplish anything by looting, and you must accomplish it by the legal ways? What does he know about legality? Ask Ho Chi Minh, he'll tell you.

*[laughter]*

So that in conclusion, we want to say that, number one: it is clear to me that we have to wage a psychological battle on the right for black people to define their own terms; define themselves as they see fit; and organize themselves as they see it. Now, the question is, how is the white community going to begin to allow for that organizing, because once they start to do that, they will also allow for the organizing that they want to do inside their community. It doesn't make a difference, 'cause we're gonna organize our way, any way. We gonna do it.





The question is how we're going to facilitate those matters, whether it's going to be done with a thousand policemen with submachine guns, or whether or not it's going to be done in a context where it's allowed to be done by white people warding off those policemen. That is the question. And the question is, how are white people, who call themselves activists, ready to start move into the white communities on two counts? On building new political institutions to destroy the old ones that we have, and to move around the concept of white youth refusing to go into the army. So that we can start, then, to build a new world. It is ironic to talk about civilization in this country. This country is uncivilized; it needs to be civilized, it needs to be civilized. *[applause]* We must begin to raise those questions of civilization - what it is and who do it. And so we must urge you to fight now to be the leaders of today, not tomorrow. We've got to be the leaders of today. This country, this country is a nation of thieves! It stands on the brink of becoming a nation of murderers! We must stop it! We must stop it! We must stop it!

*[applause]*

And then therefore, in a larger sense, there is the question of black people. We are on the move for our liberation. We have been tired of trying to prove things to white people. We are tired of trying to explain to white people that we're not gonna hurt them. We are concerned with getting the things we want, the things that we have to have to be able to function. The question is, can white people allow for that in this country? The question is, will white people overcome their racism and allow for that to happen in this country? If that does not happen, brothers and sisters, we have no choice but to say very clearly, "Move over, or we're gonna move on over you." Thank you. *[applause]*

1. Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 311-13; Michael T. Kaufman "Stokely Carmichael, Rights Leader Who Coined 'Black Power' dies at 57," *New York Times*, 16 November 1998.
2. Fairclough, *Better Day Coming*, 312-13.
3. James Oliver Horton and Louise E. Horton, *Hard Road to Freedom: The Story of African America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 306-7.
4. John Lewis, "Odyssey of a Passionate Radical," *Newsweek*, 30 November 1998.
5. Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Vintage, 1967), 50.
6. Kaufman, "Stokely Carmichael"; Lewis, "Odyssey."
7. Patrick Rogers and Ron Arias, "A Panther in Winter," *People*, 22 April 1996.
8. Cicero, Illinois.
9. Grenada, Mississippi.