

FOLLOWING IS AN INTERVIEW BETWEEN GUARDIAN STAFF WRITER ROBERT L. ALLEN AND H. RAP BROWN. BROWN, OUTGOING CHAIRMAN OF THE STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATION COMMITTEE (SNCC), GRANTED THE NEW YORK INTERVIEW MAY 31, A SNCC STAFF MEETING IN ATLANTA, GA. THIS WEEK WILL SELECT A NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE ORGANIZATION.

BROWN WAS RECENTLY CONVICTED IN A NEW ORLEANS FEDERAL COURT OF CARRYING A GUN ACROSS STATE LINES WHILE UNDER INDICTMENT. HE WAS GIVEN THE MAXIMUM SENTENCE OF FIVE YEARS IMPRISONMENT AND A \$2000 FINE. HE IS FREE ON \$15,000 BAIL PENDING AN APPEAL.

1. What is your reaction to the New Orleans conviction and other legal efforts to get you behind bars?

I don't even react to what they consider the legal aspect of their contentions. I react to the intent, and that intent is to silence me. America is operating on the principle that if you can't convert a man, you got to silence him. But she has failed in her attempt to both silence me and convert me. You know, in her attempt to silence me when she puts me in jail, she just creates another forum. I can talk to brothers in jail who are more political than people on the streets, brothers who know what has to be done. In her attempt to convert me, that's hopeless because I see America for what it is. It's another Germany. It's the Fourth Reich. America makes Hitler's and Germany's records look good.

It is because America's racism that black people and colored people around the world are oppressed. Throughout history black people who spoke out against America and her racism have been subjected to exile, assassination or murder, or imprisonment. So what happened to me is nothing new or different. Justice is a joke in this country for black people, and it stinks of its hypocrisy. Justice in this country means "just-us white folks." Black people must understand that there is no redress of grievances in the courts but only in the streets, through armed guerrilla action.

The only reason that I'm willing to go before the racist courts is that it's an educational process for black people. Black people should learn from my experiences. In other words, every black man shouldn't have to go before a judge to know what I'm experiencing. I was glad to be in Louisiana because the courtroom was filled with black people, young black brothers and sisters, every day. And they learned, man, because legally we beat the government on the first day. We made a motion to have racist Judge Mitchell dismissed from the case because of prejudicial statements he made against me during some of the bond hearings we had before.

The motion was made to him. He said, "yeah, I'm prejudiced against him, but I'm not gonna dismiss myself."

Black people must begin to learn from what is happening in Vietnam. When there is no redress of grievances, when government becomes the lawbreaker, then people must become the law enforcers. We cannot allow the government to be an outlaw especially when the crime is against the people.

2. You mentioned armed confrontation. Do you think black people are ready for this in terms of organization and preparation?

I think what happens in terms of organization for confrontations is that this is forced upon the masses of people. Masses of people are never ready for armed confrontation. You have to get that out of your mind. Masses of people are never organized, they're not even organizable. What happens is that as repression increases people must do things to survive. As the repression increases in this country that's going to force black people together. Now we have done--when I say "we" I mean people who've been out front talking to the masses of people--we have raised what's known as the level of consciousness of black people as to the problem. That's as much as we can do. In other words the man is going to have to come down on people before they really realize. They're going to have to wake up one morning and smell shoe polish on their breath to know the man's foot is up their ass. That's what will have to happen. Before any revolutionary struggle the last phase of organizing--on a mass basis--is done by the repression, is done by the oppressor. There's nothing more we can do until that point is reached. Now we can organize small groups, but in terms of the masses of people, they must react to repression. We have raised the consciousness so that they will be able to decide what to do.

3. How would you characterize the level of consciousness among black people today?

Consciousness has to be distinguished from revolutionary attitude. The level of consciousness been raised so that black people are in a state of rebellion. But rebellion is not to be confused with revolution. Black people around the country now recognize that they have a vehicle that can make this man jump. It's like a kid with a toy. In other words, we can make the motherfucker jump by putting the electrodes to his balls and we want to see how high we can make him jump. This is where black people are at. I don't think you can expect revolutionary action from the masses of people until repression become so great that it affect the (each) individual.

4. But isn't there some political content in the rebellions?

I view revolution as an evolutionary type of thing. Revolution come in steps or stages. Rebellions are a legitimate part of the steps toward revolutionary struggle, but they are not revolution. We cannot be content in rebelling. We must move from

from revolt to revolution. Actually, at this point now, it's dangerous for masses of black to go in the streets. This plays into the man's hands. I don't think it's desirable or advisable for rebellions, where masses of people go into the streets, to occur anymore.

5. What alternative would you propose?

Cadres of people who have political knowledge and technical skills must begin to execute revolutionary struggle, in this country on behalf of the masses of people. People like myself--I'm too visible. I'm under surveillance every day.

One of the things you brought up in the article (Guardian, May 25), which I've also spoken about, concerns the visibility of people. It's unnecessary, at this point that everybody wear naturals. I can do it because I'm already visible, but to the young brother just coming up it's not necessary. It's what's in your head, not what's on your head. And once a cat grows a natural the man recognizes him as political whether he is or not. If the man were to fence off Harlem he wouldn't have any trouble picking out the people who are potentially dangerous to him because the majority of the political people in the sense of struggle, wear naturals. People have to move away from this and recognize that revolutionary is not defined by his physical characteristics.

6. How do you think the masses of black people view the organized movement?

I don't think the movement controls black people. To some degree it inspires and influences black people. I think it's still a leaderless movement at this point. People respond to certain ideologies and certain individuals, but that's not to say that those individuals are the leaders of the movement.

I'm the chairman of SNCC and my position is to articulate the sentiments of black people because that the community I came from I do it because the organization has a public forum, not because I do it better than others. I don't think it can be done better than Detroit. But in terms of leaders, the masses of people will choose their leaders.

7. Where is the organized movement headed on a national level?

I think the same repression that will force the masses into a body will also forge the different black groups into a body. At this point I'm not going to say that the so-called vanguard groups in the movement are politically correct. I'm not going to say that a lot of these groups are even moving in the right political direction. They're going to come together out of necessity as repression increases.

8. In your view, what is the right political direction?

To begin with, I don't think we can address ourselves to traditional politics, because this is irrelevant to black people. The only politics relevant to black people is the politics of revolution. The politics of culture is not in itself revolution.

I don't think we should be concerned with redefining culture at this point. To be black is not to be revolutionary. Every Negro is not a potential black man. Every Negro is a potential traitor, and every black is only a potential revolutionary--with emphasis on "potential". To be black is not an end in itself, and black people will have to move away from this kind of thinking.

You see, when you begin to stress culture you have to remember that when you examine any revolutionary country you'll find that the cultural revolution had never come before actual armed confrontation, before a contest for power was waged. I'm not saying that in terms of consciousness it's not important that black people know who they are, but to put emphasis on being black emphasis on culture, at this stage of the game is not to be revolutionary. People can become so hooked up in their culture and their egos so inflated about being black that they have no desire to fight.

Vanguard groups can't afford to go around talking about stressing culture because the real test right now is preparation for struggle and the initiation of that struggle. This is my position.

9. Last year you said it was no accident that many of the newly liberated countries addressed themselves to some form of socialism. Do you think the same will happen in the black liberation movement?

I don't see any working example of socialism, communism or any ideology that's desirable for black people in this country because of racism. Socialism, especially when it's white-controlled, can foster just as much racism as anything else. Socialism and Marxism deal with exploitation but not with racism.

Any ideology to deal with racism still has to be created. and it has to be created by the masses of people.

10. Could you say what the elements of this new ideology might be?

As I said, I have seen no working example of this type of ideology, and I don't think that we can sit down and write it out. People begin to forge an ideology through revolutionary struggle. Ideologies develop, not before, but as a result of revolutionary struggle.

Basically, I think the right to self-determination is enough because this assures that the people can develop their own ideology. To talk socialism to black people at this point is ridiculous. Black people think a communist is someone who doesn't go to church. It's premature to talk about ideology to the masses of people. I think through the struggle to end oppression people will become political enough to develop ideologies.

It is, however, very real to discuss things that are denied black people as a result of oppression. Vanguard groups can talk about ideology, but I don't know if what they say is correct.

Because a cat occupies a vanguard position doesn't mean that he has a monopoly on truth. Leaders can talk about ideology, and that may inspire them, but it doesn't insure struggle among the masses of people.

11. You mentioned that the right to self-determination is enough and I question this. For example, some people define black power as black control of the black community, but they don't spell out who is to control or in who's interest...?

It's unreal to talk about black people controlling their communities unless they control the whole country. As long as the man controls the water or electricity coming into your community it does you no good to control that community. And to control the community in a capitalistic way, like the man, is not desirable. I think the real issue goes way beyond this idea of geographic control.

The slogan black power has been co-opted. You have white politicians talking about the virtues of black power and Kennedy was even running around giving people the black power handshake. We've moved beyond that.

12. Where have we moved to?

People have to address themselves to struggle. I interpreted Dr. King's death as a rise of fascism in this country: I don't think Dr. King was assassinated--I contend he was executed.

What happened now is that you have two conceptions of power exposed towards each other. You have white folks on this hand and black folks on the other, and the stronger force wins. There's nothing in between. You see, Dr. King had a large moral following in the white communities, domestic and foreign. So when you eliminate Dr. King you set up a confrontation between these two groups and the police can then come down into the black community in the name of preventing a race war. The police can legitimize this repression by saying that they're dealing with the violent element, the element that's talking about anarchy.

I think this can be coupled with the riot commission report. This report gives two very distinct solutions to what is considered a problem in this country. They say you can either address the grievances of black people by legislation and pouring in money, or you can move toward a garrison state. Everybody looked at the first solution (but you don't see any legislation). I always examined the other position. There's an estimated 39 concentration camps in this country. I was in one in Petersburg, Va.--a federal prison camp. What are these camps being prepared for? They ain't bringing no Vietcong prisoners home. The Indians are on reservations. Me and Carmichael can't fill 39 camps.

This is a dangerous situation for black people. The man is scared, true enough, but that's when he's most dangerous, because

he knows black people can disrupt this country. So he must increase his repression.

I contend that the only reason why they didn't shoot black people after Dr. King was killed and black people went in the streets is that the man was setting them up. And that was a riot. There's no way in the world I can call that political, especially Washington, D. C. That was the most apolitical demonstration since the March on Washington. Here is the most strategic city in the country and they didn't even move strategically. The man crystallized in the black people mind's that they can go out and take what they want during rebellions. What better way to catch a mouse--don't set the trap the first time, just put the cheese on it and let him think he can always get it.

Now the man also crystallized in the black people's minds and in the white people's minds that they must be prepared to deal with the "lawless element" and he let it be seen that black people were the "lawless element." So next time white people are going to be talking about coming out with guns to put down the lawbreakers--vigilantism. That gives the police the perfect excuse to move in on the black community--to prevent a race war. That's the rise of fascism. You give the police the right to do whatever they want, legally.

Do you see the possibility of revolutionary forces arising outside the black community.

My position on that is this: We are prepared to fight, and if there is anybody to fight with us, well and good. If not, if we have to fight them, then we'll fight them. I'm not aware of revolutionary elements in the white community, but if revolutionary struggle.

14. What about white students and white youth generally, some of whom appear to be developing greater political awareness.

I think some white people are oppressed and may drop out, but they can also drop back in. That's the whole thing with the hippie movement. Black people can't drop out. We've always been out, so there's nothing to talk about dropping in. White people have to decide whether they're for human rights or political rights of a country.

I can give you an example of exploited becoming exploiters--Sonny and Cher. When Sonny and Cher were down and out, they were regular people. But once they got into a position to exploit, they did so.

15. Couldn't the same thing be said about some black singers?

Yeah, and I'm going to be very specific--James Brown. I think he's pulling one of the biggest boot-licking jobs in the country today. He's selling out black people. If James Brown keeps de-

clarifying his allegiance to the country and not to the black community then black people have to purge him and his music from the community. His latest record ("America is My Home") is an example of what I mean and going down there fraternizing with (Vice-President) Humphrey, I mean he's going to have to choose sides. If he supports Humphrey then he does not support the black community. He is political in the black community whether he realized it or not.

16. What is SNCC's position on the presidential election?

I think it's irrelevant. I don't see but one candidate running and that's (George) Wallace, and whole lot of other Wallaces by different names. It's a farce, and black people should disassociate themselves totally from it. There's no choice. We have to be prepared to fight anybody who gets in.

17. What about independent candidates and parties?

The only way we can use the vote is to organize our people to purge themselves from both major parties. To create a third party in the belief that you can participate in the monolithic politics of this country is a deception. The vote can be used only to organize black people to make them aware that the system doesn't work and prepare them for further revolutionary struggle.

18. At several points in this interview you've used the term "revolutionary struggle." What does this mean?

Revolution occurs in an evolutionary process. What is revolutionary today may very well not be revolutionary tomorrow. The nonviolent movement was a revolutionary struggle at some point but it ceased to be after it was replaced by something else. The mass rebellions were part of revolutionary struggle, but this is not to be interpreted as revolution. The revolution ultimately comes as a result of early phases, or steps of revolutionary struggle. The ultimate phase of revolutionary struggle is armed confrontation and victory.

19. So as conditions and consciousness change the function of revolutionaries is to elevate the struggle to the next level?

That's right. This is the responsibility of vanguard groups. And there are many ways in which revolutionaries can work, for example, revolutionary writing. I think LeRoi Jones a few years ago was revolutionary in his works. I think what Malcolm did was revolutionary, but I don't think that people who emulate Malcolm today are necessarily revolutionary. The revolutionary has to recognize when an advance can be made.

20. In the light of this, how would you interpret the poor people's campaign in Washington?

I think this is an educational process for the people who are down there. Abernathy is in more trouble than any nigger in the

country because he has convinced those poor folks that they ain't going to leave there until they're free. He made a mistake, because once you tell black people and poor people something like that, they expect it. Abernathy demands are not going to be met by the people in Congress. So those poor people are going to be educated to the hypocrisy of the federal government as well as become distrustful of Abernathy in the event he shifts his position.

Already you saw that when the Indians went to the Supreme Court and broke some windows, Abernathy denied the people. He said he didn't know them. So I think that the people who are participating in the campaign will learn a lot. I think it's valuable in that sense.

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