Black Power Chronicles: Milton Coleman

Milton Coleman, a distinguished American journalist, discussed his journey from Milwaukee's public housing to becoming a media critic. He highlighted the impact of the Black Power movement, particularly the 1966 Declaration of Greenwood and the influence of figures like Stokely Carmichael and Malcolm X. Coleman detailed his career path, including his work with Black newspapers and his transition to mainstream media. He emphasized the importance of journalism in advocating for Black communities and the role of Black Power in shaping American politics, citing Marion Barry and Ivanhoe Donaldson as key figures. Coleman also reflected on the global influence of the Black Power movement.

Kwame Holman: I'm Kwame Holman for the Black Power Chronicles, joined today by Milton Coleman, distinguished American journalist, newspaper editor, media critic. Now, I guess it's fair to say in some respects. Milton welcome.

Your career spans Greensboro, North Carolina and *Africa World* newspaper, the *Washington Post* and onward. We've been trying to start early in life with people and ask them about the issue of being Black—your story of being Black in America and your relationship to the phrase Black Power when you first heard it. Can you pick up your life anywhere you want along that timeline?

Milton Coleman: I grew up in Milwaukee [WI], in public housing, public schools all the way through. And, of course, the phrase Black Power came about in 1966—what I used to call the Declaration of Greenwood.

At the time, I was a college student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee [UWM]. I came out of an inner-city school where the best thing we had going for us was the basketball team, along with a lot of good teachers.

It was a time of coming of age because of Dr. [Martin Luther] King, because of the Civil Rights Movement, and because of a lot of things I didn't understand as clearly as I do now. Reading Isabel Wilkerson's book *The Warmth of Other Suns* helped me understand much of what was happening during my youth.

It was a time when those of us involved in academics, sports, community work, and guided by parental guidance and everything—all those things said, “There’s something you have to contribute.”

You need to develop that on behalf of the race. And that is what propelled me some in college. We were all there—a small band of people. I think at the time, UWM had 11,000 students, and maybe 250 of them were Black.

At the time, UWM was a commuter campus. Most of us took the bus to school. We came out of a segregated school system—a northern, segregated school system. Ours is a multicultural school, but all the Black kids wound up at three or four schools.

And so you say, “What am I going to do?” There’s an integrationist strain of activity and then along comes Stokely [Carmichael] and Black Power, with ties to Marcus Garvey and the Nation of Islam. And you kind of decide, “So what am I going to do?”

Because I'm not going to college just for me. I got in here, and I'm supported by folks in my community. They were the ones who told me, “Boy, you can write.” Oh, thank you. Or "you can investigate,” what we call reporting.

At that point, I think the Black Student Movement pulled me over. When I entered college, I wasn’t thinking about being a journalist. By the time I finished college, I still wasn’t thinking about being a journalist.

I had gone to college expecting to be a high school band director because the guy who was my mentor in high school was the band director. I wanted to be a high school band director. But the student movement changed my mind on that. I got into journalism through the Black newspaper in my hometown.

I was given a break by the guy who was the editor of two or three of them. A guy named Walter Jones, who I think went to Tennessee State [University]. My first city editor was a Black woman, Carol Malone, who taught me a lot about journalism—things that, to this day, still drive me.

Like the notion that the good thing about being a journalist is that you get paid to know other people's business—which was fun. She was absolutely right.

One of the people, a guy named Kenneth Lumpkin, a photographer from Alabama who used to work for the *Southern Courier*, taught me all about images, photojournalism, and all that. That was my start in journalism.

And I tried—and still try—to ask myself: How can I use my journalism to contribute to what is really the calling of my generation? Which was the Civil Rights slash human rights slash Black Power slash whatever movement.

Kwame Holman: You responded to that call. You felt a sense of responsibility. Was that common among those around you? Special to you and other, if you will, intellectuals in

particular? How was the Black Power call different from the other slashes—the Civil Rights, human rights?

Milton Coleman: Where one was at that time of the movement depended on where you were in your head and where you were in relation to the movement.

Nowadays, we hear a lot of talk about how the Kerner Commission Report changed the face of American news journalism because it pointed out that not only was the nation headed toward two societies—one Black and one white, distinctly unequal—but that newspapers had been a part of that.

And newspapers, at the time I was growing up, that was where the action was. TV was just barely coming on, and the Internet—we didn't know anything about that, nobody did. On the one hand, the popular analysis that you hear is that that is what brought diversity into the news media.

And it did bring diversity into the news media. But at the same time, the most popular book among college students during the time I was a UWM from 1963 to 1968 was *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. And you had to read that book.

What Malcolm talked about was what, at the time, we called Black Nationalism. And Black Power was a Black Nationalism kind of refrain, kind of call.

Malcolm talked not so much about integrating the news media, but about what the news media did to Black folks and Black communities. And if you listened to a lot of Malcolm's most famous speeches that were available on recordings, like *Message to the Grassroots*, he talked about some of the same things that are being talked about now.

I had some students at Arizona State University last year. I played passages for them from *Message to the Grassroots*, and some of the students came up to me afterward, having heard Malcolm talk about the Harlem riots of—I think it was 1964 or 1963—about a young Black man who was killed. And they said, "That's just like Black Lives Matter." And I said, "Yeah."

Some of us who went into journalism went in because we thought we could make a difference. We went in not just to get a job in journalism, but to use journalism as our way of trying to contribute to what was going on.

Because if you read Malcolm and if you read Martin, or if you heard them, the Civil Rights Movement succeeded because the press covered it. And a lot of the journalists who then went on to greater careers after having covered that were white journalists.

I think Tom Brokaw, just this week, was saying that it made a difference for him. Dan Rather—it made a difference for him. There were relatively few Black people involved in mainstream media at that point. There were some.

And it was a time when, if you look at American free press journalism, a lot of the fundamental rulings that support journalism came about at that time. Journalists' basic protection against libel suits came as a result of the Supreme Court decision, *New York Times v. Sullivan*, which resulted from public officials in Alabama trying to sue *The New York Times* because it published an ad—not a news story, but an ad—criticizing them for doing their job as public officials.

And the court came back and said, no. You can't collect money from people saying things about your work as a public official. Not only do you have to prove that what was reported was wrong—because what was in that ad was inaccurate—but you have to prove that it was done with actual malice.

In other words, not only did they say something about you that was wrong, they knew it was wrong, and they said it anyway. And *Times v. Sullivan* thus became the landmark decision.

The basic idea of the protection of the confidentiality of journalists' resources came as a result of three or four different cases, which established something called limited privilege. One of those cases involved Earl Caldwell, then at *The New York Times*, when the Justice Department, the FBI, told Earl, "You have to tell us who your sources are in the Black Panther Party." And Earl said, "*I will not."*

The court then ruled that there's a limited privilege that involved Earl Caldwell and other cases. But after that, a whole bunch of states passed laws called shield laws that protect journalists.

That was the spirit of that time. Those of us who went into the business—many of us went in saying, "Can I make a difference?" When I first went into journalism at the *Milwaukee Courier*, it was because I felt I could make a difference. And I had a publisher at the time, Gerald Jones, who was young. A few years older than I am now.

And Gerald was a young upstart in that business. He was young for a publisher of a Black newspaper, but he saw in the *Courier* some of the traditions of the Black newspapers of earlier years—of the *Chicago Daily Defender*, the *Atlanta Daily World*, the *New York Amsterdam News*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the Afro-American newspapers—all of whom had followed in the tradition of Ida B. Wells, who had reported things that the mainline press would not report.

And so, a number of us who went into the Black media and then into mainstream media did so because we thought we could make that kind of difference. Some of those who were around when I was contemplating whether I should go into mainstream media said, "Well, you're going to get chances there to do things covering Black folks and the Black community that you're not

going to get at Black newspapers, because Black newspapers don't have the resources. The mainline newspapers have those resources. And you'll get a shot at being on one of those beats. You'll be able to cover the White House better than Ethel Payne—not because you're a better reporter than Ethel Payne, but because if you can do it for *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, or even *The Dayton Daily News* and *The Christian Science Monitor*, you can do it better. And hopefully, you'll do it with some sense of being Black."

Kwame Holman: An excellent presentation. I should have mentioned your work as a distinguished professor of journalism as well, and we appreciate your notation of the names Earl Caldwell and Ethel Payne—people will be interested to look into them, those who don't already know.

In choosing to go to the mainstream to use your talents there, were you exercising Black Power? Were you still answering that call that initially motivated you?

Milton Coleman: I came to the *Washington Post* after having spent several years working for Black-oriented news operations. My first newspaper job was at the *Milwaukee Courier*, a Black weekly. Then I did community organizing and wound up working for the Student Organization for Black Unity [SOBU] and running their newspaper, which was first called the *SOBU Newsletter*.

We later changed the name to *The African World*, modeled after Marcus Garvey's newspaper. It was a Pan-African newspaper. I also worked for Community News Service, which was based in New York, as the Washington correspondent. Then I ran my own news service, the *All African News Service*, which was aimed at Black weeklies and Black college newspapers.

After that, I worked at WHUR before going into the Michelle Clark Summer Program for Minority Journalists at the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University—all of which were Black-oriented programs and operations. All this was before I went to the *Minneapolis Star*.

In all of those there was a direct connection because I felt that I was writing about Black folks. And I was writing primarily for Black folks, or in the case of WHUR, I was on the radio primarily for Black folks. Then I go into white media. I go to the *Minneapolis Star* for two years, and then I come to *The Washington Post*.

One of the things that was really exciting to me about coming to *The Washington Post* was the chance to cover local government in the District of Columbia. Why? Because it was a Black town. I get to do that, knowing I'm going to do it for a newspaper that has a different approach to journalism than what I had been used to—which essentially was advocacy journalism. It was specialized journalism.

At all those places, we tried to do journalism from a Black perspective and for a Black audience. And I certainly wasn't going to be able to do that at *The Washington Post*. But I knew that. Because I had done journalism at the *Minneapolis Star*.

In fact, one of the reasons some of my editors at *The Post* were happy to have me covering the District Building was, they said, "Here's a guy who's going to come to work in a place where race is a political issue, but he's covered politics in a place where race was not a political issue—Minneapolis."

They used to always argue that the Black community in Minneapolis was about 15 people—12 since me and my family left. And a friend of mine had told my wife and me when we moved to Minneapolis, "You have to understand that in Minneapolis, the Black community is predominantly white." I said, "Okay, I got it."

But I still believed that there were things from my experience that I could work into my coverage for *The Washington Post* that would be valuable to getting an accurate picture. Because a lot of the complaint against mainstream media was not so much that it was racially biased, but that what was perceived as the Black side of the story was never covered. You know, it didn't get in there.

And over my years in journalism, I've come to believe—and, in fact, to try to teach people—that as journalists, when you see a story that you think is racially unbalanced or racially unfair—don't argue diversity, argue journalism.

Because if you believe in the tenets of journalism that we all lay out, you'll see where that story is bad—not because the reporter is racist. I can't figure that out. Not because the newspaper, the TV station, or the online site is racist. But because that's bad journalism.

They didn't talk to the people on the other side. It's not balanced. They asked stupid questions. They didn't follow up. All the things that journalism and journalism ethics tell you to do—somewhere along the line, they didn't follow that. They fell short. And that's how you argue.

Because we're not going to win by arguing diversity. We're journalists. We're not diversity advocates. We're journalists. And we argue journalism. And I can show you— I don't care whether you're a racist. I care what kind of journalism you practice. And because we're here to practice journalism, and that was bad journalism, I can show you.

And in that regard, you bring that kind of thinking into the mainstream. And if you succeed, you help the coverage of the Black community.

During all the time that people were arguing about the coverage of bad government in *The Washington Post* or the coverage of Black folks in *The Washington Post*, all of our surveys

would always show that our Black readers didn't want to be lied to. They wanted to know the truth. They didn't want things to be spun. And that's fine, because I'm a journalist. I'm in the truth business. We can get along.

Kwame Holman: Before we go more into your experience in a very Black—particularly at that time Washington, DC—*The Washington Post*, and your close coverage of two of the primary figures of the Black Power Movement, Ivanhoe Donaldson and Marion Barry—I want to stay in the [19]67 period for a moment.

I want to ask you, as an intellectual, as an observer, as a student of Garvey, the Nation of Islam, Black Nationalism—what was Black Power to you? I tried to write down whether Black Power is a coherent intellectual framework or a practical political philosophy.

Milton Coleman: Black Power was—it was a sort of a phrase that described a certain responsibility, an outlook of people who were Black. It was a form of Black Nationalism. It could include a form of Pan-Africanism. It had civil rights all involved in it.

I guess, as a student at UWM, by the time I left, I had begun to call myself a Malcolmist. Because all these things that came together for me were best expressed in the life and death of Malcolm X—through its entirety.

I mean, I was unlike Malcolm. I never spent time in prison. I think Malcolm talked about how good of a cat burglar he was. I was not. I was not in the Nation of Islam.

But Malcolm was like a lot of people that I grew up with and people I came in contact with. You know, my dad and my older brother both spent time in prison, and they both—rest in peace. And a lot of guys I grew up with went that way.

The whole notion of Black Power, as it came out, prescribed for one a certain way of conducting one's life. As a Christian, I always say that what the Bible tells you is, "Here's a way to live your life." That's what you can learn from Jesus Christ. And in that regard, all of the things that came to be involved with Black Power. This is how you can live your life. This is the way you can accomplish things that you think ought to be accomplished.

That was sort of the guide that I got from following all of that. My thing about Malcolmism and being a Malcolmist—there was no such philosophy as that, I don't think. But for me it was a call, I think, to what at the time we called Black Nationalism, which talked about a certain responsibility and a certain orientation.

I mentioned to you earlier that I was going to be a high school band director because my high school band director, who was white, was really a mentor to me. I went into college saying, I'm going to be a good high school band director and all that kind of stuff.

And the book that changed my life—which I read around the same time I was reading *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*—was *Blues People* by LeRoi Jones, later known as Amiri Baraka. Another book I read at the time was *The Myth of the Negro Past* by Northwestern University anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits, and it talked about African survivals.

I'm at UWM, supposed to be a band director. A couple of years in, I changed my major. I said, "What do you want to be?" I want to be an ethnomusicologist. I want to specialize in African and African-American music.

And why? Because that fit into what was happening in my mind at the time—reading Malcolm, reading Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* [*Les Damnés de la Terre*], having heard Dr. King speak in Milwaukee once, but also having heard Wyatt Tee Walker speak there, listening to Malcolm's records. And then along comes this guy, Stokely Carmichael, in the Declaration of Greenwood, talking about Black Power.[1]

I didn't meet Stokely until several years later, but it was enough that at that time, when I was still at UWM, we got involved with the Black Student Movement. We did fundraisers after the Orangeburg Massacre, and that became our connection, you know.[2] I think that's the way Black Power figured into it.

Kwame Holman: This young political figure—well, first a community figure—Marion Barry, and then a political figure. School board, city council, rising through the ranks quickly as an elected official, would mount an insurgent campaign against the more traditional Black candidates in Washington, DC, for mayor.

What was your impression of Marion Barry early on as he mounted that campaign, as you came to be close to him and to his campaign director, doing the daily work of watching what would turn out to be a seminal national political event?

Milton Coleman: After I left UWM and got involved with SOBU [Student Organization for Black Unity], I had an outlook on Black Power, Black Nationalism, and Blackness that was much farther to the left. Very much to the left.

When I left SOBU, they were getting into the dialectical method and Marxism, and clearly, all of those things. And by the time I got to *The Post* and met Marion Barry I knew of John Wilson because when I was a college student and trying to get out of the draft, Johnny Wilson was the head of BAWADU, the National Black Anti-War, Anti-Draft Union, and I was hell-bent on being a conscientious objector.

---

[1] The Declaration of Greenwood refers to a speech delivered by Stokely Carmichael (later Kwame Ture) in Greenwood, Mississippi, in June 1966, where he popularized the slogan "Black Power."

[2] The Orangeburg Massacre was a tragic incident on February 8, 1968, in which South Carolina Highway Patrol officers opened fire on unarmed Black students protesting segregation at a bowling alley in Orangeburg, South Carolina, killing three and injuring at least 28 others.

During the time I was at SOBU and running my own news service and all that, I had come to see people involved in electoral politics as right of center in the movement. Because I'd met Clee [Cleveland] Sellers and Courtland Cox and Charlie Cobb.

And I knew of Ivanhoe from the time when, I believe, he was on the board of the Cummins Engine Foundation, and we at SOBU were trying to get some money from him. I think the first time I met Minister [Louis] Farrakhan was when I was at the *Minneapolis Star*.

I came to Washington sort of frowning upon electoral politics but trying to understand it. And having been led to believe that Marion Barry was right of center because he was in electoral politics—and though he may have been an early chairman of SNCC, he'd gone to New York, and he was a fundraiser. And so, a lot of people would have said at that point Marion sold out.

And of course—who was in the worst sellout position of anybody but *The Washington Post*? That's a different story.

When I met Marion and encountered Marion and Ivanhoe, I was a little bit perplexed at what I thought of these guys. But also because I had seen politics in operation having covered the Minneapolis city council, I could see what was political about Marion and what was racial about Marion.

Even though, at the time, what was racial about Marion was really hidden because Walter Washington and Sterling Tucker had their hooks into the established Black community. Walter was into the churches and Sterling was into the business people and Marion was connected with the grassroots folks, having run Pride Incorporated, which was seen as a shakedown operation by many people.[3]

And Marion Barry was the sort of uncouth guy, rough at the edges. The proper Black elite considered him [to be] banal, country—didn't know how to talk. As I once said, "Too rough ever to be a diamond."

And so I meet this guy, Marion, and he's working with Ivanhoe. I hadn't met Ivanhoe at that point, but he's running the Finance and Revenue Committee. Now, wait a minute—historically and traditionally, Black folks can't count. So what's this?

And this guy—he went to university, he was a doctoral candidate in chemistry. Doug Moore wouldn't let him forget that. Doug Moore would call him an alchemist, you know, and stress the difference between chemistry and alchemy—alchemistry, whatever it is, whatever alchemists practice.

[3] Barry co-founded Pride, Inc., a job training program for Black youth. However, some critics saw it as a "shakedown operation," possibly implying allegations of financial mismanagement, coercion, or political maneuvering.

And so it took me a while to understand the Black parts of Marion, though I really understood the political parts of him. I could see where what he did, politically, was very smart as a politician. To whatever degree Ivanhoe was a part of that, that was good and I quickly came to understand that Ivanhoe, in many respects, was the political mind—maybe even the bureaucratic mind.

Back in those days, as you will recall, having been on the press staff, the mayor's office was at one end of the mayoral suite, along with Herbert's [Reid] office—Herb was the legal counsel—and the press office. Florence's [Tate] office, your office, was down there too.

And on the other end was the city administrator and the Special Assistant to the Mayor, who was Ivanhoe. I don't know what Ivanhoe's title was, but I would go in there. I would go in to talk to Herbert—who was, I can say now, a great source.

I'd say, "Herb, where's the mayor? I need to talk to the mayor." And Herb would point to Marion's office. Then he'd point to Ivanhoe's office and he'd say, "Which mayor do you mean, the one at this end of the hall or that end of the hall?" So, I came to understand that Ivanhoe was the political mind.

But later on, it became clear how Marion was becoming the Black mind. And by the election of 1982, it was clear to me that Marion had written the book—along with Ivanhoe, I guess—on how you win in DC politics. Because he understood where the Black vote was and how to get the Black vote and that came out of his experiences in SNCC.

I also understood a lot about politicians—not just what I was telling you earlier about how you win an election by identifying your voters and getting them out, but also how Marion understood how you win in a city with politics polarized by race.

I think it was Ivanhoe who talked about the importance of which wards were important, because they were the big Democratic wards. And the importance of the wards in a citywide election changed because you brought in the white wards. But the biggest wards were the Black wards with strong Democratic importance.

And then the programs that Marion pushed—the summer jobs program [Summery Youth Employment Program], the effort to try to create what Marion said were Black millionaires through minority contracting and something Marion started on early but later fell by the wayside in his effort to change the schools.

The Barry political machine, for a couple of years there, every year they would pick off somebody along the school board. And so, in that way, I began to understand the Blackness in Marion Barry, which later came under strong attack. Which Marion, in many ways, invited

through his misbehaviors, his womanizing, and his drug addiction. Does that answer your question?

Kwame Holman: Yes. There are many in Washington who believe that Marion Barry and Ivanhoe Donaldson were exercising Black Power—using the philosophies from SNCC and the Black Power Movement to empower.

As you say, creating Black millionaires from the contracting community and elsewhere in the business community, empowering young people with jobs—young people from poor families with jobs—to helping the Black elderly.

Knowing that there's always an aspect of bare-knuckle politics to any big-city politicking—or any other, probably, for that matter. as you would talk to Ivanhoe and to Marion, quietly, one-to-one, did you feel that motivation?

Did you feel that they were still carrying it out—not to make a judgment on them—but they are often put up as the actualizers of Black Power because they gained elective office and power in a way others who arose from the Black Power movement did not.

Milton Coleman: I think one of the things that people overlook when they look at the [19]60s and what gets put under the rubric of the Civil Rights Movement is a false equivalency made between SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference] and SNCC—between the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power.

Black Power was part of the Civil Rights Movement. But the thing that SNCC did that stood out to me as an observer—because during the heyday of SNCC, I was in Milwaukee—was that they were political.

People forget that the Black Power Movement and the Black Panther Party started as the Lowndes County Freedom Organization—a political movement. And SNCC was involved with voter registration, and that was political. And that was empowering Black people—Black people in the South.

And the Washington that I came to—first in 1972—was, and many would still argue, still is, a Southern town. So, Ivanhoe and Marion and Courtland Cox and all those others—because a lot of the SNCC people who settled in Washington became a real interest group in Washington.

Just like you could say that the Black church people in 1978 were Walter Washington's people, and the Black business people were Sterling Tucker's people. A part of Marion Barry's people were the SNCC people or the people who had operated on the edge of SNCC. Whether that was people who were directly involved with SNCC who got directly involved in Marion's campaign and his government, like Courtland Cox, like Florence Tate, like Frank Smith.

They were a group and a group that I knew well. And some of them were involved with Marion. Some of them were like Acklyn Lynch and they saw ties to C.L.R. James in the same way that they saw ties to Sterling Brown. They were all part of that particular generation.

And in doing what the Barry administration did, they were putting Black Power into the politics of the nation's capital. That was it. Because my sense of what Marion did is [that] he took a huge chunk of his base, which was white in [19]78, and beginning on January 2, 1979, he started melding that base with Walter's and Sterling's base.

And by 1982, that had become the Barry political machine, and it would dominate Home Rule politics for years to come.[4] And the manifestation of that was that, in order to get elected, you had to go by Marion and Ivanhoe's rules. And nobody was better at doing that than Marion Barry.

Here's a guy who gets sent to prison, spends time in prison, gets out of prison, and gets reelected. Come on. I mean, you can't do that without being a good politician. And they had made that the way you do business in DC. So, yeah, I think they were doing that.

And Marion's effort to get connected with the churches that had supported Walter Washington was an effort to do what, often, I gathered, was done in the South. Where, when you went into Lowndes County, Mississippi, or when you went into Alabama, or when you went into Georgia, you tried to get connected with the churches.

Well, Marion couldn't do it at the time, but later on, he tried. Always limited a little bit because Marion Barry was Marion Barry. But he tried to do that. I'm confident in what Marion saw because I interviewed him just before he became mayor on January 2, 1979. And when he talked about trying to create some Black millionaires, that's the same thing that other people were trying to do in the South, but they didn't have to work with as rich a Black community—in many ways, not just monetarily.

There was no difference in the role that Howard University played in Black Washington than the role North Carolina A&T State played in Greensboro [NC], or that Morehouse, Spelman, Clark Atlanta, and the others played in Atlanta.

They were just taking this particular—for lack of a better term—high-falutin Black community in DC and doing with it in local politics what people had been trying to do with the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in 1964, once they could get those folks the right to vote.

[4] Home Rule politics refers to the movement for local self-governance in Washington, D.C., culminating in the District of Columbia Home Rule Act of 1973, which allowed D.C. residents to elect their own mayor and city council, and by 1982, Marion Barry's political machine had become the dominant force in this system, shaping the city's leadership and policies for decades.

And what later was to happen in Atlanta, throughout Georgia, throughout Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina—and what was trying to be emulated in Gary, Indiana, Chicago, New York, and all over. It was the same thing.

Kwame Holman: And that was Black Power.

Milton Coleman: That was Black Power. That was what was implied in the Declaration of Greenwood in 1966.

Kwame Holman: So, there's no doubt that young people got summer jobs that launched them onto college careers, where they might not have had that in their destiny prior to the Marion Barry Summer Youth Program. That low-income elderly people got services they wouldn't [have otherwise].

And that middle-class African Americans got jobs and contracts and government work that allowed them to buy houses in nearby Prince George's County. There was no doubt that Black people were empowered—economically and otherwise—by the actions of these Black Power advocates who had taken the electoral reins.

Milton Coleman: No doubt. No doubt that that was the case. Marion Barry, the politician, was able to do that because he was in Washington, and he was the mayor of Washington. Fannie Lou Hamer couldn't do that in Ruleville, Mississippi. I think she became the mayor of Ruleville at one point.

But people in those Black Belt, shanty towns down South—that was not Washington, DC. They wanted to do the same thing, and many of them probably have or did, but it was played out on a grand scale because it was Marion Barry, and it was Washington, DC.

And remember, Marion was part of that first generation of Black mayors. I'll leave it up to people to argue whether Marion Barry was more successful with his Black constituents in Washington than Dick Hatcher in Gary [IN], or Carl Stokes in Cleveland [OH], or David Dinkins in New York, or Maynard Jackson and Andy Young in Atlanta. And you go from there.

Kwame Holman: Milton, I wanted to wrap up by again drawing on your knowledge, experience, and expertise in the broad intellectual movement of Black Nationalism, Black Power, Pan-Africanism—as it's considered part of a worldwide movement. As we know, Stokely Carmichael traveled a great deal. There were lots of associations with liberation movements around the globe.

Where do you put the American Black Power Movement in what you described as Civil Rights slash Human Rights slash Black Nationalism—as a petri dish for changes that affected the globe in that period of catalytic change in the [19]60s that had a worldwide effect?

Milton Coleman: I think it was very critical. Several years ago, my wife and I went to South Africa, and it was clear to me, in meeting South Africans, that they held African-Americans in a special regard. And you would ask them why, and they would say, "Because of the role you played in helping us to get our freedom."

And that role was as powerful, as forceful, as effective as it was because it was the United States of America and what we were doing in the United States of America. If you look at all of the connections that came about years later, I think it is fair to say that, just as many Americans will ask their fathers, or Americans of my generation will say,"Daddy, what did you do during the war?"

A lot can be said if Black folks ask their elders, "What did you do during the [19]60s?" Because a lot of the people who became important in the [19]70s, [19]80s, [19]90s, and even up through now, that importance is related to what they did during the [19]60s.

And a part of that was the Black Nationalist movements and all their many manifestations—whether it was Black Power, whether it was the Nation of Islam, whether it was the Black Panther Party, whether it was the Lowndes County Freedom Organization—you name them. Where were you, and how did that affect you and what you did and what you became?

In the past 40-something years that I've been fortunate enough to be involved in things, I keep running into people I knew from the movement—or I knew their mother, or I knew their father, you know. Those were the things that made a difference.

And just as we started out, those of us who went into journalism, when the Kerner Commission beat up on the mainline news media and a lot of us started getting hired, some of us went in there because of the jobs. It was a good job.

Some of us went in there because of the prestige. Some of us went in there because we had listened to Malcolm, we had read *The Autobiography*, we had listened to Amiri Baraka, we had seen SNCC. We went in there to improve the information that Black folks got in order to make the decisions that affected their lives.

And the Black Nationalist movement, of which Black Power was a major thrust, a major strain, affected us. We went in there—not to become the next Black Walter Cronkite, not to win Pulitzers—but to see how we could get this powerful institution to serve our communities, to serve our friends, our parents, our churches.[5]

And you see that amplified all over the world. You see it amplified in what's happening in Africa, what's happening in Asia—all of those things. That was the importance of that. That was

[5] "Black Walter Cronkite" in this context symbolizes an aspirational yet limiting idea of Black journalists achieving mainstream success by emulating established White media figures, whereas the speaker emphasizes that their goal was not personal acclaim but using journalism as a tool to empower and serve Black communities.

the importance of that to what has now become mainstream media, but which still has to reach out.

Because there are still things that the Black Power folks of this generation—they don't call it Black Power, they call it some other things—but they're working for the same things. And they're beating up on the media, rightfully so, for not doing a lot of the same things that we beat up on the media for not doing 50 years ago.

Kwame Holman: Milton Coleman, thank you very much.

Milton Coleman: Thank you. It's been a pleasure.

Kwame Holman: That's fantastic. Milton, thank you.