Black Power Chronicles: Bob Brown

Bob Brown, a prominent activist, discussed his early influences and involvement in the civil rights and Black Power movements. He highlighted the segregation and educational crises in Chicago, the impact of Emmett Till's murder, and the struggles against the Democratic Party machine. Brown emphasized the importance of independent political action and the limitations of Black visibility. He critiqued the co-optation of Black Power by the Democratic Party and stressed the need for genuine control over local institutions. Brown also discussed the influence of Kwame Nkrumah and the Pan-African movement, advocating for a revolutionary and environmental approach to Pan-Africanism.

Joshua Myers: This is the Black Power Chronicles interview, Bob Brown. Bob Brown, which we celebrated 50 years of work, study, and struggle in the student and youth human and civil rights, African liberation, Black Power and Pan African, the Socialist anti-war and anti-draft, anti-Zionist and anti-oppression movements.

He was a member of the Chicago chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality [CORE], director of the Midwest office of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee [SNCC], and co-founder of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party. He has worked with and supported hundreds of progressive and revolutionary movements, organizations, and governments in every corner of Africa, the African diaspora, and the world.

He is currently an organizer for the All-African People's Revolutionary Party, and a member of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania and co-director of the Kwame Ture Institute. Thank you, Bob, for joining us today.

Bob Brown: Thank you.

Joshua Myers: We want to begin by talking about some of your earliest influences in coming into consciousness of not only the Black predicament in the world but how you went about trying to change and join movements that would address it. How did your early influences come about?

Bob Brown: Well, I was fortunate. I'm one of the so-called Baby Boomers. And if you look at the age progression of the Baby Boomers from at least [19]46, [19]47, [19]48, you will see that as we aged, especially in the city of Chicago, there were crises.

By 1953, when we went to high school, when we went to elementary school, there was crisis. Because they had not built schools and trained teachers since the 30s in the city of Chicago, and

you now have this massive demographic wave of five-year-olds going into kindergarten and elementary school. Chicago had a neighborhood school system, so they gerrymandered the districts to keep us out.[1]

People talk about the struggle [for] segregation and struggle for integration in the South, but they don't mention nothing about the struggle at the same time in The North.

The movements were simultaneous. For example, they gerrymandered in the district of Chicago, the area of Chicago where I live, the far south side that didn't have sewage, didn't have running water, and the toilets froze up in the wintertime. They gerrymandered. They just couldn't figure out how to make the line wiggly enough, so they had to permit a few of us to attend the all-white elementary school, Esmond.

And the all-white high school, reluctantly, but even though legally, they were compelled to let us in the door, it was still segregated. For example, my high school in the 1930s—1700 white kids boycotted Morgan Park High School in the 1930s because they dared to permit one or two African kids into the school, and they had to bring Frank Sinatra to sing to the white folks, the angry white folks, to get them to accept African people.

Twenty or 30 years ago, while it was integrated, physically, in terms of attendance, it was not integrated. My mother and father went to the high school, and there were problems then. By the time I got to the high school in 1960, we had a Black football team, but we couldn't have a Black cheerleader. We couldn't have [the word] “African” on the newspaper.

We couldn't do certain kinds of things. It was still segregated, although it was considered to be one of the best high schools in the city of Chicago.

Originally, it was to be the University of Chicago before their next Beverly Hills at Evergreen Park to the city of Chicago. [John D.] Rockefeller owned the land he was going to build the University of Chicago there. So technically, anybody who got good grades at Morgan Park High School almost had a free ticket to the University of Chicago. And certainly, if you played good basketball or football, like [indistinct], you know who was the star. He thought he was on his way, straight ticket to Gale Sayers in Kansas and whatnot.[2]

So there were perks, but the racism was very clear. My mother was a maid for 50 years. She cleaned three and four houses, six days a week—rich white folks' houses. My father was a garbage man, one of the first Africans to drive the garbage trucks in the city of Chicago.

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[1] The gerrymandering of school districts in Chicago exemplifies how systemic racism shaped Black access to education.

[2] A legendary African American football player who played for the Chicago Bears in the NFL. Known as the "Kansas Comet," he was an exceptional running back and became one of the youngest players inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. His success was seen as a pathway for Black athletes to access higher education and professional sports opportunities.

And he was Teamsters [a powerful union].[3] Didn't have the problem like in Memphis, Tennessee, where garbage people could not be unionized. He was Teamsters. I'm a Teamster, baby. And Teamsters ain't struck, but once or twice in my life in the city of Chicago, because they don't play.

So you had all of these issues and problems, just socially and whatnot in a poor family with 13 kids. My mother, my father, 13 kids. But I was very lucky, because as I came of political age, there were movements in the streets. For example, when I was seven years old, Emmett Till was murdered, and [if] anybody knows the history of Chicago, they know that the murder of Emmett Till in 1955 was a major — he was born in Mississippi, but he was raised in Chicago.

Sammy Rayner took the hearse from the Rayner Funeral Parlor down to [indistinct] Mississippi to bring the body back, and his mother Mamie [Till-Mobley], let her leave [the casket] it open. I was too young to go, but it was on all the newspapers, on all the TVs. You couldn't avoid it in the city of Chicago.

So that certainly was an awakening, because you knew that if you went south, and you really didn't have to go south, just go five blocks up the street. You had to fight. If you went that way to the grocery store or that way to the movie theater, because we were hemmed in with Irish, rich Irish on that side and European ethnic on that side, and you had to fight.

As the border—the dividing line—between the African and the white community shifted. I mean, they were that side of Vincennes [Avenue], but when the [indistinct] brothers built four houses and sold them to African people on that side of Vincennes, the line shifted to the alley.

And when you go out to take the garbage out, white kids, African kids throwing bricks at each other and whatnot, in terms of the dividing lines. This area is now the epicenter of some of the gang violence and stuff. My family moved from Mississippi, Louisiana and helped [indistinct] but if you remember a couple of years ago, some kids so-called Altgeld Gardens, where Obama lied and said he organized in the [19]80s.[4]

The Black Panther Party had the largest chapter in Altgeld Gardens, led by Leroy Patterson in 1968. And the conditions of the people in Altgeld Gardens had not changed for the better in 50 years. Well, they merged two high schools, knowing full well, two rival gangs, the gang in Roseland, the gang in Altgeld, and they pushed the kids from Altgeld to go to school across the street from my sister and brother in law's house.

[3] Brown's father's membership in the Teamsters underscores how unionization was a pathway for economic stability for Black workers, contrasting with the struggles of non-unionized Southern laborers.
[4] Bob Brown critiques Barack Obama's claims of organizing in Altgeld Gardens, a historically Black public housing project in Chicago, during the 1980s.

And every day when the school closed, there is struggles between the gangs, because you're forcing them together. And you saw the spectacle of kids beating each other to death with two by fours. That's right in the community where I grew up, you know. So you have these problems.

By 1963 the elementary schools were on double and triple shifts because there were so many African kids that did not have enough classrooms. So they brought trailers, which were called Willis Wagons.[5] That's what they were called. And when there was a struggle led by our parents and whatnot, for quality education, for integrated education, for better education, it just moved. As we aged and went from grade to grade and school to school, it merged.

People don't know that Kwame Ture [referring to Stokely Carmichael] integrated schools in New York City, coming from an all African environment in Trinidad, in the public schools. By the time he got to New York and moved into Brooklyn or the Bronx, until Howard University. From 1950 to when he came into the country, to 1960 he was in at least three schools. He integrated all of them, all of them.

Some people know it, but to them, it's not a major factor, because they have this myth that *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 only impacted schools in the South [indistinct] and that's a lie. Schools in Chicago and New York City are still segregated today, and some of the major so-called civil rights struggles coming out of Brown and Board of Education since 1954 occurred in The South. But you also had the Democratic Party-made Daley machine.[6]

Joshua Myers: Yes.

Bob Brown: I grew up fighting the Democratic Party and fighting the Daley machine. One of my first acts in the movement – my mother's cousin Earl Moseley, who was lifetime NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] and lifetime supporter for Jesse Jackson – during the summer of 1963 and 1964, Earl and I stood in front of Mayor [Richard Joseph] Daley Sr.'s house with picket signs with two by fours because we had to fight.

We smacked [Richard Michael] Daley Jr. one or two times with them two by fours as they were running out. They were running out to go up the street to the White Sox ballpark, which was a few blocks from old man Daley's house. But [at] 11 or 12 o'clock every Sunday for the entire summer, Earl and I were standing in front of Mayor Daley's house on 35th [St.] and Lowe [Ave.] with two picket signs, one in each hand. On the front side said, "Dump Daley." On the back side said, "Dump [Rep. William] Dawson."

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[5] "Willis Wagons" was the pejorative term for portable school classrooms used by critics of Superintendent of Schools Benjamin C. Willis (1953–1966) when protesting school overcrowding and segregation in black neighborhoods from 1962 to 1966.
[6] In Chicago, the **Daley Machine**, led by Mayor Richard J. Daley, was notorious for its control over Democratic Party politics, reliance on patronage jobs, and suppression of opposition, particularly from Black activists and communities seeking civil rights reforms.

Joshua Myers: How old were you?

Bob Brown: I was 15.

Joshua Myers: Why was Chicago machine politics so important to resist? What was its nature and why did it influence your early movement?

Bob Brown: Because it was corrupt, it was racist, and it was vicious. Even with a velvet glove.[7] Fifty years later, I'm still fighting to dump the Daley machine symbolized by Rahm Emanuel, even though they purport to not speak to each other and have a problem and I'm fighting to dump Bobby Rush who inherited the Daley machine.[8]

Joshua Myers: Would you say that the machine was continuous, or were there people who were elected—

Bob Brown: All living organisms must bring new blood. The Daley machine has infinite capacity to co-opt and to pimp and to hustle and use. When we struggled to build the Black Panther Party, I wasn't trying to feed no kids. I wasn't talking about social service programs. In fact, Mayor Daley had more and better social programs than the Black Panther Party did.

I was fighting to build an independent all African political party that would crush the Democratic Party machine in Chicago. Somehow, some people changed. The Democratic machine has not changed. It has simply changed names and changed, in some instances, colors. All due respect to my brother Bobby Rush, but the conditions of the masses of African people in the second congressional district tonight are not any better during his reign than it was during Dawson's.

Joshua Myers: So you were able to, at 15, to see how even Black visibility in the machine didn't have any material benefit to the Black community.

Bob Brown: First of all, in order to get a job, you had to work for the Democratic Party. You had to vote for the Democratic Party. My father refused. For example, when John F Kennedy was killed, my father was at the bar with his buddies, his garbage brothers and whatnot, and somebody came up to him and said they just killed John F. Kennedy. He said, “One more cracker dead.” They laid him off. [The] supervisor heard it, took it back to Mayor Daley. Laid him off.

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[7] A metaphor describing the Daley machine's ability to maintain an appearance of civility and legitimacy ("the velvet") while exercising oppressive and discriminatory power beneath the surface ("the glove"). This duality allowed the machine to mask systemic racism and corruption under the guise of efficient governance.

[8] Bob Brown highlights the persistence of machine politics in Chicago, symbolized by figures like Rahm Emanuel and Bobby Rush, who, despite presenting themselves as politically distinct, are viewed by Brown as inheritors of the same corrupt, oppressive system established by the Daley Machine.

Joshua Myers: Wow.

Bob Brown: It was one of the hungriest periods in my life. I always fought the Democratic Party, and I will continue to fight the Democratic Party, and I don't care who joins it. I'm not in it.

Joshua Myers: So this idea that all Black people valorized JFK, it's not really true.

Bob Brown: No. It's not true. JFK had no interest in us. JFK financed the Civil Rights Movement. JFK owned and controlled SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee]. I can document it. This myth that SNCC was anti-old people, was totally a youth movement, totally independent of elderly people, is a lie. John F. Kennedy paid for it.

Joshua Myers: His interests are obvious because they needed the votes.

Bob Brown: They needed the votes in the South because the southern racist white folks did not want to vote for a Catholic. So in order to—he narrowly won.

Joshua Myers: Right.

Bob Brown: He narrowly won the race. In fact, it is Chicago who delivered the votes. He made the phone call to Coretta Scott King, when Dr. King was in jail, and Louis Martin and the Democratic Party machine in Chicago flooded the churches that said Sunday before the vote, and it delivered.

We put him there, and he fully knew that he would not be re-elected. He would not be re-elected unless they registered us to vote. So this notion that he did this for some noble, non-selfish [reason] is a lie. Lyndon Baines Johnson financed and controlled the Civil Rights Movement. He paid the bill for [the] Mississippi Summer Project [Freedom Summer].[9]

Joshua Myers: So how do you situate his interest, particularly his pushing of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act?

Bob Brown: Same interest. The South revolted in 1948 for the Democratic Party with Strom Thurmond and the Dixiecrats [States' Rights Democratic Party], and he was part of that – and he was caught between the northern, so-called liberal wing of the party and the southern, so-called Dixiecrat wing.[10] And Malcolm X was clear: two wings on the same bird.

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[9] The Mississippi Summer Project (Freedom Summer) was a campaign aimed at increasing Black voter registration in Mississippi in 1964.

[10] This marked a key moment in U.S. history when Southern politicians broke from the national party to defend segregation and white supremacy.

Joshua Myers: You got Hubert Humphrey and then Richard Russell.

Bob Brown: So he had to maneuver. He fully well knew that the 1948 revolt is that the Democratic Party had matured by 1964. He knew [Barry] Goldwater was going to sweep the South. He knew that. He said, if he supports the Voting Rights Act of [19]65, they will lose the South for a generation. He said it, in fact, it's been two generations, if not three, because the South has not voted Democratic since 1964.
They knew from Reconstruction, that if the Republican Party fights for the right to vote, the Democratic Party is on the other side.[11] The Democratic Party, the Republican Party, used us to put [Abraham] Lincoln in the White House. It wasn't about no freeing no slave. It was about which way the railroads was going to roll. That is why it is no accidental night that all six major railroads rode through Chicago.[12]

Because when the South succeeded, that was the end of the railroad going through the Transcontinental Railroad, going through St. Louis [MO] or New Orleans [LA]. Because Lincoln was a railroad lawyer. He worked for the Union Pacific Railroad. It wasn't about freeing us.

Joshua Myers: It was no accident. After the Civil War, no accident—the expansion of the railroad system.

Bob Brown: No accident. And the banks and the industries and other stuff and whatnot. So it's just – we're not told the truth. So you had all these struggles, the city of Chicago, the movements were in the streets. They have been in the streets consistently for almost 60 years. Ups and downs in terms of mass participation, ups and downs in terms of the quality of the leadership or the treachery of the leadership, is nothing new.

My second political act [was] in 1963. Chicago took tens of thousands of people on the railroads from Chicago to the March on Washington [a massive civil rights demonstration]. Children were not allowed to go. One, because you couldn't take underage children across the state lines. Two, because grown ups did what grown ups were gonna do on a train ride. So I was not permitted. My parents wouldn't let me go, but they don't talk to true history.

[11] The post-Civil War era (1865–1877) aimed to rebuild the South, enforce civil rights for formerly enslaved people, and integrate them into the political and social framework, though it faced significant resistance and eventual rollback.
[12] Bob Brown argues that the Civil War was driven more by economic interests, particularly the control of railroad routes, than by the moral imperative to end slavery, emphasizing Chicago's strategic role as a hub for major railroads.

Malcolm X said masses of people were in the streets, coming to Washington, DC, and the Big Six got ahead of it and sold it out to Johnson and the Ford Foundation and Walter Ruth and all that kind of stuff.[13] He didn't go far enough.

It was not just the masses of the people in the street. It was the masses of youth. 1960 is considered to be a turning point, because college students took to the streets. Tens of thousands, thousands arrested in 1960 and [19]61 with the student sit-in movement. But what they don't talk about is that 1963 was the year of the high school and elementary school students worldwide.

Between May of [19]63 or so with the Birmingham campaign and the [Birmingham] Children's Crusade, the Birmingham Campaign failed.[14] [Martin Luther] King had made one small strategic miscalculation. He said, fill the jails. The campaign was about filling the jails, which is good for a non-violent pacifist campaign. But he miscalculated.

He counted the traditional jails. He didn't count Greyhound, he didn't count the Little League [indistinct], chaining people under the bleachers in the Little League field. He under-counted. He underestimated Bull Connor's ability to get non-traditional jail cells.[15]

He overestimated the capacity, the willingness, of adult people to go to jail. At that time, except among certain groups in the North, going to jail was not good. It gave you a stigma for the rest of your life and whatnot. So it wasn't like a lot of people, except with that culture, [were] talking about going to jail.

So he could not find enough adults to go to jail. These two strategic miscalculations almost crushed the Birmingham Campaign. But Jim [James] Bevel and Diane Nash [SNCC activists] were up at the three high schools, and thousands of youth poured out in the streets. It is the youth who saved the Birmingham Campaign. And if they had not done that, you would have never heard of Martin Luther King, and I love him, and I respect him. Malcolm X, I love him, but Malcolm X made a profound error.

Joshua Myer: What's that?

Bob Brown: He called Dr. King a punk, not a man, because men do not put women and children in the picket lines and in the streets. He did that, and he made an error. I'm not a member of the

[13] A term referring to the six major civil rights leaders who were central to organizing the 1963 March on Washington—Martin Luther King Jr. (SCLC), John Lewis (SNCC), A. Philip Randolph (BSCP), Roy Wilkins (NAACP), James Farmer (CORE), and Whitney Young (NUL).
[14] A 1963 movement in Birmingham, Alabama, where protests, including mass student-led marches, faced violent police repression.
[15] The Commissioner of Public Safety in Birmingham, Alabama, known for using brutal police tactics, including attack dogs and fire hoses, against civil rights protesters, particularly during the 1963 Birmingham Campaign and Children's Crusade.

Nation of Islam. My mother and father couldn't stop me from joining the movement. How the hell is Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X going to do that?

The children of [the] Nation of Islam have never marched, yet they're in line to get Affirmative Action. They need to be careful. They did not fight for these gains. We did. We did, and not just in the United States. In April of 1963 a PAC—Pan Africanist Congress of Azania leader, Potlako Leballo, in Botswana, gave a press conference saying they had crushed PAC, they had crushed [Nelson] Mandela.[16] They had banned them, all of that. From [19]61 Mandela was in jail. You know, you name it.

Leballo makes a statement that they had rebuilt Poqo, the PAC guerilla army, and there were wings of the army in every high school and every elementary school across South Africa. That is true. That is true. But when he made that statement, the South African police arrested more than 3,000 Azanian high school kids and whatnot, including Steve Biko's [South African movement leader] older brother who spent several months in jail.

There's a cadre of PAC people who were high school students. Over 300 of them were sent to Robben Island. They broke rocks, they built the cell that Mandela slept in. They were on Robben Island, fighting, fighting. When Mandela came, they would work all day in the rock field and then illegally play soccer in their cells at night. You can go on the Internet and you can see a movie about it, *More Than Just a Game*, which [the] FIFA [World] Cup commissioned to be made in celebration of South Africa having the games.

Mark Shinners. He's alive. He's working today. I stay with him when I go. We're about the same age. You had students in South Africa. You had students and youth in every corner of the world, in the streets.

Joshua Myers: So this represents that independent Black political activity that you were gesturing to.

Bob Brown: I don't know that it was independent. I don't accept that myth. [There] is no such thing as pure independence. From 1954 to 1963, our parents had us in the streets fighting, I said it, fighting for quality, education, fighting for this, fighting for that. The main structures that did that were, first of all, the NAACP, secondly, CORE [Congress of Racial Equality], and then after 1960, SNCC.

[16] The PAC, a militant anti-apartheid organization, was banned alongside the African National Congress (ANC) as part of the apartheid regime's crackdown on Black liberation movements.

So we were participating in boycotts. We were doing all of that because our parents occasionally told us to do that. By [19]63, we're 15. So we now think we're old enough, grown enough, to make some of our own decisions. You understand?

Joshua Myers: Yes.

Bob Brown: But, how can you say a child is independent of her family? They may think she is? Who paying the rent? Who feed them? So this notion of independence. Our problem with it, the children who the NAACP put in the streets against those Willis Wagons from [19]55 through [19]63 through our parents and community organizations.[17]

We took to the streets in [19]63. The high school kids of [19]63 or the college students of [19]68 or the military in Vietnam or the gangs in the streets. And we knew each other, we knew each other, and we still know each other. So there is waves. I think you raise, what is the turning points? What are the milestones in different sectors of the movement? You must certainly say birth is a milestone.

So you had 27 million or 20 or 27 million baby boomers in the United States, born between [19]46 and [19]64. That's the main cohort for a baby boomer, sociologically speaking. So you must put [19]46 as a milestone. One year after the conclusion of World War II, and massive numbers of babies [were] born all over the world, not just in the United States.

By the time they hit five, that's a milestone. Is it an accident that when a kid born in 1946 becomes five in 1951, [19]52? Is it an accident that all of a sudden there's a Supreme Court decision against desegregation in the schools? I don't think so. I don't think it's an accident.

[19]54, [19]55 with the Montgomery Bus Boycott. [19]55 with Emmett Till. You know the southern rebellion against—I don't think these are accidents. I don't believe in conspiracy theories either. I believe that when you bottle steam in a kettle, unless you let some of the steam off in a controlled way, it explodes.

Joshua Myers: As well, independence movements across the world.

Bob Brown: Across the world, and not just in Africa, in the Middle East, in Asia, I don't think it's [an] accident. [The Battle of] Dien Bien Phu in 1954.[18] This comes out of years of struggle, years of struggle. I don't think it's an accident—the French atomic tests in Algeria in 1959 to

[17] Bob Brown critiques the idea that student activists were fully independent, emphasizing that their families and community organizations, including the NAACP, played a key role.
[18] A decisive battle in which the Viet Minh defeated French colonial forces in Vietnam, leading to the end of French rule in Indochina and the signing of the Geneva Accords, which divided Vietnam and set the stage for U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

threaten, to scare the NLF [National Liberation Front], [Ahmed] Ben Bella, Frantz Fanon.[19] It represents a milestone. It represents a point at which the movement reaches critical mass.

Joshua Myers: So we really can't talk about Black Power unless we go back to that moment.

Bob Brown: And before that. I don't think it's an accident that Kwame Nkrumah, [was] born in 1909, [Ahmed] Sekou Toure, born in 1927, Kwame Ture born in 1941. This represents three generations. Some sociologists take a generational approach to history. Certainly. Who was it? I forget Fanon or somebody said, "each generation of relative obscurity, must find its mission fulfilling or betrayed."

That's a generational approach to history. It is not adequate—for the statement is correct—but it is not adequate for today, because generations are not monolithic. Generations, like organizations, like individuals, have good and bad. Sure, a traitor, conscious.[20]

Joshua Myers: Different missions.

Bob Brown: A snitch, conscious, has found their mission so it doesn't have a class character. The statement doesn't have a class character to it. It's not clear enough, because you debate and you argue over what is the mission in life? And some people confuse tactics with strategy and strategy with values and principles. So while his statement is correct, he didn't tell us how to do it, and those conflicts continue to exist today.

Joshua Myers: Were you thinking about class in those terms in the [19]60s, when you were young?

Bob Brown: Yeah. Very simple.

Joshua Myers: How did you—How did you all struggle with that?

Bob Brown: Very simple. We were the children of garbage men and maids, going to school with the children of rich people. How could you not not know race and class? You did not necessarily have a full understanding consciously, but you knew the difference.

You knew the difference when your mother bring hand-me-down clothes and hand-me-down toys that the white kids break and throw away. You know the difference when your mother's out

[19] Bob Brown suggests that France's 1959 nuclear tests in Algeria were not accidental but intended to intimidate the National Liberation Front (NLF) and key figures like Ahmed Ben Bella and Frantz Fanon, who were leading the fight against French colonial rule.

[20] Bob Brown critiques the idea of viewing history solely through generational divisions, arguing that generations are not uniform—they contain both progressives and reactionaries, just as organizations and individuals do. He challenges the assumption that an entire generation shares the same political consciousness or values.

helping with their Christmas party and not at yours? So no, we didn't have a full understanding. But yes, I understood race and class very quickly. But even more than that, by 1964 I was reading Marxist literature.

They had killed Patrice Lumumba, and I had heard that the Russians had printed a book called *Lumumba's Last Will and Testament*. And I had been told that there was only one store in Chicago that sold it. The Communist Party's bookstore. So I cut white folks grass. I will not have grass today. I cut too much grass, and I cut too much and shoveled too much snow. Ain't doing it. I ain't doing it. I promised myself [a] long time ago, not me.

I went to Ishmael's bookstore in 1964 and I asked for the book. He said, yes, he has the book, but he told me, I will give you this book for free if you buy this Marxist book. I said, "Well, let's make a deal." I'll buy the Lumumba book. You give me that, and I will read it. By the time I left the store I had two shopping bags, full of books and I still got them.

In 1963 in Chicago, you had a wave of high school and student struggles and rebellions. From April of [19]63 and maybe earlier, to at least October, November of [19]63 and it is this mass youth ferment, not just high school. Not just college. Because the college movement from 1960, [19]61 was waning. It picked up again in [19]64 and whatnot, but it was waning, and they were now seniors and on their way out the door.

And we were juniors and seniors and sophomores in high school, on our way to whatever path we chose after the end of high school. On October 22nd, I believe it was 1963, a quarter of a million high school and elementary school students in Chicago boycotted school for one day [referring to the 1963 Chicago Public School boycott "Freedom Day"].[21] Quarter of a million.

They talk about a quarter of a million at the March on Washington. They talk about the Children's Crusade in Birmingham, Alabama, but nobody talks about the high school boycott, elementary school boycott, organized by Larry [Lawrence] Landry, who at that moment was the director of the Chicago SNCC office. They don't talk about that.

It is that boycott of [19]63 which took over five years or more to build. Wasn't nothing spontaneous. It took time to build. That mass boycott erupted in all the major cities in the North within [19]63, [19]64. Nobody has written about that. That was the breeding ground for the cadre. You name any structure that has former youth in it today, you can point it to that year.

That is the year the gangs started going over to the mass in the city of Chicago, and David Barksdale and Larry Hoover and Jeff Fort and [indistinct] and Jamie Doc Brown. They're a little

[21] The boycott was part of a larger movement demanding equal education and an end to the use of segregated Willis Wagons—temporary trailers used to keep Black students separate from white schools.

older. They're older than me, but by that time, they were 15, 16, 17, and they had chosen that career path within two years or so. That's the point at which the Vietnam War was moving over. You know, by [19]64 there was only 16,000 US troops. By [19]66, [19]67 it was almost 500,000. It was moving. It also coincides with the aging of the baby boomers – 18, draftable.

Joshua Myers: So it naturally segues into the anti-war movement.

Bob Brown: And if you trace the origins of anybody in the movement who've been in the movement for several years, for several decades. You will chase them back to the [19]63, [19]64 period. Mario Savio and the Free Speech Movement.[22] The youth who were in Mississippi and Alabama and whatnot, who are now in their 50s and 60s and 70s. So that's a period between [19]63, [19]64. The movement clearly split. It split in 1961 inside of SNCC, between those who said voter registration and those who said demonstrations. And that split still exists today.

Joshua Myers: Why do you think there was a split? Was it around class ideology?

Bob Brown: It was around tactics. Both sides said they wanted to be free. They wanted to vote. But it was around several things. It was not simply around class because they were petty bourgeois and middle class people on both sides of the divide. It was philosophical.

Those forces who ultimately adopted pacifism as a way of life. Versus those who saw it as purely a tactic, and that conflict still exists today. I will go up to New York on Friday. We have a program organized by our wing of the Pan-Africanist movement, and the A.J. Muste of the peace movement.

And it's gonna rock it, because we're gonna hit all the ideological divides straight up. And we've been debating and arguing that stuff since the [19]60s. It manifests itself today between those who made a decision in 1964 that they wasn't voting for Johnson. They didn't register people to vote to join the Democratic Party. They did not sell out and compromise when the leadership compromised at Atlantic City in 1964 [referring to the 1964 Democratic National Convention].

Some people crawled back to Mississippi and said, “Okay, we've been, we've been sold out, but we gonna still vote for Lyndon Baines Johnson,” and they couldn't even vote. Yet, they went out there with mock elections and campaigns. Kwame Ture said, “No, no.” He wasn't supporting the Democratic Party. He wasn't supporting them.

[22] Mario Savio was a student activist and leader of the Free Speech Movement (FSM) at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1964–65. The FSM emerged as a protest against university restrictions on political speech and organizing, becoming a major influence on student activism nationwide. It was deeply connected to the broader civil rights, anti-war, and student power movements of the 1960s.

They paid the bills, but he split with the sellout in Atlantic City with MFDP [Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party] in 1964.

Joshua Myers: So that's a huge turning point.

Bob Brown: Huge turning point.

Joshua Myers: Okay, the Atlantic City Challenge.[23]

Bob Brown: So around the question of—first of all, we're not in the system in that sense, because we can't vote in the South. You know, we can't register in the South. We voted and we registered in the North, but nobody talks about the bloody struggle to win that right in the North.

It's called uneven development. The South had the right to vote Africans in the 1870s when Reconstruction was crushed. The exodus, the first wing of the exodus North was the middle class. The first to leave Mississippi and come to Chicago was the businessmen and the politicians. Facts of that. It took 30 years, 50 years for Black Power, so called Black Power inside the system, to emerge in Chicago.

This nonsense—this ahistorical nonsense that the [19]60s represent the second Reconstruction—is a lie. It's the third, chronologically speaking, if one talks about the whole country and all African people, not just some of them. The first Reconstruction was 1865 through [19]76. The second Reconstruction was the 1920s through the 1940s.

Joshua Myers: The Great Migration.

Bob Brown: The Great Migration. But more than that, if you count the end of Reconstruction at the point when Congress people, elected officials were disbarred or thrown out, and we, quote, "lost the right to vote." If that is how you define the end of Reconstruction, with the purge of African people from Congress, then to be consistent, the second Reconstruction must start the day African people begin to go back to Congress.

So the second Reconstruction must begin in 1928 when Arthur [Wergs] Mitchell and other Africans in Chicago were the first elected officials to return to Congress, and then you had Adam Clayton Powell. How do you write Adam Clayton Powell out of history?

Yeah, Dawson. Dawson was there for Adam Clayton Powell, and he was no good, which shows you, we ain't talking quality. But if you're consistent and correct, then you must, you must

[23] The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), led by activists like Fannie Lou Hamer, challenged the legitimacy of the all-white Mississippi Democratic Party delegation at the 1964 Democratic National Convention (DNC) in Atlantic City.

correctly say the second Reconstruction begins in 1928 in Chicago, when Africans were elected as Republicans to go back to Congress, and then Dawson shifted later to Democrats. That represents the third one they talked about chronologically, is the third Reconstruction.

Joshua Myers: That's interesting, because you also have, in the [19]20s and the [19]30s, this robust attempt to organize around working class interests. American Negro Labor Congress [ANLC], National Negro Congress [NNC], [Brotherhood of] Sleeping Car Porters brothers.

Bob Brown: But not just that, because white labor paid for that. A. Philip Randolph ain't organizing those Sleeping Car Porters on his own. He was financed by the Socialist Party and other forces. And don't forget the Pullman porters.[24]

The Pullman cars were built in Chicago, right? In fact, the community, right? You got Altgeld Gardens. You got a community called Roseland, where them kids were beating each other with two by fours in Chicago. Roseland is where the Pullman cars were built. That's where cars were built.

Joshua Myers: The parallel makes sense, because you also had during the 19th century reconstruction, liberal whites who are investing in the Black vote because they see a material interest.

Bob Brown: Bottom line, the battle between W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington was over many issues, but one of them was over, who would get Andrew Carnegie's money? And Du Bois fought for it as hard, if not harder, than Booker T. did. And up until recently, Carnegie Foundation, Carnegie Endowment was one of the biggest philanthropic organizations controlling Negro education. Now George Soros is taking over.

Joshua Myers: Howard University has a building [named after] Carnegie.

Bob Brown: Ford Foundation really owns Black Studies and African Studies and Area Studies and International Studies. Anybody [who] says any different needs to hand in their PhDs. They are mouth pieces and apologists. They're not scholars if they reject that fact.

But McGeorge Bundy, who was a civilian architect of the Phoenix program and Vietnamization and all of the Vietnam War under Kennedy and Johnson.[25] He resigned a couple of months before Black Power in 1966. He didn't resign. He was pushed out. He convened a meeting of so-called wise men in the White House, who advised Johnson that they were losing the war and he had to leave.

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[24] Pullman porters were African American men who worked on luxury sleeping cars for the Pullman Company.

[25] Vietnamization was a policy implemented by President Richard Nixon to gradually reduce the number of U.S. troops in Vietnam and transfer combat responsibility to South Vietnamese forces.

He joined the Ford Foundation as the president and from 1966 for the next 20 or 30 years, he financed that version of Black Power. He financed the Black Studies program. Decided which ones, how much they would get and [what] we would teach. He financed the election of the Black political forces. He paid for urban renewal in Baltimore [MD], in Cleveland [OH], we can document it. But more importantly, first thing he said is, "You can't talk to Kwame Ture."

He spent 30 years of his life fighting Kwame, everything Kwame built, he destroyed. Everybody Kwame tried to recruit, he compromised and he bought. We can't defame on this program, so we won't name them. So they know who they are.

Joshua Myers: That gets us to the point to talk really about the emergence of Black Power in the public consciousness. No, it's always been in Black people's consciousness in one way or other, but by 1966 it's in the public's consciousness. What did that do to what was happening on the ground for Black people when that word or that slogan was uttered?

Bob Brown: First of all, it is a cancer where academicians and moving people are running around here talking about, "I'm the father of Black Power. I'm the father of Black Power studies." I mean, in the 21st century, where's the mama? Where's the mama? It is sick to be talking about the paternity of it. It is opportunistic and incorrect.

Joshua Myers: I agree.

Bob Brown: Because people just pick a person, pick a date. So Adam Clayton Powell said Black Power. So Paul Robeson said Negro power. So this one said that one and what they do is they selectively choose dates to bolster their own organizational and political perspective. Richard Wright said Black Power—wrote a book. But they don't tell you the book was about Kwame Nkrumah and the Gold Coast Revolution. They leave that out.

They put Richard Wright in because he was born in Mississippi, you know, New Africa. But they neglect to put the book was about Kwame Nkrumah. They didn't know until I told them. Frederick Douglass did a speech in 1851, I believe it was called "The Dome of Black Power."

And that speech is very important. Number one because it puts a longer timeline. Hear the word Black Power by Frederick Douglass in 1851. So if you're talking etymology and the genealogy of words and timelines, you must at least go back to 1851.

If you can confuse Negro with Black, if you are Afro, if you are African-descended, then you must go back to Egypt. You must go back to Egypt and Nubia, especially those Egyptologists,

people who believe in Kemet, who say it was Black. Cleopatra, Black, or that's Black Power? She sold out to [Mark] Antony.[26] That's Black Power, because they're doing that today.

It is also very important because it shows you the ideological conflict inside the movement, inside the terms in that point in time when Frederick Douglass said Black it was seen as negative. When it was re-echoed in [19]66 it was seen as positive, coming through the Garvey movement and all these other manifestations.

We took that word and turned it on his head and made it positive, but Frederick Douglass said it was evil. Frederick Douglass was not talking about Black people. He's talking about slavery, the *Doom of Black Power*, the doom of "King Cotton." He predicted the destruction of slavery, the destruction of the King Cotton, five years before, 10 years before, the Civil War. But words of them is important because it shows you the ideological conflict within that movement, then and now.

Joshua Myers: So the word Black Power can be a container for a range of different politics.

Bob Brown: It is. Black power can be evil. That's what Frederick Douglass said. Black power can mean white people; can mean slave masters. He called the slave master "black power," evil power. He was correct in the sense—if he was correct when that time period. If you see the word Black is evil, you cannot suggest that he said the same thing Kwame Ture said or the same thing Marcus Garvey. He did not.

[In] fact, he's more closer to Martin Luther King. Martin Luther King wasn't bad, but he didn't really see Black in the same way Kwame did. He didn't want to use the word Black Power. He didn't denounce it.

Joshua Myers: But I'm also thinking about what happens when Nixon's people appropriated.[27]

Bob Brown: And many of the people who advised Richard J. Nixon to say Black capitalism were out of Chicago and St Louis, Black Republicans. I know one personally, one of them was a high school history teacher and coach, and he introduced me to Fred Hampton. He was NAACP, Young Turk.[28] If you wanted to go organize in high schools, you had to have a teacher who would be the advisor to your student group.

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[26] He references Kemet (ancient Egypt) and Nubia—civilizations central to Black historical consciousness—and questions whether identifying with historical figures like Cleopatra represents true Black empowerment, noting that Cleopatra allied with Roman leaders like Mark Antony, which he implies was a political compromise rather than an act of Black resistance.

[27] Refers to Richard Nixon's administration co-opting the language and goals of the Civil Rights Movement, such as promoting "Black capitalism," to shift focus away from systemic change toward economic individualism.

[28] "Young Turk" is a term used to describe a group of younger, more progressive members pushing for change within a larger, often more conservative, organization.

And we knew who the good teachers—good in the sense that they cared about youth. They spent extra time being an advisor for your little football team, your wrestling team. I mean, they truly love you. Spent extra time with them. Would help you, would mentor you and not just run off once the paycheck arrives.

They advised Nixon to do that. And not all of them, but some of them out of Chicago. Chicago, Wichita [KS], St. Louis, New York City, Washington, DC, I know. And Condoleezza Rice's daddy out of Denver [CO]. Bobby Rush's oldest stepbrother was a Republican. So was his mother. It was normal. It's not defamation. Sure, if you voted — Martin Luther King voted Republican. You know, Adam Clayton Powell voted Republican in 1956.

Because the Democratic Party has never been our friend. The Democratic Party is the party of slavery and now it claims to be our savior. The Republican Party was the party of abolition, and now it's the worst thing God ever produced. That's even worse.

Joshua Myers: They're still evil.

Bob Brown: Still evil. Who is selling for lesser of evil, lesser of devils and lesser of gods? And certainly, what religious figure would let the word "lesser?" They preach hell and damnation if you don't do what they tell you to do, and don't put the money in the collection plate, you're going to hell every Sunday and then tell us to vote for the lesser of evil. That's madness.

Joshua Myers: So what did Kwame Ture mean by Black Power?

Bob Brown: Kwame Ture, if you read the book *Black Power*, the book *Black Power* is reform. It's not revolution. He said it very clearly. Black power means the ability to control the sheriff's office, the probate judge, the treasury of Lowndes County [AL]. Well, I think we've been controlling, let's not say control. I think we've had Black faces. He also said in that book that Black visibility is not Black power.

He said it in the book, 1967. So the book itself had many contradictions inside of it. When you read the 25-year afterwords, he says it again, Black visibility is not black power, Black elected officials, Blacks on TV, Blacks playing ball, Blacks singing rap songs. That's visibility. It ain't no power.

And if it is power, it's for the individual, for the elite, because the conditions of the masses of the people, he said, it only had 300 African elected officials in 1967 got more than 10,000 today. And look at the misery. Look at the misery. The proportion of elected officials who are in jail and snitching to keep from going to jail is much higher than a portion of youth who get caught up in this drug empire.

And they can't all scream entrapment. They can't all scream entrapment. It's greed, is corruption. And if one like I say, if you take it from a percentage of the 10,000 African elected officials, how many have gone to jail? Rightly so. I know there are few who are innocent, but if you take it from a percentage and you compare the numbers of youth who go to jail for selling drugs, for killing somebody, I will bet you the percentage of elected officials is much higher.

And you want to tell me that's Black Power. I love Marion Barry. Where was Black Power? Here under Marion Barry or Joyce [Clements Smith], because she was in charge of DC on paper after they took Marion down the [indistinct], no disrespect.[29] How many elected city councilmen that we had in the District of Columbia in the last 40 years? And Columbia is white, this DC is whiter tonight than it was 20 years ago, 10 years ago, 5 years ago.

Joshua Myers: Were you all aware of those contradictions in the late [19]60s, early [19]70s?

Bob Brown: Yes. In Chicago we certainly was.

Joshua Myers: How did you organize to really move beyond them?

Bob Brown: We, first of all, [we] fought to get independent elected officials. Sammy Rayner, you know other forces in Chicago, Dick [Richard] Newhouse, we wage massive campaigns, massive campaigns from 1963. Dick [Richard] Gregory ran for Mayor of Chicago in [19]64. I voted for him and couldn't even vote. At 16, I couldn't vote, but I was out there campaigning for him in 1964. He lost.

Harold Washington lost one or two times before he made it in [19]83. We fought. We fought to get progressive, independent political, elected officials in the city of Chicago in Cook County in Illinois history, and overwhelmingly we lost. We made a few. But when we saw that having an individual was not enough, we began to struggle to build independent political formations.

White folks had liberal independent voters of Illinois and CPAC independent political action committee. I mean, they organized to do that. They've been organizing for generations to build Communist parties, socialist parties, Green parties, independent parties, third parties. There's a whole movement.

We've been doing that too. And the Panther Party at the MFDP [Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party] was one experiment. And unfortunately, they were sold out. They were sold out. How can you move from the chairman of the Black Panther Party of Illinois to the vice

[29] Bob Brown questions whether Marion Barry's leadership in Washington, D.C. truly represented Black Power, especially after Barry was politically weakened following his 1990 drug-related arrest. He contrasts Barry with Joyce Clements Smith, who held political authority on paper but lacked the grassroots support and power Barry once commanded.

chairman of the Democratic Party of Illinois [referring to Bobby Rush]? Is that a step forward or step backwards? It can't be explained.

Joshua Myers: Is this one of the reasons that you were attracted to the Pan-African struggle?

Bob Brown: But I was always Pan-African before—I told you, in 1964 I went to find me a book on Lumumba.

Joshua Myers: Right. So how does Pan-Africanism then help us clarify those contradictions?

Bob Brown: The contradictions also exist inside of Pan-Africanism.

Joshua Myers: True.

Bob Brown: Can you really say that the OAU [Organisation of African Unity], the African Union, is any different than the City Hall in Chicago? Can you really say that Barack Obama was any better than Mobutu [Sese Sekoor] or Papa Doc [François Duvalier]? More sophisticated, for sure. Better? Not for us.

So the same contradictions are called neocolonialism. It's called corruption. It's called treachery. The contradictions inside of the Pan-African movement, the Black power movement, is part of the Pan-African movement. You can't have Pan-Africanism without power.

Joshua Myers: And that's what I kind of want you to explore a little bit, because so often the debates and conversations about Black Power get so domesticated that we don't see that these things are happening across the world. That they're impacting African people across the world. That's the same basic struggle.

Bob Brown: It's first of all a line struggle. Some people see Pan-Africanism as one unified continent, with the unity of 5 million African people around the world. Some African people see a decentralized 65 countries in Africa and 100 countries in the African diaspora.

Some people see one governmental structure. Some people say 165. We can argue that one is Pan-Africanism and the other is anti Pan-Africanism. And I certainly do. It is not Pan-Africanism, unless you suggest that lesser of evils and greater of devils is Pan-Africanism. The filth and corruption.

So there is confusion, some of it unconscious and accidental, some of it deliberate. Those forces who say today that Pan-Africanism is like Zionism, is confused. Because Zionism stole somebody else's land and displaced them and occupies the land. That's not liberation.[30]

So those who see Pan-Africanism as similar to Zionism [are] at best, confused. At best, lesser of evils. At best on the payroll of Zion. Those people who suggested Pan-Africanism equals capitalism, that somehow you can cut some deals, get some money and buy your way to freedom.

Those people who are saying we should get control of our own resources, that's partly true. But when you take control of uranium and of plutonium, who you going to send it to? We don't use it. We don't need it. How you going to take it from white folk and send it back to white folk? Why do we need it? As much water and wind and air energy or nuclear weapons?

So anybody who's talking about taking control of our resources in order to send it back to the white folks. That ain't about us. That's not about the people, that's about those individuals who simply want to get rich doing the same thing the white folks did.

The Pan-African movement must be environmental. You can't take Africa and then destroy the environment, destroy our Earth. You cannot say, damn the people mining [these resources]. Somebody's mining that stuff. Somebody's digging that stuff out of the ground and you're jeopardizing their health.

This is not Pan-Africanism. It doesn't speak to environmental questions. Doesn't speak to conservation questions in a revolutionary sense, is my fear. You cannot unite the people by oppressing the people. You can't do that. And you can't unite the people with one or two people sitting up extremely rich.

Go on the website and check the net worth. I do it everyday. It's a website called net worth. Type in the basketball player, type in the hip-hop singer, type in the minister, type in the preacher, type in the lawyer, type the name.

Joshua Myers: So would you agree at its core, Black power—I guess the manifestation that you received was about rethinking the meaning of it.

Bob Brown: Black Power is dialectical. It is good and bad, and we've always known that. Since [19]63 at least. I have, because I said, dump Daley and Dawson. So I understood that all Black

[30] Bob Brown rejects comparisons between Pan-Africanism and Zionism, arguing that Zionism is a settler-colonial ideology that involves the displacement and occupation of Palestinian land, whereas Pan-Africanism is a movement for Black liberation and unity without dispossessing others.

Power was not good. It's not good. You cannot go into Chicago and tell them, people, Barack Obama is not Black power. I do and they think I'm insane.

What has he done for us? What has done for us? You cannot tell me [Donald] Trump is going to do any worse or any better than Hillary [Clinton]. You see what Bill [Clinton] did to Haiti, to Rwanda?[31] What more do we have to see? So Black Power, Pan-Africanism has good and bad. It depends upon how it is organized and constructed, which is predominant.

Go back and look at Kwame's speeches. After 1967 you don't hear him say Black Power no more. He moved from Black Power to Pan-Africanism. It took years to move from freedom. And to move on from Black power, it took less than one year.

Joshua Myers: So what do you think helped him get there?

Bob Brown: His world tour, his meeting with Fidel Castro, his meeting with Ho Chi Minh, his meeting Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure. And he wasn't the first. Ho Chi Minh met Garvey. He was a member of the UNIA [Universal Negro Improvement Association]. It is Ho Chi Minh who sent Kwame to Africa. He said, where do you people in Africa go? Go home. And Kwame had not thought of that and he went home.

Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad met Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure and [indistinct] and other forces before Kwame Ture. [19]64 was not Malcolm X's first trip to Africa. He was on the committee in New York City to meet Africans when they came to the UN. He met [indistinct] in [19]59, Sekou Toure and other forces.

The difference is that he had access to them, but he didn't agree with them. I believe we over exaggerated. I love him, but now remember he only lived 14 months after he left the Nation of Islam. How much can we really live? How much can we really do in 14 months? I'm not denouncing it, but we need to stop this over exaggeration.

We need to stop it. How much can you do? How much can you learn? How much can you really know? Yes, you can be in motion, and you could reach certain milestones, certain parts. But to say he was fully a Pan-Africanist, to say he was a socialist, he was moving perhaps that way. But who knows what he would have been if he still died today.

[31] Bob Brown critiques both Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton, suggesting that neither would significantly improve conditions for Black people. He references Bill Clinton's policies in Haiti and Rwanda, implying that U.S. foreign policy under the Clintons contributed to instability, economic exploitation, or conflict in these regions, challenging the notion that Democratic leadership automatically benefits Black and African communities.

We don’t have those crystal balls and we need to be a bit more careful. Only the gods do not make mistakes. Where God was at with slavery, where God was at with [indistinct]?[32]

Joshua Myers: Were there others involved in the movement that were going along the road with Kwame Ture probably turning towards Pan-Africanism.

Bob Brown: Yes.

Joshua Myers: So who are some of those folks, and what did they end up doing?

Bob Brown: I don’t want to name names because if I name names, I also have to talk about what I agree with and what I don't. Then we run the thin line of defamation or cult of personality. But yes. For example—and some of them are obvious—for example, in the movement from SNCC to the Panther Party.

You've heard about the cadre from Huey [P. Newton] and [Leroy] Eldridge [Cleaver]. You have not heard about the cadre who moved from SNCC to the Panther Party with Kwame. You ain't heard of [indistinct], [indistinct], Bill [William] Hall, [indistinct], David Brothers, [indistinct], Evelyn Monroe, Paul Monroe, you heard of partly because they have wanted us out of our history and we have not been self promoting.

I don't need to promote myself. I’ve done perfectly good, 50 years with no interviews. I don't need none now. In fact, it puts the spotlight on there. It puts the target on the chest. You know, when you go too far, too fast. With this enemy, it can be used for good, seeing how it has been used for bad. This media, it's a weapon. It can be used for good, for the most part. I think it can be used for good, it can be used for bad, but yes.

One way to look at history is to look at the line struggle. How the Bible and the Quran has been interpreted historically, is the reason why you have so many denominations, so many sects, so many churches. The history of the Lutheran Protestant churches and their disagreements with the Catholic Church, theologically, produced these divisions. So too in the movement.[33]

[32] Bob Brown cautions against definitively labeling historical figures like Pan-Africanists or socialists without acknowledging their political evolution. He argues that individuals are in constant motion, and their ideological trajectory can change over time. He warns against speculation about what they "would have been" had they lived longer, emphasizing that humans are fallible, unlike the divine. His rhetorical question about God and slavery challenges religious justifications for oppression, suggesting that divine will is often invoked in ways that obscure historical accountability.

[33] Bob Brown compares historical and ideological divisions in political movements to religious schisms, arguing that just as interpretations of the Bible and Quran have led to numerous denominations and sects, differing ideological perspectives within activist movements have created factions and internal struggles.

So if you chase the genealogy of the line struggle or how history is interpreted. Let me give you one. How can you have the fifth PAC [Pan-African Congress] in 1945 and the sixth PAC in 1974? You mean to tell me there were no meetings in 30 years?

Joshua Myers: Nkrumah had two of them in [19]58 [referring to the All-African Peoples Conference].

Bob Brown: Thank you.

Joshua Myers: There are others.

Bob Brown: In Africa and the world and in Du Bois's biography, he says the All-African People's Conference of 1958 was the real sixth PAC. He ignores the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation [AAPSO], which met in December [19]57 in Egypt. They ignore the Tricontinental Conference of [19]66 and [19]67 which Mehdi Ben Barka, Amílcar Cabral, Sekou Toure and Kwame Ture were part of.

So what you do is you wiped 30 years, 30 years of our struggle. Why would you say sixth PAC and not ninth or tenth UNIA?

That history, that tradition, has nothing to do with us. How can you invite me to come to a meeting that whites-out my history? I inherit and continue the work of Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure and Kwame Ture. Yes, Sekou Toure spoke at the sixth PAC, but it could never have been held while Nkrumah was alive and that's why we didn't go to it.

Joshua Myers: He wouldn’t have been invited.

Bob Brown: No, because he'd have busted the area out. If you read struggles inside of the oath, if you read the struggles over where the African Liberation Committee should be held. If you read the struggles over federalism versus regionalism and you know incremental unity, fear struggles could have been helped, could have been heard.[34]

Kwame told C.L.R. James, it ain't work, because the area would compromise. He banned the Caribbean, the national force in the Caribbean, on the request of the reactionary campaign governments. I don't blame you. That's what governments do.

[34] Bob Brown references internal ideological and strategic debates within African liberation movements, highlighting divisions over federalism vs. regionalism, incremental unity, and where key organizing committees, such as the African Liberation Committee, should be based. He suggests that these unresolved struggles contributed to fragmentation and inefficiency in the broader Pan-African movement, emphasizing that if these debates had been properly addressed, they could have strengthened unity and effectiveness.

You couldn't have a nationalist meeting in Moscow or China. They wouldn't give you the visas to get in. You can't have no serious meeting in the United States. You wouldn't get visas to get in. So the area made a move for his survival, but it meant the nationalists and opposition forces in the Caribbean who built the sixth PAC wasn't built in the United States. It was built in the Caribbean. We don't document that.

They propped C.L.R. James up. They moved him. They fed him all around the world, and they could not go to their own conference. He had a choice. He didn't go, because if he hadn't went, he'd lost respect and lost his base in the campaign. We still try to work with those forces who exist. We would not have [indistinct] them by praising the sixth PAC.

Joshua Myers: So would you say the nation state adheres to that same dialectic too? Sometimes good, sometimes bad?

Bob Brown: Everything does. I'm sometimes good, I'm sometimes bad.

Joshua Myers: What do you do in the nation state now? I mean, it seems like it's always bad now.

Bob Brown: I don't accept the Marxian notion of the weathering away of the state. I don't accept the following definition of a nation so I'm not sure what we're talking about when you say nation state. Nkrumah proposed a definition of nation fundamentally and [indistinct] in opposition to the Stalinist.

Just put them side by side and look word by word. I'm not an anarchist. There must be some way that people organize themselves, govern themselves, you know, produce their spiritual, cultural, intellectual, material needs. I don't have the luxury to discuss or to think what that will be. It's not gonna come in my lifetime.

Joshua Myers: So we struggle with what exists.

Bob Brown: No, I struggle to transform what exists with what I have at my disposal. I must understand my mission within my lifetime, my generation's lifetime, and my mission is not to build a new society, not to dream about it, not discussing it. I could argue over but that's not my mission. My mission is to fight, to educate and organize the people who, then new generations will fight to achieve that.

I think we get confused about our mission. But *Black Power* – read the book and if you read the other speeches and writings, you will see Kwame's perspective was clear. He did not view MFDP as the Mississippi Democratic Party. He didn't go all the way to say it was totally independent.

But then, when it was clear that it wasn't independent, he resigned. He went to build independent political parties in Alabama.

When the White House sent the federal registrars down to sabotage that, and when Hosea Williams took money from Attorney General [Richmond] Dick Flowers to finance Martin Luther King, run through Alabama, 10 counties saying, "Don't vote for a Black candidate. Don't vote for a Black party." Hasan Jeffries got it in his book.

Martin Luther King said that the Nation of Islam supported it. The Nation of Islam [indistinct] endorsed the concept of independent political party, [indistinct]. We certainly dated back to [19]65 when Muhammad Ali took him to save his day, when Martin Luther King came to Chicago and enlisted the gangs into the Chicago Freedom Movement, not the fact that they were already there before he came.

And when he went to Kwame to raise trips to Chicago, look at his bodyguards. I remember one time, he got off an airplane at O'Hare Airport, he saw four or five rival gangs and two or three good cop, bad cops. He saw all them with guns and blah, blah, blah. He turned around and was getting ready to run back up that platform. He didn't see me.

I'm jumping up and down saying "Kwame, Kwame, Kwame." So he got his little Rocky Balboa, you know, came down there they picked me up, whispered in my ear, "Who's all these brothers?" I said, they're your bodyguards. He said, "Next time, bring women."

Then he now proceeds to cuss me out, "Come on, come on." His ass was going back up to the plane, but now all of a sudden, I get Balboa. He ready to roll. Then we rolled down the highway with four cars abreast with guns. March of [19]68 before the Panther Party.

Joshua Myers: Real quickly, we wanted to also capture, if you can, how you came to know Kwame Ture, how you two grew close to each other?

Bob Brown: That's good and bad too. Kwame came to Chicago July 28, 1966. He had been there before, raising money for Lowndes County, raising money from Mississippi. He had been there before, but within a few weeks after he said Black Power again, not the first time in Mississippi, he did a world tour about Chicago.

He was in Chicago for two, three reasons. One, he was there to raise money to help finance the struggle in Lowndes County and SNCC. Because that's how he made his money. This myth that the money dried up after he said Black Power is a lie. This myth that it dried up after SNCC came out in support of this city is a lie.

First of all, the budget was $11,000 [$115,680 in 2024] to $15,000 [$157,746 in 2024] in 1961—$10,000 [$105,164 in 2024] from Harry Belafonte to do voter registration, $5000 [$52,582 in 2024] from Carl and Anne Braden by [19]64. The budget for SNCC was $800,000 [$8,413,146 in 2024] but all the other projects had millions.

I don't have the full figure yet, but the budget for the Mississippi Freedom Summer had to be $3-$4-$5 million [$5 million to $52,582,166 in 2024]. I was at the Library of Congress all day trying to get into James Forman's papers so I can find the budget. I don't know how to do budgets. I know where money comes from.

That money came into Mississippi because Johnson and the labor unions and the churches brought it there to register people to vote for the election, and they had enough sense to know that you wouldn't get it in [19]64 and have it by [19]68. They're not that dumb.

The money dried up the day after the presidential election of November [19]65 because the campaign was over. And you will see the drop in the money from [19]64 to [19]65 to [19]66 before he was elected. This myth that we had no money is also a lie. The sources of money simply changed. Yes, the amount of money, but the sources.

Joshua Myers: So he's in Chicago.

Bob Brown: He was all over. He got to get the FBI reports and the SNCC reports and the media to see how much he moved. I can't figure out how many times he came to Chicago in [19]68. He came, I'm organizing and speaking engagements. He also came because Miriam Makeba was performing at [indistinct]. It's like he almost moved there. And I remember from March [19]68 through November, [19]68 every time he came, we had thousands at rallies and thousands in collections.

When I first met him in [19]66 we cussed him out for going to the University of Chicago to speak to white folks before he spoke to us. It's recorded. They were paying him, he'd become a brand.

Yes, white folks ruled. The Democratic Party, designed its money, pulled out. But the white campuses, the white schools, kept us alive. I know because I booked speaking engagements. I know which campuses, which teachers would bring us on the campus, and which teachers would snitch on us after they did.

I know what student groups would bring us on to the campuses and which ones wouldn't. They don't count [indistinct] and that money came with no strings. If you wasn't boycotted, if you wasn't sabotaged, if you got on the campus, if you got the check, what? No strings!

The fight was to get on the campus, to get the crowd and to get the check. Once you achieved that, it was no strings. That died when he died, because there was nobody else in our organization who had that charisma, that, whatever you want to call it. That base of support. And we wasn't about creating no Kwame twice. Other people are trying to create that.

Joshua Myers: Bob. Thank You.

Bob Brown: Thank you.