



*dialectics*  
*of*  
**black  
power**

*robert l. allen*

*a  
guardian  
pamphlet  
35¢*

cover photo by julius lester

# **preface**

Black power means many things to many people. In fact, the range of its meanings often appears restricted only by the innovative limitations of those who call themselves advocates of black power.

To most thoughtful observers, however, it has become increasingly clear that black power is more than a mere slogan but less than a consistent ideology. The first section of this pamphlet is an attempt to shape this growing awareness into an analysis of the more generally accepted meanings of black power and place them within a radical perspective.

The second section examines in detail an effort by an establishment institution, the Ford Foundation, to co-opt black power and convert the Congress of Racial Equality into an instrument for control of the black community.

Taken together, the two sections cut away the emotionalism surrounding black power and instead present a critical assessment of its political content.

# **contents**

## **part 1: the politics of black power**

from civil rights to black power      page 2

5 formulations of black power      page 7

## **part 2: the ford foundation and black power**

politics of the ford foundation      page 22

cooling the militants      page 25

# **part 1:** **the** **politics** **of** **black** **power**

## ***from civil rights to black power***

The Southern-based nonviolent civil rights movement is dead. It died a victim of the intransigent U.S. racism which sparked the first fiery urban rebellions in Northern black ghettos. From the ashes of these early revolts came the angry cry of black power.

Now, that same racism, as solidly entrenched as ever, and the growing intensity and breadth of urban convulsions may be sounding the death knell of the black power movement as it has been known up until now. Repression, co-optation and deepening alienation of the urban masses has posed a crisis that has splintered the black power movement and presented an obstacle which much of the present leadership appears unable to surmount.

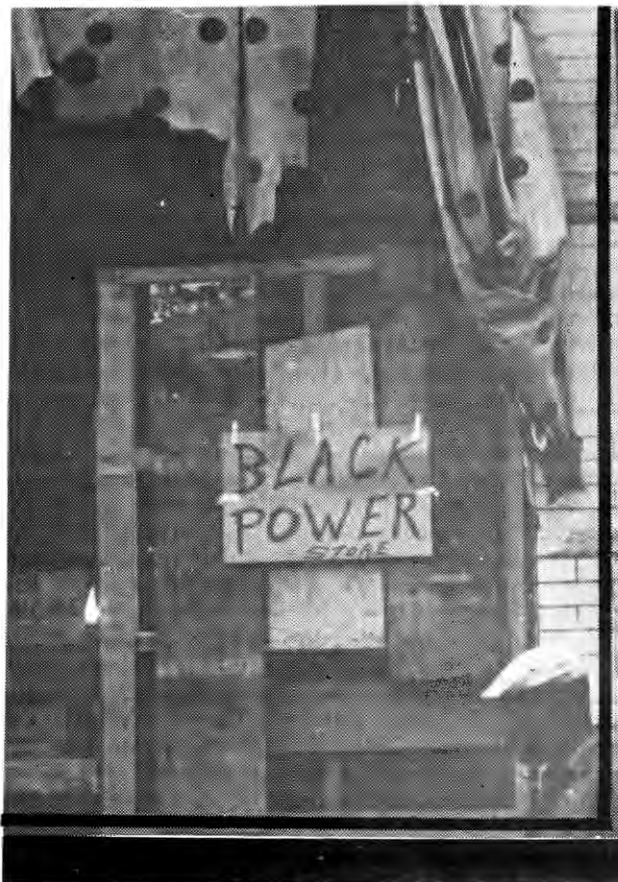
Among some of these leaders and spokesmen there is increasing fear that "the man" is about to apply the "final solution" to the ghettos. Others more soberly conclude that

only militant black leaders and organizations are to be the targets. They expect to be jailed or assassinated and their groups disbanded or co-opted as neocolonial rulers of the troublesome natives who populate urban black colonies. A few genuine radicals, the feeling is, perhaps even the fragments of an organization, will survive to carry on the liberation struggle.

Which way any given individual or organization will go is almost anybody's guess.

Black power is and always has been a maze of contradictions, a jumble of conflicting goals and strategies. This stems in part from basic differences in ideology among black militants and partly from the contradictory status of black people in the U.S. Further, the interweaving of these two factors generated new and, to some, more confusing permutations, resulting in a latticework umbrella ambiguously labeled black power.

This confusion has deep-reaching roots. In a sense, black power may be viewed as simply the latest swing in the pendulum which marks the perennial oscillation between



integration on one side and separatism-nationalism on the other. This unresolved conflict in goals has plagued the black movement since slavery days.

But black power represented an innovation in the old debate. The innovation was found in the fact that the new slogan made a nationalist appeal without employing the religious demagoguery, seen for example in the Black Muslims, which tends to alienate intellectuals and cynical young ghetto dwellers alike. Secondly, the black power movement, unlike earlier nationalist movements, ignores the question of land, whether of the back-to-Africa or five-states-in-the South variety. Thus, it avoided becoming involved in endless and diversionary hassles over how to get back to Africa or which states were suitable. Instead, it focused the attention of militants on the problem of how to achieve power in this land with the black population dispersed as it is.

The almost organic attraction which black power, like other nationalisms, held for the black masses, lay in its ability to give to ordinary black people a sense of self-worth and identity, no matter how fleeting or vague. The increasingly alienated blacks who clung to existence in the slums recognized, as many early activists did not, that the civil rights movement was intended to benefit middle-class blacks, and that integration meant assimilation into white society and the submergence of whatever separate black culture existed. But the slogan of black power coupled a conscious sense of pride in blackness with the one term which all Americans, particularly the oppressed, view as a positive value: power.

## dilemma

For the frustrated and rebellious ghetto youth, black power was at once a ray of hope and the final angry cry to be uttered when the torch was set to a white store. Stokely Carmichael, then chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), wrote in the spring of 1967 that the black power movement "could speak to the growing militancy of young black people in the urban ghetto." The difficulty is that in the ghetto hope and despair chase each other at breakneck speed in a vicious circle, creating an impulse to action which quickly turns to nihilism. This poses a grave dilemma for the radical organizer, a dilemma which has now trapped Carmichael.

To a degree black power was a reaction to the nonviolence doctrine and white paternalism which characterized the civil rights movement. As this movement came North it confronted black people living in ghettos where nonviolence is understandably equated with lack of mother wit. As it penetrated the South it encountered overt and covert enforcers of the Southern Code for whom non-violence was not a moral force but simply red carpeting on the path to broken heads, broken bodies and dead bodies.

Unable to come through with the material advancement or moral uplift it promised, the nonviolent civil rights movement became discredited.

At about the same time young black activists attacked the paternalistic aspects of that movement. They turned inward and began talking of race pride, black consciousness, black history and culture. In short, they laid the basis for the cultural nationalism which has become characteristic of the black power movement.

This, like other elements of the militant movement, has become distorted and co-opted. Natural hair-styles, African robes, shirts, dresses and sandals have become standard equipment for the well-dressed black militant. Even middle-class hipsters have gone "Afro," and a business firm advertises a hair spray especially suited for natural styles. Needless to say, much of this public display simply alienates ordinary blacks, North and South, and makes it easier for "the man" to identify budding militants.

## **cultural nationalism**

This is not to imply that there is no role for cultural nationalism. Revolutionary nationalists would probably agree with imprisoned Black Panther leader Huey P. Newton's position, expressed in an interview last March:

"We believe that it's important for us to recognize our origins and to identify with the revolutionary black people of Africa and people of color throughout the world. But as far as returning, per se, to the ancient customs, we don't see any necessity in this. And also, we say that the only culture that is worth holding on to is revolutionary culture, for change, for the better."

Black power as originally articulated by SNCC in 1966 was antiracist. It attacked white paternalism, but urged whites to go into their own communities to work against institutionalized racism while black activists organized in black communities to assault the same enemy. But white activists, by and large, moved into antiwar action instead of attacking domestic racism, thus in some measure precipitating bitter tirades by black militants against the white left. On the other hand, while most serious black militants remain antiracist, some have fallen victim to the latent (and not so latent) antiwhite and antisemitic sentiments which exploitation has bred in the ghettos. For others, frustration with the white left and antiwhite sentiment have fed into each other, fueling the racism which does indeed permeate U.S. society.

Politically, the black power movement is at once reformist and radical, nationalist and internationalist, depending on the individual militant or organization in question. Even the same individual, viewing the black struggle first from one perspective and then from another, may give contradictory definitions of the term.



photo by jeffrey blankfort

As originally formulated by SNCC, black power implied several things, not all of which were mutually congruent. In the broadest sense it implied black control of black communities. This control was to be exercised through economic cooperatives, election of black politicians, community control of local school boards, etc. There were calls for middle-class blacks to return to the ghettos, bringing with them their skills and resources to be made available to the community at large. This aspect is something like an idealized model of traditional ethnic politics and ethnic group assimilation into the American mainstream.

A second part of this original formulation viewed U.S. blacks as a colonized people and called for revolutionary action to implement self-determination or national liberation and the establishment of links with the third world. This was radical rhetoric, but it stood in conflict with the first conception of black power which SNCC also embraced.

At the root of this conflict, however, is the fact that the situation of black people is simultaneously like that of an ethnic subculture within U.S. society and, on the other



hand, like an oppressed colony standing outside that same society. This contradiction underlies, in a real sense, many of the divisions which have developed within the black power movement. The Black Panther Party for Self Defense is perhaps the only militant group to recognize this contradiction and to attempt to deal with it in their program.

Finally, SNCC threw whites out of the organization and repudiated nonviolence as an absolute principle in implementing its new black power orientation. It was this which the bourgeois press latched onto in a hysterical way, and effectively prevented any rational discussion of black power for at least a year.

Jim Forman, head of SNCC's international affairs commission and movement strategist and theoretician, offered an explanation of this phenomenon in his pamphlet, "1967: High Tide of Black Resistance": "Not surprisingly accusations of 'extremism' and 'racism in reverse' filled the air. Those accusations reflected the fact that the slogan 'Black Power' was frightening to white Americans in general and the U.S. government in particular because of its revolutionary implications. That government knows that whites have power and blacks do not. Therefore, the idea of poor black people, especially in the cities of the United States, uniting for power on the basis of independent political action—and against the foreign wars of the United States—represented a type of revolution."

## **5** ***formulations*** ***of black*** ***power***

By the time of the Newark Black Power Conference in July, 1967, it was clear that black power meant different things to different people, and the divisions in the political spectrum which black power represented became manifest at that historic meeting.

Within this spectrum five different formulations of black power can be roughly distinguished. All of them are permeated by varying degrees of cultural nationalism, and there is a good bit of overlapping between categories. In addition, orthodox black nationalists, being a political potpourri, can be found in all five categories. Moving from the political right to the political left in this spectrum, we can distinguish:

(1) Black power as black capitalism. This is espoused, for example, by the nationalist Black Muslims who urge blacks to set up businesses, factories and independent farming

operations. Whitney Young, executive director of the National Urban League, essentially endorsed this formulation in his recent call for "ghetto power." Another exponent is Dr. Thomas W. Matthew, a black neurosurgeon and president of the National Economic Growth and Reconstruction Organization (NEGRO), who in a speech Feb. 1, 1968, before a Young Americans for Freedom audience eschewed government handouts and called instead for whites to provide capital to black businessmen through loans.

The most recent supporter of black capitalism is presidential aspirant Richard M. Nixon. In a speech April 25, 1968, Nixon called for a move away from massive government-financed social welfare programs to "more black ownership, black pride, black jobs . . . black power in the most constructive sense." Black militants, according to Nixon, should seek to become capitalists—"to have a share of the wealth."

(2) Black power as more black politicians. Several years ago electoral politics was endorsed by SNCC as a means to achieving power. SNCC urged that black people organize independent parties, such as the Lowndes County (Alabama) Freedom party, which can place in office black men who will remain responsible to their people. This was ethnic politics. But it soon was distorted into integration politics. For example, the January, 1968, issue of Ebony magazine, which is integration-oriented and aimed at the black middle class, described the election of Negro mayors in Gary, Ind., and Cleveland, Ohio, as "Black power at the polls." But in those elections and their aftermaths the essential ingredients of ethnic group loyalty were missing. As militants have said time and again, "A black face in office is not black power."

In addition to these examples, electoral politics as a means of realizing black power has taken some unexpected turns, particularly in Newark. In a city with a growing black majority population but run by an Italian minority government, one has a situation comparable with the classic colonial model.

## ballot vs. bullet

LeRoi Jones, well-known black nationalist and member of the United Brothers, Newark's black united front which is seeking control of the city, actively sought to cool out the riots which developed after the murder of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Jones believes that control can be won through the ballot, not the bullet.

On April 12, 1968, Jones participated in an interview with Newark police captain Charles Kinney and Anthony Imperiale, leader of a local right-wing white organization. During the interview Jones suggested that white leftists



were responsible for instigating the riots. The policeman then named Students for a Democratic Society and the Newark Community Union Project (NCUP) as being behind the riots. Jones did not make this specific charge but the inference was that he agreed. Later in the interview it was suggested that Jones and Imperiale would be working together with the cops to maintain the peace.

A week later Jones elaborated on his position in an interview with the Washington Post. "Our aim is to bring about black self-government in Newark by 1970," Jones said. "We have a membership that embraces every social area in Newark. It is a wide cross-section of business, professional and political life.

"I'm in favor of black people taking power by the quickest, easiest, most successful means they can employ. Malcolm X said the ballot or the bullet. Newark is a particular situation where the ballot seems to be advantageous. I believe we have to survive. I didn't invent the white man. What we're trying to do is deal with him in the best way we can . . .

"Black men are not murderers . . . What we don't want to be are die-ers."

Jones added that he had "more respect for Imperiale, because he doesn't lie, like white liberals." Imperiale, he said, "had the mistaken understanding that we wanted to come up to his territory and do something. That was the basic clarification. We don't want to be bothered and I'm sure he doesn't want to be bothered."

# white provocateurs?

From other such fragmentary evidence the explanation of Jones's new tactics appears to be complex but instructive. It should be noted parenthetically that a factor which confuses the matter further is found in unconfirmed reports, originating with neither the police, right wingers or nationalists, that certain whites actually were attempting to distribute molotov cocktails to blacks during the riots.

In Newark the opportunity exists for militant black nationalists to gain control of the city, assuming that they can avoid being wiped out by the police or right wingers. From their point of view, then, it is of crucial importance to buy time and maintain the peace until a nonviolent transfer of power can be effected, hopefully in the 1970 municipal elections. A violent confrontation right now, the nationalists might argue, would be disastrous for their young and still relatively weak organization.

In the meantime, during this period of stalemate, and with the real power of the city government and right-wing whites on the wane as their supporters emigrate from the city, every effort would be made to unify the black community around the aspiring new leaders and to eliminate potentially "disruptive" elements. Such elements may derive from two sources: independent political operations which have some black support, particularly one such as NCUP which also controls one of the city's eight antipoverty boards, and, on the other hand, groups which advocate arming and what may be regarded as premature violence against the establishment. Both sources exist in Newark and the essential question at issue is not that they are white or black; right, left or apolitical. The point is that they're working in the black community but are independent of the group which is seeking control, and because they, too, may grow in strength, unlike the white establishment, they could pose a long-term, even immediate threat.

Of course, as far as the police and Imperiale were concerned, Jones's statements were very useful since they publicly set one group of militants in the black community against another. The cops and Imperiale are also playing a waiting game: waiting to exploit what they hope is a growing rift among Newark's militant groups. But the situation is very much in flux, and it remains to be seen whether Jones will maintain the position he has taken.

What is strongly suggested when this dynamic is examined is that problems such as this may be expected to arise in other metropolitan areas as more and more U.S. cities find themselves with black majority populations, and the struggle for power is transformed from militant rhetoric into actual practice.

Since 1968 is a presidential election year it is natural to ask what kind of policy black militants have adopted. The

answer is that no uniform strategy has been agreed upon. Some groups advocate abstention, others support Socialist Workers party candidates and still others are allied with the various Peace and Freedom party campaigns. The Black Panther party is running Eldridge Cleaver for President. Assorted nationalist groups have called for a write-in vote for exiled militant Robert F. Williams, and to top matters off, comedian-activist Dick Gregory is running his own spirited campaign.

All of this adds up to a lack of political direction which may well make it easier for establishment politicians to co-opt many black militants. Sen. Robert F. Kennedy was successful in getting militants in Indiana to campaign for him, and it is not beyond the realm of possibility that one of the major party candidates may receive the tacit or explicit support of one of the militant national organizations.

Richard Nixon, for example, recently proclaimed a new political alignment which includes Republicans, the "new South," "new liberals" and black militants. According to The New York Times of May 17, Roy Innis, associate national director of the Congress of Racial Equality, described Nixon as the only presidential candidate who understood black aspirations.

(3) Black power as group integration. Nathan Wright, chairman of the Newark Black Power Conference, expressed this view most clearly in his book, "Black Power and Urban Unrest." Wright urges black people to band together as a group to seek entry into the American mainstream. For example, he calls for organized efforts by blacks "to seek executive positions in corporations, bishoprics, deanships of cathedrals, superintendencies of schools, and high-management positions in banks, stores, investment houses, legal firms, civic and government agencies and factories." Wright's position differs from black capitalism or integration politics in that he calls for an organized group effort, instead of individual effort, to win entry into the American system. This might be regarded as simply another version of ethnic politics.

(4) Black power as black control of black communities. This is the political center of the black power spectrum and the most widely accepted formulation. It is what SNCC, in part, originally meant by the term and how the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) views black power today. It implies a group effort to seize total control of black communities from the white governing structure and business interests.

"Black people," said Floyd McKissick, national director of CORE in a speech July 31, 1967, outlining the group's program, "seek to control the educational system, the political-economic system and the administration of their own communities. They must control their own courts and their own police . . .

"Ownership of businesses in the ghetto must be transferred to black people—either individually or collectively."

The difficulty with this program is that it overlooks conflicting interests within the black community. It doesn't specify who is to control or in whose interest. Thus, it is open to co-optation by the power structure or may degenerate into black capitalism.

In the 1930s and '40s the Communist party supported black separatism under the slogan, "Self-determination in the black belt areas of Negro majority." Party theorists argued that black people formed a colony and that the fundamental task of the black liberation movement was to "complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution" (i.e., the Civil War) by forming a separate black nation in the Southern states, thus ending white domination and the semi-feudal status of Southern blacks. The party recognized that the Negro petty-bourgeois class, attempting to play the role of a black bourgeoisie or ruling class, has traditionally been the "most aggressive carrier of nationalism," but it thought that the proletarian and nationalist revolutions could occur simultaneously, resulting in the creation of a separate proletarian black state. At the time this might have been termed working class control of the black community.

The party later changed its line and became integrationist.

## **black administrators**

The underlying logic of the Communists' arguments, however, appears to be motivating white ruling-class efforts to co-opt black power and forestall further urban revolts. The power structure has apparently concluded that direct white rule of the ghettos, at least in some instances, is no longer operating satisfactorily. It is instead seeking out appropriate black groups to administer the colonies. Traditional Negro leaders are not acceptable, having been discredited both within and without the black communities and obviously exercising no real control.

Therefore it is the new black elite, which ironically was created by both the successes and failures of the civil rights movement, to which the power structure must now turn. Some of the members of this group are militant nationalists, even separatists. They tend to be drawn from the traditional black petty-bourgeois class or to be upwardly mobile members of the working class whose mobility in some measure was made possible by early civil rights victories.

But they share a common frustration with the failures of the civil rights movement and often exhibit a genuine desire to improve the lot of black people. Because they are committed militants they also enjoy a certain credibility and acceptance in the ghetto.

It is these factors which make this group ideal administrators of the ghetto. They seek improvement, not revolution. Having moved up on the social ladder they do not share the nihilism of the youthful ghetto resident. Because they are accepted, they also have the potential to restore ghetto peace and tranquility. Even the more opportunistic members of this group have their use since they will work for "law and order" in return for the right to control and exploit the ghetto.

In short, black control of the black community is slowly being transformed into black elite control of the black community, and the bourgeois-democratic revolution is being completed, but in a manner designed to buttress the power of the white establishment over the black ghettos.

## **internal colony**

(5) Black power as black liberation within the context of a U.S. revolution. This wing of the black power movement, represented by the Black Panthers, many members of SNCC and various local groups, views black people as a dispersed internal colony of the U.S., exploited both materially and culturally. It advocates an anticolonial struggle for self-determination which must go hand-in-hand with a general revolution throughout the U.S. It urges alliances with white radicals and other potentially revolutionary segments of the white population since, according to its analysis, genuine self-determination for blacks cannot be achieved in the framework of the present capitalist imperialism and racism which characterize the U.S. Links with the revolutionary third world are also stressed since the black struggle will supposedly be anticolonialist like other national liberation movements, and directed against a common enemy: U.S. imperialism.

But the black radicals, with some exceptions, have been unable to apply this analysis concretely or transform it into a program for struggle. There is a widespread feeling among militants that this is the way things ought to be, but few are sure as to why or how to make it reality.

For example, there has been no elaboration of the relationship between a general U.S. revolution and the black national liberation struggle. Only the theories of the orthodox white left are available, but these are explicitly rejected by black militants.

The question of third world link-ups has also presented difficulties. Aside from trips to third world countries or meetings with third world representatives, the only program developed for a direct link-up is found in the Panthers' call for a UN-supervised black plebiscite and the stationing of UN observers in U.S. cities. And even this is simply a variation on Malcolm X's plan in 1964 to secure UN intervention.

An indirect link to the third world exists in the black antiwar movement. Most militant black antiwar activists openly endorse revolutionary liberation struggles around the world while opposing imperialist wars of aggression. These activists also have a potential base from which to operate. For example, two days before President Johnson announced his noncandidacy, the Philadelphia Tribune, a black community newspaper, completed a seven-week "Vietnam Ballot" in which 84.5% of those polled favored a "get out of Vietnam" position. Only 11% favored a "stop the bombing—negotiate" position, and fewer than 5% supported what was then U.S. policy.

Unfortunately, this sentiment by and large has not been transformed into organization or action. The black antiwar movement has suffered from opportunism and weak or ineffective organizing efforts. A new group, the National Black Antiwar Antidraft Union, headed by SNCC's John Wilson, hopes to solve some of these problems, but it is still too young to have had any noticeable effect.

Aside from these problems the pressure of events is also overtaking black radicals. On the one side they are facing the prospect of increasing repression, on the other there is the escalating anger and nihilism in the ghettos. Black power did in some sense speak to the anger and frustration of urban masses and increased their militance. Their response has been bigger and better rebellions. The outbreaks are political in that they clearly challenge property rights, but black power militants have not brought this political undertone into conscious focus, except among black students, nor have they been able to deal with the resulting repression and co-optation. Instead, those who have not been co-opted, jailed or killed have tended to yield to nihilism and fatalism.

The inability of the white left to seriously deal with racism and repression has accelerated this process. Many black militants increasingly believe that there simply are no effective revolutionary elements in the white population. White students have largely confined themselves to the campuses, where the left has grown stronger, and have not organized poor whites or white workers, groups which have simply persisted in their support of U.S. racism and imperialism. The older middle-class white left has opted out by joining with itself in a middle-class antiwar movement or thrown in with the liberals in supporting McCarthy. A handful of white leftists maintain the proper rhetorical posture vis-a-vis the blacks, but they aren't able to produce the goods.

So, Stokely Carmichael, under these conflicting pressures, announces that whites are the enemy or, at best, irrelevant. He organizes black united fronts, whose unity consists in shared blackness and concern for survival. And survival quickly becomes the uppermost concern.

Socialism becomes irrelevant for Carmichael because he foresees a race war: black against white. He does not



anticipate any class struggle in the orthodox sense, hence class analysis has no use. To Carmichael all blacks form one class: the hunted. All whites form another class: the hunters and their accomplices.

Not all militant leaders have yielded to these pressures. Even within the same organization there are differences. H. Rap Brown, present chairman of SNCC and a veteran of white America's jails, contends that it is not possible to judge a revolutionary by the color of his skin. At last October's Guardian meeting Brown expressed his position: "We don't need [white] liberals, we need revolutionaries... So the question really becomes whether you choose to be an oppressor or a revolutionary. And if you choose to be an oppressor then you are my enemy. Not because you are white but because you choose to oppress me."

photo by roslyn bramms



**rap brown**

Brown, a man who has ample reason to be bitter against whites, has nevertheless frequently contended, and still does, that the revolutionary forces and their allies must be judged by the same standards: commitment and action. But

these are tough standards to meet and Brown, too, is known to have growing doubts about the existence of revolutionary forces both within and without the black communities.

## **fear of genocide**

Carmichael believes the blacks will win the projected race war, but there is an ominously growing concern with death, genocide and extermination among black militants. King's assassination added new weight to this concern.

Shortly after King's death and only a few hours before he was to be shot and jailed, Eldridge Cleaver, minister of information of the Black Panthers, said: "The death of Dr. King signals the end of an era and the beginning of a terrible and bloody chapter that may remain unwritten, because there may be no scribe left to capture on paper the holocaust to come."

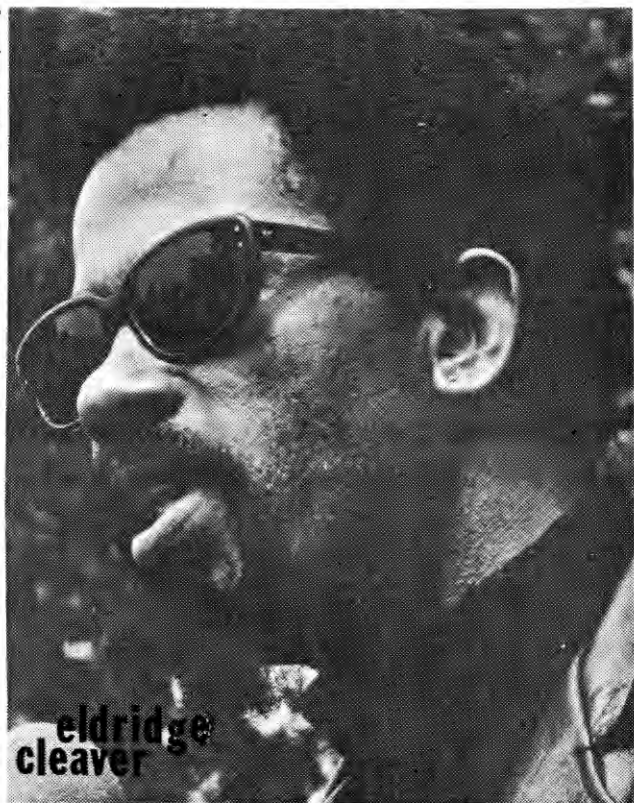
Earlier Cleaver had expressed a widespread view when he wrote in the May issue of *Ramparts*: "If the white mother country is to have victory over the black colony, it is the duty of black revolutionaries to insure that the imperialists receive no more than a Pyrrhic victory, written in the blood of what America might have become."

## **national organization needed**

It is not possible to say with certainty what will become of the black liberation movement in the coming months and years. It may develop that fear of massive or selective repression was overrated. At this point the signs are unclear.

Despite these gloomy prognostications it should not be overlooked, as one militant commented recently, that "the black power movement and the urban revolts have insured that there are few black men today who are not politically conscious." The same comment applies to cultural awareness and activities. In black communities today cultural activities rival the Harlem renaissance of the 1920s. Certainly cultural nationalism, as a factor within the political struggle, has been a positive force.

Already, here and there, are signs pointing toward the post black-power era. There is increased thinking about creating or forging one of the existing black groups into a national organization with a consistent radical or revolutionary program and real roots in black communities. For black radicals the strategic problem to be solved lies in finding the right relationship between the national and class aspects of the black movement. In the past, radicals have swung from one pole to another, but it is becoming ever clearer that at neither extreme can a winning strategy or an effective program for the black liberation movement be found.



It is the recognition of this fact which underlies the thinking of the Black Panthers. "We recognize," said Eldridge Cleaver in an interview with this writer published in the Guardian April 13, 1968, "the problem presented to black people by the economic system—the capitalist economic system. We repudiate the capitalist economic system. We recognize the class nature of the capitalist economic system and we recognize the dynamics involved in the capitalist system. At the same time we recognize the national character of our struggle. We recognize the fact that we have been oppressed because we are black people even though we know this oppression was for the purpose of exploitation. We have to deal with both exploitation and racial oppression, and we don't think you can achieve a proper balance by neglecting one or the other."

Because of the stress laid on the national question the Panthers are potentially able to mobilize a very wide spectrum of the black population. Because they also understand the nature of class exploitation in U.S. society, the Panthers have been able to work with allies outside the black community and identify enemies within it.

The Panther strategy and organization are far from perfect. The group is also being systematically harassed and destroyed by the Oakland police. The Panthers may well be wiped out, but the history of struggles in other countries suggests that after a certain point a liberation struggle develops a continuity which is independent of individuals or organizations.

This is what Jim Forman meant when he recently wrote: "The technical destruction of a single organization such as SNCC would be unfortunate but it can no more stop the black liberation movement than the murder of Che Guevara can stem the tide of liberation in Latin America. We do not despair or fear the future. Too many brothers have taken up the cry: Freedom or Death."

May, 1968



photo by Miriam Bokser





**part 2:**  
**the**  
**ford**  
**foundation**  
**and**  
**black**  
**power**

# *the politics of the ford foundation*

One of the most important though least publicized organizations in the civil rights movement today is the multi-million dollar Ford Foundation.

Housed in an ultra modern headquarters building on East 43rd St. in New York City, the Foundation plays a key part in financing and influencing almost all major civil rights groups, including the Congress of Racial Equality, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, National Urban League and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Working directly or indirectly through these organizations, as well as other national and local groups, the Foundation hopes to channel and control the black liberation movement in an effort to forestall future urban rebellions.

The Foundation catalogs its programs and grants under such headings as: public affairs, education, science and engineering, humanities and the arts, international training and research, economic development and administration, population, international affairs and overseas development. The list reads like a selection from the courses offered by a good liberal arts college. Race problems are listed as a subclass of public affairs.

Under the leadership of McGeorge Bundy, former Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the Ford Foundation in 1966 made an important decision to expand its activities in the black freedom movement. Prior to that time the Foundation had limited its activities among black Americans to traditional educational efforts and research projects designed to bring more blacks into the middle-class mainstream. The 1966 decision was a direct response to urban revolts, which were growing, both in size and frequency. It was a logical extension of an earlier decision to actively enter the political arena.

Established in 1936 by Henry and Edsel Ford, the Foundation initially made grants largely to Michigan charitable and educational institutions. According to its charter, the purpose of the organization is "To receive and administer funds for scientific, educational, and charitable purposes, all for the public welfare, and for no other



purposes . . .” Most of the Foundation’s income was, and still is, derived from its principal asset, class A nonvoting stock in the Ford Motor Co. In 1950, serving as a tax-exempt outlet for war profits, the Foundation expanded into a national organization, and its activities quickly spread throughout the U.S. and some 78 foreign countries.

In a special Board of Trustees’ report prepared at that time, the Foundation announced its intention to become active in public affairs by “support[ing] activities designed to secure greater allegiance to the basic principles of freedom and democracy in the solution of the insistent problems of an ever changing society.” This vague mandate, which at first meant little else than underwriting efforts to improve public administration, was gradually brought into sharper focus as the Foundation experimented with new programs.

## **foundation ‘interest’ shifts**

In 1962, Dyke Brown, then a vice president with responsibility for public affairs programs, could write that the Foundation’s interest had “shifted from management and public administration to policy and the political process.” He added that these programs “tended to become increasingly action—rather than research-oriented” which meant that the Foundation had to be prepared to take certain “political risks.”

How an official of a supposedly independent, non-partisan, nonpolitical philanthropic institution could justify such a statement can be understood simply by examining how the Foundation views its relationship to the major political parties and the government. Simply stated, the Foundation sees itself as a mediator which shows Democrats and Republicans their common interests and reasons for cooperating. For example, the Foundation has sponsored many “nonpartisan” conferences of state legislators and officials with the purpose of stressing “nonpolitical” consideration of common problems. Such bipartisan activities insure the smooth functioning of state and local political machinery by reducing tensions and other sources of conflict which might upset the U.S. corporate society.

The role of the private foundation vis-a-vis the government was made explicit by Henry T. Heald, Bundy’s predecessor as president of the Ford Foundation, in a speech at Columbia University on March 5, 1965. “In this country, privately supported institutions may serve the public need as fully as publicly supported ones,” Heald said. “More often than not, they work side by side in serving the same need.”

Heald went on to state that, through their activities, private foundations can serve as a kind of advance guard, paving the way for later government activity, not only in the fields of education and scientific research but also in

the area of "social welfare." Thus, the private foundation can act as an instrument of social innovation and control in areas which the government may not be able to penetrate.



## **bundy/kennedy**

This is the line of Foundation thinking which confronted Bundy as he stepped from his "little State Department" in the White House at the beginning of 1966. And Bundy was ideally suited to developing further this way of thinking. From his years of serving the U.S. power structure, Bundy had developed a keen appreciation of the complexities involved in political manipulation and the seemingly contradictory policies which often must be pursued simultaneously in order to obtain a given end.

Bundy summarized his political outlook in an article entitled "The End of Either/Or" published in January, 1967, in the magazine *Foreign Affairs*. In the article Bundy first asserts that foreign policy decisions are related to U.S. national interests, although he does not state who determines these interests or sets priorities. He then goes on to

criticize those who view foreign policy options in terms of simple extremes. "For twenty years from 1940 to 1960 the standard pattern of discussion on foreign policy was that of either/or: Isolation or Intervention, Europe or Asia, Wallace or Byrnes, Marshall Plan or Bust, SEATO or Neutralism, the U.N. or Power Politics, and always, insistently, anti-Communism or accommodation with Communists."

The world is not so simple, Bundy wrote, and "with John F. Kennedy we enter a new age. Over and over he [Kennedy] insisted on the double assertion of policies which stood in surface contradiction with each other: resistance to tyranny and relentless pursuit of accommodation; reinforcement of defense and new leadership for disarmament; counter-insurgency and the Peace Corps; openings to the left but no closed doors to the reasonable right; an Alliance for Progress and unremitting opposition to Castro; in sum, the olive branch and the arrows."

Bundy learned that it is necessary to work both sides of the street in order to secure and expand the American empire. Thus he was a staunch supporter of Kennedy's and Johnson's war policies in Vietnam while at the same time stressing the necessity of keeping channels open to the Soviet Union.

Such a man was ideally suited to work with and aid civil rights groups, including black power advocates, while at the same time the government is arming and preparing to use force to suppress the black communities. The seeming contradiction here, to use Bundy's term, is only a "surface" manifestation.

The Ford Foundation's interest in the civil rights movement was announced by Bundy at the 1966 annual banquet of the National Urban League in Philadelphia. "We believe," he said, "that full domestic equality for all American Negroes is now the most urgent concern of this country." More specifically: "the quality of our cities is inescapably the business of all of us." Many whites recognize, he continued, "that no one can run the American city by Black Power alone," the reason being, he suggested at a later point, that urban black majorities would still be faced with white majorities in the State Houses and the U.S. Congress. But if the blacks burn the cities, then, he stated, it would be the white man's fault and "the white man's companies will have to take the losses." White America is not so stupid as not to realize this, Bundy assured the Urban Leaguers.

## ***cooling the militants***

Another important development in the summer of that year was an unpublicized meeting between Foundation officials and representatives of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Urban

League and other civil rights groups. The meeting took place at Foundation headquarters in New York, and reportedly the discussion centered on how to deal with black power and isolate the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a group which was becoming increasingly militant.

In early 1967 the Foundation made grants of several hundred thousand dollars to the NAACP and the Urban League. A few months later the Foundation gave \$1 million to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund's new National Office for the Rights of Indigents. But for the Foundation's purposes, these groups were less than satisfactory since there was serious doubt as to how much control they exercised over the young militants and frustrated ghetto blacks who were likely to be heaving molotov cocktails during the summer. If its efforts to keep the lid on the cities were to succeed, the Foundation must somehow attempt to penetrate militant organizations which were believed to wield some influence over the angry young blacks of the ghettos.

## **similar to rand corp.**

The first move in this direction occurred in May, 1967, when the Foundation granted \$500,000 to the Metropolitan Applied Research Center (MARC), a newly created organization in New York with a militant-sounding program headed by Dr. Kenneth B. Clark, a psychology professor who at one time was associated with Harlem's anti-poverty program. When it was organized the previous March, MARC announced that its purpose was "to pioneer in research and action in behalf of the powerless urban poor in Northern metropolitan areas." Interestingly, in a brochure MARC compared itself with the semi-governmental RAND Corporation which does research for the air force. The difference between the two, according to the brochure, is that MARC is not associated with the government, nor is it limited to research. It is also an action organization.

One of the MARC's first actions was to name Roy Innis, then chairman of the militant Harlem chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), as its first civil rights "fellow-in-residence." The May 11 announcement also stated that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Rev. Andrew Young, one of King's chief aides, had "agreed to take part in the fellowship program."

Innis, now associate national director of CORE, received a six-month fellowship. "The civil rights fellowships," wrote The New York Times May 12, "are designed to give the leaders an opportunity to evaluate their programs and tactics and undertake long-range planning." MARC's staff was to aid the leaders in their studies, and the fellows were to draw salaries equal to those they received from their organizations or from private employment.

Clark said he had also discussed fellowships with Floyd McKissick, national director of CORE; Stokely Carmichael, then chairman of SNCC; Whitney Young of the Urban League and Roy Wilkins of the NAACP.



## **MARC's secret meeting**

MARC's next move was to call a secret meeting of civil rights leaders for May 27. The meeting was held at the home of Dr. Clark. Subsequently, another such meeting was held June 13 at a Suffern, N.Y., motel between Clark and leaders of nine major civil rights groups. At the conclusion of that meeting Clark announced a joint effort to calm Cleveland's racial tension. He said the "underlying causes of unrest and despair among urban ghetto Negroes, as well as clear indications of their grim, sobering and costly consequences, are found in classic form in Cleveland."

Clark did not mention that the Ford Foundation had been trying to "calm" Cleveland since 1961 by financing various local research and action projects. But Cleveland blew up in 1966 and further rumblings were heard in the early spring of 1967.

Clearly, a new approach was needed in Cleveland, and the stage was set for the Foundation's first direct grant to a militant group—the Cleveland chapter of CORE. The Foundation announced July 14 that it was giving \$175,000 to the Special Purposes Fund of CORE to be used for "training of Cleveland youth and adult community workers, voter registration efforts, exploration of economic-development programs, and attempts to improve program planning among civil rights groups." In explaining the grant, Bundy said that Foundation staff and consultants had been investigating Cleveland "for some months." In fact, he said, "it was predictions of new violence in the city that led to our first staff visits in March."

## **"businesslike" arrangement**

Apparently realizing that the grant might give the impression of a close relationship developing between the Foundation and CORE, Bundy added: "The national officers of CORE have dealt with us on this matter in a businesslike way, and neither Mr. Floyd McKissick nor I suppose that this grant requires the two of us—or our organizations—to agree on all public questions. It does require us both to work together in support of the peaceful and constructive efforts of CORE's Cleveland leadership, and that is what we plan to do."

It must be said that CORE was vulnerable to such corporate penetration. In the first place, they needed money. Floyd McKissick in 1966 had become national director of an organization which was several hundred thousand dollars in debt, and his espousal of black power scared away potential financial supporters.

Secondly, CORE's militant rhetoric but reformist definition of black power as simply black control of black communities appealed to foundation officials who were seeking just those qualities in a black organization which hopefully could tame the ghettos. From the Foundation's point of view, old-style moderate leaders no longer exercised any real control while genuine black radicals were too dangerous. CORE fit the bill because its talk about black revolution was believed to appeal to discontented blacks, while its program of achieving black power through massive injections of governmental, business and Foundation aid seemingly opened the way for continued corporate domination of black communities by means of a new black elite.

Surprisingly, to some, CORE's program, as elaborated by Floyd McKissick last July, is quite similar to the approach of the Metropolitan Applied Research Center (MARC). Both organizations see themselves as intermediaries whose role is to negotiate with the power structure on behalf of blacks and the poor generally. Both suggest that more government and private aid is necessary and both seek to gain admission for poor blacks and whites into the present

economic and political structure of U.S. society. McKissick, who last fall became the second CORE official to accept a MARC fellowship, criticized capitalism but only because black people are not allowed to participate fully in it.

The Ford Foundation could apparently view its grant to Cleveland CORE as a success. There was no rebellion in Cleveland, and, as the Jan. 6 issue of *Business Week* suggested, money given to a black militant group helped to elect a Negro moderate as mayor.

## **moving into harlem**

Having proved successful in Cleveland, the Ford Foundation began exploring other ways of ensuring urban tranquility. In March, 1967, following a year of demonstrations and boycotts centering around community control of schools, the Harlem chapter of CORE proposed that an independent school board be established for Harlem. According to the proposal, integration had failed and the only way to achieve quality education for Harlem's youth was through community control of its schools. Harlem CORE set up a Committee for Autonomous Harlem School District and began organizing support for its proposal.

The following November, Bundy recommended that New York's school system be decentralized into 30 to 60 semi-autonomous local districts. Bundy had been named head of a special committee on decentralization at the end of April after the state legislature directed Mayor John Lindsay to submit a decentralization plan by Dec. 1 if the city was to qualify for more state aid. Lindsay insisted that decentralization was "not merely an administrative or budgetary device, but a means to advance the quality of education for all our children and a method of insuring community participation in achieving that goal."

Bundy's proposal would allow for not one but possibly several school boards for Harlem. Harlem CORE's school board committee therefore found itself in the curious position of being on the same side as *The New York Times* in giving critical support to the Bundy plan, while both the New York City Board of Education and the United Federation of Teachers opposed it.

Although the Bundy plan is still being debated, it again shows the Foundation's willingness to make small alterations in the local status quo in order to insure tranquility while maintaining the overall balance of power.

## **detroit says no**

The Foundation attempted to play a similar role in its offer of \$100,000 to a Detroit black militant group, the Federation for Self-Determination. The federation was set up following the summer, 1967 rebellion and appealed for financial support to the New Detroit Committee (NDC),

also organized after the revolt with the purpose of rebuilding and preventing future uprisings. Foundation board member Henry Ford II is also a member of the NDC.

Rivalry developed between the federation and a more moderate group, both seeking funds to reconstruct the black community. The Foundation dealt with the problem by offering both groups \$100,000. But the federation voted to reject the offer because of a stipulation that the spending of the money be supervised by an overseer appointed by the NDC. "Self-determination means black control of black communities," said Rev. Albert Cleage, head of the federation, in rejecting the money. Interestingly, CORE's McKissick flew to Detroit to endorse Cleage's stand.

The Foundation was more successful in its efforts to aid Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and quite possibly partially underwrite King's plans for massive demonstrations in Washington in the spring of 1968. SCLC had been in financial trouble since King stated his opposition to the Vietnam war last year.

## links with sclc

Following the summer rebellions King announced plans for a "massive civil disobedience" campaign in major cities in an effort to avert continued urban violence. At the



**floyd mckissick**



beginning of January it was disclosed that the civil disobedience action will center on Washington, and that SCLC staff members will be assigned to nine cities and six rural areas to mobilize people for the demonstration in the capital. Two days later the Ford Foundation announced a grant of \$230,000 to SCLC to be used to train black ministers in urban leadership and help them start local programs to deal with the "crisis in the cities." Under the terms of the grant SCLC will conduct seminars for about 150 ministers. The seminars are to be held in 15 cities and run in cooperation with none other than the Metropolitan Applied Research Center.

## **corporate america signs on**

Ford's pioneering efforts in the black movement and the ghettos were quickly followed by America's corporatists. Some 50 white-owned corporations helped finance Newark's Black Power Conference last July. At the end of that month an Urban Coalition—termed the "Anti-Rioters" by Business Week—was organized in Washington. The coalition (Guardian, Jan. 13, 1968) includes big-city mayors, labor officials, business figures and Foundation personnel (including Henry Ford II). The coalition is nation-wide in scope and its purpose is to aid private industry's penetration and pacification of the ghettos.

It has become increasingly clear to the corporate elite that where the anti-poverty program had failed in controlling rebellious black communities, perhaps business could succeed. This idea was strengthened by statements from black leaders such as MARC's Kenneth Clark, who declared that "Business and industry are our last hope because they are the most realistic elements of our society." The National Urban League's Whitney Young added, at a recent meeting of the National Industrial Conference Board, that "The American business community must work things out with the Negro community in much the same way it worked things out with the labor movement."

January, 1968

**the guardian**, an independent radical newspaper distributed nationally, first published the material in this pamphlet as a series of weekly articles. Response to the articles was highly favorable, reflecting a demand for the pamphlet itself. It is the second in a projected series of Guardian pamphlets on widely differing subjects. The titles:

- 101 A Pocket Manual on Draft Resistance  
by Ken Cloke  
Single copies 40¢, 10-50 copies  
@35¢, 51-100 copies @30¢
- 102 Dialectics of Black Power  
by Robert L. Allen  
Single copies @35¢, 3 copies \$1,  
10-50 copies @30¢

Order from the Guardian, 197 E. 4th St.,  
New York, N.Y. 10009

---

Interested in the black liberation struggle?

So is the weekly *Guardian*, America's leading independent radical newspaper. We support the struggle in all its dimensions, and to emphasize our support we offer you the *Guardian* at a special introductory rate—A ONE-YEAR SUBSCRIPTION FOR \$5—a saving of \$2. (If you're a student or GI, of course, you can have the subscription for only \$3.50.)

---

---

**robert l. allen**, a staff writer for the Guardian since January, 1967, has long been active in the American radical movement, especially in draft resistance and in the black liberation struggle. He studied mathematics at Morehouse College in Atlanta and took an M.A. in sociology from the New School for Social Research in New York City. With his wife he will soon open a Guardian branch office in San Francisco.