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## **Social Movements and Radical Imaginations**

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## SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND RADICAL IMAGINATIONS

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Millions of protestors took to the streets in the summer of 2020 after the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted vulnerable communities. According to Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM) and COVID-19 pandemic “gave renewed validity to the notion of racism as systemic, structural, and ubiquitous in US society.” This reckoning, in turn, opened space for new ways of imagining our society.<sup>2</sup> Today, we are witnessing the fruits of this radical imagining. Teenagers are walking out of school to demand gun control legislation; youth activists are pressing for climate justice; and a reignited labor movement has Amazon workers, Starbucks baristas, UPS drivers, and Hollywood writers organizing for better working conditions.

The response from the Right has been swift and dismantled many of the political gains discussed in this *Oracle* volume. In the past three years, we have witnessed a rise in violence toward Asians, efforts to disenfranchise Black and Brown voters, and new legislation that limits how teachers can discuss racism and sexism. Since January 2021, forty-four states have introduced bills that restrict the use of critical race theory in classrooms and limit how individuals teach, learn, and engage with history.<sup>3</sup> At this crossroads, we must examine the evolution of 1960s and 1970s social movements and ask what lessons we can learn about our present and future.

Attacks on the teaching of history prevent younger generations from learning about the people before them who took on oppressive structures and institutions. Historian Donna Murch notes there are challenges when writing contemporary history because the past and present are locked in a political dialectic in which the “urgency of the moment always informs our

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<sup>1</sup> Eddie Bonilla is the newest member of Boston College’s History Department. His article, “Latina/o Communists, Activism, and the FBI During the Chicana/o and New Communist Movements,” on which this symposium was based, can be found here; <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/850746/pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, “Black Studies is Political, Radical, Indispensable, and Insurgent” in Colin Kaepernick, Robin D. G. Kelley, and Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, eds., *Our History has Always Been Contraband: In Defense of Black Studies* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2023), 20.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, “Black Studies is Political, Radical, Indispensable, and Insurgent,” 18.

chronicling of past events.”<sup>4</sup> Social movements are hard to periodize as activists become long-distance runners in the fight for social justice and move from one struggle to another, move between and on the margins of multiple movements, or move across decades. Social movements are messy and do not fit into neat boxes.

Historian and scholar of social movements Robin D. G. Kelley reflected in 2022 on the twenty-year anniversary of his foundational text, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. In a radical departure from the historiography of social movements, Kelley foregrounds optimism when thinking about Black-led movements. He ponders what success means for movements committed to fundamentally transforming society. He asks what it means to win and why. And above all, he asks what it means to dream radically. We must ask these questions when analyzing social movements where activists are taking on racial capitalism, government institutions, policing agencies, and university administrations. By examining social movements, we begin to see not only the “mechanisms of oppression” but also the “conditions and requirements for new modes of analysis, new ways of being together.”<sup>5</sup> The study of social movements is not limited to the people who mobilize; it extends to the very mechanisms that make exploitation and oppression ordinary and quotidian.

This *Oracle* volume provides the perfect moment to see what strategies, tactics, and ideologies activists from previous generations used to change their worlds. The authors collectively teach us that we must engage these stories to dream a better future. They stress what solidarity can achieve even in the face of obstacles such as police surveillance and violence. Alyssa Lego explores how women in the Black Panther Party created the Oakland Community School to transform how African American children learned inside and outside the classroom after public school districts left them behind. Brendan Mahoney pivots to higher education as a site of struggle. He traces the development of the Students for Democratic Society at Boston College to examine how leftist activists challenged the Vietnam War and campus administration. Rongwei Zhu further explores student activism through the origins of the Student Nonviolent

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<sup>4</sup> Donna Murch, *Assata Taught Me: State Violence, Racial Capitalism, and the Movement for Black Lives* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, “Twenty Years of Freedom Dreams,” *Boston Review*, August 1, 2022; <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/twenty-years-of-freedom-dreams/> last accessed August 3, 2023; Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).



Coordinating Committee and their challenges to segregation in the 1960s after African American students staged a sit-down strike in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1960.

The final two authors, Kate Nuechterlein and Sruthi Sriram, pivot to international movements and the influence of Third World ideologies from Latin American, African, and Asian revolutionaries. Nuechterlein offers a nuanced examination of how Jim Jones and the People's Temple in Guyana used the milieu of the New Left to convince people to move to South America. Sriram similarly uses an internationalist lens to explore how the writings of leftist activists spread information from the Third World through newspapers. This underground press also served as material for government policing agencies to use in their battles to squash any revolutionary movements.

In these essays, we see the importance of collective struggle and radical imagination in the face of oppression, COVID-19, and efforts to dismantle civil rights legislation of the 1960s. Organizers Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba remind us that we must have the will to survive in collectivity as people who are willing to “seize, defy, and upend whatever they must for the sake of life, dignity, and decency—and for the sake of each other.”<sup>6</sup> Much like the authors in this volume, Hayes and Kaba teach us that the study of social movements must move beyond success or failure. We should instead learn from the lessons of collectivity, solidarity, care, and dreaming if we hope to build a better world for tomorrow.

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<sup>6</sup> Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba, *Let This Radicalize You: Organizing and the Revolution of Reciprocal Care* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2023), 59.

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Article 1

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## **Jonestown, Radicals, and Third Worldism: A Reexamination of Jim Jones and The Peoples Temple Through the Lens of the New Left**

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# JONESTOWN, RADICALS, AND THIRD WORLDISM: A REEXAMINATION OF JIM JONES AND THE PEOPLES TEMPLE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE NEW LEFT

KATE NUECHTERLEIN \*

**Abstract:** In the 1960s and 70s, the charismatic Reverend Jim Jones spearheaded a religious, social, and political movement, the Peoples Temple. During a period of tumultuous social discord in the United States, Jones' focus on civil liberties, anti-racism, and solidarity with third world nations immediately attracted thousands of leftist followers. Jones founded the Temple in Indianapolis in 1955, relocated to Ukiah, California in 1963 and San Francisco in 1970, and eventually convinced a chunk of his followers to move to an agricultural commune in Guyana in 1977. On November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1978, Jones ultimately coerced and forced remaining members to commit "suicide." This paper examines the social and political nature of the Peoples Temple and argues that Jones weaponized his clout with leftist politicians and social activists to attract a primarily African American following. Legends of the New Left movement, such as Angela Davis and Harvey Milk, supported the Temple and Jones even after rumors of the Reverend's abuse emerged in San Francisco newspapers. This paper strives to demonstrate that Jones' followers were not loonies, but rather dedicated members of the New Left movement, who were committed to enacting social and political change in the U.S.

In November of 1978, twenty-eight-year-old Jackie Speier accompanied California Congressman Leo Ryan on an investigative expedition into the jungle of Guyana, a recently independent nation on the northern tip of South America.<sup>2</sup> In the weeks preceding the fact-finding mission, the Coalition of Concerned Relatives had urgently warned Congressman Ryan about the Peoples Temple, a San-Francisco-based religious organization that had mysteriously relocated to a Guyanese agricultural commune. Reverend Jim Jones, founder of the Peoples Temple and a self-proclaimed Messiah, unironically named the commune Jonestown. Congressman Ryan, after listening to the Coalition's increasingly disturbing reports of death, starvation, and psychological terror within Jonestown, wanted answers.

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<sup>2</sup> Jackie Speier, "Surviving Jonestown," *Politico Magazine*, November 10, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/11/10/jonestown-massacre-first-person-speier-ryan-jones-222222/>

The plane landed in Georgetown, Guyana's capital city, on November 14, 1978. Three days later, Speier and Ryan arrived at Jonestown, where Reverend Jones warmly welcomed the congressional delegation. The Reverend provided Ryan and his team with a tour around the compound, flaunting its cabins, medical center, school, and the community's centerpiece: the Pavilion, where Temple members would regularly congregate. That night, the Temple members performed a show for the delegation, smiling and laughing as they sang and danced. Meanwhile, Jones rested comfortably on the stage beneath a sign that proclaimed: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Speier could never have fathomed that fewer than twenty-four hours later, those 900 people would be dead; Congressman Leo Ryan, shot at least forty-five times, would be dead; the Reverend Jim Jones, found with a gunshot wound to the head, would be dead. And Speier herself, shot five times, would be lying on the muddy floor of the Guyanese jungle, mustering up the faith to survive and one day tell the tale.

On November 18, 1978, over 900 members of Jim Jones' religious organization, the Peoples Temple, simultaneously ingested a "deadly, cyanide-laced cocktail," in the jungle of South America.<sup>3</sup> While the world has speculated about the psychology of Jones' sinister manipulation since the massacre, few have situated the Peoples Temple in the era of leftist social movements to which it belongs.

American collective memory chiefly perceives of Jonestown as one of the first and most horrifying cult-related tragedies, one that can now be viewed in tandem with religious groups like Branch Davidians and Heaven's Gate. Yet the Peoples Temple was not just a church, but rather an invitation to join a new social order, one that seemingly departed from the poisonous race and class divisions of Western materialism and capitalism.<sup>4</sup> In the dozens of sermons that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) recovered from the 1970s, Jones' rhetoric mimics the civil rights activists of his time, promising economic security and social equality—particularly for his black members. To recognize the draw of the Peoples Temple, it is imperative to first understand the social, economic, and racial underpinnings of the 1960s and 70s in the United States and what scholars have termed the New Left.

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<sup>3</sup> Russell Rickford, "These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out 'Moonies': Jonestown and African American Expatriation in the 1970s," in *Ideas in Unexpected Places: Reimagining Black Intellectual History*, edited by Brandon R. Bryd, Leslie M. Alexander, and Russell Rickford, (Northwestern University Press, 2022), 151.

<sup>4</sup> Rickford, "These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies," 152.

Ideologically, the Peoples Temple embodied the socialist, radical endeavors of other New Left associations, and its shocking Guyana migration manifested Third Worldism. Although the Temple is viewed almost exclusively as a cult, Jones' organization must also be critically analyzed as a socio-political movement.

### **A Brief History of Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple**

In 1931, James Warren Jones was born in Lynn, Indiana, a deeply segregated small town in the Midwest.<sup>5</sup> Jones' father, who he would later describe as a 'KKK bandit,' was sympathetic to the Ku Klux Klan, which Jones resented.<sup>6</sup> According to Jones in a 1953 article, "Mom's Help for Ragged Tramp Leads Son to Dedicate His Life to Others," his mother reinforced his philanthropic disposition by adopting animals and daydreaming that she would ultimately birth the Messiah. Yet even in early childhood, Jones seemingly resented the disparities in church teachings and the practices of the ministers, and occasionally played pranks on local churches he believed to be engaging in deceitful behavior. At seven or eight years old, Jones reportedly soiled the bible of a hypocritical minister with cow manure.

According to Speier, Jones' early status as an "outcast" and an "underdog" facilitated his desire to later "[be] recognized as someone greater."<sup>7</sup> After moving to Indianapolis and attending Indiana University in the late 1940s and early 50s, Jones became particularly enchanted with the Methodist, Pentecostal social creed, which encouraged civil rights for all races. By the mid-1950s, Jones began hosting his own services and conducting his famous "healing" conventions, during which he supposedly extracted cancerous growths from the sick.<sup>8</sup> Unlike most ministers at the time, Jones insisted on racially integrated crowds and asked black congregation members to sit in the front. His policies sparked intense outrage in Indianapolis, and in 1954, Jones founded his own church: Wings of Deliverance, later renamed as the Peoples Temple Full Gospel Church in 1955.

Due to its socialist, integrationist creed, the Peoples Temple immediately gained traction with minority groups and leftists in the U.S. In 1963, ostensibly fearing nuclear holocaust, Jones

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<sup>5</sup> Speier, "Surviving Jonestown."

<sup>6</sup> David Chidester, *Salvation and suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> Speier, "Surviving Jonestown."

<sup>8</sup> David Chidester, *Salvation and suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 3-4.

moved the Peoples Temple to Ukiah, California, which he later claimed was “the farthest they could get from Indianapolis without falling into the ocean.”<sup>9</sup> By 1970, the Peoples Temple relocated to the heart of San Francisco, a global hub of progressive movements. Soon, approximately three thousand to five thousand members comprised Jones’ congregation.<sup>10</sup>

While the Temple maintained an excellent reputation as a humanitarian church for most of its existence, accounts of Jones’ abusive behaviors trickled into the media during the mid-1970s. Temple defectors reported that “anyone who questioned or challenged Jones” was subject to “savage beatings” from Jones or the Temple guards.<sup>11</sup> Temple members worked twelve hours a day and six days a week, and were barred from dissenting from Jones’ fabricated legal system.

In an August 1977 article in *New West Magazine*, one of the first detailed exposures of the Temple, journalists Marshall Kilduff and Phil Tracy detailed how Jones forced members to write letters, admitting to crimes and “immoral acts” they did not commit.<sup>12</sup> To satisfy Jones, members sacrificed their most prized belongings—including watches and even houses—and effectively sold their lives to the Temple. The “healing” services were also fabricated displays of divinity; while Jones would purport to extract growths from members, his wife, Marceline, would lead a cancer patient into a private area and emerge with “small bits of meat” masquerading as growths.

As these testimonies surfaced, Jones grew increasingly paranoid of government intervention. In early 1977, Jones moved the Temple to Guyana, a developing nation on the border of Venezuela. In multiple sermons, Jones referred to Guyana as the “Promised Land,” and by September 1977, over 900 members inhabited the jungles of Jonestown.<sup>13</sup> Of those living in Jonestown, 75% were black, 20% were white, and 5% were Asian, Hispanic, and Native American.<sup>14</sup>

Jones’ negative publicity peaked during the custody battle for John Victor Stoen, who was born in January 1972.<sup>15</sup> While John Stoen’s birth certificate identifies him as the child of Timothy

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<sup>9</sup> Chidester, *Salvation and suicide*, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Chidester, *Salvation and suicide*, 8.

<sup>11</sup> Deborah Roberts, “On Jonestown,” *Socialist Worker*, January 1, 1979, <https://www.proquest.com/hnp/np/docview/2408044092/4AB3F61C95E2406APQ/1?accountid=9673>, Accessed December 19, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Marshall Kilduff and Phil Tracy, “Inside Peoples Temple,” *New West Magazine*, August 1, 1977, <https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/newWestart.pdf>, Accessed December 19, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Chidester, *Salvation and suicide*, 9-10.

<sup>14</sup> Chidester, *Salvation and suicide*, 9-10.

<sup>15</sup> “The Custody Battle for John Victor Stoen and Its Fallout,” *Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple*, Accessed December 19, 2022, [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13841](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13841).

Stoen and Grace Stoen, Tim signed an affidavit in February 1972, claiming that John was in fact Jones' biological son. After Grace defected in 1976 and Tim the following year, the two began battling for custody of John, who was still a member of the Temple under Jones' close supervision. While the couple won custody in California, Jones and the toddler were already living in Jonestown and outside the jurisdiction of the American judicial system.

The Coalition of Concerned Relatives, including the Stoens, other defectors, and families of remaining Temple members, eventually published a flyer condemning Jones and demanding a federal investigation. The notice, which the Coalition distributed at various locations, included a jarring header—"This Nightmare Is Taking Place Right Now: Will You Help Us Free Our Families?"—with a sketch of an individual behind bars in Jonestown.<sup>16</sup> Claiming that they "espouse[d] no political or religious viewpoint," these relatives detailed more abuses, including censoring of mail, prohibition of any long-distance phone calls, and Jones' infamous mock "mass suicide" sessions. The Coalition concluded the notice by urging readers to donate, pray, and write to the two people they believed held any power over Jones: Guyanese Prime Minister Forbes Burnham and U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance.

Seeking to mollify the Stoens and the Coalition, Congressman Ryan traveled to Guyana in November 1978. But he would never return to the U.S.; the night after his arrival in Jonestown, Jones' henchmen shot and killed the California congressman as he attempted to bring terrified members home.<sup>17</sup> That same day, Jones commanded his followers to commit suicide by drinking Flavor-Aid laced with cyanide, and Jones' crew forcefully injected any individual who refused the poison—including infants and pets. Jones then either shot himself or ordered another member to shoot him in the head.

Before the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks, the Jonestown Massacre was the largest single intentional incident of American civilian death.<sup>18</sup> To the absolute bewilderment of U.S. officials, what had seemingly begun as an inclusive socio-religious initiative quickly transformed into one of the most infamous and nightmarish episodes in U.S. history.

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<sup>16</sup> "Concerned Relatives Flyer," The Jonestown Institute: *Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple*, [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13078](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13078), Accessed June 28, 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Speier, "Surviving Jonestown."

<sup>18</sup> J Oliver Conroy. 2018. "An Apocalyptic Cult, 900 Dead: Remembering the Jonestown Massacre, 40 Years On." The Guardian. The Guardian. November 21, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/17/apocalyptic-cult-900-dead-remembering-the-jonestown-massacre-40-years-on>.

## The Peoples Temple and the New Left

Historian Van Gosse characterizes the New Left as the social “movement of movements” that swept across the U.S. from the early 1950s to 1975.<sup>19</sup> According to Gosse, the trajectory of the New Left movement began with the nonviolent, mass protests against segregation in the Southeastern states, which eventually prompted the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The New Left also encompassed the efforts of women and the LGBTQ community to challenge institutionalized sexism and homophobia, as well as informal discriminatory social structures and practices. Perhaps most topically, Gosse emphasizes the stirrings of the antiwar movement, which skyrocketed during the U.S.’ involvement in Vietnam in the 60s and early 70s.

In conjunction with the antiwar movement, the New Left also produced a sense of Third Worldism, under which primarily black activists cultivated a sense of solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the developing world. In “The U.S. 1968: Third Worldism, Feminisms, and Liberalism,” author Judy Wu describes how the American antiwar movement spurred a deeper, cultural desire for assembly with “‘Third World’ peoples.”<sup>20</sup> She cites Che Guevara’s “two, three, many Vietnams” speech as a “rallying cry among anti-imperialist and antiwar activists globally,” eventually prompting “racialized” Americans to emphasize the “internal colonialism” plaguing the U.S during the Cold War.

It was under these circumstances that Temple members—primarily black Americans—followed Jones, abandoned their lives in the U.S., and moved to an agricultural commune in Guyana. While general speculation about the Peoples Temple has attributed this bizarre migration solely to Jones’ manipulation, it neglects how Third Worldism generated a sense of connection between oppressed Americans and the developing world. The domestic tumult of the 1960s and 70s provoked several prominent activists to travel to international destinations, including Eldridge Cleaver, Huey Newton, and Yuri Kochiyama.

In “‘These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced Out ‘Moonies’’: Jonestown and African American Expatriation in the 1970s” from *Ideas in Unexpected Places*, historian Russell Rickford claims both extremes of the political spectrum have misinterpreted the Jonestown tragedy.<sup>21</sup> Leftists viewed the episode as a product of a soulless, capitalist society, bred by long-

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<sup>19</sup> Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretative History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2-3.

<sup>20</sup> Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, “The U.S. 1968: Third Worldism, Feminisms, and Liberalism,” *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 3 (2018): 711.

<sup>21</sup> Rickford, “‘These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies,’” 152.



lasting racist and classist policy in America. Conservatives, on the other hand, perceived Jones and his cult as another communist, totalitarian regime of the Cold War. In addition, many African Americans characterized the incident as the culmination of white manipulation—one activist noted: “Black folks are still into the practice of following white folks.”<sup>22</sup>

Rickford counters these simplified analyses: “The problem with such portrayals is that they mystified both the death *and* life of Jonestown. Seen as exemplars of the cultish and bizarre, members of the community seemed totally aberrant.”<sup>23</sup> As many survivors have affirmed, most Temple members were not insane, deviant, or far more susceptible to manipulation than the average person. Members were not “Charles Mansons” or “Spaced Out ‘Moonies.’” Instead, Jones’ victims were normal people—mostly those who suffered from race- or class-based oppression and craved not only a savior, but also a shared community.

Rickford also bridges the New Left and Third Worldism movements with the Peoples Temple: “Even before the Guyana exodus of the mid-1970s, Peoples Temple was linked to a host of New Left and Black Power formations, from the American Indian Movement to the Republic of New Africa to the Free Angela Davis Campaign.”<sup>24</sup> Given the prominence of movements aiming to combat both internal oppression within the U.S. and external oppression in colonized or formerly colonized nations at the time, it is unsurprising that Peoples Temple members felt a sense of affinity with the Guyanese.

Most importantly, it is unsurprising that those who joined Jones did not view their community as a cult. While Jones was a religious leader, he centered his sermons around New Left issues that other social movements were campaigning for at the time: the anti-war movement, racial equality, and socio-economic reform.<sup>25</sup> As his popularity skyrocketed, Jones de-emphasized the religious nature of the Temple and even taught members that socialism was God. Surrounded by movements demanding similar terms, Temple participants likely saw themselves as part of another revolutionary movement, one which shared the spirit of the American Indian Movement, Republic of New Africa, or the Angela Davis Campaign.

Jones, as former Temple member Deborah Layton recalls, harbored particular affection for Angela Davis, or the “one woman outside the Temple whom Father admired and constantly spoke

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<sup>22</sup> Rickford, ““These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies,”” 152.

<sup>23</sup> Rickford, ““These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies,”” 152.

<sup>24</sup> Rickford, ““These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies,”” 152-153.

<sup>25</sup> Deborah Layton, *Seductive Poison* (New York, New York: Anchor Books, 1998), 36-45.

of.”<sup>26</sup> When Layton mimicked Davis’ hair and acted out aggressively, Jones reprimanded her trivial imitation: “‘Having Angela Davis’s hair does not make you an outspoken radical of her intelligence. Read *If They Come in the Morning* and I expect a written analysis of her thesis next week.’”<sup>27</sup> By consistently preaching the works of a well-known, radical leader, Jones shrouded his followers in the belief that the work the Temple was doing was no different than that of the Angela Davis campaign.

Jones did not just support Davis—she supported him as well. Davis publicly and confidently endorsed Jones, the Peoples Temple, and the Jonestown agricultural commune in September 1977, during the “Six Day Siege” in Jonestown.<sup>28</sup> Due to the intense custody battle over John Stoen, a sharp increase in public suspicion and scrutiny plagued both Jones and his closest confidantes. In response, Jones and Temple guards initiated a blockade around Jonestown and convinced members that they faced imminent attack from the Guyana Defense Force.

As peculiar as the siege may have appeared to outsiders, and despite Jones’ obvious descent into paranoia, Davis contacted Jones on September 10, 1977, over a radio phone-patch. Addressing her “friend,” Jim Jones, as well as his followers, Davis proclaimed widespread support for Jones’ movement: “I can personally speak for the National Alliance Against Racism and Political Repression (NAARPR)...we are very deeply obligated to you for what you have done to further the fight for justice...to further the fight against racism.”<sup>29</sup> Additionally, Davis recognized the political legitimacy of the Temple and its struggles against racism and political oppression. To both Jones’ followers and the participants of the greater New Left movement, the Peoples Temple was akin to an organization like the NAARPR, and Jones to Davis.

Davis continued her address, further validating both the Temple and Jones’ insistence of a giant scheme against him: “I know...there is a conspiracy...When you are attacked, it is because of your progressive stand...We know you are going to win, and, in the final analysis, we are all going to win.” Davis declares “we,” tying herself and Jones to the same side of history. Davis’ speech likely further convinced the public—especially leftist activists—that Jones’ operation was not only legitimate, but a necessary machination of the greater New Left movement.

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<sup>26</sup> Layton, *Seductive Poison*, 55.

<sup>27</sup> Layton, *Seductive Poison*, 56.

<sup>28</sup> “Angela Davis and the Six Day Siege,” *The Jonestown Institute: Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and the Peoples Temple*, Accessed December 16, 2022, [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=19021](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=19021).

<sup>29</sup> “Angela Davis and the Six Day Siege.”

Jones was similarly aware that he was not the only leftist figure subject to national scrutiny or unfavorable allegations. The Peoples Temple did not occur in a vacuum—Jones operated at a time when conservatives incessantly criticized revolutionaries like Angela Davis, Eldridge Cleaver, and, most notably, Martin Luther King Jr. In order to exonerate himself and his regime and rebuff any investigations, Jones drew an intentional comparison between himself and King, declaring that he had fallen victim to a similar smear campaign. After Kilduff and Tracy released their Temple exposé in mid-1977, Jones publicly dismissed their statements in a statement addressed to San Francisco, entitled “What’s Behind The Attacks On Peoples Temple?”:

We are not really surprised at the charges that have been made against us. Movements for fundamental social change have always been subject to sophisticated and well-coordinated attempts to discredit their goals and destroy their leaders. Dr. Martin Luther King was the object of an unrelenting campaign to discredit the civil rights movement.<sup>30</sup>

As declassified FBI documents have now revealed, King was indeed targeted in an “unrelenting campaign” to weaken the civil rights movement in the 1960s.<sup>31</sup> Just as Jones linked himself to Davis, the Temple only stood to gain by claiming that any negative press was a continuation of the same maneuvers used to annihilate King’s reputation. The New Left, therefore, consistently served as a convenient shield against any evidence that threatened Jones or his cult.

The American public may have also perceived Jones, like other prominent radical activists at the time, as a flawed individual whose dedication to social progress ultimately overshadowed his human misgivings. Eldridge Cleaver—a Black Panther Party (BPP) leader during the 1970s—genuinely advanced the Black Power initiative while still vocalizing offensive opinions and engaging in illegal activity.<sup>32</sup> Sentenced in 1954, Cleaver served nine years in prison for marijuana dealing, assault with intent to kill, and attempt to rape.<sup>33</sup> After his release in 1966, Cleaver joined the BPP and quickly rose to fame for his autobiography, *Soul on Ice*, a national bestseller and foundational piece of literature in the Black Power Movement. As a fervent radical, Cleaver also played a key role in the Third Worldism movement by frequently travelling to several developing

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<sup>30</sup> “Peoples Temple statement in response to *New West* article,” *The Jonestown Institute: Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and the Peoples Temple*, [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=14014](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=14014), Accessed June 28, 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Sam Briger, “Documentary Exposes How The FBI Tried To Destroy MLK With Wiretaps, Blackmail,” *National Public Radio*, January 18, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/18/956741992/documentary-exposes-how-the-fbi-tried-to-destroy-mlk-with-wiretaps-blackmail>, Accessed June 28, 2023.

<sup>32</sup> Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 107.

<sup>33</sup> Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 113-114.

nations and establishing networks alongside prominent international leaders—notably Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, Ho Chi Minh, and Mao Tse-tung.<sup>34</sup>

However, support for Cleaver was not unanimous across the U.S., even among certain leftist circles. For example, some activists questioned a passage in Cleaver’s *Soul on Ice* in which he describes his rape of a white woman as “an insurrectionary act” and states that it “delighted” him that he was “defying and trampling across the white man’s law” and “defiling his women.”<sup>35</sup> Due to his graphic admission and support of sexual violence against women, Cleaver’s fight for equality and progressivism lacked an intersectional approach.

This essay does not seek to draw comparisons between the two vastly different men, who operated under *drastically* different circumstances and objectives. Cleaver’s prominence in the New Left social arena rather suggests that many radicals—despite significant controversy—remained popular because of their dedication to their respective causes. Despite Jones’ earlier abuses of power (for example, raping young women in the Temple), his supporters may have forgiven such behavior due to what appeared to be his genuine dedication to social change.

Indeed, Jones pioneered one of the first integrated churches in Indianapolis, a church that committed to helping the impoverished and black communities after moving to California. Even Layton, who testifies to the manifold horrors of Jones’ regime, recounts the significant humanitarian work she engaged in as a Temple member. While stationed in northern California, Peoples Temple members acted as “students, city employees, professors, health care workers, social workers, or attorneys” in local communities.<sup>36</sup> From dusk until dawn, Layton reports that she and the other college-aged members “canvassed homes, housing projects, and even condemned buildings where the world’s forgotten and forsaken had sought shelter.”<sup>37</sup> As Layton and several other survivors have argued, Jones’ movement was not all psychological manipulation and false “healing” services.

The Peoples Temple was not hollow. Members undoubtedly sacrificed time, money, and effort to help those who needed it—whether that was impoverished families or victims of abuse. Unfortunately, the dedication to humanitarian labor prevented many Americans—members or

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<sup>34</sup> Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 116.

<sup>35</sup> “‘He was a symbol’: Eldridge Cleaver dies at 62,” *CNN*, May 1, 1998, <http://www.cnn.com/US/9805/01/cleaver.late.obit/>, Accessed December 19, 2022.

<sup>36</sup> Layton, *Seductive Poison*, 60.

<sup>37</sup> Layton, *Seductive Poison*, 59.

not—from noticing the warning signs. By operating alongside controversial and high-profile civil rights activists, Jones evaded the scrutiny needed to prevent the Jonestown Massacre.

### **“Guyana Was No Random Destination”: Exodus and the Third World**

On October 8, 1973, the Peoples Temple Board of Directors passed a resolution to organize and establish a “Branch Church and Agricultural Mission in Guyana.”<sup>38</sup> The resolution, which included future negotiations with Guyanese officials and bank accounts, provides insight into why Jones chose a Guyanese destination. Temple officials appreciated the nation’s proximity to the U.S., its English-speaking population, its economy as a “so-called underdeveloped nation,” and its generous agricultural policies that would furnish a Temple settlement. In 1974, a small portion of the Temple migrated to Guyana and set up the agricultural commune that would later house almost a thousand members in 1977.

Prior to October 8, Jones had considered Grenada or Cuba as the foreign destination for the Temple and conducted extensive negotiations with Grenadian officials in the early 1970s. Both Guyana and Grenada represented socialist democracies with majority non-white populations and an escape from the oppressive policies of the white, capitalist U.S. Yet because the Temple formed a mutually beneficial relationship with Forbes Burnham, the Guyanese President who also established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and Cuba, Jones settled on Guyana.<sup>39</sup>

In 1977, the Peoples Temple released its “Agricultural Project Progress Report,” which attempted to persuade other Temple members to join by presenting Jonestown as a utopian society.<sup>40</sup> The report discusses how Guyana achieved independence from Britain in 1966 and had “Caribbean cultural roots,” with a primarily “black and East Indian” ethnic makeup. Now that the country was “free from an oppressive heritage of slavery and colonialism,” the report underscored how Jonestown would aid Guyana in managing and developing its natural resources, and strengthen its leadership of the “community of non-aligned nations pursuing a socialistic course.”

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<sup>38</sup> “Resolution to Establish Agricultural Mission,” *The Jonestown Institute: Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple*, Accessed December 19, 2022, [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13068](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13068).

<sup>39</sup> “Forbes Burnham,” *Britannica Encyclopedia*, Accessed December 19, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Forbes-Burnham>.

<sup>40</sup> “People’s Temple Agricultural Project Progress Report—Summer 1977,” *The Jonestown Institute: Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple*, Accessed December 19, 2022 [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/04-10-AgBkltSum77\\_sm.pdf](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/04-10-AgBkltSum77_sm.pdf).

In particular, an underdeveloped economy and government granted Jones license to build his commune with minimal federal intervention.

Yet why Jones chose Guyana and why his people chose to follow him are two different stories. As Rickford explains, the 1960s and 70s produced “scores of black leftist and Pan-Africanist pioneers” who ventured abroad to “help build new societies in the global South.”<sup>41</sup> Struggling to reorient the U.S. during the Cold War, radicals and nonconformists turned to the Third World in an attempt to achieve “sustained political engagement” and repudiate Northern capitalism and imperialism. The promise of an agricultural commune in particular, complete with the themes of “communion with the soil, applied socialism, and camaraderie with developing nations,” was irresistible to the diverse, socialist community that Jones fostered.

The Peoples Temple—which was over ¾ black, betrayed and disillusioned by continuous oppression in the U.S.—eagerly opted to begin a new life in a recently liberated, socialist nation. As Rickford notes, Guyana’s multiracial population complemented Jones’ “family of all races,” while Burnham’s Afro-Guyanese People’s National Congress frequently echoed the “black is beautiful” sentiment.<sup>42</sup> For many black Temple members, Guyana presented a unique opportunity to gain a sense of identity: “‘Nobody wanted to return to Africa,’ one African American Jonestown resident later explained. ‘We just wanted to know where we came from. Most of us didn’t know anything about our heritage.’”<sup>43</sup>

To convince his followers to move to Guyana, Jones delivered a sermon directly placating the anxieties of his followers: “Truly, this is our Promised Land. We will be emigrating to a country in South America governed by Black men and Indians. No Ku Klux Klaners live there! We will flourish once more, as we did long ago, before the white man...whipped our backs...”<sup>44</sup> Drawing on the vestiges of slavery and Jim Crow, Jones urges his black followers to desert the racist U.S. and find freedom in Guyana.

However, reports of Jonestown vastly depart from Jones’ description of the commune as the “Promised Land” and an equal utopia. When journalist Charles Krause, a member of Ryan’s delegation, first visited Jonestown on the eve of the massacre, he noted that what he saw “reminded

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<sup>41</sup> Rickford, ““These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies,”” 153.

<sup>42</sup> Rickford, ““These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies,”” 153-154

<sup>43</sup> Rickford, ““These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies,”” 154.

<sup>44</sup> Layton, *Seductive Poison*, 99

[him] of a Southern plantation before the Civil War.”<sup>45</sup> According to Krause, the Pavilion was surrounded by primarily black women, who were cooking and baking, while Jim Jones rested at the head of a long table. Speier echoes the notion of segregation in her account of Jonestown: “It was imminently clear Jonestown was a hierarchal community, with the power structure resembling some sort of plantation.”<sup>46</sup> Although the Temple’s official statement against the *New West* article claimed that the “program in Guyana is everything that it [was] represented to be,”<sup>47</sup> Jonestown quickly devolved into an abusive dictatorship.

In the wake of the Temple’s tragic end and the discovery of its disturbing reality, the media ignored how the agricultural mission reflected the desire to achieve the utopian, socialist “good life.” Jones did not whisk members to a South American nation solely through his skilled rhetoric or psychological coercion. The Third World impulse of the New Left ultimately urged many Temple members to pack up their lives in the capitalist U.S. and venture into the jungle of a newly independent nation.

### **The Peoples Temple in Politics and the Media**

Throughout the reign of the Temple, the government, press, and popular opinion enhanced Jones’ legitimacy by recognizing him not only as a reverend, but also as a humanitarian and political leader. Widely recognized and respected for his promotion of inclusivity and racial integration, Jones quickly gained support from democratic officials and civil rights organizations. In the April 1976 volume of *Peoples Forum*, Jones’ bimonthly newspaper, a section entitled “Praise From All Quarters” details how policymakers across the country had voiced their support for Jones.<sup>48</sup> New York Democratic Representative Bella Abug noted that Jones was “showing the kind of commitment to justice which our nation so desperately needs.” John A. Buggs, a Staff Director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Vice President Walter Mondale, and other prominent elected officials echoed “equally kind words of support and encouragement.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Charles Krause, introduction to *Seductive Poison* ((New York, New York: Anchor Books, 1998), xviii

<sup>46</sup> Speier, “Surviving Jonestown.”

<sup>47</sup> “Peoples Temple statement in response to *New West* article,” Accessed June 28, 2023.

<sup>48</sup> “Peoples Forum, vol. 1, no.1,” *The Jonestown Institute: Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple*, Accessed April 13, 2023, [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=14018](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=14018).

<sup>49</sup> “Peoples Forum, vol 1, no.1.”

Even towards his chaotic end, Jones maintained intimate relationships with Democratic representatives in San Francisco, Sacramento, and the State Department.<sup>50</sup> In December 1976, Jones commanded San Francisco's Housing Authority Commission. According to journalists Kilduff and Tracy in the August 1977 *New West* article, Jones was "one of the most politically potent religious leaders in the history of the state."<sup>51</sup> When Vice President Mondale chartered a private jet for his campaign, Jim Jones was one of the few invited aboard for a "private visit."<sup>52</sup>

Jones was not just a reverend who preached in San Francisco—he was a reverend with enough clout to run the city. According to Kilduff and Tracy's report, Jones formed reciprocal ties with San Francisco political figures: "As one politically astute executive puts it: 'He controls votes.' And voters."<sup>53</sup> During the December 1975 San Francisco run-off election for mayor, Kilduff and Tracy reported that at least 150 Temple members "walked precincts to get out the vote for George Moscone." Moscone won only by about 4,000 votes; without Jones' efforts, he was unlikely to triumph. Following the election, State Assemblyman Willie Brown asserted that anyone running for office in a tight San Francisco race should "forget it without Jones."

Among his supporters was Harvey Milk, a human rights activist who became one of the nation's first openly gay elected officials after winning a spot on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977.<sup>54</sup> Liberal Americans adored Milk, who advocated not only for LGBTQ+ rights, but also for other minority groups and women's rights, as well as tax reforms in the Bay Area.

For his apparent dedication to minorities, Jones won Milk's approval. On January 19, 1978, Milk wrote a letter addressed to President Jimmy Carter, urging him to terminate the Stoen lawsuit and support his friend, Jim Jones.<sup>55</sup> Milk began his letter by commending Jones for his social programs: "Rev. Jones is widely known in the minority communities here and elsewhere as a man of the highest character, who has undertaken constructive remedies for social problems which have been amazing in their scope and effectiveness."<sup>56</sup> Milk continued by noting that Jones was widely

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<sup>50</sup> Speier, "Surviving Jonestown."

<sup>51</sup> Kilduff and Tracy, "Inside Peoples Temple."

<sup>52</sup> Kilduff and Tracy, "Inside Peoples Temple."

<sup>53</sup> Kilduff and Tracy, "Inside Peoples Temple."

<sup>54</sup> "The Official Harvey Milk Biography," Harvey Milk Foundation, Accessed December 19, 2022, <https://milkfoundation.org/about/harvey-milk-biography>.

<sup>55</sup> "Letters of support for Peoples Temple, Winter 1978," *The Jonestown Institute: Alternative Consideration of Jim Jones and Peoples Temple*, Accessed April 13, 2023, [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=99466](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=99466).

<sup>56</sup> "Letters of support for Peoples Temple, Winter 1978."



respected among church, labor, and civic leaders alike, and condemned the press for its recent efforts to discredit Jones' once pristine reputation. Referencing the Stoen suit, Milk concluded by declaring that the affair is "offensive to...all those who know Rev. Jones to see this kind of an outrage taking place." The Jonestown Massacre would occur only ten months later.

According to Roberts, the *Socialist Worker* journalist, Jones continuously escaped criticism on a national scale before the massacre.<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, as Roberts observed in 1979, such public endorsement from the left backfired once the massacre occurred. After November 18, 1978, the press never missed an opportunity to identify Jones' "Marxist," "leftist," and "revolutionary" nature when describing his atrocities. This narration of the Temple fueled the popular identification of "socialism equals bad" during the Cold War, when conservatives would point to failing "communist" dictatorships in the East to prove the inherent pitfalls of left-wing regimes. The Jonestown Massacre thus enabled American anti-communists to flaunt another example of "evil" and "Godless" leftism. In destroying the lives of almost a thousand people at Jonestown, Jones also marred the names of genuine radical activists—including Davis and Milk—who supported him along the way.

Jones' squandered political opportunities are the silent tragedies of the Peoples Temple. By weaponizing the social, economic, and political discord within the U.S. in the 1960s and 70s, a power-hungry Jones recruited and murdered over 900 people who could have made a tangible difference under a correct guidance. Decades after escaping Jones' cult, Temple survivor Laura Johnston Kohl reflected on her experience working for Jones: "We—all of us—were doing the right things but in the wrong place with the wrong leader."<sup>58</sup>

While Jones got richer, more famous, and further exalted, Temple members increasingly dedicated their lives to relieving the burdened communities of San Francisco and the developing world. Yet once Jones fell, so too did his followers. Temple members, who joined Jones in the name of progressivism and equality, are now viewed only in relation to the horrors of the massacre. As Roberts notes in her 1979 article, "Most of Jones' followers would have been part of a

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<sup>57</sup> Roberts, "On Jonestown."

<sup>58</sup> David Chiu, "Jonestown: 13 Things You Should Know About Cult Massacre," *Rolling Stone*, May 29, 2020, <https://www.rollingstone.com/feature/jonestown-13-things-you-should-know-about-cult-massacre-121974/>, Accessed December 19, 2022.

movement to transform this country, if such a movement had existed. They wouldn't have ended their lives seeking a refuge in the wilderness with a madman.”<sup>59</sup>

Those who died in Jonestown were not crazy, gullible, or twisted. The Americans who lost their lives on November 18<sup>th</sup> were not “moonies” with a death wish. Jonestown victims were members of what they believed to be a social movement and were dedicated to helping the globe's oppressed and impoverished. History owes it to the victims to remember them as such.

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<sup>59</sup> Roberts, “On Jonestown.”

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## **From Greensboro to SNCC: Nonviolent Sit-Ins of 1960**

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# FROM GREENSBORO TO SNCC: NONVIOLENT SIT-INS OF 1960

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the extent to which the Greensboro Four and other civil rights activists led to the rise of the New Left in the 1960s, drawing references predominantly to Howard Brick's *Radicals in America*. In considering the developments of the 1960s as a whole, this paper illustrates the arduous process in which the people of various activist movements sought solidarity under a single, broad political movement known as the New Left. Specifically, this essay examines how the civil rights, feminist, and anti-war movements were able to unite in their fights for justice. In light of a recent surge in hate crimes, gun violence, and the overruling of *Roe v. Wade*, American citizens, reminiscent of the 1960s, began to take to the streets again to protest against what they believe as violations of their inalienable rights. While this paper contributes to the greater discussion of non-violent political movements throughout the 1960s, it also sheds light upon the various ways in which the people of the United States can stand united amidst an increasingly polarized society.

*I have no malice, no jealousy, no hatred, no envy ... All I want is to come in and place my order and be served and leave a tip if I feel like it.” – Joseph Charles Jones, black former student at Johnson C. Smith University<sup>2</sup>*

*“The attack is on southern customs and southern habits — not southern laws.” – Lowry Bowman of The Chicago Defender<sup>3</sup>*

*“If the leaders in the Kremlin had worked up a plan to weaken us throughout the world, I can think of none which would be more effective than the script we are now following” – Governor LeRoy Collins of Florida in March 1960<sup>4</sup>*

## Introduction

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<sup>1</sup> Rongwei Zhu is a junior in MCAS majoring in history and international studies. Rongwei is also the vice president of BC's History Club and a theme leader for the IS Global Conversations project. Rongwei's academic interest revolves predominantly around American diplomatic history and conflict studies.

<sup>2</sup> “Negroes Extend Sitdown Protest: 150 in Charlotte Fill Seats at 8 Lunch Counters -- Other Cities Are Quiet,” *New York Times* (1923-), February 10, 1960, 115065640, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

<sup>3</sup> Lowry Bowman, “Sit-Down 'Drive Opens All-Out Bias Fight,” *The Chicago Defender (National Edition)* (1921-1967), March 5, 1960, 492937305, Black Studies Center; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

<sup>4</sup> Clive Webb, “Breaching the Wall of Resistance: White Southern Reactions to the Sit-Ins,” in *From Sit-Ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 59.

The 1960s was, in many ways, a period of unprecedented turmoil in the history of the modern United States. From the failed Bay of Pigs invasion to the drastic escalation of the Vietnam War, the United States faced numerous setbacks in its geopolitical initiatives. Domestically, the 1960s was no less challenging for the U.S. government. Its institutionalized racist and anti-communist ideals exacerbated social tensions, which ultimately led to a society fragmented by ideology and a generation shattered by disillusionment. Amidst such turbulent times emerged various activist groups who resorted to their own tactics in hopes of bringing about social change. Centermost of many activists' demands was, however, the common call for racial equality.

On February 1, 1960, four black university students “staged a sitdown strike” at the segregated lunch counter of their local F. W. Woolworth Company in Greensboro, N.C.<sup>5</sup> The movement, which began in Greensboro, immediately picked up momentum and spread to almost all major cities in the southern and border states within the next three months. Thousands of protesters, most of whom were black student activists, voluntarily participated in the sit-in demonstrations as a means to protest against institutionalized racial segregation in the Jim Crow South. From February to May, the sit-ins received tremendous news coverage and gained the widespread support of black activist leaders such as Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., which later led to the creation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in April 1960. As the movement gained popularity, so did its opposition—segregationists resorted to often violence means to thwart the growing demands for desegregation.

Utilizing a variety of historical newspapers and contemporary scholarship, this essay examines how the sit-in demonstrations unfolded during the spring of 1960, how the movement attracted both support and hostility, and how it ultimately nurtured a new wave of activist leaders who later formed the SNCC. The focus of this paper is not to give an extensive overview of the larger civil rights movement of the 1960s, but to zoom in on the events and developments of the sit-in demonstrations to illustrate how different groups reacted to the demonstrations until the creation of SNCC in April 1960. In the words of Joseph Charles Jones, a former graduate student at Johnson C. Smith University, the series of sit-ins were “part of my [Jones] race’s efforts to secure

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<sup>5</sup>“Negroes in South in Store Sitdown: Carolina College Students Fight Woolworth Ban on Lunch Counter Service,” *New York Times* (1923-), February 3, 1960, 115207329, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

God-given rights,” and it was such determination that led to the movement’s success in securing more representations for peoples of color in the mid 1960s. <sup>6</sup>

### **Successes and Setbacks of the Nonviolent Student Movement**

On February 1 1960, four black students of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College sat down at a white-only lunch counter in their local Woolworth after purchasing several items from the store. Later known as the Greensboro Four, Ezell Blair Jr., Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and David Richmond believed that “since we buy books and papers in the other part of the store we should get served in this part,” but their request for service was refused by the waitress and the four were later asked to leave by the local store manager.<sup>7</sup> Reporting on the incident one day later, the *New York Times* wrote that the group “vowed to continue it in relays until Negroes were served at the lunch counter.” On the same day, the sit-in protest led by the Greensboro Four gained great momentum, in which *The Atlanta Constitution* later reported that “at one time during the day Negro students filled 63 of the 66 seats at the counters.”<sup>8</sup> Significantly, the group of black student activists was reported to have received the “moral support” of three white students, who claimed that more “white students would [also] back the effort.”<sup>9</sup> On Thursday, the three-day demonstration was “thwarted,” as claimed by *The Atlanta Constitution*, by a group of white youths backed by several members of the Ku Klux Klan who arrived “ahead of the Negroes and claimed some of the seats,” producing a stand-off of some 60 youths of each race in the Woolworth lunch counter.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the demonstration spread to a nearby S.H. Kress store, where black student activists alongside several white sympathizers protested against similar discriminatory practices used in the store. Local police forces were summoned to both stores to prevent violence from breaking out between the activists and reactionists.

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<sup>6</sup>“Negroes Extend Sitdown Protest.”

<sup>7</sup>“Negroes in South in Store Sitdown.”

<sup>8</sup>“Negro Collegians Fill All Seats At Cafe in Integration Sitdown,” *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, February 4, 1960, 1536212942, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.

<sup>9</sup>“Negro Collegians Fill All Seats.”

<sup>10</sup>“Whites Grab Seats in Cafe To Slow Integration Push,” *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, February 5, 1960, 1636830296, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.



On Saturday February 7, the Greensboro demonstrations were “halted abruptly” by bomb threats in both locations. In an effort to “ensure public safety,” managers of both Woolworth and S. H. Kress closed down their stores in the early afternoon. After vowing to “return daily to both stores and sit at the counters until served,” the student demonstrators began to march through the streets and were confronted by white youth groups. On one occasion, members of two white teenage gangs, “Los Hermanos” and “Rebels”, began to wave Confederate flags at the demonstrators, who later responded by waving a few smaller American flags back at the hecklers.<sup>11</sup> The Atlanta Journal reported frequent “instances of shoving and swearing” between the two groups and a hastily-broken up fist fight that led to the arrest of three people, including one black man who was allegedly drunk.<sup>12</sup> *The Boston Globe* reported a further instance of a white man “dropping a burning piece of paper in the lap of a Negro youth.”<sup>13</sup> In considering the violent reactions by segregationists, historian Clive Webb observed that “white southerners were almost unanimous in their condemnation of the sit-ins [but] were much less assured of how to stop black activism.”<sup>14</sup> For Webb, the white mobs’ use of violence was a clear reflection of their inability to organize effective counter-demonstrations. By utilizing violent tactics, then, the mobs attempted to dissuade black activists from continuing their sit-in protests, but to the disappointment of white youth groups and klansmen alike, such tactics proved to no avail. Two days later, student demonstrators took their cause beyond Greensboro and to the nearby cities of Durham and Winston-Salem.

On February 9, a group of black students, accompanied by four white students from Duke University, arrived at the Woolworth lunch counter in Durham to protest against the store policy of “stand up service” for black customers.<sup>15</sup> As reported by *the Atlanta Constitution*, the spokesperson of the group rhetorically questioned: “If we can stand up and be served, why can’t we sit down and be served?” Apart from Durham, similar instances of protest also occurred that

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<sup>11</sup>“Bomb Scares Halt Negro Sitdown,” *The Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution (1950-1968)*, February 7, 1960, Sunday ed. edition, 1644150716, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.

<sup>12</sup>“Bomb Scares Halt Negro Sitdown.”

<sup>13</sup>“Negro-White Row Closes Lunch Counters,” *Daily Boston Globe (1928-1960)*, February 7, 1960, 276444157, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Boston Globe.

<sup>14</sup>Webb, “Breaching the Wall of Resistance,” 58.

<sup>15</sup>“Integration Push At Cafes Spreads,” *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, February 9, 1960, 1556061610, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.

same day in Winston-Salem. Black activists who took part in the Durham and Winston-Salem protests, however, denied affiliation with any “groups or individuals at the other schools.”<sup>16</sup> In the words of black graduate student Joseph Charles Jones, “there is no organization behind us.”<sup>17</sup> On February 10, the protest saw its presence in Charlotte, the largest and most populous city in North Carolina. Following the protocols of previous demonstrations, protestors entered and demanded service at the segregated lunch counter of a local Woolworth store. Like the others, they were ignored by the waitress and jeered at by white youth groups. A moment of tension emerged during the Charlotte protest when white hecklers began to throw eggs towards the counter that “splashed on the Negroes,” who were reported by *The Atlanta Constitution* to have given “no reaction either to this or the jeers and catcalls thrown at them by white youths and girls.”<sup>18</sup>

Racial tension continued the following day when demonstrations appeared in various Woolworth stores in the state capital of Raleigh, which ultimately resulted in the closure of seven lunch counters in the city that afternoon.<sup>19</sup> Commenting upon the recent societal unrest in his state, Attorney General Malcolm L. Seawell urged local authorities to take action against what he perceived as “a serious threat to peace and good order.”<sup>20</sup> In defense of the state’s customary segregationist policies, Seawell maintained that private stores and companies had the legal right to “sell or not to sell to customers as they see fit” and that school officials had “the right and probably the duty” to keep their students’ rebellious actions in check.<sup>21</sup> The American Civil Liberty Union (ACLU), on the other hand, was quick to come to the defense of the protesters, declaring that “Negro students staging the sit-down protests were within their rights” to do so and that state officials should negotiate with demonstrators to grant civil liberties to black and other minority groups.<sup>22</sup> Alongside the ACLU, many black activist leaders, non-governmental

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<sup>16</sup>“Negroes Extend Sitdown Protest.”

<sup>17</sup>“Negroes Extend Sitdown Protest.”

<sup>18</sup>“Eggs Spray Negroes In Cafe Flareup,” *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, February 11, 1960, 1536223613, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.

<sup>19</sup>“Lunch Counter Protest Spreads To N. C. Capitol,” *Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1956-1960)*, February 11, 1960, 493811908, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

<sup>20</sup>“Eggs Spray Negroes In Cafe Flareup.”

<sup>21</sup>“Eggs Spray Negroes In Cafe Flareup.”

<sup>22</sup>“Negro Diner Push Spreads to Virginia,” *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, February 12, 1960, 1555735978, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.

organizations, and a “handful of white students” also voiced their vehement support for the sit-in demonstrations.<sup>23</sup> In an address to various student-leaders of recent protests, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. claimed that the students of North Carolina have “taken their undying and passionate yearning for freedom and fashioned it into a creative protest that is destined to be one of the glowing epics of [their] time.”<sup>24</sup>

For King and his fellow Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) members, the vibrant youth demonstrators’ resort to nonviolence was a crucial element in winning widespread support. A great admirer of former Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi, King believed that “nonviolence was one of the most potent weapons available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.”<sup>25</sup> While some skirmishes did take place between demonstrators and white supremacists, black students, for the most part, kept their cool and “gave no reactions” to the heckling, jeering, and occasional physical violence by their white counterparts.<sup>26</sup> In fact, many student leaders of the sit-in demonstrations were also believed to be directly inspired by Gandhi’s nonviolent means of protest.<sup>27</sup> For historian Iwan Morgan, “the youthful dynamic of the movement was essential to its character and uniqueness,” but unlike other youth movements during the Black Power movement in the decade that followed, the students’ choice of nonviolence allowed them to secure widespread support from prominent black activists and white sympathizers.<sup>28</sup>

The spirit of nonviolence was, however, not a shared belief between demonstrators and reactionary crowds, as white youth activists, in many cases supervised directly by Ku Klux Klansmen, were willing to use violence in breaking up the demonstrations. To the disappointment of King and other activists who believed in unconditional practice of non-violence, black demonstrators were often forced to respond with violence of their own means against physical attacks by their white counterparts. On February 20, the sit-in demonstrations had spread beyond

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<sup>23</sup>Claude Sitton, “Negro Sitdowns Stir Fear Of Wider Unrest in South: Negro Sitdowns Disquiet South,” *New York Times* (1923-), February 15, 1960, 115054025, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

<sup>24</sup>Martin Luther King et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, vol. 5, 6 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 366.

<sup>25</sup>King et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 422.

<sup>26</sup>“Eggs Spray Negroes In Cafe Flareup.”

<sup>27</sup>“Gandhi ’Aims Seen in South Negro Protest,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963), February 10, 1960, 182435403, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune.

<sup>28</sup>Iwan Morgan, “The New Movement: The Student Sit-Ins in 1960,” in *From Sit-Ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 7.

the borders of North Carolina into Virginia and South Carolina. At High Point, student demonstrators got into a “brief fist fight” with white protestors before being broken up by the local police force.<sup>29</sup> Later that day, the *New York Times* reported some “250 youngsters of both races [squaring] off in a parking lot” at a downtown shopping center in Portsmouth, Virginia.<sup>30</sup> Two days later, 22 youths were arrested in the state of Tennessee when “a group of 200 Negro demonstrators and 500 white hecklers swarmed over the downtown area” of Chattanooga, an incident reported by *The Daily Defender* as the “most serious” since the sit-in movement began at Greensboro.<sup>31</sup>

As a response, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) issued a declaration saying that the youth would “initiate action immediately” to organize sit-in demonstrations “in every city and town in the southeastern region” while also calling for better education programs designated for the “study of the history of the Negro race.”<sup>32</sup> The NAACP declaration was met with a wave of backlash by segregationists. As white mobs ramped up their use of violence against student demonstrators, southern governors and other officials began to endorse such behaviors as justified administ widespread social unrest caused by black demonstrators. On February 28, two white men struck a black woman protester “about the head several times with miniature baseball bats” in downtown Montgomery and got away without being arrested.<sup>33</sup> Later that day, white supremacists attacked the houses of two black families in Chickamauga, Tennessee where “a 15-year-old boy was showered by pellets.”<sup>34</sup> Acknowledging the widespread protest by black activists but refusing to offer meaningful reconciliatory measures, Governor John Patterson of Alabama claimed that “Negro demonstration against segregated lunch

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<sup>29</sup>“Negroes Fight Back In The South: Fistfights Flare All Over South,” *New York Amsterdam News (1943-1961)*, February 20, 1960, City edition edition, 225480546, Black Studies Center; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: New York Amsterdam News; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: New York Amsterdam News.

<sup>30</sup>“Negroes Fight Back In The South.”

<sup>31</sup>“Arrest 22 in Sit-Down Move: Street Fight in Tenn. Over ‘Sitdown’ Protests,” *Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1956-1960)*, February 24, 1960, 493816124, Black Studies Center; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

<sup>32</sup>“NAACP Youth Resolve To Extend Sit-Ins All Over Southeast Area,” *Tri - State Defender (1959-1989)*, February 27, 1960, 370678949, Ethnic NewsWatch.

<sup>33</sup>“Racial Tension Erupts As Sit-Down Protests Spread: Montgomery Negro Is Clubbed; Shots Fired Into Georgia Homes,” *The Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution (1950-1968)*, February 28, 1960, Sunday ed. edition, 1644196062, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.

<sup>34</sup>“Racial Tension Erupts As Sit-Down Protests Spread.”

counters would bring a racial explosion.”<sup>35</sup> The problem, Patterson emphasized, was not the fact that black students were protesting against what they believed to be unjust, but that there was “not enough” of a police force “to prevent riots and protect everybody if they continue to provoke (the whites) on that matter.”<sup>36</sup> As reported by Claude Sitton, the governor originally pushed for the immediate expulsion of “all students who participated in a sit-in demonstration” on February 25, but when his remarks were met with widespread discontent by the enraged black public, Patterson softened his stance while maintaining that “action should be taken against the leaders.”<sup>37</sup> Governor Patterson’s call to “protect” whites from their black counterparts was echoed in the announcement of Dr. Beverly Lake, a candidate for the governor of North Carolina, who claimed: “If the administrative officers of any institution operated by this state are either unable or unwilling to exercise over its students sufficient control to prevent organized, group invasion of private property by the students, the state should supply the institution with an administration which can and will do so.”<sup>38</sup>

By calling the organized student demonstrations as a “group invasion of private property,” Lake reflected what Clive Webb observed as a common tactic of southern media and politicians’ blaming of “black activists whose criminal behavior had supposedly provoked whites.”<sup>39</sup> In making this statement, Webb critically noted it was ironically white segregationists’ racism that “undermined their ability to defend Jim Crow against the sit-in demonstrations,” as “their inability to believe that black youth possessed either the motivation or ability to organize an insurgency against segregation left them confused as to who their enemies were and what tactics to use against them.”<sup>40</sup> For segregationists, then, their best tactic was twofold: to use violence as a direct means of bringing to a halt the activities of black activists while simultaneously casting off such actions

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<sup>35</sup>Claude Sitton, “Warns Negroes on Race Flareup,” *The Globe and Mail* (1936-), March 1, 1960, 1291074960, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Globe and Mail.

<sup>36</sup>Sitton, “Warns Negroes on Race Flareup.”

<sup>37</sup>Sitton, “Warns Negroes on Race Flareup.”

<sup>38</sup>Sitton, “Warns Negroes on Race Flareup.”

<sup>39</sup>Webb, “Breaching the Wall of Resistance,” 61.

<sup>40</sup>Webb, “Breaching the Wall of Resistance,” 59.

to the “skeptical northern public” as simply upholding the “sacred constitutional principle of federalism.”<sup>41</sup>

Far from the hopes of southern segregationists, however, such tactics fueled the anti-segregationist sentiment among student demonstrators as the sit-in movement continued to pick up momentum. Backed by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., several black adult activists “staged a quiet, orderly sitdown demonstration in Nashville” on March 2, where the spokesman Rev. C. T. Vivian claimed that their actions were pursued to send the clear message that the “ Negro community is in accord with the basic spirit shown by the students.”<sup>42</sup> Later that day, more than 1,000 black students from the all-black Alabama State college “marched silently up the hill to the white-columned Alabama capitol where Jefferson Davis became the Confederacy’s first president, and as silently walked away again.”<sup>43</sup> By then, the sit-in protests had spread to 24 cities across 6 southern and border states. Recognizing the undeniable fact that the student-led movement had grown continuously despite numerous attempts to confront it, the Southern Regional Council based in Atlanta, Georgia, declared that “segregation cannot be maintained in the South,” for any attempts to forcefully suppress the growing civil rights movement was almost certain to be met with fierce resistant that would ultimately disrupt the functioning of the region as a whole.<sup>44</sup> “The sit-ins,” noted the regional council, “have spread in such contagion as to make brightly clear that the South is in a time of change, the terms of which cannot be dictated by white southerners.”<sup>45</sup>

Although the council’s statement gave veiled implications that reconciliation was likely the best course of action for the peoples of both races, defiant white supremacists continued, in a last-ditch effort, to thwart the ongoing movement. On March 5, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that the local police force of Sumter, South Carolina, arrested some 26 “Bible-carrying Negro

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<sup>41</sup>Webb, “Breaching the Wall of Resistance,” 61.

<sup>42</sup>“Cleric Leads ‘Sit-In ’Move: Minister Leads ‘Sit-In ’Protest,” *Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1956-1960)*, March 2, 1960, 493808999, Black Studies Center; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

<sup>43</sup>“Cleric Leads ‘Sit-In ’Move: Minister Leads ‘Sit-In ’Protest.”

<sup>44</sup>“Student ‘Sit-Ins ’Emerge As Vital Force To Be Reckoned With: New Movement Inspires South,” *The Louisville Defender (1933-)*, March 3, 1960, 2703272471, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Louisville Defender.

<sup>45</sup>“Student ‘Sit-Ins ’Emerge As Vital Force To Be Reckoned With.”

college students” for trespassing the private property of a white southerner.<sup>46</sup> An hour away in Florence, 48 black students were arrested for “parading without a permit.”<sup>47</sup> Later that same day in Miami, Florida, a cross in front of the house of a black family was reported to have been burned down, with the father telling the police that “he would kill anyone else who tried to burn a cross in his yard.”<sup>48</sup> Such blatant attacks, however, were not only ineffective but largely counterintuitive for segregationist leaders trying to sell their ideology to white Northern democrats, as it made the ideology of white supremacy less palpable to those who previously held moderate beliefs. Dissatisfied by the recklessness of white youths in Richmond, Virginia, a local segregationist leader observed that the black students wore “coats, white shirts and ties,” while their white boys that “came to heckle” were “slack-jawed, black-jacketed, grinning fit to kill, [and] were waving the proud and honored flag of the Southern States in the last war fought by gentlemen.”<sup>49</sup> Recognizing that they were quickly losing public support, segregationist leaders, as illustrated by Webb, “were forced to dissociate themselves from the white rank and file because their resort to racial demagoguery and violence made it impossible to persuade the rest of the nation of the political legitimacy of their cause.”<sup>50</sup>

In the weeks following the 1,000-men march on the former Confederate Capitol in Montgomery, Alabama, the movement carried on amidst the usual heckling and occasional violence perpetrated by white teenage gangs. By mid-March, the sit-in demonstrations had taken place in various major cities, including Charlotte, Richmond, Baltimore, Houston, Miami, New Orleans, and Atlanta.<sup>51</sup> Faced with large-scale arrests by the police, Rev. Martin Luther King urged the demonstrators to “show that [they were] willing and prepared to fill up the jails of the South.”<sup>52</sup> By April, the student-led civil rights movement had swept across a majority of the southern and border states. Recognizing the achievements of black student activists, civil rights leaders such as King and Ella Baker organized a conference to be held at Shaw University in North Carolina on

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<sup>46</sup>“Police Seize 26 Students in S. C. Sitdowns,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*, March 5, 1960, 182464058, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune.

<sup>47</sup>“Police Seize 26 Students in S. C. Sitdowns.”

<sup>48</sup>“Police Seize 26 Students in S. C. Sitdowns.”

<sup>49</sup>“Student ‘Sit-Ins’ Emerge As Vital Force To Be Reckoned With.”

<sup>50</sup>Webb, “Breaching the Wall of Resistance,” 62.

<sup>51</sup>Morgan, “The New Movement,” 5.

<sup>52</sup>King et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 366.

April 15, which included hundreds of student-leaders who organized and took part in the sit-in demonstrations. In his opening address, King remarked that the protests represented a great “offensive in the history of the Negro peoples’ struggle for freedom” and that the students have readily embraced “a philosophy of mass direct nonviolent action.”<sup>53</sup> Upon conclusion of the conference, a new student-led civil rights organization was formed: the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Reflecting upon the events of 1960, former SNCC Chairman Charles McDew later recalled: “The sit-ins have inspired us to build a new image of ourselves in our own mind,” an image that ultimately guided black activists towards toppling the customary segregation practices of the Jim Crow South.<sup>54</sup>

### Conclusion

A month following the creation of SNCC, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. described the sit-in demonstrations as “an electrifying movement [that] has shattered the placid surface of campuses and communities across the South.”<sup>55</sup> Characterizing the movement as nothing but “historic,” King further observed that “never before in the United States had so large a body of students spread a struggle over so great an area in pursuit of a goal of human dignity and freedom.”<sup>56</sup> By June 1960, sit-ins had occurred in 78 cities in the southern and border states, over thousands of activists had gone to jail, but the movement gave blacks and other anti-segregationists a concrete cause to rally behind.<sup>57</sup> In considering the events of 1960 as a whole, historian Francesca Polletta observed that it was the combined efforts of courageous students, ministers, NAACP officials, and white sympathizers that allowed the movement to gain popularity and momentum.<sup>58</sup>

The creation of SNCC was instrumental in the struggle against racial inequality of the 1960s, for the organization’s emphasis on nonviolent means stood in stark contrast with that of various militant activist organizations influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideals. Although its methods

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<sup>53</sup>King et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 425.

<sup>54</sup>Francesca Polletta, *It Was Like a Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 43.

<sup>55</sup>King et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 447.

<sup>56</sup>King et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 448.

<sup>57</sup>Morgan, “The New Movement,” 5.

<sup>58</sup>Polletta, *It Was Like a Fever*, 32.



differed from those of the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets, SNCC still played a crucial role in the fight for racial and social justice throughout the 1960s. As with other activist movements, SNCC, from the onset of its creation, faced widespread opposition from far-right politicians and white supremacist groups alike. This essay examined the non-violent student sit-ins of the early 1960, the backlash it faced amidst the violent heckling of white supremacists, and the latter's poor self-image that rendered ineffective segregationist leaders' attempts to thwart the advancement of civil rights for people of color. Four years later, the Civil Rights act of 1964 was, undoubtedly, a victory for black activists, but it did not end the blacks' arduous journey towards achieving equality. Today, the memories of Daunte Wright, Manuel Ellis, George Floyd, and other victims of police brutality serve as a painful yet vivid reminder that the United States, as a whole, is far from being completely free of racial discrimination. The stunning successes of the nonviolent demonstrations in 1960 should, however, serve as an inspiration for future civil rights movements in the United States, so long as institutionalized racial inequality continues to plague American societies.

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Article 3

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## **Internationalism of the Leftist Press and Reactions from the FBI and CIA from the 1960s-1970s**

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# INTERNATIONALISM OF THE LEFTIST PRESS AND REACTIONS FROM THE FBI AND CIA FROM THE 1960s-1970s

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**Abstract:** Amid the wave of American counterculture movements in the 1960s and 1970s, several members of the New Left established internationalist connections abroad. They questioned American involvement in countries undergoing decolonization and political revolution, showing solidarity with activists in those nations.

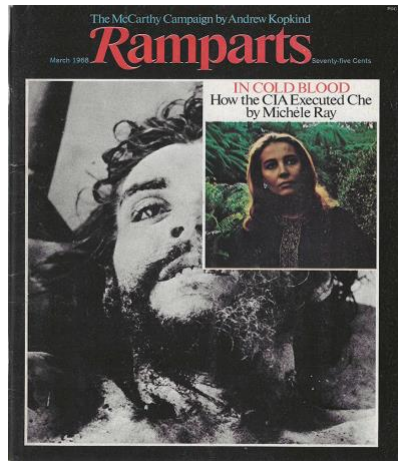
The voices of these activists were undoubtedly amplified by the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS), which disseminated these stories of international solidarity. This paper examines the stories of left-leaning activists who often served as staff writers on these publications and wrote on their ideologies and experiences. While the UPS included a range of newspapers, this paper will focus on *Ramparts* and *Liberator Magazine*, specifically with their coverage on Cuba, Ghana, and the Congo, to show the international solidarity expressed on the pages that ultimately led to police surveillance.

The FBI and CIA used strategies like “lit.-cop federalism” to monitor leftist journalists, collecting files on their publications and words to frame a story of treason and espionage. These organizations also purposely mistranslated the works of a lot of international activists, to turn domestic New Left activists against their internationalist comrades.

The leftist press was crucial in providing a voice for the New Left, and in combating the intentionally false, anti-communist narrative policing agencies were spreading. I argue that it was when these news sources began to take a specifically *internationalist* lens that the FBI and CIA increased their surveillance of these papers, as they understood the threat they posed to domestic opinion during the Cold War.

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*“We want our people to be aware of the direct chain, which reaches from Cuba into our cities, our campuses, our conventions, our lives – and which threatens the life of this Republic.”<sup>3</sup>*  
*- Senator James Oliver Eastland, Chairman of the Subcommittee to Investigate the Internal Security Act*

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Garland Allen, a renowned historian of science, spent much of the 1960s and 1970s politically involved like many of his college-aged peers.<sup>4</sup> While a graduate student at Harvard, Allen actively participated in several anti-Vietnam protests, and organized a two-week long strike where students occupied Harvard’s administration buildings and University Hall. Allen additionally participated in MLK’s march from Selma to Montgomery, considering himself to be a staunch activist for civil rights.

When Allen began teaching at Washington University in St. Louis, he decided to take a semester off to join the Venceremos Brigade to Cuba, an underground organization that sent Americans to work alongside Cuban farmers, students, and government officials to show

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<sup>2</sup> Michele Ray, “Ramparts 1968-03: Vol 6 ISS 8 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming.” Internet Archive. Ramparts Magazine Inc, March 1, 1968. [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_ramparts\\_1968-03\\_6\\_8/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/sim_ramparts_1968-03_6_8/mode/2up).

<sup>3</sup> Teishan A. Latner, “Agrarians or Anarchists? The Venceremos Brigades to Cuba, State Surveillance, and the FBI as Biographer and Archivist.” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 9, no. 1 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.5070/t891034678>.

<sup>4</sup> Everett Mendelsohn, “Garland Allen: An Appreciation.” *Journal of the History of Biology* 49, no. 4 (2016): 583–86. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10739-016-9459-2>.

American solidarity with the Cuban Revolution.<sup>5</sup> Allen singularly credits this experience to his radicalization and the complete development of his political consciousness. During this time, he worked on a sugar cane farm in community with Cubans, who shared their revolutionary zeal with Allen. He read selected works of Marx, and was invited to join the Scientists and Engineers for Social and Political Action, a radical organization.<sup>6</sup> Upon returning to the United States, Allen's scientific work began taking a radical social and political perspective.

In no way was Allen's radicalization an isolated incident. Several other members of what would be termed the "New Left" established internationalist connections abroad. They questioned American involvement in countries like Ghana, the Congo, and Cuba, and showed solidarity with activists in those nations.

The voices of these individuals were undoubtedly amplified by the underground press, which burst onto the media scene in the 1960s and 1970s. Their coverage included first-hand reports—from left-leaning activists of the time who were often staff writers on these papers—as well as republications of local news in other countries. For example, Eldridge Cleaver, an activist and staff writer for *Ramparts Magazine*, published several stories on his own internationalist activism, but also republished anti-imperialist stories circulated in local African news sources, in order to broaden the message to an American audience.<sup>7</sup>

In reaction to this activism, U.S. policy doubled-down on its already existing fears of Cold War communism, as agencies like the FBI and CIA sought to prevent U.S citizens from traveling to areas in the Third World where leftist movements were happening. The internationalism and eventual radicalism of activists like Allen strengthened the fears of subversion and treason which were deep-rooted in the U.S. at this time. This phenomenon manifested itself through the media, as the government hoped to control the narrative that was being shared with the larger population.

I argue that it was when the underground press began to take an *internationalist* lens to amplify the stories of the Third World Left between the 1960s and 1970s that American agencies like the FBI and CIA became especially threatened by their anti-American narrative, and instituted several strategies to discredit, block, and prosecute their work.

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<sup>5</sup> Mendelsohn, "Garland Allen," 583.

<sup>6</sup> Mendelsohn, "Garland Allen," 583.

<sup>7</sup> Christopher M. Tinson, *Radical Intellect Liberator Magazine and Black Activism in the 1960s*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).



## A) Terminology

It is first important to frame what Third-Worldism, leftism, internationalism, and communism meant during this time. In her book “Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era,” author Judy Wu defines and contextualizes these terms.<sup>8</sup> The United States government exuded a perspective of democratic exceptionalism during the Cold War, tasking itself with saving countries around the world from communism. Specifically with Vietnam, mainstream media presented an East-West divide between the totalitarianism of the East and freedom of the West. Wu writes “Perceiving Vietnamese opponents of the United States as part of an international communist conspiracy further intensified the divide that most Americans drew between deserving insiders and inhumane outsiders.”<sup>9</sup>

In response to these perceptions, the idea of internationalism arose. Wu explains the term in the context of the Vietnam War, explaining that internationalists viewed themselves as “members of communities that transcended national boundaries.”<sup>10</sup> Suspicious of the mainstream narratives of leftist/communist countries, internationalist activists visited those countries themselves. Oftentimes, after traveling to and interacting with grassroots activists in those nations, these Americans expanded their political views outside the walls of strict American interests. Internationalist activists often rejected what they viewed as the “militaristic, materialistic, and racist values of mainstream society” and instead identified with “people and societies resisting colonialism and neocolonialism.”<sup>11</sup>

The nations these individuals established solidarity with were referred to as the Third World, due to their specific relationship with radicalism at the time. The activists were moving away from the communism of the Soviet Union, which they believed was totalitarian. Rather, Third World leftism centered itself around solidarity with countries in Latin America and Africa, where nations were undergoing their own decolonization movements. The relationship between

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<sup>8</sup> Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 5.

these Third World socialist movements and American activists was the key to international solidarity.

## B) The Bureau's Strategy - Literary Analysis

John Edgar Hoover, former Director of the FBI, is the man credited with transforming the organization into what it is today. Between 1924 and 1972, Hoover brought the FBI to national prominence through relentless persecution of what he believed to be domestic and foreign threats. During the 60s and 70s, this meant a lot of Hoover's efforts were focused on dispersing the civil rights movement. William J. Maxwell, author of the book "F.B.Eyes," coined the term "lit.-cop federalism" to describe Hoover's strategy in policing these activists.<sup>12</sup>

The first step of "lit.-cop federalism" was the creation of literary archives on the works of activists in radical organizations, including their speeches, articles, and letters.<sup>13</sup> Hoover recognized that the dissemination of radical literature and journalism further advanced the motives of the Left, and believed this was a major threat to the stability of the country. Maxwell quotes Hoover saying that the radicals' sole purposes were to "commit acts of terrorism and to advocate, by word of mouth and by the circulation of literature, the overthrow of the Government of the United States by force and violence."<sup>14</sup> Hoover's collection of this literature was so expansive, he had gathered "a cluster of text-centered desires and activities ranging from the archival to the editorial" that was enough to make his own "intragovernmental newspaper."<sup>15</sup>

Literary archives were especially useful to the Bureau when radical activists were publishing internationalist pieces. During this time, the FBI believed that the global influence on American activism was "conceptualized in ideological terms."<sup>16</sup> In order to understand the ways in which activists were aligning with international allies, the Bureau often used these archives to prove an activist's subversion or treason.

For example, as Black activists widened their scope to promote international solidarity with Africa, so too did the FBI, although for a different reason. Maxwell writes that "the open

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<sup>12</sup> William J. F.B. Maxwell, *Eyes: How J. Edgar Hoover's Ghostreaders Framed African American Literature*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 42.

<sup>14</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 49.

<sup>15</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 43.

<sup>16</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?", 126.

comfort of the Harlem Renaissance with the simultaneously national and transnational implications of New Negro modernity dictated a comparable range in Hoover's ghostreaders."<sup>17</sup> As Black writers and activists began looking abroad, the FBI grew wary of the growth of Black international consciousness. The Bureau wanted the movement to be contained domestically as it made it easier for them to control it.<sup>18</sup>

"Lit.-cop federalism" intended to weaponize literary archives collected on activists in two ways - by smearing their images in the "U.S. print public sphere," and when possible, prosecuting them.<sup>19</sup> Hoover was attracted to print news as a PR tool, and sent several government sanctioned messages into the media to counter the publications of anti-government stories/news. Hoover's goal was to involve the government directly in the public sphere, and to challenge the desire to keep "police power at a critical distance."<sup>20</sup>

Hoover also smeared the image of these activists in the print media through "diasporic translations" of literature being transferred between American and international activists.<sup>21</sup> The Bureau hired U.S. diplomats to translate several foreign publications to English, like Claude McKay's contributions to Bolshevik papers and James Baldwin's contributions to Turkish newspapers. Yet, the Bureau intentionally released false and incomplete translations in order to divide Black activists in the U.S. from their international allies. Maxwell writes "aggravating the ambiguities of communication within the Black diaspora and its chosen political allies, Hoover's ghostreaders added the strain of hostile retranslations circulated across state channels to worsen 'the haunting gap of discrepancy' involved in any articulation of international blackness."<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the mistranslations, Hoover looked for ways to prosecute individuals on the basis of their work. It was during this time the FBI expanded its Radical Division, which was at the forefront of collecting domestic intelligence on the works of prominent activists of the time like Martin Luther King and Malcom X.<sup>23</sup> The Radical Division began by subverting internationalist or Marxist efforts of solidarity during the Russian Revolution, but honed its scope to Third World internationalism during the movements of the 60s and 70s.

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<sup>17</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 195.

<sup>18</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 195.

<sup>19</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 43.

<sup>20</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 43.

<sup>21</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 195, 196.

<sup>22</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 197.

<sup>23</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 47.

Hoover was known to search the information collected by the Radical Division for “deportation-worthy” sentiments in the writings of these left-leaning activists and writers (anything that he could paint as being treasonous), as grounds to send them out of the country.<sup>24</sup> For example, Claudia Jones, a Trinidad-born Black radical journalist, was deported from the U.S. in 1955 due to her leadership in the Communist Party U.S.A. Much of the prosecution against her was based on literary evidence collected by the Bureau.

The FBI also took on the international surveillance roles of the CIA to block passports of Americans who were traveling to leftist countries, due to perceived fears of subversion. A particularly famous case is that of W.E.B. Du Bois, whose travel requests were closely tracked by the FBI. One specific instance was when Du Bois requested a passport to travel to Ghana to see the installment of Kwame Nkrumah as prime minister. His passport was taken from him and voided, and was not reinstated during this time, due to his membership in the Communist Party U.S.A., and his naturalization as a Ghanaian citizen.<sup>25</sup>

The FBI took an international lens due to the internationalism of activists that were publishing their stories in the leftist media in the 60s and 70s. It is out of the Bureau’s mistranslation of radical papers and collection of literary evidence against activists that lit a fire within the leftist press. They strove to present what they believed to be a crucial yet silenced viewpoint in the media at this time.

### C) Cultural Overview - Underground Press

As Wu explains, there was a common feeling among leftist activists to question the message being presented in mainstream media on the state of affairs in the Third World Left. As they engaged in internationalist activism to answer those questions of what is happening abroad, they contributed to the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS) to share what they were seeing.

While this paper will hone in on *Ramparts Magazine* and *Liberator Magazine* to argue the thesis, it would be a loss not to mention the larger work of the Underground Press Syndicate that created the conditions for *Ramparts* and *Liberator* to succeed.

Artists and writers in the counterculture movement of the 1960s largely helped define the anti-establishment atmosphere of the time through publishing in papers like the *San Francisco*

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<sup>24</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 49.

<sup>25</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 202.

*Oracle*.<sup>26</sup> A hub of the hippie movement, the *Oracle* transformed the cultural atmosphere of Haight-Ashbury into a circulated publication. Art, graphics, prose and poetry that symbolized the burgeoning cultural revolution of the time were all included. While the *Oracle* was largely apolitical at the time, it still played a foundational role in creating a hub of alternative news media.

In order to inspire other news sources with the artistic impulse of the Haight, the *Oracle* organized the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS) in several cities around the U.S., inviting publications like the *Los Angeles Free Press*, the *East Village Other*, and the *Berkeley Barb*. Editors at the *Oracle* helped create standards among this coalition of papers in 1967 to increase readership.<sup>27</sup> Forming a chain of publishing houses across the country, these papers shared research with one another and sent out robust newsletters on the nature of the counterculture movement to readers in their areas. While the *Oracle* was solely responsible for cultural and arts news inspired by the Haight, the papers they recruited to join the UPS reported heavily on the leftist perspective of the antiwar movement, connecting the arts of the counterculture with the work of activists who were a part of it.<sup>28</sup> This infrastructure that artists in the UPS created was significant in allowing the leftist press to have a shot at spreading their message to a comparable readership as conservative and mainstream media. Given this context, we can explore two specific leftist publications to see how they faced off against Hoover's intragovernmental newspaper.

## Chapter 2: *Ramparts Magazine*

### A) Introduction to *Ramparts*

*Ramparts Magazine* was one of America's foremost leftist publications in the 1960s and 1970s, serving as a "mainstream" leftist voice for student activists across the country.<sup>29</sup> Originally a Catholic literary quarterly founded by Edward Keating in Menlo Park, California, the paper

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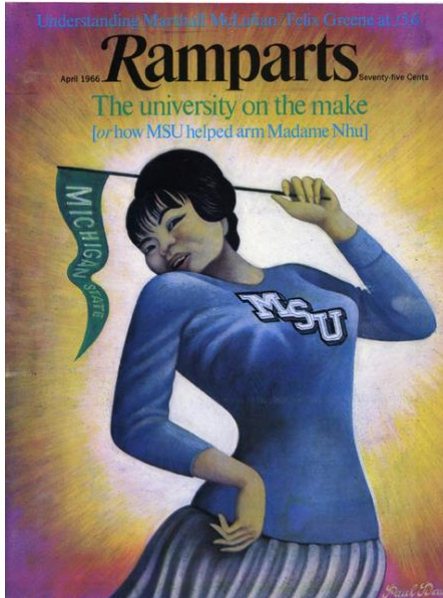
<sup>26</sup> Oleg Vyacheslavovich Brodov, Almaz Vasilovich Zakirov, Luiza Kajumovna Karimova, and Anna Andreevna Kirpichnikova, "Counterculture of 1960s and Underground Press in the USA." *Propósitos y Representaciones* 9, no. SPE2 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.20511/pyr2021.v9nspe2.999>.

<sup>27</sup> Bodrov, "Counterculture," 5.

<sup>28</sup> Bodrov, "Counterculture," 4, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Richardson, "The Perilous Fight: The Rise of Ramparts Magazine, 1965–1966," *California History* 86, no. 3 (2009): 22–69. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40495218>.

became political when Warren Hinckle and Robert Scheer were hired as editors and moved *Ramparts* to San Francisco.<sup>30</sup> In 1963, Hinckle turned the gaze of the paper to Vietnam, as anti-war protests began in full force. *Ramparts* covered Kennedy's assassination and Lyndon B.



Johnson's Vietnam policy, calling U.S. intervention in Vietnam a mistake. Scheer wrote a commentary on the famous book *Deliver Us from Evil* by Tom Dooley, saying that the reductive description of the war in Vietnam as one between the "godless communists and freedom-loving Vietnamese" painted an inaccurate and incomplete picture.<sup>31</sup> In 1966, Scheer began working on one of *Ramparts*' first investigative pieces with whistle-blower Stanley Sheinbaum, the coordinator of Michigan State University's Vietnam Project in 1957.<sup>32</sup> While going through government documents at the UC Berkeley library, Scheer discovered that the "CIA had used the Vietnam Project to interrogate and torture Vietnamese nationals."<sup>33</sup>

Scheer told Sheinbaum his discoveries, and Sheinbaum confirmed the information in the UC Berkeley files. The two broke the story together, with Sheinbaum helping write the piece.<sup>34</sup>

*Ramparts*' coverage went well beyond the scope of just the Vietnam War, as activists employed by the paper brought other internationalist perspectives to their coverage. Eldridge Cleaver, leader of the Black Panther Party, was a prominent staff writer for *Ramparts*, as the magazine published his diaries in a special edition. The Black Panthers were well known for their solidarity with activists in Cuba and Africa, and Eldridge often brought stories of the activism of the Black Panthers in Cuba and Africa to *Ramparts*.

In the same vein, *Ramparts* covered the Cuban Revolution using stories from activists who established internationalist connections in Cuba, publishing a retranslation of the diaries of Che Guevara with an introduction written especially for *Ramparts* by Fidel Castro.<sup>35</sup> It was this specific retranslation that was one of *Ramparts*' most prolific stances against mistranslations of

<sup>30</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 22, 24.

<sup>31</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 24.

<sup>32</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 27.

<sup>33</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 27.

<sup>34</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 30.

<sup>35</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 22.

radical works released by Hoover. In order for *Ramparts* to establish firm solidarity with the Cuban Revolution, their writers often engaged in direct activism in the region.

### B) Cuban Revolution and the Venceremos Brigade

Historian Teishan Latner writes that the New Left's leading activists at this time were "increasingly invested in examining and learning from revolutions, anticolonial struggles, and leftwing political movements in the Third World."<sup>36</sup> Black radical activists were the first to look towards Cuba due to Castro's anti-racist proclamations. Stokely Carmichael, a leader within the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, was invited to Cuba personally by Fidel Castro, and spoke to the Cuban audience saying that the civil rights movement in the U.S. looks to Cuba as a shining example. As anti-Vietnam War protests continued to boil well into the 60s, white, Black, Latino, Native American, and Asian activists alike began looking to Cuba with even more fervor. One student activist said "We, who participated in the civil rights movement, the battles for self-determination ... began to look outside the borders of the United States toward those who were already building societies of justice, equality, and human dignity: we were ready to learn from their examples."<sup>37</sup>

Such internationalist solidarity with Cuba resulted in the creation of the Venceremos Brigade. An organization that started among activists within the SDS, the organization sent out students to work alongside "Cuban students, farm laborers, urban volunteers, and government officials, including Fidel Castro himself, as well as volunteer brigades across the Third World."<sup>38</sup> The work of the Brigade radicalized several of the members who went. Student activists were in community with Cuban leftists, and began re-examining the work of Marx in its direct social application. These activists were stepping away from the communism of the Soviet Union which they believed had become equated with totalitarianism, and focused their efforts on Marxist/Leninist applications within the Third World. As Latner writes, "the group became the most visible and broadest expression of U.S. leftwing interest in the Cuban revolution."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?", 123.

<sup>37</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?", 124.

<sup>38</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?", 120.

<sup>39</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?", 124.

### C) *Ramparts* on Cuba

*Ramparts* wanted to tell the stories of Venceremos to show solidarity with the Cuban Revolution, and counter the anti-Cuban sentiment in mainstream American media. An especially famous example of this is *Ramparts*' special published edition of the Diary of Che Guevara, which was released on July 3, 1968. *Ramparts* was the first to translate Che's works to English, and upon publication, they included an introduction by Fidel Castro, written specifically for *Ramparts*, showing thanks for Americans that supported the Cuban Revolution.

Castro speaks about his hatred of American Imperialism in his introduction, something which was only available to Americans through publications like *Ramparts*, as the U.S. government did not want such anti-establishment rhetoric being made widely available. For example, Castro writes, "Yankee imperialism has never needed pretexts to perpetrate its villainy in any part of the world, and its efforts to smash the Cuban Revolution began with the first revolutionary law made in our county."<sup>40</sup> He goes further to explicitly state that due to the "internationalist character of contemporary social revolutions," denying support to Cuba does not show abstinence from the issue, but rather implicit support for the "Yankee Imperialists."<sup>41</sup> By publishing such language by Castro, *Ramparts* made no hesitations about broadcasting a call for solidarity with Cuba.

Later in Castro's introduction, he acknowledged that the revolutions in Latin America were being watched by certain people in North America who were tired of the United States' imperialist policy, and that these people could become crucial allies for Latin America. He writes "Only the revolutionary transformation of Latin America could permit the people of the United States to settle accounts with imperialism itself ... the rising struggle of the North American people against imperialist policy could become a decisive ally of the revolutionary struggle in Latin America."<sup>42</sup> Castro goes one step further to state that if these people in the United States did not act on their solidarity with Latin American revolutionary movements and support those within Latin America, then the dark reign of imperialism could further enslave individuals within

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<sup>40</sup> Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, *The Diary of Che Guevara : Bolivia, November 7, 1966-October 7, 1967*. 191 p. ill., facsim. ; 19 cm. Vol. 191 p. ill., facsim. ; 19 cm, (New York City, New York: Bantam Books, 1968).

<sup>41</sup> Castro, *The Diary*, 10, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Castro, *The Diary*, 19.



these countries. Castro established solidarity with other parts of the world here too, writing “This dark perspective equally affects the underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa.”<sup>43</sup> Without *Ramparts* or the underground press, there would have been no platform for the New Left to openly express Cuban solidarity in the way Castro’s introduction did.

#### D) Truth About Cuba Committee (TACC)

Staunch anti-communists utilized the media in their own way to turn popular opinion against the leftist’s solidarity with Cuba. A prime example of this is the Truth About Cuba Committee (TACC), which operated from 1961 to 1975. Composed of both anti-Castro Cuban exiles and U.S. conservatives, TACC worked with several media organizations and prominent U.S. agencies like the FBI and CIA to spread anti-Cuban state propaganda. Richard M. Mwakasege-Minaya, professor of historical media at the University of Michigan, has studied the TACC extensively.<sup>44</sup>

Minaya writes that the TACC used three distinct strategies to disseminate information: appeals to news stations, appeals to Washington officials in the FBI, and appeals to allies in other U.S. organizations.<sup>45</sup> At this time, anti-communism was the “ideological linchpin between Cold War-era U.S. conservatives and exiles of the 1959 Cuban Revolution.”<sup>46</sup> As several mainstream media outlets heavily reported on the “threat to communism,” TACC sent anti-Castro information pamphlets and essays directly to media outlets that they felt aligned with their agendas.<sup>47</sup> They additionally claimed to have sent over 4,000 copies of their pamphlets directly to J. Edgar Hoover and James O. Eastland, the Chairman of the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act, urging them to disseminate TACC’s anti-Cuba material.<sup>48</sup> The organization positioned itself within four miles of major Miami news outlets, and distributed over one million copies of books, flyers, and brochures containing their anti-communist messages. They were especially successful with hyper conservative news outlets,

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<sup>43</sup> Castro, *The Diary*, 19.

<sup>44</sup> Richard M. Mwakasege-Minaya, “Cold War Bedfellows: Cuban Exiles, US Conservatives, and Media Activism in the 1960s and 1970s.” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 41 no. 1 (2020): 114–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2020.1815364>.

<sup>45</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 117.

<sup>46</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 116.

<sup>47</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 124.

<sup>48</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 124.

who utilized TACC pamphlets as factual evidence in their reporting. While at first most self-proclaimed “respectable” conservatives like William F. Buckley separated themselves from such hyper conservative reporting, the TACC found a way to make itself marketable to the average American.<sup>49</sup>

What allowed the TACC to do this was its framing of its movement under the “exile model” - the idea that the entire Cuban population was a homogenous monolith that shared in the anti-Castro values of the TACC.<sup>50</sup> Minaya writes “Essential to any activist organization is the perception that they represent the group that they are advocating for, despite actual support and ingroup political diversity.”<sup>51</sup> By presenting the anti-communist, pro-West stance as one that most Cubans shared, the TACC made itself more palatable to the American public.

The TACC also framed the communist movement’s internationalist nature as an especially dangerous facet of the movement, bouncing off ideas like the domino theory of the time. TACC exile leader Luis Manara went on several shows like Life Line where he explained the dangers of the communists using TACC, writing that the revolution was evidence of the communist’s “imperial intentions.”<sup>52</sup>

#### E) FBI on *Ramparts*

Venceremos “crystallized fears within U.S. officialdom that Cuba was training Americans in the dark arts of guerrilla warfare.”<sup>53</sup> And to a degree, their intuition was correct. Most premier U.S. radicals in organizations like the Black Panther Party and the Weathermen Organization had in fact coalesced with Cuban revolutionaries, if not as a part of the Brigade, privately. It was these internationalist relationships U.S. leftists were making that caused the FBI to kick their tracking and reporting into a higher gear than they had before.

The FBI hoped to “expose” the Brigade and other solidarity movements with countries like Cuba by collecting samples of an activist’s writings and speeches as proof of the subversion caused by their internationalism. They hoped to show the public that members of the Brigade

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<sup>49</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 115.

<sup>50</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 116.

<sup>51</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 116.

<sup>52</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 122.

<sup>53</sup> Latner, “Agrarians or Anarchists?”, 125.

were “adherents of a particular subversive ideology,” and therefore dangerous and unreliable.<sup>54</sup> FBI files of this time contain bodies of literary evidence, partially gathered from intercepted mail or informants, but mainly from the published accounts of these activists' experiences in papers like *Ramparts*.

It becomes clear that the FBI's interest in *Ramparts* increased as their work became more internationalist. In *Ramparts*' early days, the FBI was alerted to their presence, but did not view the publication as much of a threat. We can look at FBI file FD-36 (Rev. S-22-64), where an agent writes that *Ramparts* is a Lay Catholic Magazine that does not have a strong following, but that some citizens believe the work could eventually become subversive. It was at this point in the files that the FBI began tracking *Ramparts* and was receiving copies of articles by Scheer and Cleaver, and collecting bodies of files on things like Sheibaum's whistle-blower piece on the corruption of the Vietnam Project.

Yet, as *Ramparts* became more internationalist in nature, the FBI's tracking of it took a steep incline. We can look at one specific FBI file where a special agent covertly interviewed *Ramparts* writer John Gerassi at the Laos conference in Havana, Cuba. Gerassi speaks openly about the benefits of the revolution happening in Cuba, glad to see such a widespread cultural protest, and praising Castro for being so willing and open about speaking with him for a U.S. magazine. “In what other country would a thing like this happen,” Gerassi is quoted to have allegedly said.<sup>55</sup> It was at this point in the file that *Ramparts* began to be viewed as a body of literature that posed a genuine threat to democracy, and would turn people against democratic institutions.

Scheer writes in the editor's note before Castro's introduction, “We find it fitting that Che's Diary was made public by his Cuban compañeros rather than by those against whom he fought, and we feel privileged to have been involved in its first publication.”<sup>56</sup> As explained in

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<sup>54</sup> Latner, “Agrarians or Anarchists?”, 126.

<sup>55</sup> FBI. *Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Files on Ramparts Magazine, 1964-1975*, 2011.

[https://www.governmentattic.org/5docs/FBI-RampartsMagazine\\_1964-1975.pdf](https://www.governmentattic.org/5docs/FBI-RampartsMagazine_1964-1975.pdf) Description of document: Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) files on Ramparts Magazine, 1964-1975; Released date: 31-October-2011; Posted date: 14-November-2011; Date/date range of document: 22-October-1964 – 16-May-1975; Source of document: Federal Bureau of Investigation; Attn: FOI/PA Request; Record/Information Dissemination Section; 170 Marcel Drive Winchester, VA 22602-4843; Fax: (540) 868-4995/4996/4997; E-mail:foiparequest@ic.fbi.gov; Note: FBI Files included: 100-HQ-445393 - Sections 1-5; 100-HQ-445393-EBF - Section 104; 44-HQ-25706 SERIAL 1351 - Section 42; 44-HQ-25706 SERIAL 1407 - Section 44; 52-HQ-94527 SERIAL 2065 - Section 30; Some records are undated.

<sup>56</sup> Castro, *The Diary*; Scheer, 1.

the introduction, one of the stages of the FBI's "lit.-cop federalism" policy was intentionally mistranslating radical pieces like Che's Diary to pit domestic activists against internationalists. As *Ramparts* became more internationalist and became aware that the FBI would perceive them as a bigger threat, they were intentional about getting ahead of a potential mistranslation by publishing their own first-hand, vetted, accurate translation of Che's diary. Castro was aware of the CIA tracking Che's diary and other inciting literature, and openly acknowledges it in his introduction. Castro writes that certain news organizations that were working for the CIA "had access to the document [Che's diary] in Bolivia and have made photostatic copies of it – but with the promise to abstain from publishing it for the moment."<sup>57</sup>

The internationalist rhetoric did not start or stop with Cuba - in fact *Ramparts* wrote most extensively about its anti-Vietnam War perspectives, publishing articles written by correspondents they sent to North Vietnam to get an alternative on the ground perspective of what was happening in the war. FBI files about these endeavors are similarly based on literature written by these journalists, and demonstrate the lengths the U.S. government was willing to go to understand what these leftist publications were writing about.

In Hoover's second stage of "lit-cop federalism," sometimes the Bureau would attempt to use these bodies of literary archives as grounds to prosecute writers on other terms.<sup>58</sup> For example, Richardson writes that the FBI and CIA both could use mailing addresses on these bodies of literature to see if *Ramparts* was receiving foreign investors, and through the National Security Act of 1947, conduct internal surveillance of the magazine on those grounds. It was through that specific practice that the Bureau was able to find two Communist Party members on the staff.

The efforts of the FBI in tracking the underground press were neither limited to *Ramparts* or Cuba, but the ways in which they grappled with the evolution of a leftist magazine as it became more internationalist shows a poignant example of the threat that the Third World Left was to the U.S. government. We find another example of this in the work of *Liberator Magazine* and the decolonization of Africa.

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<sup>57</sup> Castro, *The Diary*, 9, 10.

<sup>58</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 43.

### Chapter 3: *Liberator Magazine*

#### A) African Decolonization

Between 1960 to 1961, 28 African nations became free from colonial rule and were left with radical governmental shifts.<sup>59</sup> Due to Cold War alignments of the time, these nations “required support from international allies to sustain their autonomy and to guarantee that basic goods and services could be distributed to their citizenry.”<sup>60</sup> The question then became whether they would receive this aid from the United States or the Soviet Union. In order to protect their own anti-Soviet interests, the United States relied on organizations like the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) and the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC) to defend U.S. interests in the region.

In the wake of African independence movements, there was a “shift in African American consciousness,” as Black Americans revisited their relationship with Africa.<sup>61</sup> Two main opinions emerged. Organizations like ACOA and AMSAC held a firm, liberal, anticommunist interest in African independence. While they represented anti-nationalist sentiments in domestic civil rights movements, they represented pro-nationalist sentiments in regard to Africa. These groups felt that U.S. backed involvement in the area was necessary. AMSAC was held in “esteem... in elite intellectual and government circles”, where it served as the pinnacle of conversations on African liberation and Pan-Africanism.<sup>62</sup> The group published essays like “Africa Seen by American Negro Scholars (1958)” by leading Black scholars like St. Clair Drake and John Henrik Clarke.<sup>63</sup>

On the other side, the Liberation Committee for Africa (LCA) would become strong opposers to liberal anti-communist groups like ACOA and AMSAC. While they were also grappling with the new consciousness Black Americans were experiencing due to the liberation of Africa, LCA was firmly against U.S. involvement in the region. They focused on creating a Pan-African identity – the idea that all people of African descent have a shared heritage and should be unified. They released a formal Statement of Aims to that effect early on:

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<sup>59</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 15.

<sup>60</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 15.

<sup>61</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 14.

<sup>62</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 14.

<sup>63</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 14.

To work for and support the immediate liberation of all colonial peoples  
To provide a public forum for African freedom fighters  
To provide concrete aid to African freedom fighters  
To re-establish awareness of the common cultural heritage of Afro-americans  
with their African brothers.<sup>64</sup>

It was soon revealed that AMSAC was financed in part by the CIA Committee on Race and Class in World Affairs. AMSAC supported the American-Nigerian Chamber of Commerce, Inc. that “hoped to provide intercourse between American and Nigerian businessmen,” yet had no Nigerians on its board of directors.<sup>65</sup> The LCA held a much stricter anti-imperialist position than the AMSAC, as outlined in their Statement of Aims, so they spoke out fervently against such actions taken by the AMSAC. LCA wanted African Liberation to entail an anti-west, Pan-African cultural revolution, which involvement from the CIA was fighting against using the AMSAC.

Dan Watts, leader of the LCA, experienced a long-standing frustration with liberal Black activist groups. Watts attended the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANLCA), where leader of the struggle in Mozambique Eduardo Mondlane spoke up on behalf of Watts and LCA, saying they were the “only group who have managed to combine any active interest in the American Negro struggle for equality with an intense interest in African freedom.”<sup>66</sup> Watts agreed with Mondlane’s comments, saying that mainstream liberal Black groups were more concerned in maintaining western political and economic ties with the continent, rather than helping any grass roots anti-imperialist initiatives like they should be. Watts said he was done waiting around for liberal groups to provide any support, and that he would be taking matters into his own hands through the LCA.

## B) Congo Crisis

One of the major events that pushed the LCA to the forefront of the African independence and Black nationalism movement was the Congo Crisis and the assassination of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba in 1961. The leftist leader Lumumba earned the support of the LCA, who published a telegram on January 21, 1961 that they sent to his wife that

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<sup>64</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 16.

<sup>65</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 42.

<sup>66</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 55.

said they viewed Lumumba as a “symbol of liberation for all Africans at home and abroad.”<sup>67</sup> However, 4 days prior to this press release, Lumumba was killed. This news was not released until February 13, 1961, a full 22 days after. Upon hearing this news, the LCA released another press release by Watts condemning the UN and the U.S. for being responsible for Lumumba’s capture and murder.

At this time, several Black activist groups of the New Left took to the streets to protest the death of Lumumba. They spoke about how the U.S. government was complicit in Lumumba’s death due to his “pro-Soviet” tendencies, calling out the United States for their unjust actions. Watts spoke at the protests, making sure journalists heard him. It was at this moment that he officially announced the formation of the Liberation Committee for Africa, formalizing its role as an organization focused on exposing U.S. based corruption in Africa.<sup>68</sup>

While the LCA made its own press releases, its voice was undoubtedly unified in its formal publication - *Liberator Magazine*. Watts was the editor-in-chief of *Liberator*, alongside editors John Henrik Clarke and Beveridge. Watts utilized close ties with “African diplomats, students, artists, and workers” in order to create leverage for African American communities who were fighting for their own rights on the home front.<sup>69</sup> Yet, as the actions of AMSAC began to more directly threaten the goals of the LCA, *Liberator Magazine* played a critical role in exposing CIA and government ties to supposedly anti-colonial organizations like the AMSAC. *Liberator* published significant literature about the necessity for Pan-African connections. Similar to *Ramparts*, *Liberator* not only questioned American policies, but reprinted Nigerian and other African papers that were asking the same questions about the role of the U.S. in their regions, allowing a wider network of people to see the issues being presented in Africa. This helped expand the Pan-African notion too. *Liberator Magazine* made its paper internationalist in the same way *Ramparts* did, except with the framework of Pan-Africanism at the forefront of its efforts, in order to provide a leftist perspective on African decolonization, working with the LCA to fight against the continued influence of the West in the region.

### C) FBI’s Coverage of Watts and *Liberator Magazine*

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<sup>67</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 19.

<sup>68</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 20.

<sup>69</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 20.

Similar to *Ramparts*, the FBI began paying special attention to *Liberator* as they began to openly express solidarity with Africa. FBI informants were tracking the LCA the second that they began protests against Lumumba's murder. An "anonymous source" tipped the FBI to a memorial being held for Lumumba on February 23, 1961. One sponsor of this meeting was Watts.

As Watts has made his name known to the FBI, they began sending agents to the events he would be present at. One such agent had lunch with Watts at the Delegates Dining Room in New York, for the UN. This agent covertly engaged in a conversation with Watts, who allegedly proclaimed opinions that the FBI deemed to be threatening to the U.S. government. The file NY 105-42387 reads "He [Watts] stated to the informant that he is of the firm opinion that violence is necessary to attract attention to the cause of the LCA."<sup>70</sup>

As the FBI began understanding the degree of *Liberator's* solidarity with African decolonization, the Bureau collected more evidence for their literary archives in order to pit liberal Old Left Black activists against these Third World leftists. They used some of the same tactics in Ghana to monitor these leftists.

#### D) FBI and Ghana Independence

*Liberator Magazine's* reporting was just as impacted by Ghanaian independence movements as it was with what was happening in the Congo. The Conventions People Party led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah was the largest political group in Ghana a few years before the country gained its independence, controlling 79 out of the 104 seats in its government.<sup>71</sup> Nkrumah's vision was for a Ghana completely independent of imperialist rule. The LCA was fascinated by Nkrumah's government, and believed it served as a representation of the potential for independence in the continent as a whole. *Liberator Magazine* sent Selma Sparks, an advisory board member and labor rights activist, to attend Nkrumah's "world without the bomb"

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<sup>70</sup> FBI. JFK Assassination System Identification Form , n.d. <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/jfk/releases/docid-32339197.pdf> FBI, 124-90146-10029, HQ, Agency File Number 105-93072-18, originator, FBI, NY, HQ, Richard Thomas Gibson, Paper, Textual Document, Unclassified, 4, Redact, 10/16/1998, indefinite, RPT, Released under the John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 (44 USC 2107 Note). Case# NW 54464 Date: 10-10-2017.

<sup>71</sup> S. A. de Smith. "The Independence of Ghana." *The Modern Law Review* , Jul., 1957, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Jul., 1957), pp. 347-363, n.d. <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/1092185>.



conference.<sup>72</sup> Selma reported back to *Liberator* with optimism for the new government Nkrumah was trying to install. This hope for an anti-imperialist Africa was shared by many African-American expatriates, who Tinson writes moved to Ghana under “Nkrumah’s idealistic diaspora-wide invitation to assist in the development of the young nation.”<sup>73</sup>

The context of the Cold War and atomic weapon development would continue capturing the interest of reporters in Africa, and *Liberator* hoped to amplify those voices. For example, UN secretary general U. Thant spoke about how there was a racist element to the U.S. dropping the atomic bomb over Japan but not willing to drop the bomb over Germany to end WW2.<sup>74</sup>

Nkrumah held conferences on the dangers of weapons of mass destruction. There was a real palpable fear in Ghana that the U.S. was going to use this newfound power to continue to oppress nations in Africa. T.D. Baffoe wrote about this phenomenon in the *Ghanaian Times*, and expressed how the U.S. was largely viewed as an oppressive police state by the rest of the world. *Liberator* republished this article in a 1964 edition of their newspaper.

## U.S. Image in Ghana

The following article appeared in *The Ghanaian Times* (5/30/64) under the by-line of its Editor-in-Chief, T.D. Baffoe, who recently toured the U.S. as a member of a Ghana delegation.

officers whisked off the man, Odis Hyde, to his place of work in a police car and were to stay with him wherever he went, from the toilet to the lunch room, while a third rather well-mannered giant of a security agent was put on the



terical drama.

The Afro-Americans' struggle strengthened by the successes of the African Liberation movement and the social and ideological revolution raging in our continent, is now beyond the point of appeasement

T.D. Baffoe was a Ghanaian journalist who toured the U.S. as a part of a delegation. While he was in Chicago, President Lyndon Johnson was set to visit the area. In anticipation of his arrival, Johnson’s secret police worked with the FBI to send notices to Baffoe and other suspected communists to “refrain from either opening the window” in their hotel rooms, or making any gestures that would “cause alarm to any of the security personnel.” A poor Black

<sup>72</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 51.

<sup>73</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 51.

<sup>74</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 62.

couple that had expressed anti-capitalist sentiments were guarded by two members of Johnson's secret police as well, during his visit to Chicago. Baffoe later learned that several hotels in the area were similarly visited by the secret police, and suspected subversives were tightly surveillanced.

Baffoe writes that while he understands the measures the U.S. is taking to protect internal security (especially so soon after Kennedy's assassination), he is unable to accept the hypocrisy of these same people having an opinion about the importance of maintaining a free democracy in Africa. Baffoe writes, "But when their journalists, who have not carefully studied events in Africa and seem not to know the history of America's own struggle for independence... dare to moralize to Ghana, and to Africa, about the liberty of the individual in a democratic society, then it is the duty of the press and Governments in Africa to tell off the holier-than-thou hostile U.S. press."

It is this solidarity between American leftists and activists in Africa that prompted the FBI to carefully monitor journalists in *Liberator Magazine*. The Bureau hoped to curtail efforts of Pan-Africanism and decolonization by pitting internationalist writers against domestic civil rights activists, capitalizing on tensions between groups like AMSAC and LCA. Similar to how the FBI monitored *Ramparts*, their monitoring of *Liberator* showed the threat that the Third World Left posed to the U.S. government, as they felt they were going to lose their control of domestic and global affairs.

#### **Chapter 4: Conclusion**

Solidarity with the Third World Left through internationalist efforts was undoubtedly one of the most defining hallmarks of leftist activism during the 60s and 70s. Individuals traveled abroad to witness movements happening in countries like Cuba, Ghana, and the Congo, and worked with grassroots organizations like Venceremos to help in the fight against American imperialism. Yet, the impact of these efforts would not have been nearly as large without these stories being amplified by leftist press outlets like *Liberator* and *Ramparts*.

As evidenced by Hoover's "lit.-cop federalism" practices, the U.S. government recognized the power that these leftist news outlets had in mobilizing the counterculture against U.S. policies. It is for this exact reason that they worked so hard to discredit and dismantle

organizations that were spreading an anti-imperialist message at a time when Cold War fears of communism were so high.

The work of the underground press at a time when the country was so afraid of the Third World Left was invaluable in preserving freedom of speech and the freedom of the press. The extent of FBI's tracking of their work goes to show how effective these papers were at challenging mainstream narratives, even if for a short period of time. They provided a voice for the silenced stories of decolonization and internationalist movements that the FBI did not want circulated.

When we look at the evolution of news today, specifically post-2016, we can see how the government is able to discredit news that attempts to hold people in power accountable. While there is a large body of polarized, inaccurate information being circulated, the government sweeps genuine investigative journalism into that category to draw attention away from their own corruption. In the same way Hoover was eventually successful in silencing the Underground Press, the last 5 years have shown us how effective the government can be at discrediting unsavory news. This illustrates how important it is to have access to reliable news that paints a holistic picture of the truth, outside of the narrative that politicians want us to believe. With the oversaturation of content and media, it is unclear where we will receive our information going forward. However, there is a strong and timely lesson to be learned from the Underground Press Syndicate of the 1960s and 1970s. They demonstrated the profound effect that ground-breaking investigative journalism can have, in spite of a federal police force that hoped to silence it at every turn.

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# Oracle: The History Journal of Boston College

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## **Leftist Activism in the Face of a Conservative Catholic Administration: The Students for a Democratic Society Chapter at Boston College**

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**LEFTIST ACTIVISM IN THE FACE OF A CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC  
ADMINISTRATION: THE STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY CHAPTER  
AT BOSTON COLLEGE**

BRENDAN MAHONEY\*

**Abstract:** The Students for a Democratic Society Chapter (SDS) at Boston College, officially active from the year 1967 into the early 1970s, was an SDS chapter unlike all others. While most of the infamous SDS chapters of the time existed at liberal, public schools, the SDS chapter at Boston College was different. The Boston College SDS chapter had the unique challenge of having to organize in act while the looming pressure of a conservative, Catholic administration watching. This pressure led to multiple ideological changes, spanning from leanings towards revolutionary Marxist politics to softer reformist ideas. This paper documents these changes and catalogs exactly when and why these changes occurred, and the ripple effects that they caused across the campus of Boston College. This paper also maps the ways in which these ideological changes led to the Boston College SDS's intersectional interactions with other leftist groups such as workers unions and the Black Panther Party.

**Introduction**

The SDS or the Students for a Democratic Society was an anti-war group that formed in the 1960s in campuses across the US to push for leftist reforms and protest the war in Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> However, there is an added component to SDS activism when it comes to Boston College (BC), which is a desire not just to fulfill the goals of the national SDS, but also to directly combat the Jesuit Catholic establishment at the school. Thomas (Tom) Gallagher was one of the founders and leaders of the SDS at BC, reflects in an oral history interview in 1985, and he recalls a specific incident demonstrating this difference of national versus local, “I remember the thing that actually

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<sup>1</sup> Brendan Mahoney is a sophomore in MCAS majoring in history with a minor in English, and he hopes to pursue graduate school in history following his undergraduate studies. Around campus, Brendan is involved in both Best Buddies and the Mock Trial Team at BC, and holds leadership positions in both. His historical interests revolve around radical social movements, counter-culture, and the New Left, specifically the Students for a Democratic Society, both on a national and a local level.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Flacks and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *The Port Huron Statement: Sources and Legacies of the New Left's Founding Manifesto* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

caused me the most trouble was not the abolition of ROTC. It was the availability of birth control information and devices in the campus infirmary. Oh-h-h— people went nuts.”<sup>3</sup>

This recollection of Gallagher is just one of many ways that the SDS at BC had to cope with the Catholic establishment at the school. At this time, birth control was becoming more readily accessible, so it would be a given to have it accessible to students. However, it had recently been outlined in a 1968 Papal Encyclical that artificial contraceptives were evil, and against the will of God.<sup>4</sup> While the abolition of Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) may have been higher on the national list for the SDS, there was a greater priority to exert power over other men, as the famous social movement sociologist William Gamson suggested, in this case that would be the Catholic establishment vehemently against contraception.<sup>5</sup>

The SDS at Boston College is a complicated topic at face value, simply because the placement of a leftist student organization at a school which prides itself on adherence to Catholic Doctrine and the Papacy. This paper seeks to examine the ways student activism in SDS at Boston College both faced head on, and strategically dodged, the dogma of Catholic Church to further a radical progressive agenda at an intrinsically conservative school. This project builds on the work of scholars of the SDS and the New Left as a whole by focusing on a Jesuit Catholic University such as Boston College. It is the conditions of this religiousness, underlying support of the war, as well as the harsh administrative policies that shaped many of the actions taken by the SDS leaders at Boston College, sometimes even causing the BC SDS to stray from many of the policies of the national Students for a Democratic Society Organization.

### **Reactionary Radicalism**

Student activists at SDS used the printed word to debate and promote their ideas, both at Boston College and on the national level. While it is true that major contributors to the SDS movement at Boston College wrote opinion-editorials in *The Heights*, the newspaper of Boston College, many such as Tom Gallagher wrote other places. One of these other places, per my correspondence with Gallagher himself, was a magazine called *Cement*, that was described by

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<sup>3</sup> Bret Eynon, STUDENT MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960’S The Reminiscences of Thomas Gallagher, April 15, 1985, Columbia University Department of Oral History, <https://dx.doi.org/10.7916/d8-0d4y-ec48>.

<sup>4</sup> Pope Paul VI, “Humanae Vitae (July 25, 1968) | Paul VI,” The Vatican, July 25, 1968, [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_25071968\\_humanae-vitae.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html).

<sup>5</sup> William Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest* (The Dorsey Press, 1975), pp. 36-38.



Gallagher as “unorthodox and short lived.”<sup>6</sup> I made a few attempts to find this magazine in the archives of Boston College, specifically at the Burns Library, where all the archives of Boston College are housed. Sadly, I was made aware that while the Burns library has copies of this publication in their storage, it is unprocessed and will likely not be published for months or even years.<sup>7</sup> Due to the lack of access to *Cement*, I rely heavily on sources from *The Heights* for primary source work, as it is about all that is available to me at this time. However, in the future, should *Cement*, or any other relevant publication become available to me, they would be studied for any supplementary material that they may provide for the base of this paper.

Hubert Humphrey, the US Vice-President to Vietnam War overseer Lyndon B. Johnson, took a fateful trip to Boston College in October of 1966.<sup>8</sup> *The Heights* reports that four pacifists were handing out leaflets to advertise a picket line to protest the visit of who these four saw as a war hawk.<sup>9</sup> After about an hour they were presented with an ultimatum to either leave or face violence, to which the activists chose the latter and were assaulted and sworn at. It was also reported that the members of the assaulting bunch had associations with the school’s ROTC, adding even more fuel to the fire as ROTC had already been a point of contention for progressives as mentioned by Tom Gallagher above.<sup>10</sup> Upon the arrival of Humphrey, there were still many active protesters against his visit (Figure 1).

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Gallagher and Brendan Mahoney, “The SDS at Boston College,” September 6, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> This information is per Shelley Barber, the Archives Specialist at Boston College’s Burns Library

<sup>8</sup> Editor--The Heights, “The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 4 — 14 October 1966”  
Href="https://Newspapers.Bc.Edu/Iiif/Issue/Bcheights19661014/Manifest.Json?Manifest=https%3a%2f%2fnewspapers.Bc.Edu%2fiif%2fissue%2fbcheights19661014%2fmanifest.Json" Target="\_blank"><img Style="width: 20px;" Alt="IIIF Collection Link" Src="/Custom/Bostonsh/Web/Images/Iiif-Logo.Png" /></A> — Boston College Newspapers,” *The Heights*, October 14, 1966.

<sup>9</sup> Editor--The Heights, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Bret Eynon, STUDENT MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960’S The Reminiscences of Thomas Gallagher.



Figure 1: Hubert Humphrey visiting BC.<sup>11</sup>

The most peculiar thing about this entire protest would be the immediate reaction from the student body and administration. The response of administration categorized those fifteen attackers as vigilantes who have “no right to oppose” those demonstrating, even if they disagree with the protestors.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, BC Administration made it clear that, although these students thought they were aiding the university, they were tarnishing the reputation of the school. Finally, and more importantly than all, it was made crystal-clear that these students were not reflecting the values and beliefs of the “majority” of the student population.<sup>13</sup>

### Early Ideological Struggle—1966

While the SDS was not technically allowed to participate or organize in any campus activities because they were not recognized by the Campus Council, it did not stop the SDS from penning a letter to *The Heights*. They wrote a wish list to “Santa,” which was a pseudonym for Fr. Walsh.<sup>14</sup> This letter went beyond the early typical nonviolence and peace approach of the SDS, taking a more radical approach when referring to the university administration:

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<sup>11</sup> Sub Turri, *Vice President Hubert Humphrey Arrives on Campus, with Protestors in Rear.*, October 13, 1966, October 13, 1966, <https://www.proudfreain.org/2017/10/18/hello-hhh-and-vietnam/>.

<sup>12</sup> Editor--The Heights, “The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 4 — 14 October 1966, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Editor--The Heights, 4.

<sup>14</sup> SDS at BC, “The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 11 — 14 December 1966,” *The Heights*, December 14, 1966, 4.

Dear Santa: We are fed up with the results of our previous nonviolent approaches in dealing with bourgeois, imperialist, fascist menace on our campus. We have been bogged down in our efforts to construct a miniature People's Republic, through the bumbling bureaucracy of the capitalist demon. .... If the Marxist ideal, which we hold sacred, is to be eternally perpetuated, it indeed appears that total revolution is imminent We will not and cannot be concerned by bloodshed. Our goal is too lofty to be disturbed by any value that others may see in human life. Terrorism is our only feasible alternative... <sup>15</sup>

This letter reads nothing like the generally soft-spoken writings of Tom Hayden. This characterization is not to disparage the writings of Hayden, as he was a revolutionary in his own right. Rather, this is meant to categorize a contrast between Hayden and the BC SDS. This reads like a manifesto. The appearance of words such as bourgeois, imperialist, and fascist in a negative context juxtaposed with words such as Marxist, revolution, and bloodshed in a positive context, offers a level of radicalism unheard of thus far in the history of the SDS at Boston College.<sup>16</sup> In accordance with the letter to Santa format, this decisive statement had hopes of being delivered directly to Fr. Walsh (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Fr. Walsh as Santa in *The Heights*.<sup>17</sup>

One contrasting argument to this theory comes from the work of Max Elbaum, a historian who chronicles the New Communist Movement of the late 1970s in many books and articles.

<sup>15</sup> SDS at BC, 4.

<sup>16</sup> SDS at BC, 4.

<sup>17</sup> George Viens, *Father Walsh as Santa*, December 14, 1966, Newspaper Article, December 14, 1966, <https://newspapers.bc.edu/?a=d&d=bcheights19661214.1.4&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->.

Elbaum argues that historians and those reflecting on the period often try to cover up the more radical ideas of students who were apart of these movements.<sup>18</sup> Elbaum also proffers that although the height of the New Communist Movement came in 1968, it had been building for years prior. When US students were polled about the 1968 election, about twenty percent of them said that they align much more with someone such as Che Guevara, rather than any of the candidates up for election.<sup>19</sup>

In a reflective piece written by Tom Hayden titled “Crafting the Port Huron Statement,” close to his death in 2016, Hayden talks about 1966 as a year of transition.<sup>20</sup> Hayden talks about how this year, the same year that the BC SDS began getting off of the ground, was a year in which the SDS began to reject the Port Huron Statement as “too reformist.”<sup>21</sup> Hayden goes on to admit that for those organizations of the SDS across the nation that were more focused on Marxist radicalism had to abandon the Port Huron Statement. Hayden even argues that the “default” pacifist ideology that the SDS began with was something that less and less students across the nation could identify with.<sup>22</sup>

To return to the BC Santa manifesto, such radical words were infrequent, if mentioned at all in the Port Huron Statement.<sup>23</sup> There are a few plausible reasons for a detachment of the SDS at Boston College from the softer, “default” New Left approach of Hayden to a more radical Marxist approach. One of these factors would be the tensions within the SDS, and the powder keg that was the 1967 SDS National Convention.<sup>24</sup>

The influence of these Catholic ideas of being were especially pertinent in the ever-relevant Humphrey demonstrations. Many of the counter-protests to the SDS-aligned people at Boston College directly associated anti-Communism with Catholicism, chanting things such as “Kill a commie for Christ.”<sup>25</sup> The direct association with anti-leftist ideas and Christianity is not a new idea, but it had yet to be seen on the Boston College campus, as previously, attacks on SDS

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<sup>18</sup> Max Elbaum, “Project MUSE - What Legacy from the Radical Internationalism of 1968?,” 2002, <https://muse-jhu-edu.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/article/30229>.

<sup>19</sup> Max Elbaum.

<sup>20</sup> Tom Hayden, “Crafting the Port Huron Statement,” *University of Pennsylvania Press*, 2015, 16–39, <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812290998-002>.

<sup>21</sup> Tom Hayden, 28.

<sup>22</sup> Tom Hayden, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Flacks and Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Port Huron Statement*.

<sup>24</sup> Jack A Smith, “An Independent Radical Newsweekly,” *National Guardian*, July 15, 1967, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Bill McDonald, “Hello HHH . . . and Vietnam | PROUD REFRAIN,” October 18, 2017, <https://www.proudfrefrain.org/2017/10/18/hello-hhh-and-vietnam/>.

members had been based solely in opposition to leftist ideals, rather than a mixture of opposition to leftism and a desire to embrace individual Catholic beliefs. The people chanting these anti-communist phrases were not the same people who were entrenched in religionless Christianity, these are the people who adhered to orthodox Christian doctrine. These orthodox Catholics had now come to associate their religion with anti-communism, and by extent anti-SDS beliefs. In an ironic way, the anti-leftist rhetoric from Catholics motivated an even further form of leftism, easily identifiable with Marxism and Maoism, because of Catholic prejudice. Catholicism and the SDS seem to act as two magnets of the same pole, pushing one another further away from each other, and more importantly, the middle.

### **Beginning of Action—1967**

While 1966 may have been the nominal start for the SDS at Boston College, 1967 is most definitely the start of action. 1967 as a catalyst for action was also likely in part due to the official rejection of student organization recognition by the Campus Council in January of 1967.<sup>26</sup> When reasons for the rejection of the SDS had to be listed, the Campus Council Chair, David Gay, cited the actions of the national SDS, as well as the actions of the Harvard SDS.<sup>27</sup> BC's SDS did later collaborate with Harvard's SDS in 1970, to protest against Secretary Robert McNamara, who was seen as a war hawk.<sup>28</sup> The SDS was seen not just as an activist group, but rather a group made to "overthrow existing social forms,"<sup>29</sup> implying a Marxist tendency of the group at BC. This insinuation from Gay reinforces all the points made above. To summarize, the administration-aligned Campus Council's lens of Jesuit Catholicism motivated even more radical, Marxist politics from the BC SDS.

Tom Gallagher recalls what he terms vigils that started in the Spring of 1967, which would consist of SDS members lining the sidewalks around lunch time on Friday.<sup>30</sup> His firsthand accounts are an invaluable source. During this time, the SDS members would hand out period pieces, whether it be poems or photos of the Vietnam War.<sup>31</sup> While the information acted as

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<sup>26</sup> John Golenski, "The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 14 — 10; The History: SDS at Boston College," *The Heights*, February 10, 1967, *The Heights*, Volume XLVII, Number 14 — 10 edition, 3.

<sup>27</sup> John Golenski, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Bob Ruff, "55,000 Attend Harvard Rally," *The Heights*, May 13, 1970, Volume L, Number 27 edition, 00.

<sup>29</sup> John Golenski, "The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 14 — 10; The History: SDS at Boston College, 3."

<sup>30</sup> Bret Eynon, *STUDENT MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960'S The Reminiscences of Thomas Gallagher*.

<sup>31</sup> Bret Eynon.

subliminal messaging, the loudest part about the demonstrations was the silence, that Gallagher and others vowed to hold during these demonstrations.<sup>32</sup> There would be silence unless there was a conversation to be had between an interested bystander and an SDS picketer.

Controversially, some of the SDS decided upon an even harsher form of period pieces to use: photos of “napalm babies” from *Ramparts* magazine.<sup>33</sup> These were images of children who had been mutilated by the napalm used by the American soldiers. These photos had a goal of inspiring a hatred of the war by seeing the destruction that it had caused to native Vietnamese people. Rather, this was taken in a different way. Students at BC who had received the “glossy,” as Gallagher called it, versions of these innocent children were disturbed, but for the wrong reasons.<sup>34</sup> These people were disturbed that the SDS would hand these items out, not disturbed that the innocent people in North Vietnam were facing biological warfare from the US and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).

These photographs were handed out in silence. However, this silence was nothing like the manifesto-like letter to Santa. In only a few months, there was a transition from active, violent revolutionary politics to passive non-violent resistance. Perhaps the re-softening of the SDS was meant to help the SDS’s case with the Campus Council. Conversely, it is also possible that this was no resoftening at all, perhaps this form of protest was even harsher. To the latter point, being less obnoxious with a passive protest likely played to the hand of the SDS, because of its perception. The perception of these protests is that they were meant to point out minor flaws, that all lead back to a main issue (in this case, Vietnam). But the best thing about this protest is that it did not explicitly seem like a desire structural change, which tended to scare people, as Gamson had warned prospective protest groups of.<sup>35</sup> Although the Boston College SDS, specifically, did desire a sort of Marxist change, the vigils did not seem to be violent and structurally challenging.

In April, about two months later, the impossible happened. In the BC SDS’s second attempt to gain recognition from the Campus Council, in a vote of 9-3, they gained recognition.<sup>36</sup> However, there were a few amendments to this acceptance, including the second amendment,

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<sup>32</sup> Bret Eynon.

<sup>33</sup> Bret Eynon.

<sup>34</sup> Bret Eynon.

<sup>35</sup> William Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest*, 38.

<sup>36</sup> Editor--The Heights, “The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 19 — 7 April 1967,” *The Heights*, April 7, 1967, 3.

which said that if the SDS violates any undergraduate government policy, their recognition would be immediately revoked, a policy that no other club had to deal with.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Height of the BC SDS—1968-1969**

April twenty-fourth, 1968, would be one of the boundary testing days for the ideological associations of the BC SDS. The Boston College Faculty Committee for Peace and the Students for a Democratic Society Chapter planned an event called the “Academic Day of Conscience.”<sup>38</sup> This event started with a mourning for those lost at war and those lost in “ghetto rebellion,” which effectively evoke Marxist imagery of the rebellion of the proletariat.<sup>39</sup>

If this was not enough radicalism from the SDS to drive Fr. Walsh and other Jesuits mad, there was a movie presentation of *Victory Will Be Ours*, a French film that reflects on the struggle of the North Vietnamese in their communist revolutionary struggle against the French.<sup>40</sup> The turn towards open sympathy to communism was a boundary test to say the least, in comparison to the soft politics of the previous Spring.

The lecture portion of the day ended with a speech from the storied professor and author, Howard Zinn, known for his progressive history of America, *A People’s History of the United States*.<sup>41</sup> In this book, Zinn speaks very briefly on the SDS, but argues in favor of including women not only in movements for women’s rights, but in all leftist issues of race and class struggle, for the furthering of the organization.<sup>42</sup> Zinn’s talk that night called for the immediate withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam, and collaboration with the new Vietnamese Communist government (certain to win the war, in Zinn’s eyes), in order to rebuild a post-war Vietnam.<sup>43</sup> Zinn’s talk attracted a large crowd of not only SDS members, but curious students in general. The existence and even further, the popularity of Howard Zinn’s talk, proved two points.

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<sup>37</sup> Editor--The Heights, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Editor--The Heights, “Academic Day of Conscience Opens up Dialogue at BC — The Heights, Volume XLVIII, Number 21 — 7 May 1968,” *The Heights*, May 7, 1968, Volume XLVIII, Number 21 edition, 5.

<sup>39</sup> Editor--The Heights, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Editor--The Heights, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States : 1492-Present*, vol. Third edition (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013), <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=nlebk&AN=1052356&site=ehost-live&custid=s4194587>.

<sup>42</sup> Zinn, 507.

<sup>43</sup> Editor--The Heights, “Academic Day of Conscience Opens up Dialogue at BC — The Heights, Volume XLVIII, Number 21 — 7 May 1968.”

It was this merger of the SDS and the CPF (Catholic Peace Foundation) that led Tom Gallagher into writing letters and writing articles for *The Old Mole*, an alternative Marxist magazine named for a Marxist metaphor of the old mole, or the idea that there is an old mole of revolution that will pop its head up every so often throughout history.<sup>44</sup> *The Old Mole* had gained quite a following of the more radical leftists (Marxists, Leninists, and the like), which Gallagher saw as an opportunity to write in a revolutionary perspective, that he was not afforded with *The Heights*.

In a piece titled “eagle,” Gallagher speaks about the platform of the SDS (notice how it is still referred to as the SDS) at Boston College. While this platform included standard pacifist tenets of SDS policy such as a desire to abolish ROTC and demand for birth control access across campus, this article demanded more class-based, radical things.<sup>45</sup> Gallagher and the SDS asked for university for intervention in the rent-gouging of off-campus housing, which would essentially be an authoritarian intervention into capitalist dealings.<sup>46</sup> Gallagher even delved into the criticism that the students at Boston College get for their actions in the SDS, targeting priests and members of the administration. To this accusation he made the following remark:

The main thrust of the campaign was to build a movement rather than a structure. Our position papers indicated that we felt that student power in itself was insufficient. Students should play a large part in running the university, but they were responsible to society at large and should realize that they could not entirely humanize the university until oppressive social structures throughout all of America were changed as well.<sup>47</sup>

Gallagher makes the intricate, metaphysical argument that we cannot humanize the people in the positions of oppression until the positions themselves are abolished. In layman’s terms, Gallagher argues that removing positions of oppression such as administration would allow for the people in those positions to be freed, but more importantly, the oppressed would be freed. Also in this article, Gallagher argues that the cause of radical pessimism about change is not just the people in power, but the ideals they hold. Gallagher cites Irish Catholic Conservatism and the reputation of prestige that it carries as a shield from progressive change.<sup>48</sup> These ideals are virtually

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<sup>44</sup> Marxists.org Editors, “Glossary of Terms: Old Mole,” Marxists.org, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/o/1.htm>.

<sup>45</sup> Edward Romano et al., “Old Mole: Old Mole,” *Old Mole* 1, no. 9 (14 1969), <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28015584>, 6.

<sup>46</sup> Romano et al, 6.

<sup>47</sup> Romano et al, 6.

<sup>48</sup> Romano et al, 6.



untouchable, as they are entrenched in anything and everything about Boston College; in turn, the only way to make progressive change is destruction of the structures that allow tradition to rule the campus of BC.

The BC SDS would soon turn to help striking General Electric workers which consisted of chants advocating for the destruction of the “world scab” that GE was.<sup>49</sup> This was not just strike advocacy for fairer treatment of the GE workers. This was advocacy in favor of Marxist politics for the complete annihilation of bourgeois ownership of the means of production. The starkest contrast between this action, and the action of the Day of Conscience only a year earlier was the view on North Vietnam. In 1968, the view of Ho Chi Minh and his government was based on their desire to withdraw American troops from the conflict. Additionally, it was clear that Zinn, and others, had sympathies for the innocent people slaughtered in the war in Vietnam. However, Boston College students, during the GE protests, chanted “Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh!”<sup>50</sup> This chant was accompanied by the other chants in favor of abolition of General Electric for their malpractice. This chant was not just sympathy towards Ho, this was allegiance, and even an allusion to Catholicism and Fr. Walsh’s position as administrative Santa. Put simply, the General Electric Strike allowed SDS at BC students, and students across the region, to align directly with a union for radical politics.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Peak and Successive Landslide—1970**

Radical activism was at its all-time at Boston College following the Academic Day of Conscience, the General Electric strike, and a transition in the general ideology towards Marxism. The following year, 1970, would be a year of a great high, and a year that would represent the symbolic end of the SDS at Boston College.

The shifted ideology of the BC SDS ultimately led to Huey Newton, one of the founders of the Black Panther Party to speak of Boston College in the Fall of 1970.<sup>52</sup> While the Boston College SDS members were honored to have a revolutionary leader such as Huey Newton appear

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<sup>49</sup> Abarca, 106.

<sup>50</sup> Abarca.

<sup>51</sup> Abarca, 107.

<sup>52</sup> Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, “Rupture,” in *Black against Empire*, 1st ed., The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party (University of California Press, 2016), 341–71, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv1xxsj1.22>.

on their campus, the authors of “Rupture,” a book chapter which catalogues the search for allies of the BPP, describes Newton’s visit to Boston College as an obligatory one. A visit which Newton needed to make in order to maintain college students, especially those far from the home of the BPP, as allies for the party (speech below).<sup>53</sup> Huey Newton however, was welcomed with open arms by the radical students at Boston College, as he presented the ideals of the Black Panther Party.

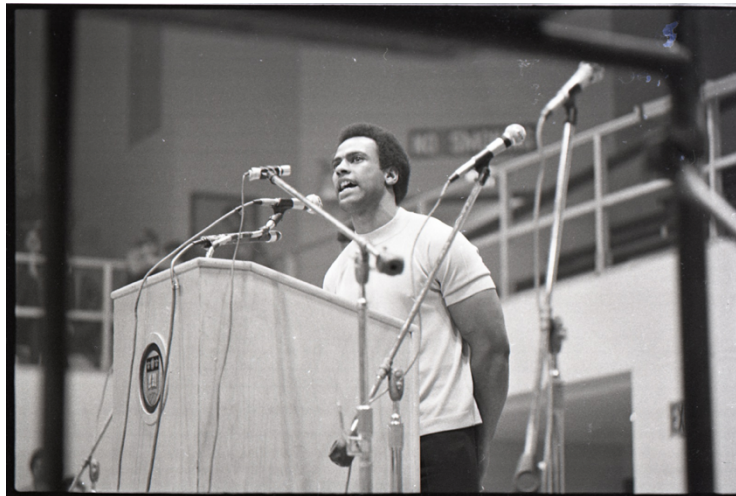


Figure 3: Huey Newton speaking at Boston College.<sup>54</sup>

Tonight, I would like to outline for you the Black Panther Party’s program and also explain how we arrived at our ideological position and why we feel it necessary to institute a Ten Point Program. A Ten Point Program is not revolutionary in itself, nor is it reformist. It’s a *survival program*. We feel that we, the people are threatened with genocide because racism and fascism is rampant. . . . We intend to change all of that. In order to change it, there must be a total transformation. But until such time that we can achieve that total transformation, we must exist. In order to exist, we must survive, so, therefore, we need a survival kit. . .

This plea from Huey Newton emphasized the necessity of students and specifically SDS members in the struggle for global liberation of oppressed peoples. As Rossinow notes in *The Politics of Authenticity*, it was a point of importance for the BPP to have interracial protests for freedoms, that consisted of more than Party members.<sup>55</sup> The example of the University of Texas

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<sup>53</sup> Bloom and Martin, 355.

<sup>54</sup> Jeff Albertson, *Huey P. Newton Speaking at Boston College: Newton at the Podium, November 18, 1970*, November 18, 1970, Photograph, November 18, 1970, <https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/muph057-b004-sl514-i018>.

<sup>55</sup> Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 201.

SDS in Rossinow's book, show how the BPP and SDS learned much from each other. The students of the UT-SDS had immense organizing power, while the BPP had a larger array of resources to provide breakfasts for local Austin kids.<sup>56</sup>

While the population of black students at Boston College was not extensive in 1970, it was around this time that the Black Student Union at Boston College would form.<sup>57</sup> This speech from Huey Newton was aimed at members of this group, in part, but also in part to all students who sought to effect change through activism at BC. Many of these members of the Black Student Union would join the SDS in the late stages of its lifetime and would independently partake in a short takeover of Gasson Hall at BC.<sup>58</sup> Regardless, the connections between black students, the Black Student Union, the BPP, and the SDS at BC are undeniable, as many of the members of these groups would entirely overlap with one another. While the numbers of black students in the SDS at BC were small (as were the numbers of women in the SDS at BC), this was most easily attributed to the small numbers of black students at BC in general.<sup>59</sup> However small these ties were with the SDS, the ties of black students at BC to the BPP, and its leaders, proved strong as Bobby Seale would speak at BC four years later, about a revived brand of black nationalism.<sup>60</sup>

By November of 1970, Boston College's chapter of the Students for a Democratic society had interacted with various elements of leftism, everything from labor to the Black Power movement. This was not the same group that struggled to gain recognition from the Campus Council. This was not the same group that tried to remove the ROTC chapter from campus. This was a student organization that had truly become radical, and it was a group that had made significant change and was on its way to make even more improvements towards forming a truly democratic society.

This decrease in popular support is clear while searching for the key-term "SDS" in the Boston College online magazine repository.<sup>61</sup> Between the years of 1960-1969, there were one hundred seventy-six results for this keyword.<sup>62</sup> In the years of 1970-1979, there were only thirty-

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<sup>56</sup> Doug Rossinow, 200.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Gallagher, Thomas Gallagher Oral History of the SDS at BC—Conducted by Brendan Mahoney, March 28, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J12-UtrX3NA&t=1451s>.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Gallagher.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Gallagher.

<sup>60</sup> Black Student Forum, "Bobby Seale, New Directions for the Black Panther Party," *The Heights*, February 4, 1974.

<sup>61</sup> Boston College Libraries, "Boston College Newspapers," 2022, <https://newspapers.bc.edu/>.

<sup>62</sup> Boston College Libraries.

two results in total.<sup>63</sup> This is a drastic drop, to say the least. When the SDS did happen to be mentioned in the 1970s, it is mentioned by the magazine of Newton College (a future part of Boston College), 885, as a rag-tag, disorganized group focused on “trashing” property and lighting things on fire.<sup>64</sup> This type of action makes one think of the aforementioned “bad sixties,” when leftism supposedly went off the deep end. The SDS had all but stopped formal operations, and activism by 1972.

### Conclusion

All in all, the story of the SDS at BC is one of resilience. The SDS chapter at Boston College would perpetually face challenges, to which they would meet with great valor, and overcome in the name of radicalism. The BC-SDS would morph from a pacifist organization to one of radical Marxist politics, with the intention of abolishing the structures of oppression at Boston College, and the world in general. While it is unlikely that the Boston College SDS chapter had worldly impacts like they had hoped, they paved the way for leftist politics at Boston College, such as the modern Marxist magazine, *Platypus*, which has a Boston College specific reading group, that is recognized by the Office of Student Involvement (the successor to the Campus Council).<sup>65</sup>

As a student at Boston College myself, I can walk into Maloney Hall or McGuinn Hall, and see a stack of pamphlets titled *The Platypus Review* ready for any student at the school to take advantage of (seen above, McGuinn to the left and Maloney to the right). It is quite easy to make the argument that these sources of leftism would not be as readily available if it were not for the SDS at Boston College. As Gallagher, Simon, Moriarty, and others had hoped for and had built up, radicalism was made more “glamorous”<sup>66</sup> and acceptable at Boston College and will be for the foreseeable future.

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<sup>63</sup> Boston College Libraries.

<sup>64</sup> 885 Editors, “885, Volume II, Number 4, 7 November 1972,” November 7, 1972, <https://newspapers.bc.edu/?a=d&d=eighteightfive19721107-01.2.2&srpos=27&e=-----197-en-20--21-byDA-txt-txIN-SDS----->, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Platypus BC, “The Platypus Affiliated Society – Platypus Boston College Primary Marxist Reading Group Summer/Fall 2020 – Winter 2021,” Platypus 1917, Fall 2020, <https://platypus1917.org/2020/09/03/platypus-boston-college-primary-marxist-reading-group-summer-fall-2020-winter-2021/>.

<sup>66</sup> Bret Eynon, STUDENT MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960’S The Reminiscences of Thomas Gallagher.

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## **The Oppressed Teaching the Oppressed: The Black Panthers' Oakland Community School as a "Pedagogy of Hope"**

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# THE OPPRESSED TEACHING THE OPPRESSED: THE BLACK PANTHERS' OAKLAND COMMUNITY SCHOOL AS A “PEDAGOGY OF HOPE”

ALYSSA LEGO\*

**Abstract:** The Oakland Community School (OCS), founded by the Black Panther Party, emerged as a pioneering institution in the 1970s, providing comprehensive and revolutionary education for Black and underprivileged students in Oakland, California. This paper explores how the OCS embodied Paulo Freire’s “pedagogy of hope” and served as a catalyst for culturally responsive education models. Through an analysis of primary and secondary sources, the paper examines the OCS’s unique approach to education, including the teaching of Black Panther Party ideology within classrooms. Drawing upon Freire’s concepts of liberatory education and pedagogy of the oppressed, the paper highlights the alignment between OCS experiences and Freire’s framework. The three components of liberatory education and pedagogy of hope are considered in relation to the OCS, and the paper concludes with a discussion of transformative education and the use of the dialectic at the OCS. By connecting the OCS model and Freire’s inspirations, the paper sheds light on the relevance of culturally responsive education in contemporary contexts.

“... The kinship formed of the children and the staff and the teachers and the parents through the Oakland Community School, there was nothing like it,” said school director Ericka Huggins. “It really was like this gigantic family and I’ve never experienced anything quite like that since in a school setting.”<sup>2</sup> The Oakland Community School—the longest-standing survival program of the Black Panther Party—was a remarkable place, operating under the principle: “We serve the people everyday. We serve the people, body and soul.”<sup>3</sup> Born from a dire need for comprehensive, revolutionary education for Black and underprivileged students in Oakland, California in the 1970s, the Oakland Community School embodied a liberatory education. In this paper, I will

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<sup>2</sup> University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library, *University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library*, 2007, pp. 1-111, 82.

<sup>3</sup> Shani Ealey, “Black Panthers' Oakland Community School: A Model for Liberation,” Black Organizing Project, November 16, 2021, <https://blackorganizingproject.org/black-panthers-oakland-community-school-a-model-for-liberation/>.

demonstrate how the Oakland Community School personified Paulo Freire’s “pedagogy of hope” and inspired the call toward culturally responsive education models. I will begin by introducing the Black Panther Party’s Oakland Community School, followed by an overview of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. I will then discuss the practice of teaching Black Panther Party Ideology in OCS classrooms to begin a pedagogical analysis of the Oakland Community School. The main sections of my paper will connect Oakland Community School experiences and teaching philosophies to the three components of Paulo Freire’s “liberatory education” and “pedagogy of hope.” My analysis will conclude with a discussion of transformative education and the use of the dialectic at the Oakland Community School, connecting the model and Freire’s inspirations to contemporary calls for culturally responsive education.

The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) was founded in October 1966 in Oakland, California by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. The organization was revolutionary; from 1966 to 1982, its ideologies of Black nationalism, socialism, and armed self-defense (particularly in response to police brutality) manifested in a number of ways, including their survival programs. The Black Panther Party developed several survival programs aimed to meet many of the immediate needs of their communities, which included food assistance, drug awareness, health care access, police patrols, teen councils, and more.<sup>4</sup> But the particular focus of this paper is the Black Panther Party’s liberation schools. For the party, education was seen as a key to liberation and progression. In fact, Dr. Saturu Ned, a Black Panther Party alum, is known for the following quote, “Let’s circulate to educate, and educate to liberate!”<sup>5</sup>

Russell Rickford’s *We Are an African People: Independent Education, Black Power, and the Radical Imagination* sheds light on the Black Panthers as the leaders of the most influential liberation schools. He positions the liberation schools as projects consistent with the Panthers’ other radical enterprises, asserting they were “designed to infuse youngsters with revolutionary fervor and enable them to survive this corrupt system and build a new one that serves the people.”<sup>6</sup> However, Ericka Huggins, a member of the Black Panther Party, distinguishes the Oakland

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<sup>4</sup> “Black Panther Party Community Survival Programs @ Bppaln.org,” Black Panther Party Alumni Legacy Network, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://bppaln.org/programs>.

<sup>5</sup> Shani Ealey, “Black Panthers’ Oakland Community School: A Model for Liberation,” Black Organizing Project, November 16, 2021, <https://blackorganizingproject.org/black-panthers-oakland-community-school-a-model-for-liberation/>.

<sup>6</sup> Russell John Rickford, *We Are an African People: Independent Education, Black Power, and the Radical Imagination*, (Oxford University Press, 2016), 89.

Community School, stating that “there was no other school like Oakland Community School that the party ran.”<sup>7</sup> For that reason, I have chosen the Oakland Community School as a specific representation of the Black Panther Party’s liberation education, which I argue is a living model of Paulo Freire’s “pedagogy of hope” as outlined in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

The precursor to the Oakland Community School, called the Intercommunal Youth Institute (IYI), opened in 1971 with a mission to challenge the concept of “uneducable youth” battered and underserved by Oakland’s public school system. The initial IYI had minimal enrollment, teaching staff, and it was supported financially by the Black Panther Party. In the beginning, the IYI actually functioned as a home-school, where instructors and students lived together because the students were primarily Panther party children. During the year 1973, the IYI was growing and ready to serve the broader community. As such, the Party changed its name to the Oakland Community School (OCS).<sup>8</sup> But the tenets of innovative and radical education that began at the IYI continued to serve as the basis for the pedagogical practices of the Oakland Community School. On the transition from the IYI to OCS, former director Ericka Huggins says:

When we opened the doors, we had 90 students, five-year-olds through twelve-year-olds, and we had a child development center already for two to four-and-a-half year olds. Then within a couple months we had 150 students, which was our cap. We always had a huge waiting list and unborn children on that waiting list. People loved this school so much.<sup>9</sup>

From 1973 to 1982, the Oakland Community School functioned as a ten-year institution that instructed students in math, science, language arts (Spanish and English), history, art, physical education, choir, and environmental studies. However, through the core of student instruction, the school maintained its commitment to teaching students “how to think, not what to think.”<sup>10</sup> The Oakland Community School was tuition-free, serving students from a variety of different geographic locations and economic backgrounds. Particularly prophetic about the Oakland Community School was its untraditional level system, where students were divided into seven

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<sup>7</sup> Cline, David, Ericka C. Huggins oral history interview conducted by David P. Cline in Oakland, California, 2016 June 30, Other, Accessed 2016, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2016655435/>.

<sup>8</sup> Gore, Dayo F. et al., “Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education,” Essay, in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, (New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 170.

<sup>9</sup> University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library, *University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library*, 2007, pp. 1-111, 90.

<sup>10</sup> Gore et al., “Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education,” Essay, in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, (New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 170.

groups, each according to their ability and their need.<sup>11</sup> This format allowed each student at OCS to receive a customized curriculum fit for their learning style and level. It is also worth noting that the Oakland Community School paid special attention to students with learning differences. Special education consultants frequently visited OCS to identify students with learning challenges, and their individual learning plans were then adjusted accordingly.<sup>12</sup> This was remarkable, given the history that, in the 1970s, U.S. schools educated only one in five children with disabilities. Many states had laws excluding certain students, including children who were deaf, blind, emotionally disturbed, or had an intellectual disability.<sup>13</sup> According to school director Ericka Huggins, a typical day at the Oakland Community School went as follows:

The students remember starting the day with a ten minute exercise program. Breakfast, followed by a short, school wide interactive check-in preceded the morning classes. A nutritious lunch at midday and ten minutes of meditation in the early afternoon was followed by classes for the older children and rest for the smaller ones. Dinner concluded the day and the school vans transported the children who could not walk to their homes.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout OCS' nine years of operation, the school and learning models attracted the attention of other educators as a viable and powerful educational program. OCS head administrators Huggins, Howell, Newton, and Brown had a goal to make the Oakland Community School a replicable model, which was reflected in their careful and conscientious employee selection processes. At OCS, educators had to be patient and dedicated to successfully and effectively "educate the whole child."<sup>15</sup> In fact, in August 1977, the California State Department of Education gave its approval to the school as a *model* elementary school—an incredible testament to the success of OCS. The Oakland Community School was a legend in its time, with

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<sup>11</sup> Gore et al., "Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education," Essay, in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, (New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 170.

<sup>12</sup> Gore et al., "Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education," Essay, in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, (New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 173.

<sup>13</sup> "A History of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act," Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, November 18, 2022, <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/IDEA-History>.

<sup>14</sup> Shani Ealey, "Black Panthers' Oakland Community School: A Model for Liberation," Black Organizing Project, November 16, 2021.

<sup>15</sup> Gore et al., "Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education," Essay, in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, (New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 174.

director Ericka Huggins stating that: “We were the great-great-great-grandma of charter schools.”<sup>16</sup> She continues:

It was the most phenomenal teaching experience I’ve ever had and to be able to facilitate parents from poor communities especially communities of color without blame, shame, or judgment was a wonderful experience also. It was just entirely unique and I would like to see it happen again because it was a model that could be replicated anywhere, anytime, by anybody. It wasn’t that you had to be black or you had to be connected with an organization.<sup>17</sup>

The Oakland Community School’s remarkable flexibility and replicability extends the conversation far beyond Oakland California, the Black Panther Party, or the years 1973 to 1982. OCS’ educational philosophy embodies conversations about the role of education in social movements and in dismantling systems of oppression, as well as the case for culturally responsive education—which is particularly relevant in the present moment.

*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, written by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire in 1967 and 1968, is Freire’s attempt to, through pedagogical practice, help the oppressed fight back to regain their lost humanity, thus dismantling systems of oppression. His book, like the Oakland Community School, was born in the shadows of important historical moments. Latin America underwent significant political turmoil during the Cold War as the conflicting interests of the capitalist United States and the communist Soviet Union caused widespread tension and social unrest. In the 1960s and 1970s, military coups took place in Bolivia, Brazil, Argentina, and other South American nations, occasionally with support from the United States. The new authoritarian administrations in these nations were frequently openly hostile to communist ideologies. The 1964 military takeover of Brazil, which began with the removal of the left-leaning president João Goulart, had a special impact on Freire’s viewpoint in his works (including Freire and his literacy efforts). Freire wrote the book while exiled from his native country as it experienced an anti-communist regime change. As a result, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* emphasizes the role of education in social movements, critiquing the rise of authoritarianism and right-wing policies in Latin America at the time.

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<sup>16</sup> University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library, *University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library*, 2007, pp. 1-111, 87.

<sup>17</sup> University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library, *University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library*, 2007, pp. 1-111, 87.

Many revolutionary organizations like the Black Panthers in the late twentieth century also saw education as a key to not only liberation, but also to dismantling institutions of the dominant culture. Those educators found inspiration and theoretical bases in Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*—and Russell Rickford affirms this in his *We Are an African People: Independent Education, Black Power, and the Radical Imagination*. He writes, “Some read Brazilian theorist Paulo Freire, whose 1970 treatise, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, argued that the reconstruction of subject peoples required the cultivation of critical consciousness.”<sup>18</sup> Though we cannot say definitively whether any instructors at OCS read Freire’s work, this lens provides an interesting way to analyze the pedagogical practices of the Oakland Community School as a living model of the philosophies outlined in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

At the core of Freire’s “pedagogy of the oppressed” is the task for oppressed people to liberate themselves from an unjust system of oppression. According to Freire, any movement to defeat oppression must be led by oppressed people, so that they may play an active role in their own liberation. He writes:

Liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one. The man or woman who emerges is a new person, viable only as the oppressor-oppressed contradiction is superseded by the humanization of all people. Or to put it another way, the solution of the contradiction is born in the labor which brings into the world this new being: no longer oppressor, no longer oppressed, but human in the process of achieving freedom.<sup>19</sup>

Before presenting liberation as a “childbirth,” Freire introduces the role of education in his “pedagogy of the oppressed,” posing the question: How can education serve in helping oppressed people dismantle oppression and reach liberation? Central to his argument here is the idea that education can help people—the oppressors and the oppressed—realize their roles in oppressive systems, abandon them, and begin to define new roles independent of the systems that the dominant cultures depend upon. This notion of the oppressed leading—or educating—the oppressed manifests itself in the Oakland Community School, specifically through its practice of teaching Black Panther Party ideology to its students.

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<sup>18</sup> Russell John Rickford, *We Are an African People: Independent Education, Black Power, and the Radical Imagination*, (Oxford University Press, 2016), 11.

<sup>19</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 49.

The Black Panther Party's Ten-Point Program first emphasized the importance of liberation education in the Party, and many of those tenets were exercised through education at the Oakland Community School. The fifth tenet of the Ten-Point Program states:

We want decent education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present day-society. We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of the self. If you do not have knowledge of the self and your position in society and the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else.<sup>20</sup>

In many ways, the Oakland Community School was a working, living model of this tenet.

Research conducted by Robert P. Robinson, titled “Until the Revolution: Analyzing the Politics, Pedagogy, and Curriculum of the Oakland Community School,” examines how OCS used Black Panther Party ideology as a pedagogical practice in its early stages. On the ideological focus of OCS, Robinson writes, “This focus mixed some Marxist-Leninist-Maoist interpretations of capitalism with a Fanonian discourse on colonialism.”<sup>21</sup> This perspective also provides insight into the role that Oakland, California—a politically charged location at the time—played in shaping education at OCS. OCS was located at the very center of a community-wide education crisis, where “Oakland was one of the lowest-scoring school districts in California ... where other troubling issues for OUSD included school violence, the use of security guards on school campuses, and the highly contested plan to reduce the number of teachers in the district, resulting in larger class size and high student-teacher ratios.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, we can argue that Oakland was a site of colonial struggle, tasking the Black Panther Party with awakening a political consciousness in the poor Black and Brown communities of Oakland, so they could reach liberation through force. Understanding liberation education as an important task for the Black Panther Party highlights the way they used BPP ideology to shape the minds and belief systems of its students, the next generation of revolutionaries.

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<sup>20</sup> October 1966 Black Panther Party Platform and Program: What We Want, What We Believe, (1969, August 2), The Black Panther, p. 22, Retrieved from <http://solomon.bltc.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu>.

<sup>21</sup> Robert P Robinson, “Until the Revolution: Analyzing the Politics, Pedagogy, and Curriculum of the Oakland Community School,” *Espacio, Tiempo y Educación* 7, no. 1 (April 2020): pp. 181-203, <https://doi.org/10.14516/ete.273>, 185.

<sup>22</sup> Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, (New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 163.

The students at OCS engaged most closely with BPP ideology in their writing classes and assignments. Huey P. Newton, the founder of the Black Panther Party, had been charged with murdering Oakland police officer John Frey in 1967<sup>23</sup>, and, while he was in prison, a number of young comrades wrote him letters:

Dear Black Panthers,

I think it isn't right for you to be in jail. Well, you and I know there are bad people in the world, and the cops and the judge are the same. You didn't think for one minute I believed all this hogwash did you? About bombing Macy's etc. I'm giving 10 cents and I'll contribute more too. They'll keep you in jail for life over my dead body. I'll raise over \$10,000 someday, somehow but don't you worry I'll do it ..."

P.S. I'll be a Panther when I grow up. Please write me.<sup>24</sup>

In addition, the early Oakland Community School (then the Intercommunal Youth Institute) taught students about Panther activism, revolutionary philosophy, and Black history. They also took routine field trips to Panther trials.<sup>25</sup> A specific example of BPP ideology used as a pedagogical practice was the infusion of BPP rhetoric in the classroom. The following exchange indicates this:

*Teacher:* What is a pig?

*Student:* A pig is a low-down person who can be any color who beats us up and tells lies.

*Teacher:* How many types of pigs are there?

*Student:* Four types.

*Teacher:* Name them.

*Student:* The avaricious businessman pig (who may be a landowner or a store owner, the teacher interjected), the police pig, the president pig, and the National Guard pig.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> "Arrest of Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale," Arrest of Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale - Bay Area Television Archive, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://diva.sfsu.edu/collections/sfbatv/bundles/206879>.

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth Watts, (1970, March 15), A Letter From the Youth, The Black Panther, p. 10, Retrieved from: <http://solomon.bltc.alexanderstreet.com.ezproxy.gc.cuny.edu/cgi-bin/asp/philo/bltc/getvolume.pl?S16520#DIV27>.

<sup>25</sup> Jones, C., & Gayles, J. (2008). "The world is a child's classroom: An analysis of the Black Panther Party's Oakland Community School," in C. Payne & C. Strickland (Eds.), *Teach freedom: Education for liberation in the African-American tradition*, (Teachers College Press), 110-116.

<sup>26</sup> Jones, C., & Gayles, J. (2008). "The world is a child's classroom: An analysis of the Black Panther Party's Oakland Community School," in C. Payne & C. Strickland (Eds.), *Teach freedom: Education for liberation in the African-American tradition*, (Teachers College Press), 110-116.



Oakland Community School Students were also vocal in and familiar with the political atmosphere of Oakland, California. Between 1973 and 1975, Panthers leaders Elaine Brown and Bobby Seale ran for political office in Oakland. The below photo shows how Oakland Community School students were embedded in liberation education and how the political processes that surrounded them amplified their classroom lessons.



*Gregory Lewis, front, followed by Ericka Brown and Geromino Clark hold signs as they attend the Oakland Community School, the Black Panther liberation school in 1973. (Courtesy of Gregory Lewis)*

Through the letter, the exchange between student and teacher, and the above photo, we see how the youth had internalized the party teachings, equating the police, judicial systems, capitalism, and big business with a conceptual pig pen.<sup>27</sup> This encapsulates Black Panther Party Ideology, illustrating its place as the vanguard of the revolution, responsible for educating the future leaders that were students at the Oakland Community School.

Another important aspect of OCS that resonates with Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is the idea that the OCS administrators followed a tradition of revolutionary educators. “Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education” in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, written by OCS founding members Ericka Huggins and Angela Leblanc-Ernest, expands on this further:

In line with this great tradition of resistance, the OCS administrators saw the dire need for *quality* education and stepped forward to change educational conditions

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<sup>27</sup> Robert P Robinson, “Until the Revolution: Analyzing the Politics, Pedagogy, and Curriculum of the Oakland Community School,” *Espacio, Tiempo y Educación* 7, no. 1 (April 2020): pp. 181-203, <https://doi.org/10.14516/ete.273>, 185.

for youth of color. Each administrator was a BPP member at the time she became a school leader ... OCS administrators were able to apply lessons from their experience as BPP members to their teaching and community outreach.<sup>28</sup>

These firsthand accounts from OCS, coupled with the idea of a continuation of revolutionary education embodies Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, specifically the mandate that the oppressed must teach, and, thus, liberate the oppressed. The text states, "This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves."<sup>29</sup> This quote takes the stance that oppressed people must liberate themselves and their oppressors at the same time. It also resonates with and addresses the "banking" concept of education mentioned earlier. Freire writes, "Indeed, the interests of the oppressors lie in 'changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them': for the more the oppressed can be led to adapt to that situation, the more easily they can be dominated."<sup>30</sup> Here, Freire argues that the Western, dominant education system shapes the consciousness of its students, placing oppressed people further into systemic oppression. When this idea is matched to education, the "banking" concept of education plays a role in leading students to adapt to an oppressive society, rather than mobilize to fight it. As long as this process of adaptation continues, the oppressed cannot liberate themselves, and this underscores Freire's idea that the oppressed must teach the oppressed. This is because, while a revolutionary education can liberate, a "banking" system of education can serve as a tool for maintaining oppression. At the Oakland Community School, administrators and teachers confronted the dominant educational system, through letter-writing to figures like Huey P. Newton, spouting BPP rhetoric, and continuing a tradition of liberatory education. It is clear that OCS administrators understood the gravity of liberatory education, using it to dismantle systemic oppression rather than maintain it.

The powerful presence of Black educators was another positive, distinguishing factor of the Oakland Community School and its many successes, underscoring Freire's idea that the "oppressed must teach the oppressed." According to OCS alumni Gregory Lewis and Kesha

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<sup>28</sup> Gore et al., "Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education," Essay, in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, (New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 163.

<sup>29</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 44.

<sup>30</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 74.

Hackett, “having teachers who were mostly Black created an atmosphere of pride, confidence, and understanding that was infectious.”<sup>31</sup> In an interview, Hackett remembers a song that OCS teachers used to sing called “We Can Do Anything,”; she sang:

We can do anything  
Because anything is possible you see  
We can live forever and make peace like it should be  
We can turn the tide and the wind  
And even make life begin again<sup>32</sup>

This example shows how OCS instructors used their own Blackness to inspire a sense of boundless potential in their students, which taught Hackett that “[she] came from kings and queens.”<sup>33</sup> And a growing body of academic research supports this idea that Black students benefit enormously from having Black teachers. A 2015 study at Johns Hopkins found that Black teachers are 40 percent more likely to believe a Black student will graduate high school than non-Black teachers who evaluate the same student, and these expectations can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies that influence student behavior and performance.<sup>34</sup> This conclusion is not new, but it supports the validity of OCS’ educational model, as well as Freire’s task for the oppressed: “to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well.”<sup>35</sup> In this context, we see how the Oakland Community School was a living example of Freire’s educational philosophies.

### **The Oakland Community School and Freire’s “Liberatory Education”**

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paul Freire introduces three components of a “liberatory education,” which embody his “pedagogy of hope.” For Freire, liberatory education has three components: “(1) it fosters critical awareness, (2) it includes dialogue (rather than narration), and

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<sup>31</sup> Cassady Rosenblum, “At Historic Black Panthers School, Black Teachers Were Key to Student Success,” Oakland North, May 20, 2019, <https://oaklandnorth.net/2016/12/15/at-historic-black-panthers-school-black-teachers-were-key-to-student-success/>.

<sup>32</sup> Cassady Rosenblum, “At Historic Black Panthers School, Black Teachers Were Key to Student Success,” Oakland North, May 20, 2019, <https://oaklandnorth.net/2016/12/15/at-historic-black-panthers-school-black-teachers-were-key-to-student-success/>.

<sup>33</sup> Cassady Rosenblum, “At Historic Black Panthers School, Black Teachers Were Key to Student Success,” Oakland North, May 20, 2019, <https://oaklandnorth.net/2016/12/15/at-historic-black-panthers-school-black-teachers-were-key-to-student-success/>.

<sup>34</sup> Seth Gershenson, Stephen B. Holt, and Nicholas W. Papageorge, “Who Believes in Me? the Effect of Student-Teacher Demographic Match on Teacher Expectations,” January 2015, <https://doi.org/10.17848/wp15-231>.

<sup>35</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 44.

(3) it is transformative in nature.”<sup>36</sup> In the following sections, I will align the educational programs, practices, and experiences at the Oakland Community School to Freire’s components of a “liberatory education.”

Freire describes the impact an oppressive system has on an oppressed individual’s sense of self: “As long as their ambiguity persists, the oppressed are reluctant to resist, and totally lack confidence in themselves. They have a diffuse, magical belief in the invulnerability and power of the oppressor.”<sup>37</sup> Later, in his section on the program content of education as the practice of freedom, he writes, “Thematic investigation thus becomes a common striving towards awareness of reality and towards self-awareness, which makes this investigation a starting point for the educational process or for cultural action of a liberating character.”<sup>38</sup> It is clear that self-awareness is a key component of Freire’s theory of education—and this theme is also present in the pedagogical practices of the Oakland Community School.

In the classroom, the teachers at the Oakland Community school emphasized autobiographical writing, which helped the students define, understand, and accept themselves, thus reinforcing one of the key components of Freire’s argument. For OCS students, practicing autobiographical writing began as early as level three, where students were assigned to “... tell a story to the class based on a personal experience,” with a goal of promoting “better self-expression.”<sup>39</sup> As the students advanced to the next levels, they would continue to develop their autobiographical entries by adding more complex details, anecdotes, and personal characteristics. In addition to reflecting on their personal lives, the students were also required to engage with the personal experiences of others to better understand their roles in society. The *Oakland Community School instructor handbook* states: “Each child will be assigned to interview a person in the community and write the interview as an article for the school newsletter.”<sup>40</sup> This interview assignment encapsulates OCS’ teaching philosophy; by teaching students to engage both personally and communally, they thought critically about their own lives and learned what it meant

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<sup>36</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 80.

<sup>37</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 64.

<sup>38</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 107.

<sup>39</sup> Oakland Community School, (1978, 79), Oakland Community School-Instructor Handbook-Huey P. Newton 1978-79, Retrieved from Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation Inc. collection, M0864. Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif. (Box 17, Folder 2).

<sup>40</sup> Oakland Community School, (1978, 79), Oakland Community School-Instructor Handbook-Huey P. Newton 1978-79, Retrieved from Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation Inc. collection, M0864. Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif. (Box 17, Folder 2).

to enact social change through prose. These ideas directly correlate with that of Freire, who believed that self-awareness was critical awareness: “Without a sense of identity, there can be no real struggle.”<sup>41</sup>

In addition to prompting students to think critically about themselves and their counterparts, the Oakland Community School was also committed to developing self-confidence in its students. Every day after lunch the entire staff and students sat quietly for a few minutes to “honor their own innate greatness.”<sup>42</sup> This practice, central to the students’ daily lives at the Oakland Community School, demonstrates how the children were taught not only to reflect on themselves and one another, but care for themselves and one another as members of a greater community. They were successful in doing so, according to Betty Jo Reuben, who enrolled her son, Tim, and daughter, Keshia, at OCS because she wanted them to learn about Black history. She says, “My children grew up feeling proud of being Black instead of feeling like it was a curse like a lot of children.”<sup>43</sup> Her daughter, now an adult, affirms this: “If I didn’t go to OCS, I think my life would have been more destructive. You can be influenced by stressors ... like gangs, drugs, whatever. But knowledge of self kept me grounded.”<sup>44</sup>

Oakland Community School students thought critically about themselves and their peers, but also about the world around them, and this is seen best through the field trips that fostered critical awareness with their decidedly political tones. According to Jones and Gayles in “The World is a Child’s Classroom,” OCS pupils regularly attended political trials, including the “San Quentin 6” trial, to acquire “direct exposure to the inadequacies of the American judicial system for Black and other minority people.”<sup>45</sup> This one example embodies OCS’ commitment to educating its students about their surroundings in a revolutionary way, consistent with Freire’s idea that “people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world in which

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<sup>41</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 186.

<sup>42</sup> Gore et al., “Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education,” Essay, in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, (New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 174.

<sup>43</sup> Tammerlin Drummond, “Black Panther School a Legend in Its Time,” East Bay Times (East Bay Times, October 29, 2016), <https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2016/10/06/black-panther-school-ahead-of-its-time/>.

<sup>44</sup> Cassidy Rosenblum, “At Historic Black Panthers School, Black Teachers Were Key to Student Success,” Oakland North, May 20, 2019, <https://oaklandnorth.net/2016/12/15/at-historic-black-panthers-school-black-teachers-were-key-to-student-success/>.

<sup>45</sup> Jones, C., & Gayles, J. (2008). “The world is a child’s classroom: An analysis of the Black Panther Party’s Oakland Community School,” in C. Payne & C. Strickland (Eds.), *Teach freedom: Education for liberation in the African-American tradition*, (Teachers College Press), 110-116.

they find themselves. Indeed, they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation.”<sup>46</sup>

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, author Paul Freire details the dominant “banking” concept of education: “Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits in which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat.”<sup>47</sup> For Freire, liberatory education in many ways is a reaction to this dominant concept of education. He writes, “The *raison d’être* of libertarian education, on the other hand, lies in its drive towards reconciliation. Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students.”<sup>48</sup> Here, we understand the importance of transformative dialogue within a school community as the basis for a liberatory education.

This “drive toward reconciliation” is understood at the Oakland Community School through its “Each One Teach One” philosophy, a guiding principle for the school and its students and faculty members. In this section, I will expand on the “Each One Teach One” philosophy, but there are two notable examples that highlight the essence of this philosophy. Perhaps the most poignant manifestation of this “solution of the teacher-student contradiction” at OCS was its Youth Committee, a formal venue for students to critique faculty, school, and self in an attempt to foster independence, as was the student-generated newsletter.”<sup>49</sup> In addition, “OCS students tutored their peers, hence implementing the essence of the school’s “Each One Teach One” philosophy.”<sup>50</sup>

As mentioned above, the Youth Committee was instrumental in helping the students at the Oakland Community School define their voices and contribute to the school community. The Youth Committee was an elected student body that was responsible for the Youth Shore, the Newsletter, and the Justice Board, which had the responsibilities to “handle the children’s relations with each other and their understanding of school rules” in addition to critiquing faculty.<sup>51</sup> The

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<sup>46</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 83.

<sup>47</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 83.

<sup>48</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 72.

<sup>49</sup> Gore et al., “Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education,” Essay, in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, (New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 172.

<sup>50</sup> Gore et al., “Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education,” Essay, in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, (New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 173.

<sup>51</sup> Oakland Community School, (1976), [Oakland Community School Instructor Handbook], 1976, Retrieved from Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation Inc. collection, M0864. Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif. (Box 17, Folder 1).

Justice Board was especially remarkable; if a student had misbehaved, they would appear in front of the Justice Board, which handled student conduct in a truly revolutionary fashion:

Students socratically inquired about their peers' behaviors and repeated back the details of the unfavorable behavior. Active listening, critical thinking, and reflective questioning were required to negotiate with the student whose behavior was in question and with the members of the court. After this careful questioning and deliberation, the court would suggest a method of correction, which essentially was the consequence or intervention for the behavior.<sup>52</sup>

It is evident how the Youth Council, through the process of child and error, encouraged student development in a way that allowed them to hold the reins.

At the very foundation of the Oakland Community School was emphases on students' autonomy, which directed activities both inside and outside of the classroom. The Oakland Community School Instructor Handbook states:

Concentration is a natural consequence of voluntary interest, but without interest there can be no concentration. Therefore, we make every attempt to provide our children with interesting tasks upon which to focus their attention. We provide a warm, structured environment which we feel gives rise to the development of classroom discipline. Discipline to us does not mean control of the class; but rather directing inevitable human energies into productive, socially meaningful channels.<sup>53</sup>

Two examples of the Oakland Community School's willingness and commitment to think beyond the physical limits of a classroom are Project Seed and Chisenbop, both outlined in a 2007 interview with former leader of the Black Panther Party, Ericka Huggins.

On reflecting on the classroom activities at the Oakland Community School, Huggins says:

Project Seed was this innovate math tutorial but the innovation part was they came into the elementary schools that would allow them in and taught algebra, algebraic thinking, problem solving, to third, fourth, and fifth graders. Then one of the young men I interviewed said that he remembered being given calculus problems in fifth grade by Project Seed and it was the most exciting part of his day.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Robert P Robinson, "Until the Revolution: Analyzing the Politics, Pedagogy, and Curriculum of the Oakland Community School," *Espacio, Tiempo y Educación* 7, no. 1 (April 2020): pp. 181-203, <https://doi.org/10.14516/ete.273>, 185.

<sup>53</sup> Oakland Community School, (1976), [Oakland Community School Instructor Handbook], 1976, Retrieved from Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation Inc. collection, M0864. Dept. of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, Stanford, Calif. (Box 17, Folder 1).

<sup>54</sup> University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library, *University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library*, 2007, pp. 1-111, 85.

Project Seed’s integration into the Oakland Community School certainly underscores one of its major premises and philosophies: that you could teach a child how to think, not what.

In the interview, Huggins also references Chisenbop—a Korean finger-counting method—which was taught at the Oakland Community School. “You could learn how to count your tens, hundreds digits, and ones on your fingers, but it’s a rhythmic, almost beat way of doing it.”<sup>55</sup> Though Project Seed and Chisenbop are two examples of OCS’ innovative teaching methods, they embody the school’s efforts to challenge the dominant educational methods of the time. A former student at the Oakland Community School writes, “I enjoyed the classes here because we learn methods and how to work problems. I think method is important because it is a tool that helps me solve all problems and not just find the answers to a few ... Here the classroom is not a locked-up classroom. Our school motto says, ‘The world is the children’s classroom.’”<sup>56</sup>

The examples of the Oakland Community School’s “Each One Teach One” philosophy like the Youth Committee, Project Seed, and Chisenbop are directly aligned with the type of education that Freire suggests. He writes:

Yet only through communication can human life hold meaning. The teacher’s thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students’ thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about *reality*, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication. If it is true that thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world, the subordination of students to teachers becomes impossible.<sup>57</sup>

Through this quote, we understand that the dominant banking concept of education not only serves, but also activates the interests of oppression. By operating under the mission that “the world is the children’s classroom,” the Oakland Community School’s pedagogical practices refute the banking concept, as the teachers empowered the students to be their partners in their own education and the overarching quest for social justice.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire introduces his “problem-posing” education, which is transformative in nature. He writes:

Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of women and men, as conscious beings, and

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<sup>55</sup> University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library, *University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library*, 2007, pp. 1-111, 85.

<sup>56</sup> Gregory B. Lewis, (1995), “Power To the Children: Writing from the Life of a Panther Cub”, Oakland, CA.

<sup>57</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 77.



consciousness as consciousness intent upon the world. They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of problems of human beings in their relations with the world.<sup>58</sup>

It is clear that Freire's "problem-posing" education should encourage students to ask questions about the world, and, in turn, see the possibility for social change. This leads to holistic development as students and people and at the center of that development is reflection, then action. This process, important to Freire's problem-posing education, speaks to the transformative powers of his theories, "To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Human beings are not built in silence, but in work, in action-reflection."<sup>59</sup> Here, Freire poses education as a catalyst for action and social movements, viewing students as agents for progression and, eventually, liberation.

The Oakland Community School also used education as a transformative experience and tool. OCS alumni Kesha Hackett speaks to the experience: "I meditate on this ... sometimes I think I would have been a statistic, being born to a 17-year-old mom in East Oakland. Those project schools were hard."<sup>60</sup> She continues, "Where would I be today if we [OCS] had a middle school, and a high school? What further heights would I have reached?"<sup>61</sup> Freire's idea that "to exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it"<sup>62</sup> is also seen in OCS' commitment to educating the whole child. Specifically, each student's physical health, cleanliness, and appearance were also important to OCS staff, with Donna Howell coordinating the youth's general health care and appearance, overseeing clothing, grooming, nutrition, and doctor visits. According to Huggins and Ernest, "the special interconnectedness and sharing that occurred in the BPP extended family life was an integral part of the trademark atmosphere of love, support, and learning that made OCS so special."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 79.

<sup>59</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 88.

<sup>60</sup> Cassady Rosenblum, "At Historic Black Panthers School, Black Teachers Were Key to Student Success," Oakland North, May 20, 2019, <https://oaklandnorth.net/2016/12/15/at-historic-black-panthers-school-black-teachers-were-key-to-student-success/>.

<sup>61</sup> Cassady Rosenblum, "At Historic Black Panthers School, Black Teachers Were Key to Student Success," Oakland North, May 20, 2019, <https://oaklandnorth.net/2016/12/15/at-historic-black-panthers-school-black-teachers-were-key-to-student-success/>.

<sup>62</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 69.

<sup>63</sup> Gore et al., "Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education," Essay, in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, (New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 163.

The Oakland Community School experience was so transformative and empowering that graduates often struggled to adjust to public schools in communities of color. *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* highlights Zachary Killoran, an OCS alum who had difficulty transitioning to a public school because the curriculum was not challenging enough and “one of the main things he learned to do in public school was use profanity and fight.”<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, Killoran continued to reflect on the transformative lessons he learned at OCS: “I don’t just take care of me, I take care of my community; anybody who happens to be around me.”<sup>65</sup> Killoran’s story is just one example of how OCS accomplished its goal of equipping their students with the tools necessary to transform themselves, and their worlds—a direct parallel to Freire’s idea that “education is inherently directive and must always be transformative.”<sup>66</sup>

### **The Dialectic at the Oakland Community School**

The idea of dialectical materialism is seen in Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and in the pedagogical practices at the Oakland Community School. Specifically, director Ericka Huggins says:

“Our motto was to – one of our principles was to teach children how to think, not what to think. So we called it – because we were all studying philosophies from all over the world, we called it dialectical materialism ... And it was very important, and we always – when children came to us tattle-taling or with some gossip or a rumor they didn’t fully understand fully, we would say, ‘Go and investigate and come back.’”<sup>67</sup>

Huggins and Ernest expand upon this idea in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, explaining OCS’ philosophy of dialectical materialism as one that emphasized critical thinking skills, encouraging students to ask questions that fostered discussion and ideas.<sup>68</sup>

Central to Freire’s argument is this theme of dialectics, which animates his views on education. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire argues that dialectics are the fundamental logic

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<sup>64</sup> Gore et al., “Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education,” Essay, in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, (New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 181.

<sup>65</sup> Gore et al., “Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education,” Essay, in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, (New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 181.

<sup>66</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 25.

<sup>67</sup> University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library, *University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library*, 2007, pp. 1-111, 40.

<sup>68</sup> Gore et al., “Revolutionary Women, Revolutionary Education,” Essay, in *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, (New York, NY: New York Univ. Press, 2009), 173.

of reality, which he uses in his discussions of education, oppression, and social change. For Freire, oppressed people must learn to view the world as “dialectical,” which helps them understand reality—a necessary component of liberation. This is seen most profoundly in the following quote; “[Themes] imply others which are opposing or even antithetical; they also indicate tasks to be carried out and fulfilled. Thus, historical themes are never isolated, independent, disconnected, or static; they are always interacting dialectically with their opposites.”<sup>69</sup> Here, Freire poses a unique challenge to liberatory educators: to use the investigation of themes to help oppressed people understand their conditions. This challenge explains Freire’s view of history as interconnected, and as a constantly shifting set of beliefs and concepts.

Educators at the Oakland Community School had a similar view of history to that of Freire, which impacted their pedagogical practices and teaching styles. A great example of this is when a fourth grade OCS student asked her class what the Middle Passage was like. That class, using the idea of dialectical materialism, went as follows:

We talked about slavery. We simulated the slave ships so that children would understand what it felt like to be packed in there, head to groin, arm to arm with people, like in a sardine can. The children would ask, ‘So how did they pee, Ericka? Where’d they poop?’ And they could answer their own questions couldn’t they? ‘Did they get sick? Did they throw up? How did they have babies? Do you think they wanted to live?’ We didn’t know a public school setting or a private school setting where children were allowed to think in this way, think things through. We didn’t have them sit there and agonize over the history of slavery for days on end, but we didn’t hide it from them.<sup>70</sup>

Here, we see how OCS educators’ ways of teaching history operated in a dialectical manner, where students and their questions informed and inspired one another—a distinctly Freirian idea. These conversations in the classroom influenced how OCS students saw the world, using the understanding of historical themes as future agents for social change.

It is also worth noting that OCS’ one-of-a-kind Youth Committee and Justice Court (discussed above) also followed these tenets of dialectical thinking. Allowing the students to hold themselves and their peers accountable for their actions espoused a sophisticated social engagement that necessitated careful thought of concepts and their opposites before arriving at conclusions. Gregory, a student at the Oakland Community School fondly remembers the process,

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<sup>69</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (s.l.: Penguin Books Ltd, 2017), 101.

<sup>70</sup> University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library, *University of California Oral History Center at the Bancroft Library*, 2007, pp. 1-111, 88.

“You kinda have to explain your actions and it actually made you think, ‘Why DID I do that?’ We were taught at an early age that there’s rules and it’s important to adhere to them ... about being accountable.”<sup>71</sup> This reflection is important because it shows how inquiry-based learning at the Oakland Community School compelled students to discuss and reason in the classroom through dialogue and investigation—two tools important to dialectical thinking, and in line with Freire’s “pedagogy of hope.”

In 1994, pedagogical theorist Gloria-Ladson Billings introduced the concept of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, a theory with three main components: a focus on student learning and academic success, developing students’ cultural competence to assist students in developing positive ethnic and social identities, and supporting students’ critical consciousness or their ability to recognize and critique societal inequalities.<sup>72</sup> This theory can be seen as a continuation, or a new development of Freire’s work, specifically his idea of fostering critical consciousness through education. The Oakland Community School’s dialectical training and ability to care and nourish the whole student poses OCS as an early iteration of culturally relevant teaching in action—a legend in its time.

Echoes of the Oakland Community School staff are seen in Ladson-Billings’ *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*, a contemporary call to give Black students the education they deserve. She writes, “the quest for quality education remains an elusive dream for the African American community.”<sup>73</sup> In a time where federal loopholes enable lower spending on students of color<sup>74</sup> and 14-point achievement gaps exist between low-income and non-low income students,<sup>75</sup> the case for culturally responsive teaching could not be more relevant. In this context, we must examine the past to dream of the future. The Oakland Community School and its efforts to engage its students in meaningful dialogue, foster critical thinking, and celebrate their cultural backgrounds marked education as a tangible vehicle for a dream of

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<sup>71</sup>Gregory B. Lewis, (1995), “Power To the Children: Writing from the Life of a Panther Cub”, Oakland, CA.

<sup>72</sup>Ladson-Billings, G., (1995a), “But That’s Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy. Theory Into Practice”, 34(3), 159-165. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1476635>.

<sup>73</sup> Ladson-Billings, G., (1994), “The dreamkeepers: successful teachers of African American children,” (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers), xv

<sup>74</sup> Ary Spatig-Amerikaner, “Unequal Education - UNCF,” [https://cdn.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/PDFs/UnequalEducation.pdf?\\_ga=2.73597201.2005597485.1669692407-508998608.1669692407](https://cdn.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/PDFs/UnequalEducation.pdf?_ga=2.73597201.2005597485.1669692407-508998608.1669692407), August 2012, <https://cdn.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/PDFs/UnequalEducation.pdf>.

<sup>75</sup> State House News Service Sam Drysdale, “Coalition Says Education Achievement Gap Has Widened,” WBUR News (WBUR, September 14, 2022), <https://www.wbur.org/news/2022/09/14/student-opportunity-act-report-achievement-gap>.

liberation. Contemporarily, Ladson-Billings' *The Dreamkeepers* espouses a special hope of the future of educating Black students: "Each of my ancestors had a hope nestled in a dream. My generation is the beginning of that fulfillment of that hope."<sup>76</sup> Here, Freire's "pedagogy of hope" intersects with Huey P. Newton's belief that, with education as the compass, "the revolution has always been in the hands of the young."<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ladson-Billings, G., (1994), "The dreamkeepers: successful teachers of African American children," (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers), 177.

<sup>77</sup> MerriCatherine, (2018), "Huey P. Newton's Interview with the Movement Magazine (1968)," Medium, February 21, 2018, <https://medium.com/@merricatherine/huey-p-newtons-interview-with-the-movement-magazine-1968-a328e6b78c32>.

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## **Jonestown, Radicals, and Third Worldism: A Reexamination of Jim Jones and The Peoples Temple Through the Lens of the New Left**

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# JONESTOWN, RADICALS, AND THIRD WORLDISM: A REEXAMINATION OF JIM JONES AND THE PEOPLES TEMPLE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE NEW LEFT

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**Abstract:** In the 1960s and 70s, the charismatic Reverend Jim Jones spearheaded a religious, social, and political movement, the Peoples Temple. During a period of tumultuous social discord in the United States, Jones' focus on civil liberties, anti-racism, and solidarity with third world nations immediately attracted thousands of leftist followers. Jones founded the Temple in Indianapolis in 1955, relocated to Ukiah, California in 1963 and San Francisco in 1970, and eventually convinced a chunk of his followers to move to an agricultural commune in Guyana in 1977. On November 18<sup>th</sup>, 1978, Jones ultimately coerced and forced remaining members to commit "suicide." This paper examines the social and political nature of the Peoples Temple and argues that Jones weaponized his clout with leftist politicians and social activists to attract a primarily African American following. Legends of the New Left movement, such as Angela Davis and Harvey Milk, supported the Temple and Jones even after rumors of the Reverend's abuse emerged in San Francisco newspapers. This paper strives to demonstrate that Jones' followers were not loonies, but rather dedicated members of the New Left movement, who were committed to enacting social and political change in the U.S.

In November of 1978, twenty-eight-year-old Jackie Speier accompanied California Congressman Leo Ryan on an investigative expedition into the jungle of Guyana, a recently independent nation on the northern tip of South America.<sup>2</sup> In the weeks preceding the fact-finding mission, the Coalition of Concerned Relatives had urgently warned Congressman Ryan about the Peoples Temple, a San-Francisco-based religious organization that had mysteriously relocated to a Guyanese agricultural commune. Reverend Jim Jones, founder of the Peoples Temple and a self-proclaimed Messiah, unironically named the commune Jonestown. Congressman Ryan, after listening to the Coalition's increasingly disturbing reports of death, starvation, and psychological terror within Jonestown, wanted answers.

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<sup>2</sup> Jackie Speier, "Surviving Jonestown," *Politico Magazine*, November 10, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/11/10/jonestown-massacre-first-person-speier-ryan-jones-222222/>

The plane landed in Georgetown, Guyana's capital city, on November 14, 1978. Three days later, Speier and Ryan arrived at Jonestown, where Reverend Jones warmly welcomed the congressional delegation. The Reverend provided Ryan and his team with a tour around the compound, flaunting its cabins, medical center, school, and the community's centerpiece: the Pavilion, where Temple members would regularly congregate. That night, the Temple members performed a show for the delegation, smiling and laughing as they sang and danced. Meanwhile, Jones rested comfortably on the stage beneath a sign that proclaimed: "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Speier could never have fathomed that fewer than twenty-four hours later, those 900 people would be dead; Congressman Leo Ryan, shot at least forty-five times, would be dead; the Reverend Jim Jones, found with a gunshot wound to the head, would be dead. And Speier herself, shot five times, would be lying on the muddy floor of the Guyanese jungle, mustering up the faith to survive and one day tell the tale.

On November 18, 1978, over 900 members of Jim Jones' religious organization, the Peoples Temple, simultaneously ingested a "deadly, cyanide-laced cocktail," in the jungle of South America.<sup>3</sup> While the world has speculated about the psychology of Jones' sinister manipulation since the massacre, few have situated the Peoples Temple in the era of leftist social movements to which it belongs.

American collective memory chiefly perceives of Jonestown as one of the first and most horrifying cult-related tragedies, one that can now be viewed in tandem with religious groups like Branch Davidians and Heaven's Gate. Yet the Peoples Temple was not just a church, but rather an invitation to join a new social order, one that seemingly departed from the poisonous race and class divisions of Western materialism and capitalism.<sup>4</sup> In the dozens of sermons that the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) recovered from the 1970s, Jones' rhetoric mimics the civil rights activists of his time, promising economic security and social equality—particularly for his black members. To recognize the draw of the Peoples Temple, it is imperative to first understand the social, economic, and racial underpinnings of the 1960s and 70s in the United States and what scholars have termed the New Left.

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<sup>3</sup> Russell Rickford, "These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out 'Moonies': Jonestown and African American Expatriation in the 1970s," in *Ideas in Unexpected Places: Reimagining Black Intellectual History*, edited by Brandon R. Bryd, Leslie M. Alexander, and Russell Rickford, (Northwestern University Press, 2022), 151.

<sup>4</sup> Rickford, "These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies," 152.

Ideologically, the Peoples Temple embodied the socialist, radical endeavors of other New Left associations, and its shocking Guyana migration manifested Third Worldism. Although the Temple is viewed almost exclusively as a cult, Jones' organization must also be critically analyzed as a socio-political movement.

### **A Brief History of Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple**

In 1931, James Warren Jones was born in Lynn, Indiana, a deeply segregated small town in the Midwest.<sup>5</sup> Jones' father, who he would later describe as a 'KKK bandit,' was sympathetic to the Ku Klux Klan, which Jones resented.<sup>6</sup> According to Jones in a 1953 article, "Mom's Help for Ragged Tramp Leads Son to Dedicate His Life to Others," his mother reinforced his philanthropic disposition by adopting animals and daydreaming that she would ultimately birth the Messiah. Yet even in early childhood, Jones seemingly resented the disparities in church teachings and the practices of the ministers, and occasionally played pranks on local churches he believed to be engaging in deceitful behavior. At seven or eight years old, Jones reportedly soiled the bible of a hypocritical minister with cow manure.

According to Speier, Jones' early status as an "outcast" and an "underdog" facilitated his desire to later "[be] recognized as someone greater."<sup>7</sup> After moving to Indianapolis and attending Indiana University in the late 1940s and early 50s, Jones became particularly enchanted with the Methodist, Pentecostal social creed, which encouraged civil rights for all races. By the mid-1950s, Jones began hosting his own services and conducting his famous "healing" conventions, during which he supposedly extracted cancerous growths from the sick.<sup>8</sup> Unlike most ministers at the time, Jones insisted on racially integrated crowds and asked black congregation members to sit in the front. His policies sparked intense outrage in Indianapolis, and in 1954, Jones founded his own church: Wings of Deliverance, later renamed as the Peoples Temple Full Gospel Church in 1955.

Due to its socialist, integrationist creed, the Peoples Temple immediately gained traction with minority groups and leftists in the U.S. In 1963, ostensibly fearing nuclear holocaust, Jones

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<sup>5</sup> Speier, "Surviving Jonestown."

<sup>6</sup> David Chidester, *Salvation and suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 1-2.

<sup>7</sup> Speier, "Surviving Jonestown."

<sup>8</sup> David Chidester, *Salvation and suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 3-4.

moved the Peoples Temple to Ukiah, California, which he later claimed was “the farthest they could get from Indianapolis without falling into the ocean.”<sup>9</sup> By 1970, the Peoples Temple relocated to the heart of San Francisco, a global hub of progressive movements. Soon, approximately three thousand to five thousand members comprised Jones’ congregation.<sup>10</sup>

While the Temple maintained an excellent reputation as a humanitarian church for most of its existence, accounts of Jones’ abusive behaviors trickled into the media during the mid-1970s. Temple defectors reported that “anyone who questioned or challenged Jones” was subject to “savage beatings” from Jones or the Temple guards.<sup>11</sup> Temple members worked twelve hours a day and six days a week, and were barred from dissenting from Jones’ fabricated legal system.

In an August 1977 article in *New West Magazine*, one of the first detailed exposures of the Temple, journalists Marshall Kilduff and Phil Tracy detailed how Jones forced members to write letters, admitting to crimes and “immoral acts” they did not commit.<sup>12</sup> To satisfy Jones, members sacrificed their most prized belongings—including watches and even houses—and effectively sold their lives to the Temple. The “healing” services were also fabricated displays of divinity; while Jones would purport to extract growths from members, his wife, Marceline, would lead a cancer patient into a private area and emerge with “small bits of meat” masquerading as growths.

As these testimonies surfaced, Jones grew increasingly paranoid of government intervention. In early 1977, Jones moved the Temple to Guyana, a developing nation on the border of Venezuela. In multiple sermons, Jones referred to Guyana as the “Promised Land,” and by September 1977, over 900 members inhabited the jungles of Jonestown.<sup>13</sup> Of those living in Jonestown, 75% were black, 20% were white, and 5% were Asian, Hispanic, and Native American.<sup>14</sup>

Jones’ negative publicity peaked during the custody battle for John Victor Stoen, who was born in January 1972.<sup>15</sup> While John Stoen’s birth certificate identifies him as the child of Timothy

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<sup>9</sup> Chidester, *Salvation and suicide*, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Chidester, *Salvation and suicide*, 8.

<sup>11</sup> Deborah Roberts, “On Jonestown,” *Socialist Worker*, January 1, 1979, <https://www.proquest.com/hnp/np/docview/2408044092/4AB3F61C95E2406APQ/1?accountid=9673>, Accessed December 19, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Marshall Kilduff and Phil Tracy, “Inside Peoples Temple,” *New West Magazine*, August 1, 1977, <https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/newWestart.pdf>, Accessed December 19, 2022.

<sup>13</sup> Chidester, *Salvation and suicide*, 9-10.

<sup>14</sup> Chidester, *Salvation and suicide*, 9-10.

<sup>15</sup> “The Custody Battle for John Victor Stoen and Its Fallout,” *Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple*, Accessed December 19, 2022, [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13841](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13841).

Stoen and Grace Stoen, Tim signed an affidavit in February 1972, claiming that John was in fact Jones' biological son. After Grace defected in 1976 and Tim the following year, the two began battling for custody of John, who was still a member of the Temple under Jones' close supervision. While the couple won custody in California, Jones and the toddler were already living in Jonestown and outside the jurisdiction of the American judicial system.

The Coalition of Concerned Relatives, including the Stoens, other defectors, and families of remaining Temple members, eventually published a flyer condemning Jones and demanding a federal investigation. The notice, which the Coalition distributed at various locations, included a jarring header—"This Nightmare Is Taking Place Right Now: Will You Help Us Free Our Families?"—with a sketch of an individual behind bars in Jonestown.<sup>16</sup> Claiming that they "espouse[d] no political or religious viewpoint," these relatives detailed more abuses, including censoring of mail, prohibition of any long-distance phone calls, and Jones' infamous mock "mass suicide" sessions. The Coalition concluded the notice by urging readers to donate, pray, and write to the two people they believed held any power over Jones: Guyanese Prime Minister Forbes Burnham and U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance.

Seeking to mollify the Stoens and the Coalition, Congressman Ryan traveled to Guyana in November 1978. But he would never return to the U.S.; the night after his arrival in Jonestown, Jones' henchmen shot and killed the California congressman as he attempted to bring terrified members home.<sup>17</sup> That same day, Jones commanded his followers to commit suicide by drinking Flavor-Aid laced with cyanide, and Jones' crew forcefully injected any individual who refused the poison—including infants and pets. Jones then either shot himself or ordered another member to shoot him in the head.

Before the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks, the Jonestown Massacre was the largest single intentional incident of American civilian death.<sup>18</sup> To the absolute bewilderment of U.S. officials, what had seemingly begun as an inclusive socio-religious initiative quickly transformed into one of the most infamous and nightmarish episodes in U.S. history.

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<sup>16</sup> "Concerned Relatives Flyer," The Jonestown Institute: *Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple*, [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13078](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13078), Accessed June 28, 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Speier, "Surviving Jonestown."

<sup>18</sup> J Oliver Conroy. 2018. "An Apocalyptic Cult, 900 Dead: Remembering the Jonestown Massacre, 40 Years On." The Guardian. The Guardian. November 21, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/17/an-apocalyptic-cult-900-dead-remembering-the-jonestown-massacre-40-years-on>.

## The Peoples Temple and the New Left

Historian Van Gosse characterizes the New Left as the social “movement of movements” that swept across the U.S. from the early 1950s to 1975.<sup>19</sup> According to Gosse, the trajectory of the New Left movement began with the nonviolent, mass protests against segregation in the Southeastern states, which eventually prompted the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The New Left also encompassed the efforts of women and the LGBTQ community to challenge institutionalized sexism and homophobia, as well as informal discriminatory social structures and practices. Perhaps most topically, Gosse emphasizes the stirrings of the antiwar movement, which skyrocketed during the U.S.’ involvement in Vietnam in the 60s and early 70s.

In conjunction with the antiwar movement, the New Left also produced a sense of Third Worldism, under which primarily black activists cultivated a sense of solidarity with the oppressed peoples of the developing world. In “The U.S. 1968: Third Worldism, Feminisms, and Liberalism,” author Judy Wu describes how the American antiwar movement spurred a deeper, cultural desire for assembly with “‘Third World’ peoples.”<sup>20</sup> She cites Che Guevara’s “two, three, many Vietnams” speech as a “rallying cry among anti-imperialist and antiwar activists globally,” eventually prompting “racialized” Americans to emphasize the “internal colonialism” plaguing the U.S during the Cold War.

It was under these circumstances that Temple members—primarily black Americans—followed Jones, abandoned their lives in the U.S., and moved to an agricultural commune in Guyana. While general speculation about the Peoples Temple has attributed this bizarre migration solely to Jones’ manipulation, it neglects how Third Worldism generated a sense of connection between oppressed Americans and the developing world. The domestic tumult of the 1960s and 70s provoked several prominent activists to travel to international destinations, including Eldridge Cleaver, Huey Newton, and Yuri Kochiyama.

In “‘These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced Out ‘Moonies’’: Jonestown and African American Expatriation in the 1970s” from *Ideas in Unexpected Places*, historian Russell Rickford claims both extremes of the political spectrum have misinterpreted the Jonestown tragedy.<sup>21</sup> Leftists viewed the episode as a product of a soulless, capitalist society, bred by long-

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<sup>19</sup> Van Gosse, *Rethinking the New Left: An Interpretative History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 2-3.

<sup>20</sup> Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, “The U.S. 1968: Third Worldism, Feminisms, and Liberalism,” *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 3 (2018): 711.

<sup>21</sup> Rickford, “‘These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies,’” 152.

lasting racist and classist policy in America. Conservatives, on the other hand, perceived Jones and his cult as another communist, totalitarian regime of the Cold War. In addition, many African Americans characterized the incident as the culmination of white manipulation—one activist noted: “Black folks are still into the practice of following white folks.”<sup>22</sup>

Rickford counters these simplified analyses: “The problem with such portrayals is that they mystified both the death *and* life of Jonestown. Seen as exemplars of the cultish and bizarre, members of the community seemed totally aberrant.”<sup>23</sup> As many survivors have affirmed, most Temple members were not insane, deviant, or far more susceptible to manipulation than the average person. Members were not “Charles Mansons” or “Spaced Out ‘Moonies.’” Instead, Jones’ victims were normal people—mostly those who suffered from race- or class-based oppression and craved not only a savior, but also a shared community.

Rickford also bridges the New Left and Third Worldism movements with the Peoples Temple: “Even before the Guyana exodus of the mid-1970s, Peoples Temple was linked to a host of New Left and Black Power formations, from the American Indian Movement to the Republic of New Africa to the Free Angela Davis Campaign.”<sup>24</sup> Given the prominence of movements aiming to combat both internal oppression within the U.S. and external oppression in colonized or formerly colonized nations at the time, it is unsurprising that Peoples Temple members felt a sense of affinity with the Guyanese.

Most importantly, it is unsurprising that those who joined Jones did not view their community as a cult. While Jones was a religious leader, he centered his sermons around New Left issues that other social movements were campaigning for at the time: the anti-war movement, racial equality, and socio-economic reform.<sup>25</sup> As his popularity skyrocketed, Jones de-emphasized the religious nature of the Temple and even taught members that socialism was God. Surrounded by movements demanding similar terms, Temple participants likely saw themselves as part of another revolutionary movement, one which shared the spirit of the American Indian Movement, Republic of New Africa, or the Angela Davis Campaign.

Jones, as former Temple member Deborah Layton recalls, harbored particular affection for Angela Davis, or the “one woman outside the Temple whom Father admired and constantly spoke

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<sup>22</sup> Rickford, ““These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies,”” 152.

<sup>23</sup> Rickford, ““These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies,”” 152.

<sup>24</sup> Rickford, ““These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies,”” 152-153.

<sup>25</sup> Deborah Layton, *Seductive Poison* (New York, New York: Anchor Books, 1998), 36-45.

of.”<sup>26</sup> When Layton mimicked Davis’ hair and acted out aggressively, Jones reprimanded her trivial imitation: “‘Having Angela Davis’s hair does not make you an outspoken radical of her intelligence. Read *If They Come in the Morning* and I expect a written analysis of her thesis next week.’”<sup>27</sup> By consistently preaching the works of a well-known, radical leader, Jones shrouded his followers in the belief that the work the Temple was doing was no different than that of the Angela Davis campaign.

Jones did not just support Davis—she supported him as well. Davis publicly and confidently endorsed Jones, the Peoples Temple, and the Jonestown agricultural commune in September 1977, during the “Six Day Siege” in Jonestown.<sup>28</sup> Due to the intense custody battle over John Stoen, a sharp increase in public suspicion and scrutiny plagued both Jones and his closest confidantes. In response, Jones and Temple guards initiated a blockade around Jonestown and convinced members that they faced imminent attack from the Guyana Defense Force.

As peculiar as the siege may have appeared to outsiders, and despite Jones’ obvious descent into paranoia, Davis contacted Jones on September 10, 1977, over a radio phone-patch. Addressing her “friend,” Jim Jones, as well as his followers, Davis proclaimed widespread support for Jones’ movement: “I can personally speak for the National Alliance Against Racism and Political Repression (NAARPR)...we are very deeply obligated to you for what you have done to further the fight for justice...to further the fight against racism.”<sup>29</sup> Additionally, Davis recognized the political legitimacy of the Temple and its struggles against racism and political oppression. To both Jones’ followers and the participants of the greater New Left movement, the Peoples Temple was akin to an organization like the NAARPR, and Jones to Davis.

Davis continued her address, further validating both the Temple and Jones’ insistence of a giant scheme against him: “I know...there is a conspiracy...When you are attacked, it is because of your progressive stand...We know you are going to win, and, in the final analysis, we are all going to win.” Davis declares “we,” tying herself and Jones to the same side of history. Davis’ speech likely further convinced the public—especially leftist activists—that Jones’ operation was not only legitimate, but a necessary machination of the greater New Left movement.

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<sup>26</sup> Layton, *Seductive Poison*, 55.

<sup>27</sup> Layton, *Seductive Poison*, 56.

<sup>28</sup> “Angela Davis and the Six Day Siege,” *The Jonestown Institute: Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and the Peoples Temple*, Accessed December 16, 2022, [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=19021](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=19021).

<sup>29</sup> “Angela Davis and the Six Day Siege.”



Jones was similarly aware that he was not the only leftist figure subject to national scrutiny or unfavorable allegations. The Peoples Temple did not occur in a vacuum—Jones operated at a time when conservatives incessantly criticized revolutionaries like Angela Davis, Eldridge Cleaver, and, most notably, Martin Luther King Jr. In order to exonerate himself and his regime and rebuff any investigations, Jones drew an intentional comparison between himself and King, declaring that he had fallen victim to a similar smear campaign. After Kilduff and Tracy released their Temple exposé in mid-1977, Jones publicly dismissed their statements in a statement addressed to San Francisco, entitled “What’s Behind The Attacks On Peoples Temple?”:

We are not really surprised at the charges that have been made against us. Movements for fundamental social change have always been subject to sophisticated and well-coordinated attempts to discredit their goals and destroy their leaders. Dr. Martin Luther King was the object of an unrelenting campaign to discredit the civil rights movement.<sup>30</sup>

As declassified FBI documents have now revealed, King was indeed targeted in an “unrelenting campaign” to weaken the civil rights movement in the 1960s.<sup>31</sup> Just as Jones linked himself to Davis, the Temple only stood to gain by claiming that any negative press was a continuation of the same maneuvers used to annihilate King’s reputation. The New Left, therefore, consistently served as a convenient shield against any evidence that threatened Jones or his cult.

The American public may have also perceived Jones, like other prominent radical activists at the time, as a flawed individual whose dedication to social progress ultimately overshadowed his human misgivings. Eldridge Cleaver—a Black Panther Party (BPP) leader during the 1970s—genuinely advanced the Black Power initiative while still vocalizing offensive opinions and engaging in illegal activity.<sup>32</sup> Sentenced in 1954, Cleaver served nine years in prison for marijuana dealing, assault with intent to kill, and attempt to rape.<sup>33</sup> After his release in 1966, Cleaver joined the BPP and quickly rose to fame for his autobiography, *Soul on Ice*, a national bestseller and foundational piece of literature in the Black Power Movement. As a fervent radical, Cleaver also played a key role in the Third Worldism movement by frequently travelling to several developing

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<sup>30</sup> “Peoples Temple statement in response to *New West* article,” *The Jonestown Institute: Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and the Peoples Temple*, [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=14014](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=14014), Accessed June 28, 2023.

<sup>31</sup> Sam Briger, “Documentary Exposes How The FBI Tried To Destroy MLK With Wiretaps, Blackmail,” *National Public Radio*, January 18, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/01/18/956741992/documentary-exposes-how-the-fbi-tried-to-destroy-mlk-with-wiretaps-blackmail>, Accessed June 28, 2023.

<sup>32</sup> Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 107.

<sup>33</sup> Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 113-114.

nations and establishing networks alongside prominent international leaders—notably Frantz Fanon, Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, Ho Chi Minh, and Mao Tse-tung.<sup>34</sup>

However, support for Cleaver was not unanimous across the U.S., even among certain leftist circles. For example, some activists questioned a passage in Cleaver’s *Soul on Ice* in which he describes his rape of a white woman as “an insurrectionary act” and states that it “delighted” him that he was “defying and trampling across the white man’s law” and “defiling his women.”<sup>35</sup> Due to his graphic admission and support of sexual violence against women, Cleaver’s fight for equality and progressivism lacked an intersectional approach.

This essay does not seek to draw comparisons between the two vastly different men, who operated under *drastically* different circumstances and objectives. Cleaver’s prominence in the New Left social arena rather suggests that many radicals—despite significant controversy—remained popular because of their dedication to their respective causes. Despite Jones’ earlier abuses of power (for example, raping young women in the Temple), his supporters may have forgiven such behavior due to what appeared to be his genuine dedication to social change.

Indeed, Jones pioneered one of the first integrated churches in Indianapolis, a church that committed to helping the impoverished and black communities after moving to California. Even Layton, who testifies to the manifold horrors of Jones’ regime, recounts the significant humanitarian work she engaged in as a Temple member. While stationed in northern California, Peoples Temple members acted as “students, city employees, professors, health care workers, social workers, or attorneys” in local communities.<sup>36</sup> From dusk until dawn, Layton reports that she and the other college-aged members “canvassed homes, housing projects, and even condemned buildings where the world’s forgotten and forsaken had sought shelter.”<sup>37</sup> As Layton and several other survivors have argued, Jones’ movement was not all psychological manipulation and false “healing” services.

The Peoples Temple was not hollow. Members undoubtedly sacrificed time, money, and effort to help those who needed it—whether that was impoverished families or victims of abuse. Unfortunately, the dedication to humanitarian labor prevented many Americans—members or

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<sup>34</sup> Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 116.

<sup>35</sup> “‘He was a symbol’: Eldridge Cleaver dies at 62,” *CNN*, May 1, 1998, <http://www.cnn.com/US/9805/01/cleaver.late.obit/>, Accessed December 19, 2022.

<sup>36</sup> Layton, *Seductive Poison*, 60.

<sup>37</sup> Layton, *Seductive Poison*, 59.

not—from noticing the warning signs. By operating alongside controversial and high-profile civil rights activists, Jones evaded the scrutiny needed to prevent the Jonestown Massacre.

### **“Guyana Was No Random Destination”: Exodus and the Third World**

On October 8, 1973, the Peoples Temple Board of Directors passed a resolution to organize and establish a “Branch Church and Agricultural Mission in Guyana.”<sup>38</sup> The resolution, which included future negotiations with Guyanese officials and bank accounts, provides insight into why Jones chose a Guyanese destination. Temple officials appreciated the nation’s proximity to the U.S., its English-speaking population, its economy as a “so-called underdeveloped nation,” and its generous agricultural policies that would furnish a Temple settlement. In 1974, a small portion of the Temple migrated to Guyana and set up the agricultural commune that would later house almost a thousand members in 1977.

Prior to October 8, Jones had considered Grenada or Cuba as the foreign destination for the Temple and conducted extensive negotiations with Grenadian officials in the early 1970s. Both Guyana and Grenada represented socialist democracies with majority non-white populations and an escape from the oppressive policies of the white, capitalist U.S. Yet because the Temple formed a mutually beneficial relationship with Forbes Burnham, the Guyanese President who also established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and Cuba, Jones settled on Guyana.<sup>39</sup>

In 1977, the Peoples Temple released its “Agricultural Project Progress Report,” which attempted to persuade other Temple members to join by presenting Jonestown as a utopian society.<sup>40</sup> The report discusses how Guyana achieved independence from Britain in 1966 and had “Caribbean cultural roots,” with a primarily “black and East Indian” ethnic makeup. Now that the country was “free from an oppressive heritage of slavery and colonialism,” the report underscored how Jonestown would aid Guyana in managing and developing its natural resources, and strengthen its leadership of the “community of non-aligned nations pursuing a socialistic course.”

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<sup>38</sup> “Resolution to Establish Agricultural Mission,” *The Jonestown Institute: Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple*, Accessed December 19, 2022, [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=13068](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=13068).

<sup>39</sup> “Forbes Burnham,” *Britannica Encyclopedia*, Accessed December 19, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Forbes-Burnham>.

<sup>40</sup> “People’s Temple Agricultural Project Progress Report—Summer 1977,” *The Jonestown Institute: Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple*, Accessed December 19, 2022 [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/04-10-AgBkltSum77\\_sm.pdf](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/04-10-AgBkltSum77_sm.pdf).

In particular, an underdeveloped economy and government granted Jones license to build his commune with minimal federal intervention.

Yet why Jones chose Guyana and why his people chose to follow him are two different stories. As Rickford explains, the 1960s and 70s produced “scores of black leftist and Pan-Africanist pioneers” who ventured abroad to “help build new societies in the global South.”<sup>41</sup> Struggling to reorient the U.S. during the Cold War, radicals and nonconformists turned to the Third World in an attempt to achieve “sustained political engagement” and repudiate Northern capitalism and imperialism. The promise of an agricultural commune in particular, complete with the themes of “communion with the soil, applied socialism, and camaraderie with developing nations,” was irresistible to the diverse, socialist community that Jones fostered.

The Peoples Temple—which was over ¾ black, betrayed and disillusioned by continuous oppression in the U.S.—eagerly opted to begin a new life in a recently liberated, socialist nation. As Rickford notes, Guyana’s multiracial population complemented Jones’ “family of all races,” while Burnham’s Afro-Guyanese People’s National Congress frequently echoed the “black is beautiful” sentiment.<sup>42</sup> For many black Temple members, Guyana presented a unique opportunity to gain a sense of identity: “‘Nobody wanted to return to Africa,’ one African American Jonestown resident later explained. ‘We just wanted to know where we came from. Most of us didn’t know anything about our heritage.’”<sup>43</sup>

To convince his followers to move to Guyana, Jones delivered a sermon directly placating the anxieties of his followers: “Truly, this is our Promised Land. We will be emigrating to a country in South America governed by Black men and Indians. No Ku Klux Klaners live there! We will flourish once more, as we did long ago, before the white man...whipped our backs...”<sup>44</sup> Drawing on the vestiges of slavery and Jim Crow, Jones urges his black followers to desert the racist U.S. and find freedom in Guyana.

However, reports of Jonestown vastly depart from Jones’ description of the commune as the “Promised Land” and an equal utopia. When journalist Charles Krause, a member of Ryan’s delegation, first visited Jonestown on the eve of the massacre, he noted that what he saw “reminded

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<sup>41</sup> Rickford, “‘These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies,’” 153.

<sup>42</sup> Rickford, “‘These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies,’” 153-154

<sup>43</sup> Rickford, “‘These People are No Charles Mansons or Spaced-Out Moonies,’” 154.

<sup>44</sup> Layton, *Seductive Poison*, 99

[him] of a Southern plantation before the Civil War.”<sup>45</sup> According to Krause, the Pavilion was surrounded by primarily black women, who were cooking and baking, while Jim Jones rested at the head of a long table. Speier echoes the notion of segregation in her account of Jonestown: “It was imminently clear Jonestown was a hierarchal community, with the power structure resembling some sort of plantation.”<sup>46</sup> Although the Temple’s official statement against the *New West* article claimed that the “program in Guyana is everything that it [was] represented to be,”<sup>47</sup> Jonestown quickly devolved into an abusive dictatorship.

In the wake of the Temple’s tragic end and the discovery of its disturbing reality, the media ignored how the agricultural mission reflected the desire to achieve the utopian, socialist “good life.” Jones did not whisk members to a South American nation solely through his skilled rhetoric or psychological coercion. The Third World impulse of the New Left ultimately urged many Temple members to pack up their lives in the capitalist U.S. and venture into the jungle of a newly independent nation.

### **The Peoples Temple in Politics and the Media**

Throughout the reign of the Temple, the government, press, and popular opinion enhanced Jones’ legitimacy by recognizing him not only as a reverend, but also as a humanitarian and political leader. Widely recognized and respected for his promotion of inclusivity and racial integration, Jones quickly gained support from democratic officials and civil rights organizations. In the April 1976 volume of *Peoples Forum*, Jones’ bimonthly newspaper, a section entitled “Praise From All Quarters” details how policymakers across the country had voiced their support for Jones.<sup>48</sup> New York Democratic Representative Bella Abug noted that Jones was “showing the kind of commitment to justice which our nation so desperately needs.” John A. Buggs, a Staff Director of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Vice President Walter Mondale, and other prominent elected officials echoed “equally kind words of support and encouragement.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Charles Krause, introduction to *Seductive Poison* ((New York, New York: Anchor Books, 1998), xviii

<sup>46</sup> Speier, “Surviving Jonestown.”

<sup>47</sup> “Peoples Temple statement in response to *New West* article,” Accessed June 28, 2023.

<sup>48</sup> “Peoples Forum, vol. 1, no.1,” *The Jonestown Institute: Alternative Considerations of Jonestown and Peoples Temple*, Accessed April 13, 2023, [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=14018](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=14018).

<sup>49</sup> “Peoples Forum, vol 1, no.1.”

Even towards his chaotic end, Jones maintained intimate relationships with Democratic representatives in San Francisco, Sacramento, and the State Department.<sup>50</sup> In December 1976, Jones commanded San Francisco's Housing Authority Commission. According to journalists Kilduff and Tracy in the August 1977 *New West* article, Jones was "one of the most politically potent religious leaders in the history of the state."<sup>51</sup> When Vice President Mondale chartered a private jet for his campaign, Jim Jones was one of the few invited aboard for a "private visit."<sup>52</sup>

Jones was not just a reverend who preached in San Francisco—he was a reverend with enough clout to run the city. According to Kilduff and Tracy's report, Jones formed reciprocal ties with San Francisco political figures: "As one politically astute executive puts it: 'He controls votes.' And voters."<sup>53</sup> During the December 1975 San Francisco run-off election for mayor, Kilduff and Tracy reported that at least 150 Temple members "walked precincts to get out the vote for George Moscone." Moscone won only by about 4,000 votes; without Jones' efforts, he was unlikely to triumph. Following the election, State Assemblyman Willie Brown asserted that anyone running for office in a tight San Francisco race should "forget it without Jones."

Among his supporters was Harvey Milk, a human rights activist who became one of the nation's first openly gay elected officials after winning a spot on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 1977.<sup>54</sup> Liberal Americans adored Milk, who advocated not only for LGBTQ+ rights, but also for other minority groups and women's rights, as well as tax reforms in the Bay Area.

For his apparent dedication to minorities, Jones won Milk's approval. On January 19, 1978, Milk wrote a letter addressed to President Jimmy Carter, urging him to terminate the Stoen lawsuit and support his friend, Jim Jones.<sup>55</sup> Milk began his letter by commending Jones for his social programs: "Rev. Jones is widely known in the minority communities here and elsewhere as a man of the highest character, who has undertaken constructive remedies for social problems which have been amazing in their scope and effectiveness."<sup>56</sup> Milk continued by noting that Jones was widely

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<sup>50</sup> Speier, "Surviving Jonestown."

<sup>51</sup> Kilduff and Tracy, "Inside Peoples Temple."

<sup>52</sup> Kilduff and Tracy, "Inside Peoples Temple."

<sup>53</sup> Kilduff and Tracy, "Inside Peoples Temple."

<sup>54</sup> "The Official Harvey Milk Biography," Harvey Milk Foundation, Accessed December 19, 2022, <https://milkfoundation.org/about/harvey-milk-biography>.

<sup>55</sup> "Letters of support for Peoples Temple, Winter 1978," *The Jonestown Institute: Alternative Consideration of Jim Jones and Peoples Temple*, Accessed April 13, 2023, [https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page\\_id=99466](https://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=99466).

<sup>56</sup> "Letters of support for Peoples Temple, Winter 1978."

respected among church, labor, and civic leaders alike, and condemned the press for its recent efforts to discredit Jones' once pristine reputation. Referencing the Stoen suit, Milk concluded by declaring that the affair is "offensive to...all those who know Rev. Jones to see this kind of an outrage taking place." The Jonestown Massacre would occur only ten months later.

According to Roberts, the *Socialist Worker* journalist, Jones continuously escaped criticism on a national scale before the massacre.<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, as Roberts observed in 1979, such public endorsement from the left backfired once the massacre occurred. After November 18, 1978, the press never missed an opportunity to identify Jones' "Marxist," "leftist," and "revolutionary" nature when describing his atrocities. This narration of the Temple fueled the popular identification of "socialism equals bad" during the Cold War, when conservatives would point to failing "communist" dictatorships in the East to prove the inherent pitfalls of left-wing regimes. The Jonestown Massacre thus enabled American anti-communists to flaunt another example of "evil" and "Godless" leftism. In destroying the lives of almost a thousand people at Jonestown, Jones also marred the names of genuine radical activists—including Davis and Milk—who supported him along the way.

Jones' squandered political opportunities are the silent tragedies of the Peoples Temple. By weaponizing the social, economic, and political discord within the U.S. in the 1960s and 70s, a power-hungry Jones recruited and murdered over 900 people who could have made a tangible difference under a correct guidance. Decades after escaping Jones' cult, Temple survivor Laura Johnston Kohl reflected on her experience working for Jones: "We—all of us—were doing the right things but in the wrong place with the wrong leader."<sup>58</sup>

While Jones got richer, more famous, and further exalted, Temple members increasingly dedicated their lives to relieving the burdened communities of San Francisco and the developing world. Yet once Jones fell, so too did his followers. Temple members, who joined Jones in the name of progressivism and equality, are now viewed only in relation to the horrors of the massacre. As Roberts notes in her 1979 article, "Most of Jones' followers would have been part of a

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<sup>57</sup> Roberts, "On Jonestown."

<sup>58</sup> David Chiu, "Jonestown: 13 Things You Should Know About Cult Massacre," *Rolling Stone*, May 29, 2020, <https://www.rollingstone.com/feature/jonestown-13-things-you-should-know-about-cult-massacre-121974/>, Accessed December 19, 2022.

movement to transform this country, if such a movement had existed. They wouldn't have ended their lives seeking a refuge in the wilderness with a madman.”<sup>59</sup>

Those who died in Jonestown were not crazy, gullible, or twisted. The Americans who lost their lives on November 18<sup>th</sup> were not “moonies” with a death wish. Jonestown victims were members of what they believed to be a social movement and were dedicated to helping the globe's oppressed and impoverished. History owes it to the victims to remember them as such.

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<sup>59</sup> Roberts, “On Jonestown.”



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## **From Greensboro to SNCC: Nonviolent Sit-Ins of 1960**

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# FROM GREENSBORO TO SNCC: NONVIOLENT SIT-INS OF 1960

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the extent to which the Greensboro Four and other civil rights activists led to the rise of the New Left in the 1960s, drawing references predominantly to Howard Brick's *Radicals in America*. In considering the developments of the 1960s as a whole, this paper illustrates the arduous process in which the people of various activist movements sought solidarity under a single, broad political movement known as the New Left. Specifically, this essay examines how the civil rights, feminist, and anti-war movements were able to unite in their fights for justice. In light of a recent surge in hate crimes, gun violence, and the overruling of *Roe v. Wade*, American citizens, reminiscent of the 1960s, began to take to the streets again to protest against what they believe as violations of their inalienable rights. While this paper contributes to the greater discussion of non-violent political movements throughout the 1960s, it also sheds light upon the various ways in which the people of the United States can stand united amidst an increasingly polarized society.

*I have no malice, no jealousy, no hatred, no envy ... All I want is to come in and place my order and be served and leave a tip if I feel like it.” – Joseph Charles Jones, black former student at Johnson C. Smith University<sup>2</sup>*

*“The attack is on southern customs and southern habits — not southern laws.” – Lowry Bowman of The Chicago Defender<sup>3</sup>*

*“If the leaders in the Kremlin had worked up a plan to weaken us throughout the world, I can think of none which would be more effective than the script we are now following” – Governor LeRoy Collins of Florida in March 1960<sup>4</sup>*

## Introduction

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<sup>1</sup> Rongwei Zhu is a junior in MCAS majoring in history and international studies. Rongwei is also the vice president of BC's History Club and a theme leader for the IS Global Conversations project. Rongwei's academic interest revolves predominantly around American diplomatic history and conflict studies.

<sup>2</sup> “Negroes Extend Sitdown Protest: 150 in Charlotte Fill Seats at 8 Lunch Counters -- Other Cities Are Quiet,” *New York Times* (1923-), February 10, 1960, 115065640, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

<sup>3</sup> Lowry Bowman, “Sit-Down 'Drive Opens All-Out Bias Fight,” *The Chicago Defender (National Edition)* (1921-1967), March 5, 1960, 492937305, Black Studies Center; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

<sup>4</sup> Clive Webb, “Breaching the Wall of Resistance: White Southern Reactions to the Sit-Ins,” in *From Sit-Ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 59.

The 1960s was, in many ways, a period of unprecedented turmoil in the history of the modern United States. From the failed Bay of Pigs invasion to the drastic escalation of the Vietnam War, the United States faced numerous setbacks in its geopolitical initiatives. Domestically, the 1960s was no less challenging for the U.S. government. Its institutionalized racist and anti-communist ideals exacerbated social tensions, which ultimately led to a society fragmented by ideology and a generation shattered by disillusionment. Amidst such turbulent times emerged various activist groups who resorted to their own tactics in hopes of bringing about social change. Centermost of many activists' demands was, however, the common call for racial equality.

On February 1, 1960, four black university students “staged a sitdown strike” at the segregated lunch counter of their local F. W. Woolworth Company in Greensboro, N.C.<sup>5</sup> The movement, which began in Greensboro, immediately picked up momentum and spread to almost all major cities in the southern and border states within the next three months. Thousands of protesters, most of whom were black student activists, voluntarily participated in the sit-in demonstrations as a means to protest against institutionalized racial segregation in the Jim Crow South. From February to May, the sit-ins received tremendous news coverage and gained the widespread support of black activist leaders such as Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., which later led to the creation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in April 1960. As the movement gained popularity, so did its opposition—segregationists resorted to often violence means to thwart the growing demands for desegregation.

Utilizing a variety of historical newspapers and contemporary scholarship, this essay examines how the sit-in demonstrations unfolded during the spring of 1960, how the movement attracted both support and hostility, and how it ultimately nurtured a new wave of activist leaders who later formed the SNCC. The focus of this paper is not to give an extensive overview of the larger civil rights movement of the 1960s, but to zoom in on the events and developments of the sit-in demonstrations to illustrate how different groups reacted to the demonstrations until the creation of SNCC in April 1960. In the words of Joseph Charles Jones, a former graduate student at Johnson C. Smith University, the series of sit-ins were “part of my [Jones] race’s efforts to secure

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<sup>5</sup>“Negroes in South in Store Sitdown: Carolina College Students Fight Woolworth Ban on Lunch Counter Service,” *New York Times* (1923-), February 3, 1960, 115207329, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

God-given rights,” and it was such determination that led to the movement’s success in securing more representations for peoples of color in the mid 1960s. <sup>6</sup>

### **Successes and Setbacks of the Nonviolent Student Movement**

On February 1 1960, four black students of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College sat down at a white-only lunch counter in their local Woolworth after purchasing several items from the store. Later known as the Greensboro Four, Ezell Blair Jr., Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and David Richmond believed that “since we buy books and papers in the other part of the store we should get served in this part,” but their request for service was refused by the waitress and the four were later asked to leave by the local store manager.<sup>7</sup> Reporting on the incident one day later, the *New York Times* wrote that the group “vowed to continue it in relays until Negroes were served at the lunch counter.” On the same day, the sit-in protest led by the Greensboro Four gained great momentum, in which *The Atlanta Constitution* later reported that “at one time during the day Negro students filled 63 of the 66 seats at the counters.”<sup>8</sup> Significantly, the group of black student activists was reported to have received the “moral support” of three white students, who claimed that more “white students would [also] back the effort.”<sup>9</sup> On Thursday, the three-day demonstration was “thwarted,” as claimed by *The Atlanta Constitution*, by a group of white youths backed by several members of the Ku Klux Klan who arrived “ahead of the Negroes and claimed some of the seats,” producing a stand-off of some 60 youths of each race in the Woolworth lunch counter.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the demonstration spread to a nearby S.H. Kress store, where black student activists alongside several white sympathizers protested against similar discriminatory practices used in the store. Local police forces were summoned to both stores to prevent violence from breaking out between the activists and reactionists.

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<sup>6</sup>“Negroes Extend Sitdown Protest.”

<sup>7</sup>“Negroes in South in Store Sitdown.”

<sup>8</sup>“Negro Collegians Fill All Seats At Cafe in Integration Sitdown,” *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, February 4, 1960, 1536212942, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.

<sup>9</sup>“Negro Collegians Fill All Seats.”

<sup>10</sup>“Whites Grab Seats in Cafe To Slow Integration Push,” *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, February 5, 1960, 1636830296, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.

On Saturday February 7, the Greensboro demonstrations were “halted abruptly” by bomb threats in both locations. In an effort to “ensure public safety,” managers of both Woolworth and S. H. Kress closed down their stores in the early afternoon. After vowing to “return daily to both stores and sit at the counters until served,” the student demonstrators began to march through the streets and were confronted by white youth groups. On one occasion, members of two white teenage gangs, “Los Hermanos” and “Rebels”, began to wave Confederate flags at the demonstrators, who later responded by waving a few smaller American flags back at the hecklers.<sup>11</sup> The Atlanta Journal reported frequent “instances of shoving and swearing” between the two groups and a hastily-broken up fist fight that led to the arrest of three people, including one black man who was allegedly drunk.<sup>12</sup> *The Boston Globe* reported a further instance of a white man “dropping a burning piece of paper in the lap of a Negro youth.”<sup>13</sup> In considering the violent reactions by segregationists, historian Clive Webb observed that “white southerners were almost unanimous in their condemnation of the sit-ins [but] were much less assured of how to stop black activism.”<sup>14</sup> For Webb, the white mobs’ use of violence was a clear reflection of their inability to organize effective counter-demonstrations. By utilizing violent tactics, then, the mobs attempted to dissuade black activists from continuing their sit-in protests, but to the disappointment of white youth groups and klansmen alike, such tactics proved to no avail. Two days later, student demonstrators took their cause beyond Greensboro and to the nearby cities of Durham and Winston-Salem.

On February 9, a group of black students, accompanied by four white students from Duke University, arrived at the Woolworth lunch counter in Durham to protest against the store policy of “stand up service” for black customers.<sup>15</sup> As reported by *the Atlanta Constitution*, the spokesperson of the group rhetorically questioned: “If we can stand up and be served, why can’t we sit down and be served?” Apart from Durham, similar instances of protest also occurred that

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<sup>11</sup>“Bomb Scares Halt Negro Sitdown,” *The Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution (1950-1968)*, February 7, 1960, Sunday ed. edition, 1644150716, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.

<sup>12</sup>“Bomb Scares Halt Negro Sitdown.”

<sup>13</sup>“Negro-White Row Closes Lunch Counters,” *Daily Boston Globe (1928-1960)*, February 7, 1960, 276444157, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Boston Globe.

<sup>14</sup>Webb, “Breaching the Wall of Resistance,” 58.

<sup>15</sup>“Integration Push At Cafes Spreads,” *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, February 9, 1960, 1556061610, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.

same day in Winston-Salem. Black activists who took part in the Durham and Winston-Salem protests, however, denied affiliation with any “groups or individuals at the other schools.”<sup>16</sup> In the words of black graduate student Joseph Charles Jones, “there is no organization behind us.”<sup>17</sup> On February 10, the protest saw its presence in Charlotte, the largest and most populous city in North Carolina. Following the protocols of previous demonstrations, protestors entered and demanded service at the segregated lunch counter of a local Woolworth store. Like the others, they were ignored by the waitress and jeered at by white youth groups. A moment of tension emerged during the Charlotte protest when white hecklers began to throw eggs towards the counter that “splashed on the Negroes,” who were reported by *The Atlanta Constitution* to have given “no reaction either to this or the jeers and catcalls thrown at them by white youths and girls.”<sup>18</sup>

Racial tension continued the following day when demonstrations appeared in various Woolworth stores in the state capital of Raleigh, which ultimately resulted in the closure of seven lunch counters in the city that afternoon.<sup>19</sup> Commenting upon the recent societal unrest in his state, Attorney General Malcolm L. Seawell urged local authorities to take action against what he perceived as “a serious threat to peace and good order.”<sup>20</sup> In defense of the state’s customary segregationist policies, Seawell maintained that private stores and companies had the legal right to “sell or not to sell to customers as they see fit” and that school officials had “the right and probably the duty” to keep their students’ rebellious actions in check.<sup>21</sup> The American Civil Liberty Union (ACLU), on the other hand, was quick to come to the defense of the protesters, declaring that “Negro students staging the sit-down protests were within their rights” to do so and that state officials should negotiate with demonstrators to grant civil liberties to black and other minority groups.<sup>22</sup> Alongside the ACLU, many black activist leaders, non-governmental

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<sup>16</sup>“Negroes Extend Sitdown Protest.”

<sup>17</sup>“Negroes Extend Sitdown Protest.”

<sup>18</sup>“Eggs Spray Negroes In Cafe Flareup,” *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, February 11, 1960, 1536223613, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.

<sup>19</sup>“Lunch Counter Protest Spreads To N. C. Capitol,” *Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1956-1960)*, February 11, 1960, 493811908, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

<sup>20</sup>“Eggs Spray Negroes In Cafe Flareup.”

<sup>21</sup>“Eggs Spray Negroes In Cafe Flareup.”

<sup>22</sup>“Negro Diner Push Spreads to Virginia,” *The Atlanta Constitution (1946-1984)*, February 12, 1960, 1555735978, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.



organizations, and a “handful of white students” also voiced their vehement support for the sit-in demonstrations.<sup>23</sup> In an address to various student-leaders of recent protests, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. claimed that the students of North Carolina have “taken their undying and passionate yearning for freedom and fashioned it into a creative protest that is destined to be one of the glowing epics of [their] time.”<sup>24</sup>

For King and his fellow Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) members, the vibrant youth demonstrators’ resort to nonviolence was a crucial element in winning widespread support. A great admirer of former Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi, King believed that “nonviolence was one of the most potent weapons available to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom.”<sup>25</sup> While some skirmishes did take place between demonstrators and white supremacists, black students, for the most part, kept their cool and “gave no reactions” to the heckling, jeering, and occasional physical violence by their white counterparts.<sup>26</sup> In fact, many student leaders of the sit-in demonstrations were also believed to be directly inspired by Gandhi’s nonviolent means of protest.<sup>27</sup> For historian Iwan Morgan, “the youthful dynamic of the movement was essential to its character and uniqueness,” but unlike other youth movements during the Black Power movement in the decade that followed, the students’ choice of nonviolence allowed them to secure widespread support from prominent black activists and white sympathizers.<sup>28</sup>

The spirit of nonviolence was, however, not a shared belief between demonstrators and reactionary crowds, as white youth activists, in many cases supervised directly by Ku Klux Klansmen, were willing to use violence in breaking up the demonstrations. To the disappointment of King and other activists who believed in unconditional practice of non-violence, black demonstrators were often forced to respond with violence of their own means against physical attacks by their white counterparts. On February 20, the sit-in demonstrations had spread beyond

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<sup>23</sup>Claude Sitton, “Negro Sitdowns Stir Fear Of Wider Unrest in South: Negro Sitdowns Disquiet South,” *New York Times* (1923-), February 15, 1960, 115054025, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times.

<sup>24</sup>Martin Luther King et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, vol. 5, 6 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 366.

<sup>25</sup>King et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 422.

<sup>26</sup>“Eggs Spray Negroes In Cafe Flareup.”

<sup>27</sup>“Gandhi ’Aims Seen in South Negro Protest,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1923-1963), February 10, 1960, 182435403, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune.

<sup>28</sup>Iwan Morgan, “The New Movement: The Student Sit-Ins in 1960,” in *From Sit-Ins to SNCC: The Student Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012), 7.

the borders of North Carolina into Virginia and South Carolina. At High Point, student demonstrators got into a “brief fist fight” with white protestors before being broken up by the local police force.<sup>29</sup> Later that day, the *New York Times* reported some “250 youngsters of both races [squaring] off in a parking lot” at a downtown shopping center in Portsmouth, Virginia.<sup>30</sup> Two days later, 22 youths were arrested in the state of Tennessee when “a group of 200 Negro demonstrators and 500 white hecklers swarmed over the downtown area” of Chattanooga, an incident reported by *The Daily Defender* as the “most serious” since the sit-in movement began at Greensboro.<sup>31</sup>

As a response, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) issued a declaration saying that the youth would “initiate action immediately” to organize sit-in demonstrations “in every city and town in the southeastern region” while also calling for better education programs designated for the “study of the history of the Negro race.”<sup>32</sup> The NAACP declaration was met with a wave of backlash by segregationists. As white mobs ramped up their use of violence against student demonstrators, southern governors and other officials began to endorse such behaviors as justified administ widespread social unrest caused by black demonstrators. On February 28, two white men struck a black woman protester “about the head several times with miniature baseball bats” in downtown Montgomery and got away without being arrested.<sup>33</sup> Later that day, white supremacists attacked the houses of two black families in Chickamauga, Tennessee where “a 15-year-old boy was showered by pellets.”<sup>34</sup> Acknowledging the widespread protest by black activists but refusing to offer meaningful reconciliatory measures, Governor John Patterson of Alabama claimed that “Negro demonstration against segregated lunch

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<sup>29</sup>“Negroes Fight Back In The South: Fistfights Flare All Over South,” *New York Amsterdam News (1943-1961)*, February 20, 1960, City edition edition, 225480546, Black Studies Center; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: New York Amsterdam News; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: New York Amsterdam News.

<sup>30</sup>“Negroes Fight Back In The South.”

<sup>31</sup>“Arrest 22 in Sit-Down Move: Street Fight in Tenn. Over ‘Sitdown’ Protests,” *Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1956-1960)*, February 24, 1960, 493816124, Black Studies Center; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

<sup>32</sup>“NAACP Youth Resolve To Extend Sit-Ins All Over Southeast Area,” *Tri - State Defender (1959-1989)*, February 27, 1960, 370678949, Ethnic NewsWatch.

<sup>33</sup>“Racial Tension Erupts As Sit-Down Protests Spread: Montgomery Negro Is Clubbed; Shots Fired Into Georgia Homes,” *The Atlanta Journal and the Atlanta Constitution (1950-1968)*, February 28, 1960, Sunday ed. edition, 1644196062, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Atlanta Constitution.

<sup>34</sup>“Racial Tension Erupts As Sit-Down Protests Spread.”

counters would bring a racial explosion.”<sup>35</sup> The problem, Patterson emphasized, was not the fact that black students were protesting against what they believed to be unjust, but that there was “not enough” of a police force “to prevent riots and protect everybody if they continue to provoke (the whites) on that matter.”<sup>36</sup> As reported by Claude Sitton, the governor originally pushed for the immediate expulsion of “all students who participated in a sit-in demonstration” on February 25, but when his remarks were met with widespread discontent by the enraged black public, Patterson softened his stance while maintaining that “action should be taken against the leaders.”<sup>37</sup> Governor Patterson’s call to “protect” whites from their black counterparts was echoed in the announcement of Dr. Beverly Lake, a candidate for the governor of North Carolina, who claimed: “If the administrative officers of any institution operated by this state are either unable or unwilling to exercise over its students sufficient control to prevent organized, group invasion of private property by the students, the state should supply the institution with an administration which can and will do so.”<sup>38</sup>

By calling the organized student demonstrations as a “group invasion of private property,” Lake reflected what Clive Webb observed as a common tactic of southern media and politicians’ blaming of “black activists whose criminal behavior had supposedly provoked whites.”<sup>39</sup> In making this statement, Webb critically noted it was ironically white segregationists’ racism that “undermined their ability to defend Jim Crow against the sit-in demonstrations,” as “their inability to believe that black youth possessed either the motivation or ability to organize an insurgency against segregation left them confused as to who their enemies were and what tactics to use against them.”<sup>40</sup> For segregationists, then, their best tactic was twofold: to use violence as a direct means of bringing to a halt the activities of black activists while simultaneously casting off such actions

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<sup>35</sup>Claude Sitton, “Warns Negroes on Race Flareup,” *The Globe and Mail* (1936-), March 1, 1960, 1291074960, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Globe and Mail.

<sup>36</sup>Sitton, “Warns Negroes on Race Flareup.”

<sup>37</sup>Sitton, “Warns Negroes on Race Flareup.”

<sup>38</sup>Sitton, “Warns Negroes on Race Flareup.”

<sup>39</sup>Webb, “Breaching the Wall of Resistance,” 61.

<sup>40</sup>Webb, “Breaching the Wall of Resistance,” 59.

to the “skeptical northern public” as simply upholding the “sacred constitutional principle of federalism.”<sup>41</sup>

Far from the hopes of southern segregationists, however, such tactics fueled the anti-segregationist sentiment among student demonstrators as the sit-in movement continued to pick up momentum. Backed by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., several black adult activists “staged a quiet, orderly sitdown demonstration in Nashville” on March 2, where the spokesman Rev. C. T. Vivian claimed that their actions were pursued to send the clear message that the “ Negro community is in accord with the basic spirit shown by the students.”<sup>42</sup> Later that day, more than 1,000 black students from the all-black Alabama State college “marched silently up the hill to the white-columned Alabama capitol where Jefferson Davis became the Confederacy’s first president, and as silently walked away again.”<sup>43</sup> By then, the sit-in protests had spread to 24 cities across 6 southern and border states. Recognizing the undeniable fact that the student-led movement had grown continuously despite numerous attempts to confront it, the Southern Regional Council based in Atlanta, Georgia, declared that “segregation cannot be maintained in the South,” for any attempts to forcefully suppress the growing civil rights movement was almost certain to be met with fierce resistant that would ultimately disrupt the functioning of the region as a whole.<sup>44</sup> “The sit-ins,” noted the regional council, “have spread in such contagion as to make brightly clear that the South is in a time of change, the terms of which cannot be dictated by white southerners.”<sup>45</sup>

Although the council’s statement gave veiled implications that reconciliation was likely the best course of action for the peoples of both races, defiant white supremacists continued, in a last-ditch effort, to thwart the ongoing movement. On March 5, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that the local police force of Sumter, South Carolina, arrested some 26 “Bible-carrying Negro

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<sup>41</sup>Webb, “Breaching the Wall of Resistance,” 61.

<sup>42</sup>“Cleric Leads ‘Sit-In ’Move: Minister Leads ‘Sit-In ’Protest,” *Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1956-1960)*, March 2, 1960, 493808999, Black Studies Center; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Defender.

<sup>43</sup>“Cleric Leads ‘Sit-In ’Move: Minister Leads ‘Sit-In ’Protest.”

<sup>44</sup>“Student ‘Sit-Ins ’Emerge As Vital Force To Be Reckoned With: New Movement Inspires South,” *The Louisville Defender (1933-)*, March 3, 1960, 2703272471, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Louisville Defender.

<sup>45</sup>“Student ‘Sit-Ins ’Emerge As Vital Force To Be Reckoned With.”

college students” for trespassing the private property of a white southerner.<sup>46</sup> An hour away in Florence, 48 black students were arrested for “parading without a permit.”<sup>47</sup> Later that same day in Miami, Florida, a cross in front of the house of a black family was reported to have been burned down, with the father telling the police that “he would kill anyone else who tried to burn a cross in his yard.”<sup>48</sup> Such blatant attacks, however, were not only ineffective but largely counterintuitive for segregationist leaders trying to sell their ideology to white Northern democrats, as it made the ideology of white supremacy less palpable to those who previously held moderate beliefs. Dissatisfied by the recklessness of white youths in Richmond, Virginia, a local segregationist leader observed that the black students wore “coats, white shirts and ties,” while their white boys that “came to heckle” were “slack-jawed, black-jacketed, grinning fit to kill, [and] were waving the proud and honored flag of the Southern States in the last war fought by gentlemen.”<sup>49</sup> Recognizing that they were quickly losing public support, segregationist leaders, as illustrated by Webb, “were forced to dissociate themselves from the white rank and file because their resort to racial demagoguery and violence made it impossible to persuade the rest of the nation of the political legitimacy of their cause.”<sup>50</sup>

In the weeks following the 1,000-men march on the former Confederate Capitol in Montgomery, Alabama, the movement carried on amidst the usual heckling and occasional violence perpetrated by white teenage gangs. By mid-March, the sit-in demonstrations had taken place in various major cities, including Charlotte, Richmond, Baltimore, Houston, Miami, New Orleans, and Atlanta.<sup>51</sup> Faced with large-scale arrests by the police, Rev. Martin Luther King urged the demonstrators to “show that [they were] willing and prepared to fill up the jails of the South.”<sup>52</sup> By April, the student-led civil rights movement had swept across a majority of the southern and border states. Recognizing the achievements of black student activists, civil rights leaders such as King and Ella Baker organized a conference to be held at Shaw University in North Carolina on

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<sup>46</sup>“Police Seize 26 Students in S. C. Sitdowns,” *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*, March 5, 1960, 182464058, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Chicago Tribune.

<sup>47</sup>“Police Seize 26 Students in S. C. Sitdowns.”

<sup>48</sup>“Police Seize 26 Students in S. C. Sitdowns.”

<sup>49</sup>“Student ‘Sit-Ins’ Emerge As Vital Force To Be Reckoned With.”

<sup>50</sup>Webb, “Breaching the Wall of Resistance,” 62.

<sup>51</sup>Morgan, “The New Movement,” 5.

<sup>52</sup>King et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 366.

April 15, which included hundreds of student-leaders who organized and took part in the sit-in demonstrations. In his opening address, King remarked that the protests represented a great “offensive in the history of the Negro peoples’ struggle for freedom” and that the students have readily embraced “a philosophy of mass direct nonviolent action.”<sup>53</sup> Upon conclusion of the conference, a new student-led civil rights organization was formed: the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Reflecting upon the events of 1960, former SNCC Chairman Charles McDew later recalled: “The sit-ins have inspired us to build a new image of ourselves in our own mind,” an image that ultimately guided black activists towards toppling the customary segregation practices of the Jim Crow South.<sup>54</sup>

### Conclusion

A month following the creation of SNCC, Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. described the sit-in demonstrations as “an electrifying movement [that] has shattered the placid surface of campuses and communities across the South.”<sup>55</sup> Characterizing the movement as nothing but “historic,” King further observed that “never before in the United States had so large a body of students spread a struggle over so great an area in pursuit of a goal of human dignity and freedom.”<sup>56</sup> By June 1960, sit-ins had occurred in 78 cities in the southern and border states, over thousands of activists had gone to jail, but the movement gave blacks and other anti-segregationists a concrete cause to rally behind.<sup>57</sup> In considering the events of 1960 as a whole, historian Francesca Polletta observed that it was the combined efforts of courageous students, ministers, NAACP officials, and white sympathizers that allowed the movement to gain popularity and momentum.<sup>58</sup>

The creation of SNCC was instrumental in the struggle against racial inequality of the 1960s, for the organization’s emphasis on nonviolent means stood in stark contrast with that of various militant activist organizations influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideals. Although its methods

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<sup>53</sup>King et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 425.

<sup>54</sup>Francesca Polletta, *It Was Like a Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 43.

<sup>55</sup>King et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 447.

<sup>56</sup>King et al., *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 448.

<sup>57</sup>Morgan, “The New Movement,” 5.

<sup>58</sup>Polletta, *It Was Like a Fever*, 32.

differed from those of the Black Panthers and the Brown Berets, SNCC still played a crucial role in the fight for racial and social justice throughout the 1960s. As with other activist movements, SNCC, from the onset of its creation, faced widespread opposition from far-right politicians and white supremacist groups alike. This essay examined the non-violent student sit-ins of the early 1960, the backlash it faced amidst the violent heckling of white supremacists, and the latter's poor self-image that rendered ineffective segregationist leaders' attempts to thwart the advancement of civil rights for people of color. Four years later, the Civil Rights act of 1964 was, undoubtedly, a victory for black activists, but it did not end the blacks' arduous journey towards achieving equality. Today, the memories of Daunte Wright, Manuel Ellis, George Floyd, and other victims of police brutality serve as a painful yet vivid reminder that the United States, as a whole, is far from being completely free of racial discrimination. The stunning successes of the nonviolent demonstrations in 1960 should, however, serve as an inspiration for future civil rights movements in the United States, so long as institutionalized racial inequality continues to plague American societies.

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Article 3

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## **Internationalism of the Leftist Press and Reactions from the FBI and CIA from the 1960s-1970s**

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# INTERNATIONALISM OF THE LEFTIST PRESS AND REACTIONS FROM THE FBI AND CIA FROM THE 1960s-1970s

SHRUTHI SRIRAM\*

**Abstract:** Amid the wave of American counterculture movements in the 1960s and 1970s, several members of the New Left established internationalist connections abroad. They questioned American involvement in countries undergoing decolonization and political revolution, showing solidarity with activists in those nations.

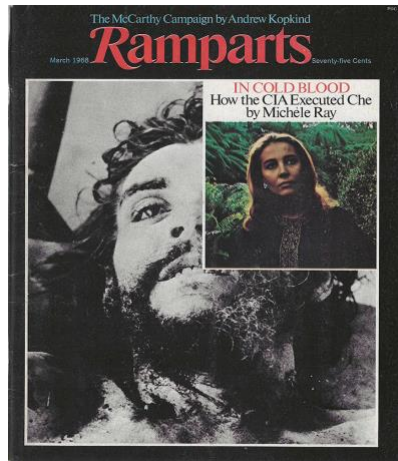
The voices of these activists were undoubtedly amplified by the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS), which disseminated these stories of international solidarity. This paper examines the stories of left-leaning activists who often served as staff writers on these publications and wrote on their ideologies and experiences. While the UPS included a range of newspapers, this paper will focus on *Ramparts* and *Liberator Magazine*, specifically with their coverage on Cuba, Ghana, and the Congo, to show the international solidarity expressed on the pages that ultimately led to police surveillance.

The FBI and CIA used strategies like “lit.-cop federalism” to monitor leftist journalists, collecting files on their publications and words to frame a story of treason and espionage. These organizations also purposely mistranslated the works of a lot of international activists, to turn domestic New Left activists against their internationalist comrades.

The leftist press was crucial in providing a voice for the New Left, and in combating the intentionally false, anti-communist narrative policing agencies were spreading. I argue that it was when these news sources began to take a specifically *internationalist* lens that the FBI and CIA increased their surveillance of these papers, as they understood the threat they posed to domestic opinion during the Cold War.

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*“We want our people to be aware of the direct chain, which reaches from Cuba into our cities, our campuses, our conventions, our lives – and which threatens the life of this Republic.”<sup>3</sup>*  
*- Senator James Oliver Eastland, Chairman of the Subcommittee to Investigate the Internal Security Act*

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Garland Allen, a renowned historian of science, spent much of the 1960s and 1970s politically involved like many of his college-aged peers.<sup>4</sup> While a graduate student at Harvard, Allen actively participated in several anti-Vietnam protests, and organized a two-week long strike where students occupied Harvard’s administration buildings and University Hall. Allen additionally participated in MLK’s march from Selma to Montgomery, considering himself to be a staunch activist for civil rights.

When Allen began teaching at Washington University in St. Louis, he decided to take a semester off to join the Venceremos Brigade to Cuba, an underground organization that sent Americans to work alongside Cuban farmers, students, and government officials to show

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<sup>2</sup> Michele Ray, “Ramparts 1968-03: Vol 6 ISS 8 : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming.” Internet Archive. Ramparts Magazine Inc, March 1, 1968. [https://archive.org/details/sim\\_ramparts\\_1968-03\\_6\\_8/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/sim_ramparts_1968-03_6_8/mode/2up).

<sup>3</sup> Teishan A. Latner, “Agrarians or Anarchists? The Venceremos Brigades to Cuba, State Surveillance, and the FBI as Biographer and Archivist.” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 9, no. 1 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.5070/t891034678>.

<sup>4</sup> Everett Mendelsohn, “Garland Allen: An Appreciation.” *Journal of the History of Biology* 49, no. 4 (2016): 583–86. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10739-016-9459-2>.

American solidarity with the Cuban Revolution.<sup>5</sup> Allen singularly credits this experience to his radicalization and the complete development of his political consciousness. During this time, he worked on a sugar cane farm in community with Cubans, who shared their revolutionary zeal with Allen. He read selected works of Marx, and was invited to join the Scientists and Engineers for Social and Political Action, a radical organization.<sup>6</sup> Upon returning to the United States, Allen's scientific work began taking a radical social and political perspective.

In no way was Allen's radicalization an isolated incident. Several other members of what would be termed the "New Left" established internationalist connections abroad. They questioned American involvement in countries like Ghana, the Congo, and Cuba, and showed solidarity with activists in those nations.

The voices of these individuals were undoubtedly amplified by the underground press, which burst onto the media scene in the 1960s and 1970s. Their coverage included first-hand reports—from left-leaning activists of the time who were often staff writers on these papers—as well as republications of local news in other countries. For example, Eldridge Cleaver, an activist and staff writer for *Ramparts Magazine*, published several stories on his own internationalist activism, but also republished anti-imperialist stories circulated in local African news sources, in order to broaden the message to an American audience.<sup>7</sup>

In reaction to this activism, U.S. policy doubled-down on its already existing fears of Cold War communism, as agencies like the FBI and CIA sought to prevent U.S citizens from traveling to areas in the Third World where leftist movements were happening. The internationalism and eventual radicalism of activists like Allen strengthened the fears of subversion and treason which were deep-rooted in the U.S. at this time. This phenomenon manifested itself through the media, as the government hoped to control the narrative that was being shared with the larger population.

I argue that it was when the underground press began to take an *internationalist* lens to amplify the stories of the Third World Left between the 1960s and 1970s that American agencies like the FBI and CIA became especially threatened by their anti-American narrative, and instituted several strategies to discredit, block, and prosecute their work.

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<sup>5</sup> Mendelsohn, "Garland Allen," 583.

<sup>6</sup> Mendelsohn, "Garland Allen," 583.

<sup>7</sup> Christopher M. Tinson, *Radical Intellect Liberator Magazine and Black Activism in the 1960s*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

## A) Terminology

It is first important to frame what Third-Worldism, leftism, internationalism, and communism meant during this time. In her book “Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era,” author Judy Wu defines and contextualizes these terms.<sup>8</sup> The United States government exuded a perspective of democratic exceptionalism during the Cold War, tasking itself with saving countries around the world from communism. Specifically with Vietnam, mainstream media presented an East-West divide between the totalitarianism of the East and freedom of the West. Wu writes “Perceiving Vietnamese opponents of the United States as part of an international communist conspiracy further intensified the divide that most Americans drew between deserving insiders and inhumane outsiders.”<sup>9</sup>

In response to these perceptions, the idea of internationalism arose. Wu explains the term in the context of the Vietnam War, explaining that internationalists viewed themselves as “members of communities that transcended national boundaries.”<sup>10</sup> Suspicious of the mainstream narratives of leftist/communist countries, internationalist activists visited those countries themselves. Oftentimes, after traveling to and interacting with grassroots activists in those nations, these Americans expanded their political views outside the walls of strict American interests. Internationalist activists often rejected what they viewed as the “militaristic, materialistic, and racist values of mainstream society” and instead identified with “people and societies resisting colonialism and neocolonialism.”<sup>11</sup>

The nations these individuals established solidarity with were referred to as the Third World, due to their specific relationship with radicalism at the time. The activists were moving away from the communism of the Soviet Union, which they believed was totalitarian. Rather, Third World leftism centered itself around solidarity with countries in Latin America and Africa, where nations were undergoing their own decolonization movements. The relationship between

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<sup>8</sup> Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, *Radicals on the Road: Internationalism, Orientalism, and Feminism during the Vietnam Era*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Wu, *Radicals on the Road*, 5.

these Third World socialist movements and American activists was the key to international solidarity.

## B) The Bureau's Strategy - Literary Analysis

John Edgar Hoover, former Director of the FBI, is the man credited with transforming the organization into what it is today. Between 1924 and 1972, Hoover brought the FBI to national prominence through relentless persecution of what he believed to be domestic and foreign threats. During the 60s and 70s, this meant a lot of Hoover's efforts were focused on dispersing the civil rights movement. William J. Maxwell, author of the book "F.B.Eyes," coined the term "lit.-cop federalism" to describe Hoover's strategy in policing these activists.<sup>12</sup>

The first step of "lit.-cop federalism" was the creation of literary archives on the works of activists in radical organizations, including their speeches, articles, and letters.<sup>13</sup> Hoover recognized that the dissemination of radical literature and journalism further advanced the motives of the Left, and believed this was a major threat to the stability of the country. Maxwell quotes Hoover saying that the radicals' sole purposes were to "commit acts of terrorism and to advocate, by word of mouth and by the circulation of literature, the overthrow of the Government of the United States by force and violence."<sup>14</sup> Hoover's collection of this literature was so expansive, he had gathered "a cluster of text-centered desires and activities ranging from the archival to the editorial" that was enough to make his own "intragovernmental newspaper."<sup>15</sup>

Literary archives were especially useful to the Bureau when radical activists were publishing internationalist pieces. During this time, the FBI believed that the global influence on American activism was "conceptualized in ideological terms."<sup>16</sup> In order to understand the ways in which activists were aligning with international allies, the Bureau often used these archives to prove an activist's subversion or treason.

For example, as Black activists widened their scope to promote international solidarity with Africa, so too did the FBI, although for a different reason. Maxwell writes that "the open

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<sup>12</sup> William J. F.B. Maxwell, *Eyes: How J. Edgar Hoover's Ghostreaders Framed African American Literature*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>13</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 42.

<sup>14</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 49.

<sup>15</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 43.

<sup>16</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?", 126.



comfort of the Harlem Renaissance with the simultaneously national and transnational implications of New Negro modernity dictated a comparable range in Hoover's ghostreaders."<sup>17</sup> As Black writers and activists began looking abroad, the FBI grew wary of the growth of Black international consciousness. The Bureau wanted the movement to be contained domestically as it made it easier for them to control it.<sup>18</sup>

"Lit.-cop federalism" intended to weaponize literary archives collected on activists in two ways - by smearing their images in the "U.S. print public sphere," and when possible, prosecuting them.<sup>19</sup> Hoover was attracted to print news as a PR tool, and sent several government sanctioned messages into the media to counter the publications of anti-government stories/news. Hoover's goal was to involve the government directly in the public sphere, and to challenge the desire to keep "police power at a critical distance."<sup>20</sup>

Hoover also smeared the image of these activists in the print media through "diasporic translations" of literature being transferred between American and international activists.<sup>21</sup> The Bureau hired U.S. diplomats to translate several foreign publications to English, like Claude McKay's contributions to Bolshevik papers and James Baldwin's contributions to Turkish newspapers. Yet, the Bureau intentionally released false and incomplete translations in order to divide Black activists in the U.S. from their international allies. Maxwell writes "aggravating the ambiguities of communication within the Black diaspora and its chosen political allies, Hoover's ghostreaders added the strain of hostile retranslations circulated across state channels to worsen 'the haunting gap of discrepancy' involved in any articulation of international blackness."<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the mistranslations, Hoover looked for ways to prosecute individuals on the basis of their work. It was during this time the FBI expanded its Radical Division, which was at the forefront of collecting domestic intelligence on the works of prominent activists of the time like Martin Luther King and Malcom X.<sup>23</sup> The Radical Division began by subverting internationalist or Marxist efforts of solidarity during the Russian Revolution, but honed its scope to Third World internationalism during the movements of the 60s and 70s.

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<sup>17</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 195.

<sup>18</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 195.

<sup>19</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 43.

<sup>20</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 43.

<sup>21</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 195, 196.

<sup>22</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 197.

<sup>23</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 47.

Hoover was known to search the information collected by the Radical Division for “deportation-worthy” sentiments in the writings of these left-leaning activists and writers (anything that he could paint as being treasonous), as grounds to send them out of the country.<sup>24</sup> For example, Claudia Jones, a Trinidad-born Black radical journalist, was deported from the U.S. in 1955 due to her leadership in the Communist Party U.S.A. Much of the prosecution against her was based on literary evidence collected by the Bureau.

The FBI also took on the international surveillance roles of the CIA to block passports of Americans who were traveling to leftist countries, due to perceived fears of subversion. A particularly famous case is that of W.E.B. Du Bois, whose travel requests were closely tracked by the FBI. One specific instance was when Du Bois requested a passport to travel to Ghana to see the installment of Kwame Nkrumah as prime minister. His passport was taken from him and voided, and was not reinstated during this time, due to his membership in the Communist Party U.S.A., and his naturalization as a Ghanaian citizen.<sup>25</sup>

The FBI took an international lens due to the internationalism of activists that were publishing their stories in the leftist media in the 60s and 70s. It is out of the Bureau’s mistranslation of radical papers and collection of literary evidence against activists that lit a fire within the leftist press. They strove to present what they believed to be a crucial yet silenced viewpoint in the media at this time.

### C) Cultural Overview - Underground Press

As Wu explains, there was a common feeling among leftist activists to question the message being presented in mainstream media on the state of affairs in the Third World Left. As they engaged in internationalist activism to answer those questions of what is happening abroad, they contributed to the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS) to share what they were seeing.

While this paper will hone in on *Ramparts Magazine* and *Liberator Magazine* to argue the thesis, it would be a loss not to mention the larger work of the Underground Press Syndicate that created the conditions for *Ramparts* and *Liberator* to succeed.

Artists and writers in the counterculture movement of the 1960s largely helped define the anti-establishment atmosphere of the time through publishing in papers like the *San Francisco*

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<sup>24</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 49.

<sup>25</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 202.

*Oracle*.<sup>26</sup> A hub of the hippie movement, the *Oracle* transformed the cultural atmosphere of Haight-Ashbury into a circulated publication. Art, graphics, prose and poetry that symbolized the burgeoning cultural revolution of the time were all included. While the *Oracle* was largely apolitical at the time, it still played a foundational role in creating a hub of alternative news media.

In order to inspire other news sources with the artistic impulse of the Haight, the *Oracle* organized the Underground Press Syndicate (UPS) in several cities around the U.S., inviting publications like the *Los Angeles Free Press*, the *East Village Other*, and the *Berkeley Barb*. Editors at the *Oracle* helped create standards among this coalition of papers in 1967 to increase readership.<sup>27</sup> Forming a chain of publishing houses across the country, these papers shared research with one another and sent out robust newsletters on the nature of the counterculture movement to readers in their areas. While the *Oracle* was solely responsible for cultural and arts news inspired by the Haight, the papers they recruited to join the UPS reported heavily on the leftist perspective of the antiwar movement, connecting the arts of the counterculture with the work of activists who were a part of it.<sup>28</sup> This infrastructure that artists in the UPS created was significant in allowing the leftist press to have a shot at spreading their message to a comparable readership as conservative and mainstream media. Given this context, we can explore two specific leftist publications to see how they faced off against Hoover's intragovernmental newspaper.

## Chapter 2: *Ramparts Magazine*

### A) Introduction to *Ramparts*

*Ramparts Magazine* was one of America's foremost leftist publications in the 1960s and 1970s, serving as a "mainstream" leftist voice for student activists across the country.<sup>29</sup> Originally a Catholic literary quarterly founded by Edward Keating in Menlo Park, California, the paper

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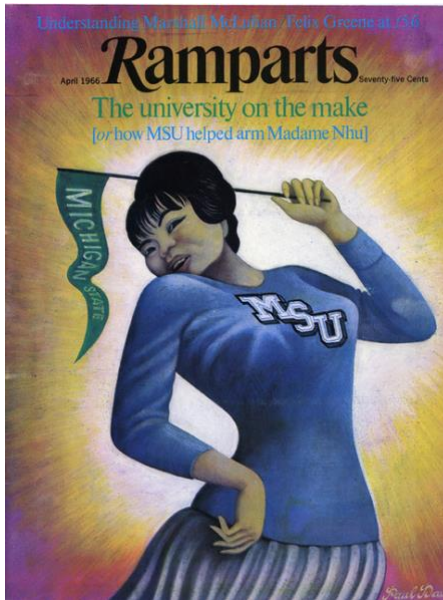
<sup>26</sup> Oleg Vyacheslavovich Brodov, Almaz Vasilovich Zakirov, Luiza Kajumovna Karimova, and Anna Andreevna Kirpichnikova, "Counterculture of 1960s and Underground Press in the USA." *Propósitos y Representaciones* 9, no. SPE2 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.20511/pyr2021.v9nspe2.999>.

<sup>27</sup> Bodrov, "Counterculture," 5.

<sup>28</sup> Bodrov, "Counterculture," 4, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Richardson, "The Perilous Fight: The Rise of Ramparts Magazine, 1965–1966," *California History* 86, no. 3 (2009): 22–69. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40495218>.

became political when Warren Hinckle and Robert Scheer were hired as editors and moved *Ramparts* to San Francisco.<sup>30</sup> In 1963, Hinckle turned the gaze of the paper to Vietnam, as anti-war protests began in full force. *Ramparts* covered Kennedy's assassination and Lyndon B.



Johnson's Vietnam policy, calling U.S. intervention in Vietnam a mistake. Scheer wrote a commentary on the famous book *Deliver Us from Evil* by Tom Dooley, saying that the reductive description of the war in Vietnam as one between the "godless communists and freedom-loving Vietnamese" painted an inaccurate and incomplete picture.<sup>31</sup> In 1966, Scheer began working on one of *Ramparts*' first investigative pieces with whistle-blower Stanley Sheinbaum, the coordinator of Michigan State University's Vietnam Project in 1957.<sup>32</sup> While going through government documents at the UC Berkeley library, Scheer discovered that the "CIA had used the Vietnam Project to interrogate and torture Vietnamese nationals."<sup>33</sup>

Scheer told Sheinbaum his discoveries, and Sheinbaum confirmed the information in the UC Berkeley files. The two broke the story together, with Sheinbaum helping write the piece.<sup>34</sup>

*Ramparts*' coverage went well beyond the scope of just the Vietnam War, as activists employed by the paper brought other internationalist perspectives to their coverage. Eldridge Cleaver, leader of the Black Panther Party, was a prominent staff writer for *Ramparts*, as the magazine published his diaries in a special edition. The Black Panthers were well known for their solidarity with activists in Cuba and Africa, and Eldridge often brought stories of the activism of the Black Panthers in Cuba and Africa to *Ramparts*.

In the same vein, *Ramparts* covered the Cuban Revolution using stories from activists who established internationalist connections in Cuba, publishing a retranslation of the diaries of Che Guevara with an introduction written especially for *Ramparts* by Fidel Castro.<sup>35</sup> It was this specific retranslation that was one of *Ramparts*' most prolific stances against mistranslations of

<sup>30</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 22, 24.

<sup>31</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 24.

<sup>32</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 27.

<sup>33</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 27.

<sup>34</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 30.

<sup>35</sup> Richardson, "The Perilous Fight," 22.

radical works released by Hoover. In order for *Ramparts* to establish firm solidarity with the Cuban Revolution, their writers often engaged in direct activism in the region.

### B) Cuban Revolution and the Venceremos Brigade

Historian Teishan Latner writes that the New Left's leading activists at this time were "increasingly invested in examining and learning from revolutions, anticolonial struggles, and leftwing political movements in the Third World."<sup>36</sup> Black radical activists were the first to look towards Cuba due to Castro's anti-racist proclamations. Stokely Carmichael, a leader within the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, was invited to Cuba personally by Fidel Castro, and spoke to the Cuban audience saying that the civil rights movement in the U.S. looks to Cuba as a shining example. As anti-Vietnam War protests continued to boil well into the 60s, white, Black, Latino, Native American, and Asian activists alike began looking to Cuba with even more fervor. One student activist said "We, who participated in the civil rights movement, the battles for self-determination ... began to look outside the borders of the United States toward those who were already building societies of justice, equality, and human dignity: we were ready to learn from their examples."<sup>37</sup>

Such internationalist solidarity with Cuba resulted in the creation of the Venceremos Brigade. An organization that started among activists within the SDS, the organization sent out students to work alongside "Cuban students, farm laborers, urban volunteers, and government officials, including Fidel Castro himself, as well as volunteer brigades across the Third World."<sup>38</sup> The work of the Brigade radicalized several of the members who went. Student activists were in community with Cuban leftists, and began re-examining the work of Marx in its direct social application. These activists were stepping away from the communism of the Soviet Union which they believed had become equated with totalitarianism, and focused their efforts on Marxist/Leninist applications within the Third World. As Latner writes, "the group became the most visible and broadest expression of U.S. leftwing interest in the Cuban revolution."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?", 123.

<sup>37</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?", 124.

<sup>38</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?", 120.

<sup>39</sup> Latner, "Agrarians or Anarchists?", 124.

### C) *Ramparts* on Cuba

*Ramparts* wanted to tell the stories of Venceremos to show solidarity with the Cuban Revolution, and counter the anti-Cuban sentiment in mainstream American media. An especially famous example of this is *Ramparts*' special published edition of the Diary of Che Guevara, which was released on July 3, 1968. *Ramparts* was the first to translate Che's works to English, and upon publication, they included an introduction by Fidel Castro, written specifically for *Ramparts*, showing thanks for Americans that supported the Cuban Revolution.

Castro speaks about his hatred of American Imperialism in his introduction, something which was only available to Americans through publications like *Ramparts*, as the U.S. government did not want such anti-establishment rhetoric being made widely available. For example, Castro writes, "Yankee imperialism has never needed pretexts to perpetrate its villainy in any part of the world, and its efforts to smash the Cuban Revolution began with the first revolutionary law made in our county."<sup>40</sup> He goes further to explicitly state that due to the "internationalist character of contemporary social revolutions," denying support to Cuba does not show abstinence from the issue, but rather implicit support for the "Yankee Imperialists."<sup>41</sup> By publishing such language by Castro, *Ramparts* made no hesitations about broadcasting a call for solidarity with Cuba.

Later in Castro's introduction, he acknowledged that the revolutions in Latin America were being watched by certain people in North America who were tired of the United States' imperialist policy, and that these people could become crucial allies for Latin America. He writes "Only the revolutionary transformation of Latin America could permit the people of the United States to settle accounts with imperialism itself ... the rising struggle of the North American people against imperialist policy could become a decisive ally of the revolutionary struggle in Latin America."<sup>42</sup> Castro goes one step further to state that if these people in the United States did not act on their solidarity with Latin American revolutionary movements and support those within Latin America, then the dark reign of imperialism could further enslave individuals within

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<sup>40</sup> Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, *The Diary of Che Guevara : Bolivia, November 7, 1966-October 7, 1967*. 191 p. ill., facsim. ; 19 cm. Vol. 191 p. ill., facsim. ; 19 cm, (New York City, New York: Bantam Books, 1968).

<sup>41</sup> Castro, *The Diary*, 10, 11.

<sup>42</sup> Castro, *The Diary*, 19.

these countries. Castro established solidarity with other parts of the world here too, writing “This dark perspective equally affects the underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa.”<sup>43</sup> Without *Ramparts* or the underground press, there would have been no platform for the New Left to openly express Cuban solidarity in the way Castro’s introduction did.

#### D) Truth About Cuba Committee (TACC)

Staunch anti-communists utilized the media in their own way to turn popular opinion against the leftist’s solidarity with Cuba. A prime example of this is the Truth About Cuba Committee (TACC), which operated from 1961 to 1975. Composed of both anti-Castro Cuban exiles and U.S. conservatives, TACC worked with several media organizations and prominent U.S. agencies like the FBI and CIA to spread anti-Cuban state propaganda. Richard M. Mwakasege-Minaya, professor of historical media at the University of Michigan, has studied the TACC extensively.<sup>44</sup>

Minaya writes that the TACC used three distinct strategies to disseminate information: appeals to news stations, appeals to Washington officials in the FBI, and appeals to allies in other U.S. organizations.<sup>45</sup> At this time, anti-communism was the “ideological linchpin between Cold War-era U.S. conservatives and exiles of the 1959 Cuban Revolution.”<sup>46</sup> As several mainstream media outlets heavily reported on the “threat to communism,” TACC sent anti-Castro information pamphlets and essays directly to media outlets that they felt aligned with their agendas.<sup>47</sup> They additionally claimed to have sent over 4,000 copies of their pamphlets directly to J. Edgar Hoover and James O. Eastland, the Chairman of the Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act, urging them to disseminate TACC’s anti-Cuba material.<sup>48</sup> The organization positioned itself within four miles of major Miami news outlets, and distributed over one million copies of books, flyers, and brochures containing their anti-communist messages. They were especially successful with hyper conservative news outlets,

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<sup>43</sup> Castro, *The Diary*, 19.

<sup>44</sup> Richard M. Mwakasege-Minaya, “Cold War Bedfellows: Cuban Exiles, US Conservatives, and Media Activism in the 1960s and 1970s.” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 41 no. 1 (2020): 114–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01439685.2020.1815364>.

<sup>45</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 117.

<sup>46</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 116.

<sup>47</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 124.

<sup>48</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 124.

who utilized TACC pamphlets as factual evidence in their reporting. While at first most self-proclaimed “respectable” conservatives like William F. Buckley separated themselves from such hyper conservative reporting, the TACC found a way to make itself marketable to the average American.<sup>49</sup>

What allowed the TACC to do this was its framing of its movement under the “exile model” - the idea that the entire Cuban population was a homogenous monolith that shared in the anti-Castro values of the TACC.<sup>50</sup> Minaya writes “Essential to any activist organization is the perception that they represent the group that they are advocating for, despite actual support and ingroup political diversity.”<sup>51</sup> By presenting the anti-communist, pro-West stance as one that most Cubans shared, the TACC made itself more palatable to the American public.

The TACC also framed the communist movement’s internationalist nature as an especially dangerous facet of the movement, bouncing off ideas like the domino theory of the time. TACC exile leader Luis Manara went on several shows like Life Line where he explained the dangers of the communists using TACC, writing that the revolution was evidence of the communist’s “imperial intentions.”<sup>52</sup>

#### E) FBI on *Ramparts*

Venceremos “crystallized fears within U.S. officialdom that Cuba was training Americans in the dark arts of guerrilla warfare.”<sup>53</sup> And to a degree, their intuition was correct. Most premier U.S. radicals in organizations like the Black Panther Party and the Weathermen Organization had in fact coalesced with Cuban revolutionaries, if not as a part of the Brigade, privately. It was these internationalist relationships U.S. leftists were making that caused the FBI to kick their tracking and reporting into a higher gear than they had before.

The FBI hoped to “expose” the Brigade and other solidarity movements with countries like Cuba by collecting samples of an activist’s writings and speeches as proof of the subversion caused by their internationalism. They hoped to show the public that members of the Brigade

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<sup>49</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 115.

<sup>50</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 116.

<sup>51</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 116.

<sup>52</sup> Mwakasege-Minaya, “Bedfellows,” 122.

<sup>53</sup> Latner, “Agrarians or Anarchists?”, 125.



were “adherents of a particular subversive ideology,” and therefore dangerous and unreliable.<sup>54</sup> FBI files of this time contain bodies of literary evidence, partially gathered from intercepted mail or informants, but mainly from the published accounts of these activists' experiences in papers like *Ramparts*.

It becomes clear that the FBI's interest in *Ramparts* increased as their work became more internationalist. In *Ramparts*' early days, the FBI was alerted to their presence, but did not view the publication as much of a threat. We can look at FBI file FD-36 (Rev. S-22-64), where an agent writes that *Ramparts* is a Lay Catholic Magazine that does not have a strong following, but that some citizens believe the work could eventually become subversive. It was at this point in the files that the FBI began tracking *Ramparts* and was receiving copies of articles by Scheer and Cleaver, and collecting bodies of files on things like Sheibaum's whistle-blower piece on the corruption of the Vietnam Project.

Yet, as *Ramparts* became more internationalist in nature, the FBI's tracking of it took a steep incline. We can look at one specific FBI file where a special agent covertly interviewed *Ramparts* writer John Gerassi at the Laos conference in Havana, Cuba. Gerassi speaks openly about the benefits of the revolution happening in Cuba, glad to see such a widespread cultural protest, and praising Castro for being so willing and open about speaking with him for a U.S. magazine. “In what other country would a thing like this happen,” Gerassi is quoted to have allegedly said.<sup>55</sup> It was at this point in the file that *Ramparts* began to be viewed as a body of literature that posed a genuine threat to democracy, and would turn people against democratic institutions.

Scheer writes in the editor's note before Castro's introduction, “We find it fitting that Che's Diary was made public by his Cuban compañeros rather than by those against whom he fought, and we feel privileged to have been involved in its first publication.”<sup>56</sup> As explained in

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<sup>54</sup> Latner, “Agrarians or Anarchists?”, 126.

<sup>55</sup> FBI. *Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Files on Ramparts Magazine, 1964-1975*, 2011.

[https://www.governmentattic.org/5docs/FBI-RampartsMagazine\\_1964-1975.pdf](https://www.governmentattic.org/5docs/FBI-RampartsMagazine_1964-1975.pdf) Description of document: Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) files on Ramparts Magazine, 1964-1975; Released date: 31-October-2011; Posted date: 14-November-2011; Date/date range of document: 22-October-1964 – 16-May-1975; Source of document: Federal Bureau of Investigation; Attn: FOI/PA Request; Record/Information Dissemination Section; 170 Marcel Drive Winchester, VA 22602-4843; Fax: (540) 868-4995/4996/4997; E-mail:foiparequest@ic.fbi.gov; Note: FBI Files included: 100-HQ-445393 - Sections 1-5; 100-HQ-445393-EBF - Section 104; 44-HQ-25706 SERIAL 1351 - Section 42; 44-HQ-25706 SERIAL 1407 - Section 44; 52-HQ-94527 SERIAL 2065 - Section 30; Some records are undated.

<sup>56</sup> Castro, *The Diary*; Scheer, 1.

the introduction, one of the stages of the FBI's "lit.-cop federalism" policy was intentionally mistranslating radical pieces like Che's Diary to pit domestic activists against internationalists. As *Ramparts* became more internationalist and became aware that the FBI would perceive them as a bigger threat, they were intentional about getting ahead of a potential mistranslation by publishing their own first-hand, vetted, accurate translation of Che's diary. Castro was aware of the CIA tracking Che's diary and other inciting literature, and openly acknowledges it in his introduction. Castro writes that certain news organizations that were working for the CIA "had access to the document [Che's diary] in Bolivia and have made photostatic copies of it – but with the promise to abstain from publishing it for the moment."<sup>57</sup>

The internationalist rhetoric did not start or stop with Cuba - in fact *Ramparts* wrote most extensively about its anti-Vietnam War perspectives, publishing articles written by correspondents they sent to North Vietnam to get an alternative on the ground perspective of what was happening in the war. FBI files about these endeavors are similarly based on literature written by these journalists, and demonstrate the lengths the U.S. government was willing to go to understand what these leftist publications were writing about.

In Hoover's second stage of "lit-cop federalism," sometimes the Bureau would attempt to use these bodies of literary archives as grounds to prosecute writers on other terms.<sup>58</sup> For example, Richardson writes that the FBI and CIA both could use mailing addresses on these bodies of literature to see if *Ramparts* was receiving foreign investors, and through the National Security Act of 1947, conduct internal surveillance of the magazine on those grounds. It was through that specific practice that the Bureau was able to find two Communist Party members on the staff.

The efforts of the FBI in tracking the underground press were neither limited to *Ramparts* or Cuba, but the ways in which they grappled with the evolution of a leftist magazine as it became more internationalist shows a poignant example of the threat that the Third World Left was to the U.S. government. We find another example of this in the work of *Liberator Magazine* and the decolonization of Africa.

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<sup>57</sup> Castro, *The Diary*, 9, 10.

<sup>58</sup> Maxwell, *Eyes*, 43.

### Chapter 3: *Liberator Magazine*

#### A) African Decolonization

Between 1960 to 1961, 28 African nations became free from colonial rule and were left with radical governmental shifts.<sup>59</sup> Due to Cold War alignments of the time, these nations “required support from international allies to sustain their autonomy and to guarantee that basic goods and services could be distributed to their citizenry.”<sup>60</sup> The question then became whether they would receive this aid from the United States or the Soviet Union. In order to protect their own anti-Soviet interests, the United States relied on organizations like the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) and the American Society of African Culture (AMSAC) to defend U.S. interests in the region.

In the wake of African independence movements, there was a “shift in African American consciousness,” as Black Americans revisited their relationship with Africa.<sup>61</sup> Two main opinions emerged. Organizations like ACOA and AMSAC held a firm, liberal, anticommunist interest in African independence. While they represented anti-nationalist sentiments in domestic civil rights movements, they represented pro-nationalist sentiments in regard to Africa. These groups felt that U.S. backed involvement in the area was necessary. AMSAC was held in “esteem... in elite intellectual and government circles”, where it served as the pinnacle of conversations on African liberation and Pan-Africanism.<sup>62</sup> The group published essays like “Africa Seen by American Negro Scholars (1958)” by leading Black scholars like St. Clair Drake and John Henrik Clarke.<sup>63</sup>

On the other side, the Liberation Committee for Africa (LCA) would become strong opposers to liberal anti-communist groups like ACOA and AMSAC. While they were also grappling with the new consciousness Black Americans were experiencing due to the liberation of Africa, LCA was firmly against U.S. involvement in the region. They focused on creating a Pan-African identity – the idea that all people of African descent have a shared heritage and should be unified. They released a formal Statement of Aims to that effect early on:

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<sup>59</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 15.

<sup>60</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 15.

<sup>61</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 14.

<sup>62</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 14.

<sup>63</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 14.

To work for and support the immediate liberation of all colonial peoples  
To provide a public forum for African freedom fighters  
To provide concrete aid to African freedom fighters  
To re-establish awareness of the common cultural heritage of Afro-americans  
with their African brothers.<sup>64</sup>

It was soon revealed that AMSAC was financed in part by the CIA Committee on Race and Class in World Affairs. AMSAC supported the American-Nigerian Chamber of Commerce, Inc. that “hoped to provide intercourse between American and Nigerian businessmen,” yet had no Nigerians on its board of directors.<sup>65</sup> The LCA held a much stricter anti-imperialist position than the AMSAC, as outlined in their Statement of Aims, so they spoke out fervently against such actions taken by the AMSAC. LCA wanted African Liberation to entail an anti-west, Pan-African cultural revolution, which involvement from the CIA was fighting against using the AMSAC.

Dan Watts, leader of the LCA, experienced a long-standing frustration with liberal Black activist groups. Watts attended the American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa (ANLCA), where leader of the struggle in Mozambique Eduardo Mondlane spoke up on behalf of Watts and LCA, saying they were the “only group who have managed to combine any active interest in the American Negro struggle for equality with an intense interest in African freedom.”<sup>66</sup> Watts agreed with Mondlane’s comments, saying that mainstream liberal Black groups were more concerned in maintaining western political and economic ties with the continent, rather than helping any grass roots anti-imperialist initiatives like they should be. Watts said he was done waiting around for liberal groups to provide any support, and that he would be taking matters into his own hands through the LCA.

## B) Congo Crisis

One of the major events that pushed the LCA to the forefront of the African independence and Black nationalism movement was the Congo Crisis and the assassination of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba in 1961. The leftist leader Lumumba earned the support of the LCA, who published a telegram on January 21, 1961 that they sent to his wife that

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<sup>64</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 16.

<sup>65</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 42.

<sup>66</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 55.

said they viewed Lumumba as a “symbol of liberation for all Africans at home and abroad.”<sup>67</sup> However, 4 days prior to this press release, Lumumba was killed. This news was not released until February 13, 1961, a full 22 days after. Upon hearing this news, the LCA released another press release by Watts condemning the UN and the U.S. for being responsible for Lumumba’s capture and murder.

At this time, several Black activist groups of the New Left took to the streets to protest the death of Lumumba. They spoke about how the U.S. government was complicit in Lumumba’s death due to his “pro-Soviet” tendencies, calling out the United States for their unjust actions. Watts spoke at the protests, making sure journalists heard him. It was at this moment that he officially announced the formation of the Liberation Committee for Africa, formalizing its role as an organization focused on exposing U.S. based corruption in Africa.<sup>68</sup>

While the LCA made its own press releases, its voice was undoubtedly unified in its formal publication - *Liberator Magazine*. Watts was the editor-in-chief of *Liberator*, alongside editors John Henrik Clarke and Beveridge. Watts utilized close ties with “African diplomats, students, artists, and workers” in order to create leverage for African American communities who were fighting for their own rights on the home front.<sup>69</sup> Yet, as the actions of AMSAC began to more directly threaten the goals of the LCA, *Liberator Magazine* played a critical role in exposing CIA and government ties to supposedly anti-colonial organizations like the AMSAC. *Liberator* published significant literature about the necessity for Pan-African connections. Similar to *Ramparts*, *Liberator* not only questioned American policies, but reprinted Nigerian and other African papers that were asking the same questions about the role of the U.S. in their regions, allowing a wider network of people to see the issues being presented in Africa. This helped expand the Pan-African notion too. *Liberator Magazine* made its paper internationalist in the same way *Ramparts* did, except with the framework of Pan-Africanism at the forefront of its efforts, in order to provide a leftist perspective on African decolonization, working with the LCA to fight against the continued influence of the West in the region.

### C) FBI’s Coverage of Watts and *Liberator Magazine*

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<sup>67</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 19.

<sup>68</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 20.

<sup>69</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 20.

Similar to *Ramparts*, the FBI began paying special attention to *Liberator* as they began to openly express solidarity with Africa. FBI informants were tracking the LCA the second that they began protests against Lumumba's murder. An "anonymous source" tipped the FBI to a memorial being held for Lumumba on February 23, 1961. One sponsor of this meeting was Watts.

As Watts has made his name known to the FBI, they began sending agents to the events he would be present at. One such agent had lunch with Watts at the Delegates Dining Room in New York, for the UN. This agent covertly engaged in a conversation with Watts, who allegedly proclaimed opinions that the FBI deemed to be threatening to the U.S. government. The file NY 105-42387 reads "He [Watts] stated to the informant that he is of the firm opinion that violence is necessary to attract attention to the cause of the LCA."<sup>70</sup>

As the FBI began understanding the degree of *Liberator's* solidarity with African decolonization, the Bureau collected more evidence for their literary archives in order to pit liberal Old Left Black activists against these Third World leftists. They used some of the same tactics in Ghana to monitor these leftists.

#### D) FBI and Ghana Independence

*Liberator Magazine's* reporting was just as impacted by Ghanaian independence movements as it was with what was happening in the Congo. The Conventions People Party led by Dr. Kwame Nkrumah was the largest political group in Ghana a few years before the country gained its independence, controlling 79 out of the 104 seats in its government.<sup>71</sup> Nkrumah's vision was for a Ghana completely independent of imperialist rule. The LCA was fascinated by Nkrumah's government, and believed it served as a representation of the potential for independence in the continent as a whole. *Liberator Magazine* sent Selma Sparks, an advisory board member and labor rights activist, to attend Nkrumah's "world without the bomb"

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<sup>70</sup> FBI. JFK Assassination System Identification Form , n.d. <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/jfk/releases/docid-32339197.pdf> FBI, 124-90146-10029, HQ, Agency File Number 105-93072-18, originator, FBI, NY, HQ, Richard Thomas Gibson, Paper, Textual Document, Unclassified, 4, Redact, 10/16/1998, indefinite, RPT, Released under the John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Collection Act of 1992 (44 USC 2107 Note). Case# NW 54464 Date: 10-10-2017.

<sup>71</sup> S. A. de Smith. "The Independence of Ghana." *The Modern Law Review* , Jul., 1957, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Jul., 1957), pp. 347-363, n.d. <https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/1092185>.

conference.<sup>72</sup> Selma reported back to *Liberator* with optimism for the new government Nkrumah was trying to install. This hope for an anti-imperialist Africa was shared by many African-American expatriates, who Tinson writes moved to Ghana under “Nkrumah’s idealistic diaspora-wide invitation to assist in the development of the young nation.”<sup>73</sup>

The context of the Cold War and atomic weapon development would continue capturing the interest of reporters in Africa, and *Liberator* hoped to amplify those voices. For example, UN secretary general U. Thant spoke about how there was a racist element to the U.S. dropping the atomic bomb over Japan but not willing to drop the bomb over Germany to end WW2.<sup>74</sup>

Nkrumah held conferences on the dangers of weapons of mass destruction. There was a real palpable fear in Ghana that the U.S. was going to use this newfound power to continue to oppress nations in Africa. T.D. Baffoe wrote about this phenomenon in the *Ghanaian Times*, and expressed how the U.S. was largely viewed as an oppressive police state by the rest of the world. *Liberator* republished this article in a 1964 edition of their newspaper.

## U.S. Image in Ghana

The following article appeared in *The Ghanaian Times* (5/30/64) under the by-line of its Editor-in-Chief, T.D. Baffoe, who recently toured the U.S. as a member of a Ghana delegation.

officers whisked off the man, Odis Hyde, to his place of work in a police car and were to stay with him wherever he went, from the toilet to the lunch room, while a third rather well-mannered giant of a security agent was put on the



terical drama.

The Afro-Americans' struggle strengthened by the successes of the African Liberation movement and the social and ideological revolution raging in our continent, is now beyond the point of appeasement

T.D. Baffoe was a Ghanaian journalist who toured the U.S. as a part of a delegation. While he was in Chicago, President Lyndon Johnson was set to visit the area. In anticipation of his arrival, Johnson’s secret police worked with the FBI to send notices to Baffoe and other suspected communists to “refrain from either opening the window” in their hotel rooms, or making any gestures that would “cause alarm to any of the security personnel.” A poor Black

<sup>72</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 51.

<sup>73</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 51.

<sup>74</sup> Tinson, *Radical Intellect*, 62.

couple that had expressed anti-capitalist sentiments were guarded by two members of Johnson's secret police as well, during his visit to Chicago. Baffoe later learned that several hotels in the area were similarly visited by the secret police, and suspected subversives were tightly surveillanced.

Baffoe writes that while he understands the measures the U.S is taking to protect internal security (especially so soon after Kennedy's assassination), he is unable to accept the hypocrisy of these same people having an opinion about the importance of maintaining a free democracy in Africa. Baffoe writes, "But when their journalists, who have not carefully studied events in Africa and seem not to know the history of America's own struggle for independence... dare to moralize to Ghana, and to Africa, about the liberty of the individual in a democratic society, then it is the duty of the press and Governments in Africa to tell off the holier-than-thou hostile U.S. press."

It is this solidarity between American leftists and activists in Africa that prompted the FBI to carefully monitor journalists in *Liberator Magazine*. The Bureau hoped to curtail efforts of Pan-Africanism and decolonization by pitting internationalist writers against domestic civil rights activists, capitalizing on tensions between groups like AMSAC and LCA. Similar to how the FBI monitored *Ramparts*, their monitoring of *Liberator* showed the threat that the Third World Left posed to the U.S. government, as they felt they were going to lose their control of domestic and global affairs.

#### **Chapter 4: Conclusion**

Solidarity with the Third World Left through internationalist efforts was undoubtedly one of the most defining hallmarks of leftist activism during the 60s and 70s. Individuals traveled abroad to witness movements happening in countries like Cuba, Ghana, and the Congo, and worked with grassroots organizations like Venceremos to help in the fight against American imperialism. Yet, the impact of these efforts would not have been nearly as large without these stories being amplified by leftist press outlets like *Liberator* and *Ramparts*.

As evidenced by Hoover's "lit.-cop federalism" practices, the U.S. government recognized the power that these leftist news outlets had in mobilizing the counterculture against U.S. policies. It is for this exact reason that they worked so hard to discredit and dismantle



organizations that were spreading an anti-imperialist message at a time when Cold War fears of communism were so high.

The work of the underground press at a time when the country was so afraid of the Third World Left was invaluable in preserving freedom of speech and the freedom of the press. The extent of FBI's tracking of their work goes to show how effective these papers were at challenging mainstream narratives, even if for a short period of time. They provided a voice for the silenced stories of decolonization and internationalist movements that the FBI did not want circulated.

When we look at the evolution of news today, specifically post-2016, we can see how the government is able to discredit news that attempts to hold people in power accountable. While there is a large body of polarized, inaccurate information being circulated, the government sweeps genuine investigative journalism into that category to draw attention away from their own corruption. In the same way Hoover was eventually successful in silencing the Underground Press, the last 5 years have shown us how effective the government can be at discrediting unsavory news. This illustrates how important it is to have access to reliable news that paints a holistic picture of the truth, outside of the narrative that politicians want us to believe. With the oversaturation of content and media, it is unclear where we will receive our information going forward. However, there is a strong and timely lesson to be learned from the Underground Press Syndicate of the 1960s and 1970s. They demonstrated the profound effect that ground-breaking investigative journalism can have, in spite of a federal police force that hoped to silence it at every turn.

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# Oracle: The History Journal of Boston College

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## **Leftist Activism in the Face of a Conservative Catholic Administration: The Students for a Democratic Society Chapter at Boston College**

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**LEFTIST ACTIVISM IN THE FACE OF A CONSERVATIVE CATHOLIC  
ADMINISTRATION: THE STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY CHAPTER  
AT BOSTON COLLEGE**

BRENDAN MAHONEY\*

**Abstract:** The Students for a Democratic Society Chapter (SDS) at Boston College, officially active from the year 1967 into the early 1970s, was an SDS chapter unlike all others. While most of the infamous SDS chapters of the time existed at liberal, public schools, the SDS chapter at Boston College was different. The Boston College SDS chapter had the unique challenge of having to organize in act while the looming pressure of a conservative, Catholic administration watching. This pressure led to multiple ideological changes, spanning from leanings towards revolutionary Marxist politics to softer reformist ideas. This paper documents these changes and catalogs exactly when and why these changes occurred, and the ripple effects that they caused across the campus of Boston College. This paper also maps the ways in which these ideological changes led to the Boston College SDS's intersectional interactions with other leftist groups such as workers unions and the Black Panther Party.

**Introduction**

The SDS or the Students for a Democratic Society was an anti-war group that formed in the 1960s in campuses across the US to push for leftist reforms and protest the war in Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> However, there is an added component to SDS activism when it comes to Boston College (BC), which is a desire not just to fulfill the goals of the national SDS, but also to directly combat the Jesuit Catholic establishment at the school. Thomas (Tom) Gallagher was one of the founders and leaders of the SDS at BC, reflects in an oral history interview in 1985, and he recalls a specific incident demonstrating this difference of national versus local, “I remember the thing that actually

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<sup>1</sup> Brendan Mahoney is a sophomore in MCAS majoring in history with a minor in English, and he hopes to pursue graduate school in history following his undergraduate studies. Around campus, Brendan is involved in both Best Buddies and the Mock Trial Team at BC, and holds leadership positions in both. His historical interests revolve around radical social movements, counter-culture, and the New Left, specifically the Students for a Democratic Society, both on a national and a local level.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Flacks and Nelson Lichtenstein, eds., *The Port Huron Statement: Sources and Legacies of the New Left's Founding Manifesto* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

caused me the most trouble was not the abolition of ROTC. It was the availability of birth control information and devices in the campus infirmary. Oh-h-h— people went nuts.”<sup>3</sup>

This recollection of Gallagher is just one of many ways that the SDS at BC had to cope with the Catholic establishment at the school. At this time, birth control was becoming more readily accessible, so it would be a given to have it accessible to students. However, it had recently been outlined in a 1968 Papal Encyclical that artificial contraceptives were evil, and against the will of God.<sup>4</sup> While the abolition of Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) may have been higher on the national list for the SDS, there was a greater priority to exert power over other men, as the famous social movement sociologist William Gamson suggested, in this case that would be the Catholic establishment vehemently against contraception.<sup>5</sup>

The SDS at Boston College is a complicated topic at face value, simply because the placement of a leftist student organization at a school which prides itself on adherence to Catholic Doctrine and the Papacy. This paper seeks to examine the ways student activism in SDS at Boston College both faced head on, and strategically dodged, the dogma of Catholic Church to further a radical progressive agenda at an intrinsically conservative school. This project builds on the work of scholars of the SDS and the New Left as a whole by focusing on a Jesuit Catholic University such as Boston College. It is the conditions of this religiousness, underlying support of the war, as well as the harsh administrative policies that shaped many of the actions taken by the SDS leaders at Boston College, sometimes even causing the BC SDS to stray from many of the policies of the national Students for a Democratic Society Organization.

### **Reactionary Radicalism**

Student activists at SDS used the printed word to debate and promote their ideas, both at Boston College and on the national level. While it is true that major contributors to the SDS movement at Boston College wrote opinion-editorials in *The Heights*, the newspaper of Boston College, many such as Tom Gallagher wrote other places. One of these other places, per my correspondence with Gallagher himself, was a magazine called *Cement*, that was described by

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<sup>3</sup> Bret Eynon, STUDENT MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960’S The Reminiscences of Thomas Gallagher, April 15, 1985, Columbia University Department of Oral History, <https://dx.doi.org/10.7916/d8-0d4y-ec48>.

<sup>4</sup> Pope Paul VI, “Humanae Vitae (July 25, 1968) | Paul VI,” The Vatican, July 25, 1968, [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_enc\\_25071968\\_humanae-vitae.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html).

<sup>5</sup> William Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest* (The Dorsey Press, 1975), pp. 36-38.

Gallagher as “unorthodox and short lived.”<sup>6</sup> I made a few attempts to find this magazine in the archives of Boston College, specifically at the Burns Library, where all the archives of Boston College are housed. Sadly, I was made aware that while the Burns library has copies of this publication in their storage, it is unprocessed and will likely not be published for months or even years.<sup>7</sup> Due to the lack of access to *Cement*, I rely heavily on sources from *The Heights* for primary source work, as it is about all that is available to me at this time. However, in the future, should *Cement*, or any other relevant publication become available to me, they would be studied for any supplementary material that they may provide for the base of this paper.

Hubert Humphrey, the US Vice-President to Vietnam War overseer Lyndon B. Johnson, took a fateful trip to Boston College in October of 1966.<sup>8</sup> *The Heights* reports that four pacifists were handing out leaflets to advertise a picket line to protest the visit of who these four saw as a war hawk.<sup>9</sup> After about an hour they were presented with an ultimatum to either leave or face violence, to which the activists chose the latter and were assaulted and sworn at. It was also reported that the members of the assaulting bunch had associations with the school’s ROTC, adding even more fuel to the fire as ROTC had already been a point of contention for progressives as mentioned by Tom Gallagher above.<sup>10</sup> Upon the arrival of Humphrey, there were still many active protesters against his visit (Figure 1).

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Gallagher and Brendan Mahoney, “The SDS at Boston College,” September 6, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> This information is per Shelley Barber, the Archives Specialist at Boston College’s Burns Library

<sup>8</sup> Editor--The Heights, “The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 4 — 14 October 1966”  
<https://Newspapers.Bc.Edu/Iiif/Issue/Bcheights19661014/Manifest.Json?Manifest=https%3a%2f%2fnewspapers.Bc.Edu%2fiif%2fissue%2fbcheights19661014%2fmanifest.Json> Target="\_blank"><img Style="width: 20px;" Alt="IIIF Collection Link" Src="/Custom/Bostonsh/Web/Images/Iiif-Logo.Png" /></A> — Boston College Newspapers,” *The Heights*, October 14, 1966.

<sup>9</sup> Editor--The Heights, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Bret Eynon, STUDENT MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960’S The Reminiscences of Thomas Gallagher.



Figure 1: Hubert Humphrey visiting BC.<sup>11</sup>

The most peculiar thing about this entire protest would be the immediate reaction from the student body and administration. The response of administration categorized those fifteen attackers as vigilantes who have “no right to oppose” those demonstrating, even if they disagree with the protestors.<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, BC Administration made it clear that, although these students thought they were aiding the university, they were tarnishing the reputation of the school. Finally, and more importantly than all, it was made crystal-clear that these students were not reflecting the values and beliefs of the “majority” of the student population.<sup>13</sup>

### Early Ideological Struggle—1966

While the SDS was not technically allowed to participate or organize in any campus activities because they were not recognized by the Campus Council, it did not stop the SDS from penning a letter to *The Heights*. They wrote a wish list to “Santa,” which was a pseudonym for Fr. Walsh.<sup>14</sup> This letter went beyond the early typical nonviolence and peace approach of the SDS, taking a more radical approach when referring to the university administration:

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<sup>11</sup> Sub Turri, *Vice President Hubert Humphrey Arrives on Campus, with Protestors in Rear.*, October 13, 1966, October 13, 1966, <https://www.proudfreain.org/2017/10/18/hello-hhh-and-vietnam/>.

<sup>12</sup> Editor--The Heights, “The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 4 — 14 October 1966, 4.

<sup>13</sup> Editor--The Heights, 4.

<sup>14</sup> SDS at BC, “The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 11 — 14 December 1966,” *The Heights*, December 14, 1966, 4.



Dear Santa: We are fed up with the results of our previous nonviolent approaches in dealing with bourgeois, imperialist, fascist menace on our campus. We have been bogged down in our efforts to construct a miniature People's Republic, through the bumbling bureaucracy of the capitalist demon. .... If the Marxist ideal, which we hold sacred, is to be eternally perpetuated, it indeed appears that total revolution is imminent We will not and cannot be concerned by bloodshed. Our goal is too lofty to be disturbed by any value that others may see in human life. Terrorism is our only feasible alternative... <sup>15</sup>

This letter reads nothing like the generally soft-spoken writings of Tom Hayden. This characterization is not to disparage the writings of Hayden, as he was a revolutionary in his own right. Rather, this is meant to categorize a contrast between Hayden and the BC SDS. This reads like a manifesto. The appearance of words such as bourgeois, imperialist, and fascist in a negative context juxtaposed with words such as Marxist, revolution, and bloodshed in a positive context, offers a level of radicalism unheard of thus far in the history of the SDS at Boston College.<sup>16</sup> In accordance with the letter to Santa format, this decisive statement had hopes of being delivered directly to Fr. Walsh (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Fr. Walsh as Santa in *The Heights*.<sup>17</sup>

One contrasting argument to this theory comes from the work of Max Elbaum, a historian who chronicles the New Communist Movement of the late 1970s in many books and articles.

<sup>15</sup> SDS at BC, 4.

<sup>16</sup> SDS at BC, 4.

<sup>17</sup> George Viens, *Father Walsh as Santa*, December 14, 1966, Newspaper Article, December 14, 1966, <https://newspapers.bc.edu/?a=d&d=bcheights19661214.1.4&e=-----en-20--1--txt-txIN----->.

Elbaum argues that historians and those reflecting on the period often try to cover up the more radical ideas of students who were apart of these movements.<sup>18</sup> Elbaum also proffers that although the height of the New Communist Movement came in 1968, it had been building for years prior. When US students were polled about the 1968 election, about twenty percent of them said that they align much more with someone such as Che Guevara, rather than any of the candidates up for election.<sup>19</sup>

In a reflective piece written by Tom Hayden titled “Crafting the Port Huron Statement,” close to his death in 2016, Hayden talks about 1966 as a year of transition.<sup>20</sup> Hayden talks about how this year, the same year that the BC SDS began getting off of the ground, was a year in which the SDS began to reject the Port Huron Statement as “too reformist.”<sup>21</sup> Hayden goes on to admit that for those organizations of the SDS across the nation that were more focused on Marxist radicalism had to abandon the Port Huron Statement. Hayden even argues that the “default” pacifist ideology that the SDS began with was something that less and less students across the nation could identify with.<sup>22</sup>

To return to the BC Santa manifesto, such radical words were infrequent, if mentioned at all in the Port Huron Statement.<sup>23</sup> There are a few plausible reasons for a detachment of the SDS at Boston College from the softer, “default” New Left approach of Hayden to a more radical Marxist approach. One of these factors would be the tensions within the SDS, and the powder keg that was the 1967 SDS National Convention.<sup>24</sup>

The influence of these Catholic ideas of being were especially pertinent in the ever-relevant Humphrey demonstrations. Many of the counter-protests to the SDS-aligned people at Boston College directly associated anti-Communism with Catholicism, chanting things such as “Kill a commie for Christ.”<sup>25</sup> The direct association with anti-leftist ideas and Christianity is not a new idea, but it had yet to be seen on the Boston College campus, as previously, attacks on SDS

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<sup>18</sup> Max Elbaum, “Project MUSE - What Legacy from the Radical Internationalism of 1968?,” 2002, <https://muse-jhu-edu.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/article/30229>.

<sup>19</sup> Max Elbaum.

<sup>20</sup> Tom Hayden, “Crafting the Port Huron Statement,” *University of Pennsylvania Press*, 2015, 16–39, <https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812290998-002>.

<sup>21</sup> Tom Hayden, 28.

<sup>22</sup> Tom Hayden, 30.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Flacks and Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Port Huron Statement*.

<sup>24</sup> Jack A Smith, “An Independent Radical Newsweekly,” *National Guardian*, July 15, 1967, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Bill McDonald, “Hello HHH . . . and Vietnam | PROUD REFRAIN,” October 18, 2017, <https://www.proudfrefrain.org/2017/10/18/hello-hhh-and-vietnam/>.

members had been based solely in opposition to leftist ideals, rather than a mixture of opposition to leftism and a desire to embrace individual Catholic beliefs. The people chanting these anti-communist phrases were not the same people who were entrenched in religionless Christianity, these are the people who adhered to orthodox Christian doctrine. These orthodox Catholics had now come to associate their religion with anti-communism, and by extent anti-SDS beliefs. In an ironic way, the anti-leftist rhetoric from Catholics motivated an even further form of leftism, easily identifiable with Marxism and Maoism, because of Catholic prejudice. Catholicism and the SDS seem to act as two magnets of the same pole, pushing one another further away from each other, and more importantly, the middle.

### **Beginning of Action—1967**

While 1966 may have been the nominal start for the SDS at Boston College, 1967 is most definitely the start of action. 1967 as a catalyst for action was also likely in part due to the official rejection of student organization recognition by the Campus Council in January of 1967.<sup>26</sup> When reasons for the rejection of the SDS had to be listed, the Campus Council Chair, David Gay, cited the actions of the national SDS, as well as the actions of the Harvard SDS.<sup>27</sup> BC's SDS did later collaborate with Harvard's SDS in 1970, to protest against Secretary Robert McNamara, who was seen as a war hawk.<sup>28</sup> The SDS was seen not just as an activist group, but rather a group made to "overthrow existing social forms,"<sup>29</sup> implying a Marxist tendency of the group at BC. This insinuation from Gay reinforces all the points made above. To summarize, the administration-aligned Campus Council's lens of Jesuit Catholicism motivated even more radical, Marxist politics from the BC SDS.

Tom Gallagher recalls what he terms vigils that started in the Spring of 1967, which would consist of SDS members lining the sidewalks around lunch time on Friday.<sup>30</sup> His firsthand accounts are an invaluable source. During this time, the SDS members would hand out period pieces, whether it be poems or photos of the Vietnam War.<sup>31</sup> While the information acted as

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<sup>26</sup> John Golenski, "The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 14 — 10; The History: SDS at Boston College," *The Heights*, February 10, 1967, *The Heights*, Volume XLVII, Number 14 — 10 edition, 3.

<sup>27</sup> John Golenski, 3.

<sup>28</sup> Bob Ruff, "55,000 Attend Harvard Rally," *The Heights*, May 13, 1970, Volume L, Number 27 edition, 00.

<sup>29</sup> John Golenski, "The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 14 — 10; The History: SDS at Boston College, 3."

<sup>30</sup> Bret Eynon, *STUDENT MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960'S The Reminiscences of Thomas Gallagher*.

<sup>31</sup> Bret Eynon.

subliminal messaging, the loudest part about the demonstrations was the silence, that Gallagher and others vowed to hold during these demonstrations.<sup>32</sup> There would be silence unless there was a conversation to be had between an interested bystander and an SDS picketer.

Controversially, some of the SDS decided upon an even harsher form of period pieces to use: photos of “napalm babies” from *Ramparts* magazine.<sup>33</sup> These were images of children who had been mutilated by the napalm used by the American soldiers. These photos had a goal of inspiring a hatred of the war by seeing the destruction that it had caused to native Vietnamese people. Rather, this was taken in a different way. Students at BC who had received the “glossy,” as Gallagher called it, versions of these innocent children were disturbed, but for the wrong reasons.<sup>34</sup> These people were disturbed that the SDS would hand these items out, not disturbed that the innocent people in North Vietnam were facing biological warfare from the US and the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).

These photographs were handed out in silence. However, this silence was nothing like the manifesto-like letter to Santa. In only a few months, there was a transition from active, violent revolutionary politics to passive non-violent resistance. Perhaps the re-softening of the SDS was meant to help the SDS’s case with the Campus Council. Conversely, it is also possible that this was no resoftening at all, perhaps this form of protest was even harsher. To the latter point, being less obnoxious with a passive protest likely played to the hand of the SDS, because of its perception. The perception of these protests is that they were meant to point out minor flaws, that all lead back to a main issue (in this case, Vietnam). But the best thing about this protest is that it did not explicitly seem like a desire structural change, which tended to scare people, as Gamson had warned prospective protest groups of.<sup>35</sup> Although the Boston College SDS, specifically, did desire a sort of Marxist change, the vigils did not seem to be violent and structurally challenging.

In April, about two months later, the impossible happened. In the BC SDS’s second attempt to gain recognition from the Campus Council, in a vote of 9-3, they gained recognition.<sup>36</sup> However, there were a few amendments to this acceptance, including the second amendment,

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<sup>32</sup> Bret Eynon.

<sup>33</sup> Bret Eynon.

<sup>34</sup> Bret Eynon.

<sup>35</sup> William Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest*, 38.

<sup>36</sup> Editor--The Heights, “The Heights, Volume XLVII, Number 19 — 7 April 1967,” *The Heights*, April 7, 1967, 3.

which said that if the SDS violates any undergraduate government policy, their recognition would be immediately revoked, a policy that no other club had to deal with.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Height of the BC SDS—1968-1969**

April twenty-fourth, 1968, would be one of the boundary testing days for the ideological associations of the BC SDS. The Boston College Faculty Committee for Peace and the Students for a Democratic Society Chapter planned an event called the “Academic Day of Conscience.”<sup>38</sup> This event started with a mourning for those lost at war and those lost in “ghetto rebellion,” which effectively evoke Marxist imagery of the rebellion of the proletariat.<sup>39</sup>

If this was not enough radicalism from the SDS to drive Fr. Walsh and other Jesuits mad, there was a movie presentation of *Victory Will Be Ours*, a French film that reflects on the struggle of the North Vietnamese in their communist revolutionary struggle against the French.<sup>40</sup> The turn towards open sympathy to communism was a boundary test to say the least, in comparison to the soft politics of the previous Spring.

The lecture portion of the day ended with a speech from the storied professor and author, Howard Zinn, known for his progressive history of America, *A People’s History of the United States*.<sup>41</sup> In this book, Zinn speaks very briefly on the SDS, but argues in favor of including women not only in movements for women’s rights, but in all leftist issues of race and class struggle, for the furthering of the organization.<sup>42</sup> Zinn’s talk that night called for the immediate withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam, and collaboration with the new Vietnamese Communist government (certain to win the war, in Zinn’s eyes), in order to rebuild a post-war Vietnam.<sup>43</sup> Zinn’s talk attracted a large crowd of not only SDS members, but curious students in general. The existence and even further, the popularity of Howard Zinn’s talk, proved two points.

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<sup>37</sup> Editor--The Heights, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Editor--The Heights, “Academic Day of Conscience Opens up Dialogue at BC — The Heights, Volume XLVIII, Number 21 — 7 May 1968,” *The Heights*, May 7, 1968, Volume XLVIII, Number 21 edition, 5.

<sup>39</sup> Editor--The Heights, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Editor--The Heights, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States : 1492-Present*, vol. Third edition (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013), <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,shib&db=nlebk&AN=1052356&site=ehost-live&custid=s4194587>.

<sup>42</sup> Zinn, 507.

<sup>43</sup> Editor--The Heights, “Academic Day of Conscience Opens up Dialogue at BC — The Heights, Volume XLVIII, Number 21 — 7 May 1968.”

It was this merger of the SDS and the CPF (Catholic Peace Foundation) that led Tom Gallagher into writing letters and writing articles for *The Old Mole*, an alternative Marxist magazine named for a Marxist metaphor of the old mole, or the idea that there is an old mole of revolution that will pop its head up every so often throughout history.<sup>44</sup> *The Old Mole* had gained quite a following of the more radical leftists (Marxists, Leninists, and the like), which Gallagher saw as an opportunity to write in a revolutionary perspective, that he was not afforded with *The Heights*.

In a piece titled “eagle,” Gallagher speaks about the platform of the SDS (notice how it is still referred to as the SDS) at Boston College. While this platform included standard pacifist tenets of SDS policy such as a desire to abolish ROTC and demand for birth control access across campus, this article demanded more class-based, radical things.<sup>45</sup> Gallagher and the SDS asked for university for intervention in the rent-gouging of off-campus housing, which would essentially be an authoritarian intervention into capitalist dealings.<sup>46</sup> Gallagher even delved into the criticism that the students at Boston College get for their actions in the SDS, targeting priests and members of the administration. To this accusation he made the following remark:

The main thrust of the campaign was to build a movement rather than a structure. Our position papers indicated that we felt that student power in itself was insufficient. Students should play a large part in running the university, but they were responsible to society at large and should realize that they could not entirely humanize the university until oppressive social structures throughout all of America were changed as well.<sup>47</sup>

Gallagher makes the intricate, metaphysical argument that we cannot humanize the people in the positions of oppression until the positions themselves are abolished. In layman’s terms, Gallagher argues that removing positions of oppression such as administration would allow for the people in those positions to be freed, but more importantly, the oppressed would be freed. Also in this article, Gallagher argues that the cause of radical pessimism about change is not just the people in power, but the ideals they hold. Gallagher cites Irish Catholic Conservatism and the reputation of prestige that it carries as a shield from progressive change.<sup>48</sup> These ideals are virtually

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<sup>44</sup> Marxists.org Editors, “Glossary of Terms: Old Mole,” Marxists.org, 2022, <https://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/o/1.htm>.

<sup>45</sup> Edward Romano et al., “Old Mole: Old Mole,” *Old Mole* 1, no. 9 (14 1969), <https://jstor.org/stable/community.28015584>, 6.

<sup>46</sup> Romano et al, 6.

<sup>47</sup> Romano et al, 6.

<sup>48</sup> Romano et al, 6.

untouchable, as they are entrenched in anything and everything about Boston College; in turn, the only way to make progressive change is destruction of the structures that allow tradition to rule the campus of BC.

The BC SDS would soon turn to help striking General Electric workers which consisted of chants advocating for the destruction of the “world scab” that GE was.<sup>49</sup> This was not just strike advocacy for fairer treatment of the GE workers. This was advocacy in favor of Marxist politics for the complete annihilation of bourgeois ownership of the means of production. The starkest contrast between this action, and the action of the Day of Conscience only a year earlier was the view on North Vietnam. In 1968, the view of Ho Chi Minh and his government was based on their desire to withdraw American troops from the conflict. Additionally, it was clear that Zinn, and others, had sympathies for the innocent people slaughtered in the war in Vietnam. However, Boston College students, during the GE protests, chanted “Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh!”<sup>50</sup> This chant was accompanied by the other chants in favor of abolition of General Electric for their malpractice. This chant was not just sympathy towards Ho, this was allegiance, and even an allusion to Catholicism and Fr. Walsh’s position as administrative Santa. Put simply, the General Electric Strike allowed SDS at BC students, and students across the region, to align directly with a union for radical politics.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Peak and Successive Landslide—1970**

Radical activism was at its all-time at Boston College following the Academic Day of Conscience, the General Electric strike, and a transition in the general ideology towards Marxism. The following year, 1970, would be a year of a great high, and a year that would represent the symbolic end of the SDS at Boston College.

The shifted ideology of the BC SDS ultimately led to Huey Newton, one of the founders of the Black Panther Party to speak of Boston College in the Fall of 1970.<sup>52</sup> While the Boston College SDS members were honored to have a revolutionary leader such as Huey Newton appear

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<sup>49</sup> Abarca, 106.

<sup>50</sup> Abarca.

<sup>51</sup> Abarca, 107.

<sup>52</sup> Joshua Bloom and Waldo E. Martin, “Rupture,” in *Black against Empire*, 1st ed., The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party (University of California Press, 2016), 341–71, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv1xxsj1.22>.

on their campus, the authors of “Rupture,” a book chapter which catalogues the search for allies of the BPP, describes Newton’s visit to Boston College as an obligatory one. A visit which Newton needed to make in order to maintain college students, especially those far from the home of the BPP, as allies for the party (speech below).<sup>53</sup> Huey Newton however, was welcomed with open arms by the radical students at Boston College, as he presented the ideals of the Black Panther Party.

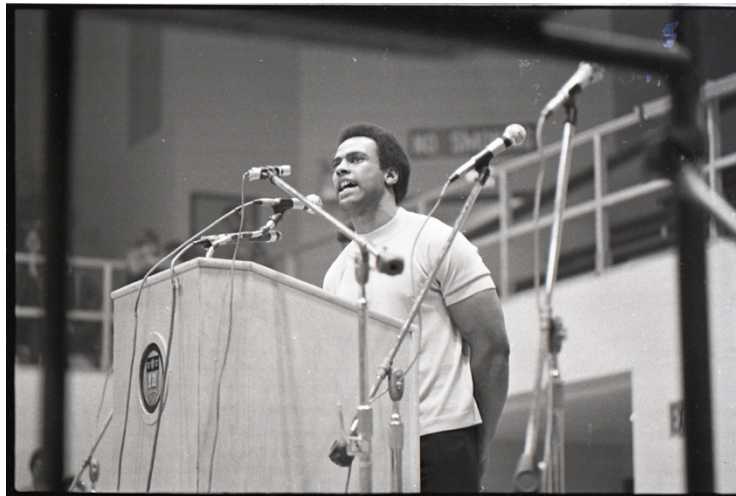


Figure 3: Huey Newton speaking at Boston College.<sup>54</sup>

Tonight, I would like to outline for you the Black Panther Party’s program and also explain how we arrived at our ideological position and why we feel it necessary to institute a Ten Point Program. A Ten Point Program is not revolutionary in itself, nor is it reformist. It’s a *survival program*. We feel that we, the people are threatened with genocide because racism and fascism is rampant. . . . We intend to change all of that. In order to change it, there must be a total transformation. But until such time that we can achieve that total transformation, we must exist. In order to exist, we must survive, so, therefore, we need a survival kit. . .

This plea from Huey Newton emphasized the necessity of students and specifically SDS members in the struggle for global liberation of oppressed peoples. As Rossinow notes in *The Politics of Authenticity*, it was a point of importance for the BPP to have interracial protests for freedoms, that consisted of more than Party members.<sup>55</sup> The example of the University of Texas

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<sup>53</sup> Bloom and Martin, 355.

<sup>54</sup> Jeff Albertson, *Huey P. Newton Speaking at Boston College: Newton at the Podium, November 18, 1970*, November 18, 1970, Photograph, November 18, 1970, <https://credo.library.umass.edu/view/full/muph057-b004-sl514-i018>.

<sup>55</sup> Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 201.



SDS in Rossinow's book, show how the BPP and SDS learned much from each other. The students of the UT-SDS had immense organizing power, while the BPP had a larger array of resources to provide breakfasts for local Austin kids.<sup>56</sup>

While the population of black students at Boston College was not extensive in 1970, it was around this time that the Black Student Union at Boston College would form.<sup>57</sup> This speech from Huey Newton was aimed at members of this group, in part, but also in part to all students who sought to effect change through activism at BC. Many of these members of the Black Student Union would join the SDS in the late stages of its lifetime and would independently partake in a short takeover of Gasson Hall at BC.<sup>58</sup> Regardless, the connections between black students, the Black Student Union, the BPP, and the SDS at BC are undeniable, as many of the members of these groups would entirely overlap with one another. While the numbers of black students in the SDS at BC were small (as were the numbers of women in the SDS at BC), this was most easily attributed to the small numbers of black students at BC in general.<sup>59</sup> However small these ties were with the SDS, the ties of black students at BC to the BPP, and its leaders, proved strong as Bobby Seale would speak at BC four years later, about a revived brand of black nationalism.<sup>60</sup>

By November of 1970, Boston College's chapter of the Students for a Democratic society had interacted with various elements of leftism, everything from labor to the Black Power movement. This was not the same group that struggled to gain recognition from the Campus Council. This was not the same group that tried to remove the ROTC chapter from campus. This was a student organization that had truly become radical, and it was a group that had made significant change and was on its way to make even more improvements towards forming a truly democratic society.

This decrease in popular support is clear while searching for the key-term "SDS" in the Boston College online magazine repository.<sup>61</sup> Between the years of 1960-1969, there were one hundred seventy-six results for this keyword.<sup>62</sup> In the years of 1970-1979, there were only thirty-

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<sup>56</sup> Doug Rossinow, 200.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas Gallagher, Thomas Gallagher Oral History of the SDS at BC—Conducted by Brendan Mahoney, March 28, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J12-UtrX3NA&t=1451s>.

<sup>58</sup> Thomas Gallagher.

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Gallagher.

<sup>60</sup> Black Student Forum, "Bobby Seale, New Directions for the Black Panther Party," *The Heights*, February 4, 1974.

<sup>61</sup> Boston College Libraries, "Boston College Newspapers," 2022, <https://newspapers.bc.edu/>.

<sup>62</sup> Boston College Libraries.

two results in total.<sup>63</sup> This is a drastic drop, to say the least. When the SDS did happen to be mentioned in the 1970s, it is mentioned by the magazine of Newton College (a future part of Boston College), 885, as a rag-tag, disorganized group focused on “trashing” property and lighting things on fire.<sup>64</sup> This type of action makes one think of the aforementioned “bad sixties,” when leftism supposedly went off the deep end. The SDS had all but stopped formal operations, and activism by 1972.

### Conclusion

All in all, the story of the SDS at BC is one of resilience. The SDS chapter at Boston College would perpetually face challenges, to which they would meet with great valor, and overcome in the name of radicalism. The BC-SDS would morph from a pacifist organization to one of radical Marxist politics, with the intention of abolishing the structures of oppression at Boston College, and the world in general. While it is unlikely that the Boston College SDS chapter had worldly impacts like they had hoped, they paved the way for leftist politics at Boston College, such as the modern Marxist magazine, *Platypus*, which has a Boston College specific reading group, that is recognized by the Office of Student Involvement (the successor to the Campus Council).<sup>65</sup>

As a student at Boston College myself, I can walk into Maloney Hall or McGuinn Hall, and see a stack of pamphlets titled *The Platypus Review* ready for any student at the school to take advantage of (seen above, McGuinn to the left and Maloney to the right). It is quite easy to make the argument that these sources of leftism would not be as readily available if it were not for the SDS at Boston College. As Gallagher, Simon, Moriarty, and others had hoped for and had built up, radicalism was made more “glamorous”<sup>66</sup> and acceptable at Boston College and will be for the foreseeable future.

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<sup>63</sup> Boston College Libraries.

<sup>64</sup> 885 Editors, “885, Volume II, Number 4, 7 November 1972,” November 7, 1972, <https://newspapers.bc.edu/?a=d&d=eighteightfive19721107-01.2.2&srpos=27&e=-----197-en-20--21-byDA-txt-txIN-SDS----->, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Platypus BC, “The Platypus Affiliated Society – Platypus Boston College Primary Marxist Reading Group Summer/Fall 2020 – Winter 2021,” Platypus 1917, Fall 2020, <https://platypus1917.org/2020/09/03/platypus-boston-college-primary-marxist-reading-group-summer-fall-2020-winter-2021/>.

<sup>66</sup> Bret Eynon, STUDENT MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960’S The Reminiscences of Thomas Gallagher.

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# ORACLE

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Volume IV | Issue I

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## **Social Movements and Radical Imaginations**

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## SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND RADICAL IMAGINATIONS

EDDIE BONILLA\*

Millions of protestors took to the streets in the summer of 2020 after the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted vulnerable communities. According to Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, the Black Lives Matter Movement (BLM) and COVID-19 pandemic “gave renewed validity to the notion of racism as systemic, structural, and ubiquitous in US society.” This reckoning, in turn, opened space for new ways of imagining our society.<sup>2</sup> Today, we are witnessing the fruits of this radical imagining. Teenagers are walking out of school to demand gun control legislation; youth activists are pressing for climate justice; and a reignited labor movement has Amazon workers, Starbucks baristas, UPS drivers, and Hollywood writers organizing for better working conditions.

The response from the Right has been swift and dismantled many of the political gains discussed in this *Oracle* volume. In the past three years, we have witnessed a rise in violence toward Asians, efforts to disenfranchise Black and Brown voters, and new legislation that limits how teachers can discuss racism and sexism. Since January 2021, forty-four states have introduced bills that restrict the use of critical race theory in classrooms and limit how individuals teach, learn, and engage with history.<sup>3</sup> At this crossroads, we must examine the evolution of 1960s and 1970s social movements and ask what lessons we can learn about our present and future.

Attacks on the teaching of history prevent younger generations from learning about the people before them who took on oppressive structures and institutions. Historian Donna Murch notes there are challenges when writing contemporary history because the past and present are locked in a political dialectic in which the “urgency of the moment always informs our

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<sup>1</sup> Eddie Bonilla is the newest member of Boston College’s History Department. His article, “Latina/o Communists, Activism, and the FBI During the Chicana/o and New Communist Movements,” on which this symposium was based, can be found here; <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/850746/pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, “Black Studies is Political, Radical, Indispensable, and Insurgent” in Colin Kaepernick, Robin D. G. Kelley, and Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, eds., *Our History has Always Been Contraband: In Defense of Black Studies* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2023), 20.

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, “Black Studies is Political, Radical, Indispensable, and Insurgent,” 18.



chronicling of past events.”<sup>4</sup> Social movements are hard to periodize as activists become long-distance runners in the fight for social justice and move from one struggle to another, move between and on the margins of multiple movements, or move across decades. Social movements are messy and do not fit into neat boxes.

Historian and scholar of social movements Robin D. G. Kelley reflected in 2022 on the twenty-year anniversary of his foundational text, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. In a radical departure from the historiography of social movements, Kelley foregrounds optimism when thinking about Black-led movements. He ponders what success means for movements committed to fundamentally transforming society. He asks what it means to win and why. And above all, he asks what it means to dream radically. We must ask these questions when analyzing social movements where activists are taking on racial capitalism, government institutions, policing agencies, and university administrations. By examining social movements, we begin to see not only the “mechanisms of oppression” but also the “conditions and requirements for new modes of analysis, new ways of being together.”<sup>5</sup> The study of social movements is not limited to the people who mobilize; it extends to the very mechanisms that make exploitation and oppression ordinary and quotidian.

This *Oracle* volume provides the perfect moment to see what strategies, tactics, and ideologies activists from previous generations used to change their worlds. The authors collectively teach us that we must engage these stories to dream a better future. They stress what solidarity can achieve even in the face of obstacles such as police surveillance and violence. Alyssa Lego explores how women in the Black Panther Party created the Oakland Community School to transform how African American children learned inside and outside the classroom after public school districts left them behind. Brendan Mahoney pivots to higher education as a site of struggle. He traces the development of the Students for Democratic Society at Boston College to examine how leftist activists challenged the Vietnam War and campus administration. Rongwei Zhu further explores student activism through the origins of the Student Nonviolent

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<sup>4</sup> Donna Murch, *Assata Taught Me: State Violence, Racial Capitalism, and the Movement for Black Lives* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, “Twenty Years of Freedom Dreams,” *Boston Review*, August 1, 2022; <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/twenty-years-of-freedom-dreams/> last accessed August 3, 2023; Robin D. G. Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003).

Coordinating Committee and their challenges to segregation in the 1960s after African American students staged a sit-down strike in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1960.

The final two authors, Kate Nuechterlein and Sruthi Sriram, pivot to international movements and the influence of Third World ideologies from Latin American, African, and Asian revolutionaries. Nuechterlein offers a nuanced examination of how Jim Jones and the People's Temple in Guyana used the milieu of the New Left to convince people to move to South America. Sriram similarly uses an internationalist lens to explore how the writings of leftist activists spread information from the Third World through newspapers. This underground press also served as material for government policing agencies to use in their battles to squash any revolutionary movements.

In these essays, we see the importance of collective struggle and radical imagination in the face of oppression, COVID-19, and efforts to dismantle civil rights legislation of the 1960s. Organizers Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba remind us that we must have the will to survive in collectivity as people who are willing to “seize, defy, and upend whatever they must for the sake of life, dignity, and decency—and for the sake of each other.”<sup>6</sup> Much like the authors in this volume, Hayes and Kaba teach us that the study of social movements must move beyond success or failure. We should instead learn from the lessons of collectivity, solidarity, care, and dreaming if we hope to build a better world for tomorrow.

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<sup>6</sup> Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba, *Let This Radicalize You: Organizing and the Revolution of Reciprocal Care* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2023), 59.