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The Rise of the Messiah: The American Government's Surveillance of SNCC Leaders,
1960-1972

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Abstract

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By Christina D. Morgan

This thesis discusses how Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) members James Forman, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown experienced targeting and surveillance from the American government from 1960 to 1972. Primarily the FBI, but also other government agencies like the CIA heavily scrutinized Forman, Carmichael, and Brown during the civil rights and Black Power movement. During the 1960s, the government perceived two major threats facing the nation. Civil rights workers challenged the social and political order of American society. Meanwhile, due to hostile relations between the United States and the Soviet Union during this time, the American government also feared the rise and spread of communism. Therefore, the government often targeted civil rights leaders and people perceived as maintaining leftist ideologies. Forman, Carmichael, and Brown were all influential civil rights leaders who associated with the New Left and held relations with leftist regimes like Cuba and Guinea. This thesis analyzes how the intersection of these men as radical leftist civil rights workers affected the way in which the American government targeted them. This thesis will show that as these men became increasingly more radical during the civil rights movement and into the more militant Black Power movement, the government responded by intensifying its tactics of surveillance. By analyzing government documents, primarily from the FBI, and works written by Forman, Carmichael, and Brown themselves, the thesis seeks to unveil how this conflict began, shifted, and, escalated from SNCC's inception to its demise.

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Introduction

On February 17, 1968, H. Rap Brown, James Forman, and Stokely Carmichael, three leaders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sat side-by-side on a stage in Oakland, California overlooking a crowded and noisy auditorium. H. Rap Brown stood up and delivered a rousing speech to the eagerly anticipating audience. He said that President Johnson: “can always raise an argument about law and order because he never talks about justice. Black people fall for that same argument, and they go around talking about lawbreakers. We did not make the laws in this country, and we are neither legally nor morally confined to these laws. Those laws that keep them up keep us down.”¹ After everyone spoke at this rally to protest the imprisonment of the Oakland Black Panther Party co-founder Huey P. Newton, the crowd erupted in a standing ovation.

When Brown delivered this speech in 1968, the relationship between SNCC and the American government had worsened considerably since SNCC’s founding in 1960. When SNCC was first established, the organization hoped to work with the federal government to introduce legislation providing equal rights to African Americans.² However, the government proved that it would often not come to the aid of civil rights workers. Over the coming years, as each side grew more hostile toward the other, SNCC members realized that they did not want to achieve equality through the American democratic system; they wanted to achieve power against the American democratic

¹ H. Rap Brown, speech presented at the Huey P. Newton Birthday Rally to protest Newton’s arrest and imprisonment, Oakland, CA, February 17, 1968, broadcast by KQED Radio, Bay Area Television Archive, Black Panther Party Collection.

² Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 9.

system. The strategies and means of exhibiting power against the government intensified as the tension between these civil rights leaders and the government intensified as well. Upon Stokely Carmichael's popularization of the term "Black Power" in 1966, the civil rights movement almost immediately became more militant and revolutionary, meaning that any attempt for collaboration between civil rights and Black Power leaders and the government was severed. What began as occasional trips to Africa seeking solidarity with the oppressed nonwhites of the world and efforts to force the United States government to address its nation's injustices, transformed into a condemnation of western ideals of colonialism, capitalism, racism, and imperialism and a worldwide call to assert black power through revolutionary means. In essence, as the American government enacted stronger policies of surveillance, Forman, Brown, and Carmichael became more radical and adopted more revolutionary strategies of asserting power over the United States.³ By the time of the Oakland rally in 1968, leaders like James Forman, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown had long since understood that the only way to provide African Americans with a political and social presence was by taking revolutionary action against the American government since the government had proved that it was not an ally.

During the 1960s, the government perceived two serious threats facing the security of the nation. In the eyes of most government officials, the civil rights movement and communism challenged the social and political order as well as national

³ Raymond J. Batvinis, *The Origins of FBI Counterintelligence* (Lawrence, KS: The University Press of Kansas, 2007); Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The FBI: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Richard Gid Powers, *Broken: The Troubled Past and Uncertain future of the FBI* (New York: Free Press, 2004); Tim Weiner, *Enemies: A History of the FBI* (New York: Random House, 2012); Frank J. Rafalko, *MH/CHAOS: The CIA's Campaign against the Radical New Left and the Black Panthers* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011).

security. This duality caused the government to especially target Forman, Brown, and Carmichael because they were civil rights leaders as well as strong supporters of the Left who often associated themselves with leftist regimes of the postcolonial world. This thesis will discuss how the intersection of being black civil rights workers and supporting leftist ideologies affected the way in which James Forman, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown experienced surveillance from the federal government. The intersection provided the government with various avenues as a means of compounding its surveillance of these individuals. Since these men possessed so many ideologies that threatened the government, several government agencies felt justified in targeting them. This thesis will examine the methods that government agencies like the FBI and the CIA enacted to achieve such intense levels of investigation in order to stop these men from gaining support and spreading their ideologies among other nonwhite radicals. Furthermore, it will analyze how these tactics changed over time and what new tactics the government adopted to escalate its surveillance.

During this time that federal agencies targeted Brown, Carmichael, and Forman, the United States was also in the midst of a global rivalry with the Soviet Union. Understanding the Cold War during the 1960s when many Americans feared that nations would fall to communism, which would subsequently threaten global freedom and democracy, is vital to recognizing the circumstances that surrounded government surveillance of James Forman, Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, and other civil rights leaders who also threatened the established order. Works like Mary L. Dudziak's *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* and Thomas Borstelmann's *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global*

Arena acknowledge this.⁴ Dudziak and Borstelmann examine how the Cold War and the United States' tense relations with communist nations like the Soviet Union affected how the American government perceived and treated domestic civil rights workers. The government as well as the media rebaited them because, like communists, they questioned the American social and political order.

This thesis will examine how civil rights workers who associated themselves with the New Left experienced such an intense level of government scrutiny due to this national danger of communism.⁵ Because Brown, Carmichael, and Forman traveled to places like communist Cuba and socialist Guinea, the American government investigated them even more than it would have had these individuals limited the dissemination of their ideas to the African American community. In addition to the government's programs of surveillance aimed at domestic unrest and racial issues, like the FBI's COINTELPRO operation, the government created programs specifically to monitor their foreign travel and involvement, like the CIA watch list. This surveillance only intensified as Forman, Carmichael, and Brown spread their radical rhetoric throughout the world and increasingly supported a socialist Pan-African state rather than American

⁴ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of the New Left* (London: Verso, 1993).

⁵ Jennifer Frost, *"An Interracial Movement of the Poor: " Community Organizing and the New Left in the 1960s* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); Jim Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

democracy.⁶ This thesis will add to Dudziak's and Borstelmann's discussion of the effects of the Cold War on the civil rights movement by providing an understanding of government surveillance on leftist civil rights leaders.

Although Brown, Carmichael, and Forman were instrumental to the civil rights movement and Black Power movement, there are few biographies and histories written about them. Nevertheless, works like Peniel E. Joseph's *Stokely: A Life* provide a thorough understanding of Stokely Carmichael's life from his birth in Trinidad to his death in Guinea. Joseph discusses Carmichael's ascension into the radical and popular Black Power leader he became.⁷ Additionally, Joseph's *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* examines the national and international political importance of the Black Power movement and its effect on the black community.⁸ Joseph considers Forman, Carmichael, and Brown and their work as major leaders within the Black Power movement. However, his work focuses on the political impact and transformation of racial identity of the Black Power movement; he does not concentrate on government surveillance of Black Power leaders. This thesis will put greater emphasis on surveillance of Black Power leaders rather than ideological shifts,

⁶ James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Seattle: Open Hand Publishing Inc., 1985); H. Rap Brown, *Die Nigger Die!* (New York: The Dial Press Inc., 1969); Stokely Carmichael with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2003).

⁷ Peniel E. Joseph, *Stokely: A Life* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2014), IX.

⁸ Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2006); Tom Adam Davies, *Mainstreaming Black Power* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017); Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, Resistance – A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to Black Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010); Alton Hornsby Jr., *Black Power in Dixie: A Political History of African Americans in Atlanta* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2009).

thus adding a different perspective to Black Power and Forman's, Carmichael's, and Brown's role within it.

This thesis will further the discussion of these men, their significant impact within the civil rights and Black Power movement, and how government surveillance limited their efforts to communicate their ideologies and assert black authority. It will offer a comparison of how Brown, Carmichael, and Forman were faced with surveillance at the hands of the American government as well as a comparison of their contributions to the civil rights and Black Power movement. These men achieved the height in their civil rights career at different points in time during the 1960s, and the way in which the federal government investigated them reflects that. The political climate changed throughout the 60s, so government surveillance changed along with it. James Forman, who was especially significant earlier in the 1960s, encountered differing surveillance than H. Rap Brown, who was more significant during the later 1960s. Forman experienced redbaiting and attempts to create distrust among civil rights and Black Power leaders, while Brown experienced frequent imprisonment and threats to his physical wellbeing. By providing a narrow examination of these individuals and their targeting from the government, this thesis will show how the government's attack of civil rights workers and leftists intensified from more indirect harassment to more aggressive surveillance, which also reflected the process of radicalization of these men and the movement.

While there are few studies that focus on Forman, Carmichael, and Brown specifically, these individuals are often discussed within the historiography of the SNCC organization. Clayborne Carson's *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* is one of the leading works on the evolution of SNCC from a nonviolent student

group to an international human rights organization.⁹ Although Carson certainly discusses Forman's, Carmichael's, and Brown's role within SNCC, he analyzes the organization as a whole and goes into little detail about government surveillance. This thesis will discuss SNCC's part within the civil rights and Black Power movement, but it will focus specifically on Forman, Brown, and Carmichael and the impact of government surveillance on their experience as black leaders. Focusing on each individual's tenure of leadership and influence within SNCC produces a chronological progression of the organization from the civil rights movement to the Black Power movement. In doing so, this thesis illuminates an understanding of the ideological shift within SNCC's and the African American community's struggle for social and political autonomy as well as an understanding of the government's corresponding shift to a more intensive form of surveillance. The intensification of government surveillance across these different phases of SNCC's existence shows how the radicalization of the organization and the African American activists more broadly prompted increasingly aggressive government action.

By analyzing federal government documents, primarily FBI files that report on surveillance of SNCC, James Forman, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown, as well as looking at documents written by these men themselves, this thesis will explore how the American government targeted these civil rights workers and how these men responded in word and deed. Additionally, the thesis will evaluate how three individuals instilled in federal government officials such trepidation that federal agencies retaliated with a range of repressive and potentially lethal tactics. By probing into these inquiries, this thesis will reveal patterns of extreme and covert government acts of sabotage, spying, and

⁹ Carson, *In Struggle*.

blatant attacking spanning the 1960s and the lives of Forman, Carmichael, and Brown. This thesis will show that as these individuals became more powerful and influential, the American government increased its efforts to impede their goals. I argue that the fact that James Forman, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown supported leftist ideologies coupled with the fact that they were influential civil rights leaders, caused the American government to put them under especially intensive scrutiny, and as these men became more radical and revolutionary, government surveillance magnified to prevent them from propagating their ideas that challenged the American social and political order.

Chapter 1 – James Forman: SNCC’s Transition to a Revolutionary Organization and the Federal Government’s Retaliation

The United States government investigated SNCC and James Forman for over ten years. At first, the government sought to stop the spread of communism, and it viewed many civil rights workers, including Forman, as communists or communist supporters. As the civil rights movement grew and became more militant, the government targeted African Americans not only for their perceived leftist leanings, but also for their potential violence. In 1968 FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover received a memorandum detailing the background, goals, and targets of the Bureau’s program targeting black nationalists. The main objective was to prevent “the beginning of a true black revolution” in which African American leaders “could unify, and electrify, the militant black nationalist movement.”¹⁰ In Hoover’s eyes, if the FBI did not enact everything in its power to stop black violence and revolution, then the United States would witness the “rise of the messiah.”¹¹ The American government worked tirelessly to maintain the social and political order, but James Forman’s ideologies of a socialist revolution and black liberation threatened that. Similar to the Cold War during the 1960s in which the United States and the Soviet Union faced rising tension, as one side became more radical and increased its tactics for domination, so did the other side in response. In other words, when the federal government attempted to tighten control over James Forman, Forman increased his calls for revolution. As he became more serious about the institution of a Pan-African socialist

¹⁰ Special Agent in Charge, Albany to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence, March 4, 1968, Memorandum, Counterintelligence Program: Black Extremist FBI file, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

¹¹ Ibid.

state, the American government underwent more drastic measures to prevent that from being realized. This conflict continued through the 1960s.

James Forman was born on October 4, 1928. Although he was born and raised in Chicago, he spent much of his childhood living with his grandmother in Mississippi where he experienced the effects of Southern style Jim Crow.¹² Upon graduating from high school, Forman briefly joined the Air Force and was stationed in Okinawa, Japan during the Korean War. Forman then graduated from Roosevelt University in 1957.¹³ During the late 1950s Forman worked as a journalist for the *Chicago Defender*, an African American newspaper. This is where he was first introduced to the workings of the civil rights movement and where the federal government first began watching him. For instance, in 1958, the FBI investigated Forman's involvement in the Little Rock School Crisis.¹⁴ During that time, Forman briefly worked with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and with Robert F. Williams, a leader within the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).¹⁵ Williams maintained several socialist and revolutionary ideologies. He later fled the United States and moved to Cuba where he created a radio show discussing his beliefs called *Radio Free Dixie*.¹⁶ He shared many of his beliefs with Forman, who then carried these thoughts with him when he became the Executive Secretary of SNCC in 1961.

¹² "James Forman," *SNCC Digital Gateway*, accessed March 6, 2019.

¹³ Zack Schrempp, "James Forman (1928-2005)," *Black Past*, February 28, 2007.

¹⁴ US Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans Book III, Report no. 94-755, 94th Cong., 2d sess., April 23, 1976, 2.

¹⁵ "Forman," *SNCC Digital Gateway*.

¹⁶ Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

When Ella Baker, with the help of a few others, established SNCC in 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina, the organization comprised a humble group of students staging sit-ins and nonviolent protests to achieve racial equality.¹⁷ James Forman was quite different from the other members when he joined just one year later. While most SNCC workers were college students, Forman was 33 and had already received his degree. Yet, his age and experience allowed him to quickly become a major leader within the organization.¹⁸ This fact would prove significant considering Forman did not share these views of nonviolent resistance and racial inclusion that SNCC did. Although he supported SNCC and its projects and was an invaluable member, many of his values did not align with those of the organization. He agreed to the concept of nonviolence “as a means to build a mass movement... [He] knew that nonviolence would not work, but hopefully the witnessing of terror and police brutality would help create a mass consciousness that would eventually lead to more militancy and action for revolution on the part of the black people.”¹⁹ During the early 1960s when most civil rights workers encouraged nonviolent resistance, Forman maintained a more revolutionary attitude, but he did not make his views publicly known until a few years later.

When SNCC was founded in 1960, it was the middle of the Cold War. This often meant that federal government agencies, particularly the Federal Bureau of Investigation, labeled people who were thought to possess radical ideas, like civil rights workers who

¹⁷ John Lewis with Michael D’Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1998), 107-108.

¹⁸ James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Seattle: Open Hand Publishing Inc., 1985), 234-236.

¹⁹ Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 149.

challenged the social order, as communists.²⁰ Even before the inception of SNCC, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, the FBI, and other federal government agencies were terrified of communist infiltration within the United States. Hoover, who was instrumental in forming the FBI in 1935, spent his career investigating and targeting communists and anyone suspected of being a communist. The United States was in the midst of the First Red Scare when Hoover joined the Bureau of Investigation in 1924, the predecessor to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.²¹ This fear of reds essentially carried from the end of the First World War in 1919 through the 1960s. Hoover had been Director of the FBI for almost twenty years when the second Red Scare started with the end of World War II and the beginning of McCarthyism. Throughout the 1950s Hoover and the FBI went on a manhunt to find supposed communists who aligned themselves with the Soviet Union or even those who simply held leftist ideologies.²² Because of this massive fear of communism, the federal government, the media, and American citizens rebaited several people within SNCC whether or not they possessed any communist affiliation.

Even though Forman's radical ideas of armed self-defense and socialist revolution were by no means within the minds of most members of the organization, the media and the federal government were convinced that SNCC possessed strong ties with communism. It is true that some SNCC workers did associate themselves with communism, and some, like Angela Davis for instance, were even members of the

²⁰ Gerald Horne, "The Rise of Reds – On the Mainland and the Island," in *Race to Revolution: The United States and Cuba during Slavery and Jim Crow* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014), 204-231.

²¹ Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The FBI: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 8.

²² Jeffreys-Jones, *The FBI*; Tim Weiner, *Enemies: A History of the FBI* (New York: Random House, 2012).

Communist Party of the United States of America, or CPUSA.²³ However, the majority of civil rights workers in SNCC were not affiliated with communism. Nevertheless, the constant rumors and media portrayals of red, anarchist SNCC made citizens and government agencies alike very cautious of the organization's true intentions.

The media and government attacked even the most peaceful and democracy-supporting members of SNCC. An FBI special agent from the Atlanta office wrote a report concerning potential communists within SNCC, which contained an *Atlanta Times* article from 1965. The article criticized Chairman John Lewis for permitting communists to join SNCC if they were, in his words "committed to working for inter-racial democracy."²⁴ The article continued by saying that an Alabama Legislative Committee charged that the organization was communist-ridden. Lewis responded to this accusation by saying that it would be difficult "to determine what a Communist is... We do not make any type of security check on people."²⁵ Even though Chairman Lewis was clearly not a communist and consistently discussed his desire for a more egalitarian *democracy*, the fact that he did not say that he would reject all communists who wanted to join the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, made him a red sympathizer and maybe even red himself in the eyes of the media. The FBI used articles such as this, articles that were largely unsubstantiated, to gather evidence against members of SNCC. The Bureau used rumors and petty redbaiting to build a case against John Lewis and James Forman and justify investigating them.

²³ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press: 1981), 270.

²⁴ *Atlanta Times*, July 11, 1965, article in FBI Report, Re: Communist Infiltration of Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, February 4, 1966, SNCC FBI File, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

During the early 1960s when Forman was not much of a public figure and did not make his revolutionary views widely known, news media consistently labeled him as a dissident. A 1964 issue of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, discussed in an FBI report addressing communist infiltration within SNCC, attempted to list all of the communists in SNCC. The article stated that James Forman “refused to discuss any possible relationship between SNCC and subversive activities.”²⁶ The fact that Forman would not entertain an accusatory question about the relationship between SNCC and dissident activities labeled him as a dissident himself. During this time James Forman in fact did not support the American capitalist system or SNCC’s tactic of nonviolence.²⁷ However, his ideologies did not become public knowledge until SNCC transformed into a more radical organization, and his ideas resonated more within the organization and the African American community. During the early 1960s when SNCC and Forman publicly advocated for nonviolent resistance, the FBI used rumors and contempt to create a narrative of SNCC as an organization filled with traitorous reds in order to diminish their popularity and credibility.²⁸

This fear of communism and subsequent desire to attack anyone involved with it culminated with the federal government’s Counter Intelligence Program, or COINTELPRO, which began in 1956 and ended in 1971 amid threat of public exposure

²⁶ “SNCC Backers Here Once Identified as Reds,” *Atlanta Journal – Constitution*, February 2, 1964, article in FBI Report, Re: Communist Infiltration of Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, March 20, 1964, SNCC FBI File, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

²⁷ Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 236-237; Lewis with D’Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, 177-178, 189.

²⁸ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans Book III, Report no. 94-755, 94th Cong., 2d sess., April 23, 1976, 479.

of the program.²⁹ COINTELPRO was an FBI program that covertly targeted domestic dissidents who were thought to threaten national security.³⁰ According to a report published by a special Senate committee to investigate COINTELPRO and the FBI in 1976, the purpose of the program was to “[protect] national security, [prevent] violence, and [maintain] the existing social and political order by ‘disrupting’ and ‘neutralizing’ groups and individuals perceived as threats.”³¹ When COINTELPRO began operating in 1956, it was specifically aimed at communists and people suspected of supporting communism. However, during its 15 years of operation, the program scrutinized five groups of people. They included: the CPUSA, the Socialist Workers’ Party, white hate groups, black nationalist-hate groups, and groups associated with the new left.³² James Forman and SNCC were primarily examined under the black nationalist-hate group program, which began in 1967.³³ However, the FBI and COINTELPRO still targeted SNCC during the early 1960s for fear of communist infiltration.

Much of the COINTELPRO attack on SNCC involved covert operations to determine who was a communist. From 1962 to 1965 the FBI engaged in microphone and wiretap surveillance of SNCC to discover who displayed communist affiliations and

²⁹ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 3.

³⁰ Betty Medsger, *The Burglary: The Discovery of J. Edgar Hoover’s Secret FBI* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014); Raymond J. Batvinis, *The Origins of FBI Counterintelligence* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2007); Nelson Blackstock, *COINTELPRO: The FBI’s Secret War on Political Freedom* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975).

³¹ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 5.

³² Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 4.

³³ *Ibid.*; Kenneth O’Reilly, “Racial Matters:” *The FBI’s Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972* (New York: Free Press, 1989), 276-278.

what their plans were for violent, extremist acts. The Bureau preferred microphone surveillance because it was not required to obtain a warrant or approval from the Attorney General.³⁴ However, it used both tactics regularly. If there were even the slightest potential threat that a member of SNCC was a communist and could threaten national security, the FBI would wiretap or bug him or her. According to the report of the Senate committee in 1976, the FBI saw SNCC as “the principal target for Communist Party infiltration among the various civil rights organizations” because some of its leaders “made public appearances with leaders of Communist-front organizations” and had “subversive backgrounds.”³⁵ This intensive and covert surveillance strategy would have continued had it not been outlawed a few years later. The *Katz* decision in 1967 and the Omnibus Crime Control Act of 1968 prevented the FBI from wielding the seemingly uninhibited power it had during the first half of the 1960s.³⁶ Therefore, the FBI diminished its use of the warrantless and unauthorized microphone and wiretap surveillance it had enjoyed. That is not to say, however, that the Bureau downgraded its efforts to attack and expose dissidents within SNCC. In fact, as SNCC continued to agitate the federal government, the government only increased its targeting of civil rights workers.

Throughout the early 60s, SNCC consciously put the American government in a problematic position by involving it in the fight against local and state acts of racial oppression and violence. SNCC even used nonviolence as a tactic to receive attention from the federal government. When white citizens and local law enforcement beat civil

³⁴ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 297.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 334.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 299.

rights activists who refused to fight back, the federal government was often obligated to send national aid. Forman and other leaders subsequently used the publicity generated from appealing to the American government to draw attention to a particular racial issue. Forman later wrote that SNCC “would get out the story of an incident of racist oppression by issuing a press release saying [they] had sent a telegram about the incident to Robert Kennedy, then attorney general, and President Kennedy.”³⁷ These telegrams never brought a response, but Forman knew they would not. By the end of 1961, Forman acknowledged that the federal government would not assist civil rights activists. In November SNCC led a mass movement in Albany, Georgia seeking black voter registration and the desegregation of public facilities.³⁸ During the two-week movement, local law enforcement unconstitutionally arrested and imprisoned almost a thousand civil rights workers, and the federal government did nothing. By end of the month, Forman understood that appeals to the American government “were just a tactic” because “it became clear to all that the federal government was a partner in the crimes against black people.”³⁹

This was how the relationship between SNCC and the federal government developed in the early 1960s. No matter how much figures like Attorney General Robert Kennedy and President John F. Kennedy publicly encouraged racial equality, privately, in

³⁷ Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 242.

³⁸ Rick Bragg, “Still a Freedom Movement Casualty after 32 Years,” *The New York Times*, July 31, 1997; Charles E. Cobb Jr., “... On My Mind: Atlanta, Albany, and Savannah Georgia,” in *On the Road to Freedom: A Guided Tour of the Civil Rights Trail* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2008); Forman, “Albany, Georgia,” in *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*.

³⁹ Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 260.

the eyes of the members of SNCC, they did little to help.⁴⁰ In January 1963, James Forman, SNCC worker Bob Moses, and others took Robert Kennedy and F.B.I. Director J. Edgar Hoover to court. They wanted to force these men to prosecute southern officials who failed to implement justice against the hundreds of cases of assault and arrest against SNCC and other civil rights workers. Unsurprisingly, SNCC lost the suit.⁴¹ However, the process clearly demonstrated SNCC's attitude toward the federal government and vice versa. No matter what was said publicly, the federal government would not support SNCC, which became even more evident in during the summer of 1964.

The 1964 Summer Project in Mississippi marked a major shift for James Forman, SNCC, and the civil rights movement. Commonly known as Mississippi Freedom Summer, this initiative redefined many of the ideologies of the civil rights movement. Forman recalled that the project was a: "high point of all the work that SNCC had been doing since 1960. Its consequences were far-reaching within SNCC and within the larger society."⁴² The project required incredible money and manpower and was a far greater endeavor than SNCC had ever undergone. Forman, fellow SNCC member and director of the Mississippi Freedom Project Bob Moses, and SNCC chose to execute this project because the Mississippi government had implemented several barriers preventing the majority of blacks from voting. By demanding voter registration so that blacks could

⁴⁰ Robert Kennedy, "Address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors" (speech presented at the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 28, 1961); Mabel Williams, in *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, by James Forman, 179; John F. Kennedy, "Civil Rights Address" (address televised on CBS News, June 11, 1963).

⁴¹ Carson, *In Struggle*, 86.

⁴² Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 372-373.

participate in local and state politics, SNCC hoped to shed a national light on the inequality and disadvantages thousands of blacks experienced.⁴³

SNCC organized and initiated Freedom Summer, but other civil rights organizations including the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) all participated in the project. These organizations made up the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO).⁴⁴ Together COFO helped provide African Americans in Mississippi the right to vote in a state where blacks made up a significant portion of the population, but only 6.4 percent of eligible black voters were actually registered to vote.⁴⁵

In addition to providing blacks with the power to vote, SNCC with the help of COFO founded the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party earlier that year. This political party consisted primarily of African Americans and campaigned for the political power of African Americans. Much of Freedom Summer was spent campaigning for the MFDP candidates and trying to earn them a nomination at the 1964 Democratic National Convention and seats within Congress.⁴⁶ SNCC recruited over a thousand volunteers, many of whom were white, to campaign for the MFDP and its members.⁴⁷

⁴³ Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 373; Jon N. Hale, *The Freedom Schools: Student Activists in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016); Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); James P. Marshall, *Student Activism and Civil Rights in Mississippi: Protest Politics and the Struggle for Racial Justice, 1960-1965* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013).

⁴⁴ Hale, *The Freedom Schools*, 69.

⁴⁵ Susan Goldman Rubin, *Freedom Summer: The 1964 Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (New York: Holiday House, 2014), 3.

⁴⁶ Marshall, *Student Activism*, 2.

⁴⁷ Carmichael with Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution*, 350.

Demonstrating their seriousness and conviction to obtain political representation for black people showed the nation that African Americans would not stop until their vote counted.⁴⁸

Forman understood that this mentality would cause contempt and that white backlash and white violence was a very logical concern. Therefore, COFO attempted to enlist the help of the federal government. Considering the fact that many of the SNCC volunteers were white, Forman thought that President Johnson might send troops to Mississippi to maintain peace. However, he “realized that the federal government” and “the Johnson administration [were] unlikely to send troops into Mississippi during the summer of 1964. And even if it did send troops, they would constitute no more than a housekeeping operation.”⁴⁹ It became clear to Forman that not only did the federal government refuse to provide SNCC with any type of aid, it even felt contemptuous and hostile toward the organization. In order to achieve national acknowledgement, SNCC would have to turn to the people and the media rather than the government. During the summer of 1964, SNCC had received significant media coverage, and the organization achieved exponentially more political power. This enabled them to move the fight to the national level, which only made Johnson and Hoover even more wary and more willing to sabotage Forman and SNCC.⁵⁰

The FBI feared racial unrest and SNCC’s attempts to introduce its own party and candidates into the political sphere. This aversion towards black political power as well

⁴⁸ Stokely Carmichael with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael {Kwame Ture}* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 353.

⁴⁹ Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 373.

⁵⁰ Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 373.
Carmichael with Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution*, 373.

as increased redbaiting from the media, led the FBI to form a “special desk,” which was created to “determine the degree of communist [infiltration] into racial matters.”⁵¹ Stokely Carmichael, who was also a major contributor to the Mississippi Freedom Project, later acknowledged a sudden increase in FBI presence because of actions taken like “Presidential phone calls to the Mississippi governor; a huge FBI office established in Jackson; a battalion of sailors dispatched to beat the bushes.”⁵² While the FBI claimed to be solely an investigative organization, Carmichael pointed out that the Bureau “suddenly discovered the authority to make arrests” when special agents arrested three men who held two Freedom Summer volunteers at gunpoint.⁵³ With Forman’s and SNCC’s increasing and more public challenging of the current political and social system, government scrutiny became far worse.

Perhaps the most important consequence that came out of this summer was the almost sudden switch to an advocacy for armed self-defense.⁵⁴ During the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964, three volunteers were killed, several more were arrested, and the federal government seemed to be doing nothing to protect these civil rights workers or was even antagonizing.⁵⁵ Members of SNCC had had enough. James Forman, Stokely Carmichael, and a few other members had encouraged armed self-defense since

⁵¹ U.S. Congress, Senate, and Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *The Development of F.B.I. Domestic Intelligence Investigations*, in *Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans*, April 1976, 16.

⁵² Carmichael with Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution*, 373.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Akinyele Omowale Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

⁵⁵ Alan Gilbert, “My Pal Andy Goodman’s Murder Made Him a Civil Rights Martyr,” *Daily Beast*, June 21, 2018; Carmichael with Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution*, 371-373; Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill, NC, The University of North Carolina Press: 1999), 290.

the beginning, but the organization's official stance was that of nonviolent resistance. After seeing what became of blacks that tried to achieve power and equality peacefully, several more civil rights workers decided that nonviolence would not create the change they wanted to see. Blacks not just within SNCC and not just within Mississippi, but also throughout the nation, were tired of being demonized and redbaited on TV. They were tired of being treated like terrorists when they had been nonviolent. James Forman reflects this in his *Making of Black Revolutionaries*.

I was once convinced by the words of Kwame Nkrumah that the use of positive nonviolent action could produce the necessary changes. But at the time he wrote that, Algeria was already engaged in a violent revolution, and Frantz Fanon would later argue that only violence could bring about decolonization. This seeming contradiction actually reflects a process of evolution.⁵⁶

After the summer of 1964, there was no turning back. SNCC had become so disillusioned by the United States government, by the current system of capitalist government, and by white supremacy and violence that it became clear that the old ways of doing things were not enough. Forman carried this attitude with him as he entered the 1964 Democratic National Convention.

SNCC brought eight candidates of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party to the Democratic National Convention to contest for Mississippi seats.⁵⁷ Of course, the Convention and the Democratic Party were adamantly against any members of the

⁵⁶ Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 375.

⁵⁷ John C. Skipper, *Showdown at the 1964 Democratic National Convention: Lyndon Johnson, Mississippi and Civil Rights* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2012); Earnest N. Bracey, *Fannie Lou Hamer: The Life of a Civil Rights Icon* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2011).

MFDP, all of whom were black except one, from obtaining political power, and the chances of earning seats were slim. Nevertheless, the candidates were well prepared and received more support than they thought they would. Yet, President Johnson refused to allow the MFDP to win even one seat primarily because it would hurt Hubert Humphrey's chances of being nominated as Johnson's Vice President. He pressured and threatened officials at the convention to withdraw support for the candidates, and efforts were successful.⁵⁸ The Democratic Party attempted to persuade the MFDP to sign a compromise stating that the MFDP would receive only two seats so that Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey could be nominated and would subsequently put in place several policies to help black Mississippians. The MFDP candidates refused the compromise and actually staged a sit-in in the Mississippi section of the convention floor to show their dissatisfaction.⁵⁹ Had the delegates fully understood the level of covert surveillance and investigation the government performed on them during the Convention, they may have chosen a more radical form of protest.

Leading up to and during the National Convention, President Johnson was worried that the MFDP delegates would win a significant number of seats. Therefore, he ordered J. Edgar Hoover to perform surveillance methods on the delegates and their peers by placing microphones in the SNCC headquarters and other areas and tapping their phones.⁶⁰ Johnson did not want the espionage traced back to him though, and he told his advisors "I'm Joe Glutz."⁶¹ The surveillance obtained "the most sensitive details of the

⁵⁸ McAdam, *Freedom Summer*, 119-120.

⁵⁹ Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 389-396; Skipper, *Showdown*, 145.

⁶⁰ Skipper, *Showdown*, 85; Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 347; McAdam, *Freedom Summer*, 119.

⁶¹ Skipper, *Showdown*, 85.

plans and tactics of individuals supporting the MFDP's challenges."⁶² The Bureau and the executive branch later claimed that the spying was to prevent civil unrest at the convention or to prevent possible communist infiltration.⁶³

In reality the federal government was terrified of the notion that the MFDP could win congressional seats, and that African Americans could achieve real political power. The information the FBI and White House received was "purely political and only tangentially related to possible civil unrest."⁶⁴ This hostility between the federal government and the supporters of the MFDP and the political party's subsequent rejection from Congress, made it clear that it would be impossible to achieve political power by working solely through the system. In order to obtain true power, African Americans would have to reject the system and implement their own. From this point forward, SNCC became a new organization with Forman at its head, a man who believed in armed self-defense and the overthrow of the American system of government.

Many of the new, dissident ideologies that SNCC began to hold came from revolutionaries in Africa. In 1958 Sékou Touré of Guinea led a revolt against the government, and the nation achieved independence from France.⁶⁵ SNCC worker Harry Belafonte was a friend of Touré, the nation's first president.⁶⁶ Touré invited James

⁶² Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 347.

⁶³ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 335, 347.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 347.

⁶⁵ Mohamed Saliou Camara, *His Master's Voice: Mass Communication and Single-Party Politics in Guinea under Sékou Touré* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2005); Mike McGovern, *Unmasking the State: Making Guinea Modern* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013); Philip E. Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans: John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁶⁶ Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, 293.

Forman, Chairman John Lewis, and eight other members of SNCC as guests of the newly independent African nation, and in October 1964 the group made its first trip to Africa. They started in Guinea and embarked on a two-month tour throughout the continent. In addition to Guinea, they went to Zambia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Liberia, and more.⁶⁷ This tour marked the beginning of SNCC's association with African nations and their struggles for liberation and the organization's subsequent ideological application to the black struggle at home. Forman and the others were able to witness the people, ideas, and tactics that led to government revolt in some of these countries.⁶⁸ They saw a world in which black people were in power and the majority. They saw a world in which citizens not only heard their ideas and voices, but also loved and admired them. John Lewis recollected that back in the States, SNCC workers "were considered radical... But here in Africa, among these young freedom fighters, [they] were dismissed as mainstream."⁶⁹ Before this trip, many members of SNCC thought that maybe they were doing too much and being too aggressive. In comparison to SCLC and CORE, SNCC was radical. However, watching black liberators in Africa drastically altered many people's perspectives. Forman had always thought that SNCC needed to be more militant and aggressive and that the organization was too mainstream; now, for the first time, much of the organization agreed with him. Federal government agencies recognized this ideological shift as a result of their trip to Africa, and therefore increased their analysis of the influence of their foreign travel.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 294-297.

⁶⁸ Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, 293; Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 406.

⁶⁹ Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, 295.

As early as 1963, the FBI and the Central Intelligence Agency remained very alert to foreign influence on domestic unrest and foreign travel of domestic dissidents. Yet, as Forman and other members of SNCC increased their travel to Africa and other socialist states like Cuba, the American government more closely investigated their international travel and involvement.⁷⁰ The FBI feared foreign influence of all radicals. However, the threat of communist foreign influence on black nationalists was particularly imminent in Hoover's eyes because he wanted to prevent a black nationalist led communist or socialist government overthrow. Therefore, in 1966 the FBI established an agreement with the CIA to most effectively probe into foreign influence of domestic dissidents. The CIA and FBI disseminated information to each other that pertained to international travel and influence of black nationalists. The CIA would "seek concurrence and coordination of the FBI" before engaging in domestic surveillance to determine if it conflicted with any of the Bureau's existing operations.⁷¹ Additionally, when the CIA led an investigation on foreign intelligence, the Agency involved the FBI if the intelligence pertained to "internal security factors," meaning potential domestic dissidence.⁷² Once these two government agencies coordinated effectively and gathered enough information on particular black nationalists, the CIA put these individuals on a "watch list." This was intended for the National Security Agency to be able to monitor and intercept

⁷⁰ Monthly Intelligence Summary, January 1-31, 1964, Army File, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress; Report on James Rufus Forman, January 9, 1974, James Forman FBI File, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress; Re: Foreign Influences in the Black Nationalist Movement, January 11, 1968, FBI file, SNCC Collection, The National Archives.

⁷¹ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 519; Re: Counterintelligence Research Program: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, October 10, 1967, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Army File, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

⁷² Ibid.

international communication. The practice of inter-agency mass intelligence continued into the 1970s.⁷³

This international surveillance program led to heavy scrutiny of James Forman's international travel. Almost every action he took, word he spoke, and person with whom he interacted was documented. In July and August of 1965 FBI agents tracked Forman when he and his family took a trip to Puerto Rico. For several weeks they probed into everything he did. At 10:30 am on August 4, 1965 James was speaking with his wife Mildred about their plans with Mike, a member of SNCC and: "Mildred said she was going home to Chicago for 1 week and would return to Atlanta before going to El Paso. James said Mildred could go from Chicago but needs to call Mike about 4 days ahead of time. Mike's phone is 0X7-8640. Mildred said 'you have to give me that package.'"⁷⁴ It is unclear how these agents knew exactly what Forman and his wife were saying, but what is clear is that they examined him intensely because of their uneasiness as to what consequences international travel and communication would create domestically. The FBI continued to target Forman as his calls for revolutionary action became more pronounced.

When Stokely Carmichael was elected Chairman of SNCC in 1966, James Forman became the Director of International Affairs, which incorporated fewer responsibilities than those of his previous position as Executive Secretary.⁷⁵ He wanted to reduce his authority within the organization in part to focus on the broader economic

⁷³ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 520-521.

⁷⁴ "Activity Recorded," August 4, 1965, FBI Report, James Forman FBI File, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

⁷⁵ Carmichael with Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution*, 478-482.

and political issues affecting all people of African descent. He chose instead to concentrate on other projects that addressed these issues, so he began working with the Black Workers' Congress and helped found the National Black Economic Development Conference. Being a major contributor to organizations such as these that aligned more with his own priorities towards achieving power for blacks gave Forman a greater platform from which to share his ideas.⁷⁶

The federal government's acts of abusing authority to maintain control only reinforced Forman's belief that blacks needed to tear themselves from the tyrannical hands of the American system of government. Forman thought that four main issues created black oppression and stood in the way of black liberation. He outlined them in a speech in front of the Black Writers Conference in Montreal in 1968. He said that "[racism], capitalism, colonialism and imperialism dominate the lives of the people of the Third World – the people of Africa, Asia, Latin America, the colonized minorities who live inside the United States."⁷⁷ Forman believed that the colonialism, racism, and imperialism of western, developed nations like the United States had been keeping blacks powerless for centuries. Western nations were developed and successful at the expense of minorities and therefore wanted to keep exploiting minorities in order to continue to thrive. Yet, blacks' failure to seek independence was due to their "lack of ideology... negotiated independence... opportunism, and... failure to develop a people's army."⁷⁸ In other words, according to Forman, the oppressed people of the third world must

⁷⁶ Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 453.

⁷⁷ James Forman, "Speech Delivered at the Black Writers Conference." (speech presented at Black Writers Conference, Montreal, October 11-14, 1968), 2, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

⁷⁸ Forman, "Speech Delivered," 3.

understand that in order to achieve power and independence, they must create an armed, proletariat, socialist revolution. Once this is done, the brothers and sisters of Africa can finally implement a true African-dominated socialist state.

The first step in giving blacks greater agency is finding the money to fund such an endeavor. In Forman's eyes, since the white man had been economically successful due to its exploitation of black people, the money to take power back should come from the white man himself. Forman's notions of justice, his calls to action, his scrutiny by the FBI, and his infamy culminated in 1969 with his Black Manifesto. On April 26, 1969 Forman spoke in front of the National Black Economic Development Conference (NBEDC) in Detroit, Michigan. This was the first time, but certainly not the last, that he presented his Black Manifesto. In essence, he called for American churches and synagogues to pay \$500 million in reparations to African Americans so that they may have more economic autonomy.⁷⁹ He said: "it is time we stopped mincing words. Caution is fine, but no oppressed people ever gained their liberation until they 'were ready to fight,' to use whatever means necessary, including the use of force and power of the gun to bring down the colonizer."⁸⁰ Forman continued to present his speech throughout the nation, and he even increased the money demanded from \$500 million to \$3 billion.

In order for African Americans to retrieve this money, Forman called: "for the total disruption of selected church-sponsored agencies operating anywhere in the U.S. and the world," and for blacks to seize things like "offices, telephones, and printing

⁷⁹ James Forman, "The Black Manifesto." (speech presented at the National Black Economic Development Conference, Detroit, April 26, 1969), James Forman Collection, the Library of Congress.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

apparatus of all church-sponsored agencies” until the money was paid.⁸¹ Forman and his supporters began to occupy churches and church offices to demand their reparations.⁸² According to an FBI report on the Black Manifesto, on June 1, 1969, twenty African Americans associated with the NBEDC, including ten men, seven women, and three children, visited Christ Church Cranbrook in Detroit.⁸³ Black nationalist Kenneth John Watson stood in front of the congregation, delivered the Black Manifesto, and then made an additional statement demanding reparations from the church. Instances such as this proliferated throughout Detroit as well as other cities throughout the nation. Some African Americans even took over the entire floor of some church buildings and examined the churches’ financial records.⁸⁴ After Forman’s speech and the chaos of the weeks that followed, every local, state, and federal law enforcement agency was on high alert. The FBI began an intense inquiry to determine who was involved, who supported it, who had paid, and if James Forman could be charged with a crime.

Less than two months after Forman presented his manifesto, the FBI interviewed nineteen people. Many of them had nothing to do with Forman, SNCC, or the Black

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Re: National Black Economic Development Conference, Detroit Michigan, April 25-27, 1969, June 7, 1969, James Forman FBI File, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress; From Mr. DeLoach to A. Rosen, Re: Inter-Religious Foundation for Community Organization, Inc.; National Black Development Conference, Detroit, Michigan April 25-27, 1969; James Forman, Kenneth John Watson: Daniel Webster Aldridge, Jr.; Various Christian Churches and Jewish Synagogues – Victims Extortion; Interstate Transportation in Aid of Racketeering – Extortion; Conspiracy, June 13, 1969, FBI Memorandum, James Forman FBI File, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

⁸³ Re: National Black Development Conference, Forman FBI File.

⁸⁴ From Special Agent in Charge, Detroit to FBI Director, Re: Inter-Religious Foundation for Community Organization, Inc.; et al; Various Christian Churches and Jewish Synagogues – Victims Extortion; ITAR – Extortion – Conspiracy, June 6, 1969, FBI Memorandum, James Forman FBI File, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

Manifesto.⁸⁵ They were either at the NBEDC conference or in the surrounding area during the time that Forman presented the manifesto. The Bureau was determined to investigate this matter until it could find a reasonable cause to arrest Forman. FBI agents dropped by their homes and places of work and called anyone suspected of having information. Most people would not give away any information, whether or not they had any.⁸⁶ Friend of Forman and supporter of NBEDC, Herman Holmes, wrote a letter to Forman detailing the level of surveillance he was under for years after Forman presented the Black Manifesto. He wrote that his apartment was broken into and searched, and he was arrested several times for arbitrary crimes. On February 7, 1970 he was arrested for stealing mail that he was in the process of shipping out.⁸⁷ Ironically, the FBI and the CIA had been involved in intercepting SNCC's mail for almost a decade.⁸⁸ By the end of the 1960s, after years of hostility between the Bureau and Forman, the FBI was willing to arrest, threaten, sabotage, and manipulate any person who could potentially aid in the removal of Forman from the international political sphere.

The FBI was not very discreet about its investigation. Word got out among the people involved in the manifesto, and they banded together to not give away any information. The Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization, for instance, wrote the NBEDC telling them that the FBI was investigating them. They gave advice based upon what their attorneys had to say and even laid out step-by-step instructions if

⁸⁵ Re: National Black Economic Development Conference, Forman FBI File.

⁸⁶ FBI Interviews of Cincinnati SNCC Membership, June 16, 1969, James Forman FBI File, James Forman Papers, The Library of Congress; Report on NBEDC Members, June 20, 1969, James Forman FBI File, James Forman Papers, The Library of Congress.

⁸⁷ Herman Holmes, Letter to James Forman, January 11, 1971, James Forman Papers, The Library of Congress.

⁸⁸ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 631.

an FBI agent ever tried to question them. If a NBEDC member were to be questioned, he or she should “secure the name and badge number,” remember that he or she is “under no legal obligation to engage in conversation when contacted,” and remember that he or she is “not obligated to see or talk to an agent without legal counsel present.”⁸⁹ Based upon the fact that the Bureau did not have any real power to arrest Forman and the fact that no one would speak to them meant that legal action was futile. This does not mean, however, that J. Edgar Hoover and the F.B.I. ever stopped trying to imprison James Forman.

This intensive investigation of suspected participants of the Black Manifesto in 1969 illustrates just how hostile the relationship between James Forman and the federal government became since Forman joined SNCC in 1961. When Forman became a member, he believed in more radical tactics but still wholeheartedly supported the organization. Meanwhile, the FBI was simply interested in hunting communists and communist supporters within the U.S. During his time working for SNCC, Forman became more revolutionary and pugnacious towards the federal government, and Hoover and the Bureau subsequently became more belligerent towards him and obsessed with curbing his influence. As Forman continued to spread his ideas of a Pan-African state globally, the FBI became more fearful of what consequences his rhetoric would create domestically. By the time Stokely Carmichael was elected Chairman of SNCC in 1966, the American government was truly cautious when he said he planned to organize an African socialist state. Carmichael was in many ways even more terrifying than Forman

⁸⁹ From Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization to National Black Economic Development Conference Participants, June 13, 1969, Memorandum, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

because he achieved a level of popularity and impact that Forman never did. This is why the FBI and other federal government agencies investigated and scrutinized Carmichael on a level that had previously been unseen.

Chapter 2 - Stokely Carmichael: What SNCC's Increasing International Influence Meant for the Federal Government

When Stokely Carmichael was elected Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in 1966, it became clear that SNCC was now on a different path than it had been while under the leadership of Chairman John Lewis. SNCC would no longer work with the American government to achieve racial equality. During the early 1960s, the government had proven that, no matter what speeches were made and laws were passed, it would not often help civil rights activists reach their goals of equality. Like James Forman, Stokely Carmichael recognized this and instead hoped to create a new, Pan-Africanist state where blacks would not only be heard, but would also be the people in power. He presented eloquent and charismatic speeches throughout the nation, and he became a prominent voice for African Americans who believed in armed self-defense and power for blacks. He used his popularity to travel the world, discussing socialism and Pan-Africanism with socialist and communist states. The more power and influence Carmichael possessed, the more the federal government dreaded what sorts of actions his words would spark. During Carmichael's time as a leader of SNCC and the Black Panther Party, federal government agencies created several programs to target him and his allies. The government was desperate and used any tactic available to curb Carmichael's power, including spreading false rumors, creating distrust between him and his colleagues, and scrutinizing his foreign travel. Despite its efforts, Stokely Carmichael maintained such a large effect on the black community both domestically and internationally that his words of revolution helped launch an entire militant movement on the heels of the civil rights movement.

In 1966, many African Americans, particularly in Southern states like Mississippi, were not registered to vote. Civil rights worker James Meredith recognized this injustice and wanted blacks to have the courage to seek voter registration. Therefore, from June 5, 1966 to June 26, 1966 Meredith trekked 220 miles throughout Mississippi to challenge the fear surrounding black voter registration.⁹⁰ This was called the Meredith March against Fear. By the end of the journey, the entire nation was watching, and civil rights workers knew they were being heard. This attention was in large part due to Stokely Carmichael. On June 16 the marchers were in Greenwood, Mississippi, a city with some of the worst segregation and white supremacy in the South. When they went to set up their tents at Stone Street Elementary, the City Council forbid them, and Carmichael was arrested.⁹¹

Radical SNCC member Willie Ricks had been waiting for the perfect moment for a charismatic and well-liked man like Stokely Carmichael to drop “Black Power.” While Carmichael was still in jail, Ricks stood in front of the crowd that was outside the jail waiting for his release, readying and exciting them for Carmichael’s speech.⁹² When Carmichael stepped outside he saw several news cameras documenting a massive rally. On his way out, Ricks said to him, “Drop it now. The people are ready. Drop it now.”⁹³ Carmichael got in front of the crowd and said, “We begged the federal government. We begged and begged, we’ve done nothing but beg. We’ve got to stop begging and take

⁹⁰ Aram Goudsouzian, *Down to the Crossroads: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Meredith March against Fear* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014)

⁹¹ Ibid, 140.

⁹² Peniel E. Joseph, *Stokely: A Life* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2014), 114.

⁹³ Stokely Carmichael with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2003), 507.

power... Black Power! Black Power! Black Power!”⁹⁴ This speech redefined the civil rights movement and Stokely Carmichael’s role within it. It marked a shift from nonviolent resistance and peaceful protests to armed self-defense and aggressive confrontation. After this day Carmichael became a hero for black people throughout the country.

Black Power has resulted in several interpretations, emotions, and consequences. When asked, Stokely Carmichael often altered his definition of the term. More generally, according to Carmichael, Black Power is: “a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support those organizations. It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this society.”⁹⁵ In other words, when Stokely Carmichael used the term Black Power, he meant African Americans’ rejection of American government, society, and institutions. This notion became essential to Carmichael’s public rhetoric as he achieved national and international recognition, and it would prove distressing for the United States during the Cold War of the 1960s.

One of the most polarizing positions SNCC assumed under Carmichael’s leadership was its outspoken opposition to the Vietnam War, which became particularly pronounced as the organization’s ideologies increasingly centered upon foreign involvement and human rights. During the Cold War, the United States was terrified of the “Domino Theory:” the idea that once one nation fell to communism, it would create a

⁹⁴ Stokely Carmichael, in *Down to the Crossroads*, by Goudsouzian, 143.

⁹⁵ Kwame Ture and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Random House Inc., 1967), 44.

domino effect and other nations would fall as well. U.S. government officials felt compelled to prevent the spread of communism and implement democracy throughout the world.⁹⁶ The United States subsequently involved itself in the conflict in Vietnam in 1954. President Eisenhower supported Ngo Dinh Diem, who led South Vietnam's fight against communist leader Ho Chi Minh of North Vietnam. However, the United States did not maintain a huge presence in the Vietnam War until 1964 when President Johnson increased his military attacks and the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed, which gave Johnson more wartime powers. As the 1960s progressed, many Americans were sent to fight a seemingly endless war in which the U.S. appeared to be losing. The war became wildly unpopular among many American citizens, including most civil rights leaders.⁹⁷

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee opposed the Vietnam War because it felt not only that U.S. involvement in the war was wrong, but also that blacks should not risk their lives fighting for the freedom and democracy of the Vietnamese if they did not experience freedom and democracy at home.⁹⁸ In 1966 President Johnson invited Stokely Carmichael, who had recently replaced John Lewis as chairman, to the White House for a conference to discuss the rights of African Americans. Two years earlier, Johnson promised to address poverty and racial inequality with his Great Society plan. Johnson enacted this plan for several reasons, some of which were to maintain Kennedy's legacy, appeal to a more liberal Congress and society and shatter his

⁹⁶ Frank A. Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁹⁷ James F. Dunnigan and Albert A. Nofi, *Dirty Little Secrets of the Vietnam War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999); Daniel S. Lucks, *Selma to Saigon: The Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2014); James E. Westheider, *The Vietnam War* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007).

⁹⁸ "1967 High Tide of Black Resistance," 1967, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress; "SNCC Rejects White House Conference," *The Movement* 2, no. 4, June 1966.

conservative Southerner image, and because of his moral consciousness.⁹⁹ Carmichael refused Johnson's invitation, and SNCC released a statement saying that it opposed the Vietnam War and could not: "in good conscience meet with the chief policy maker of the Vietnam War to discuss Human Rights in this country when we flagrantly violate the human rights of colored people in Vietnam."¹⁰⁰ Rather than working with the government to find a way to end racial oppression at home and abroad, Carmichael and SNCC chose to disassociate themselves from the Johnson administration because they could not work with the man who perpetuated this war. This altercation made it clear that SNCC was moving in a different direction under Carmichael and that the tactics and relationships of SNCC under Lewis would not be the same as those under Carmichael. While President Johnson attempted to extend an olive branch taking another step to righting the wrongs done to African Americans, Carmichael responded by publicly denouncing and humiliating the federal government. This hostility set the stage for the type of relationship he and the federal government would have.

Tensions between them grew worse as Carmichael continued to protest the war and the government increased its surveillance of his dissident actions. Later that year in September of 1966, the FBI wrote a report summarizing Carmichael's anti-Vietnam activity after he and his supporters picketed the Twelfth Corps Headquarters of the United States Army in Atlanta, Georgia.¹⁰¹ During the five days of protesting, the FBI acknowledged that the Atlanta Police had arrested and charged several picketers with

⁹⁹ Merle Miller, *Lyndon: An Oral Biography* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1980); Charles Peters, *Lyndon B. Johnson* (New York: Times Books, 2010).

¹⁰⁰ "SNCC Rejects," *The Movement*.

¹⁰¹ Re: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee: Stokely Carmichael, September 7, 1966, FBI Report, Stokely Carmichael FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

offenses like disorderly conduct and assault and battery.¹⁰² The Bureau continued to watch Carmichael and reported on a rally that he held on September 3, 1966, the day after the final day of picketing. Carmichael proudly condemned police brutality in front of 200 anxious people. After this the FBI, with the help of local and state law enforcement agencies, began an investigation to determine whether anyone could be arrested for destroying government property or for violating the Military Selective Service Act of 1948, which created the first post-war draft and implemented the current Selective Service System.¹⁰³ Unfortunately for J. Edgar Hoover, Carmichael was never arrested for these protests, but the demand to subdue him only heightened as Carmichael increased his involvement with other communist nations.¹⁰⁴

Stokely Carmichael, similar to his solidarity with Vietnam, identified with several communist or socialist states in which nonwhites had been oppressed. For example, he was friendly with the nation of Cuba, which was extremely troublesome for the American government considering its complex and hostile history with Cuba. In 1953, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara led a revolution against the U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista. Cuba officially became a socialist state under the reign of Fidel Castro in 1959. The nation also became an ally of the Soviet Union, which was the United States' primary enemy during the Cold War of the 1960s.¹⁰⁵ This was especially problematic considering

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid; "Military Selective Service Act (MSSA)," Selective Service System, accessed February 11, 2019; Military Legal Resources, "Selective Service Act of 1948," The Library of Congress, accessed February 11, 2019.

¹⁰⁴ Re: SNCC: Carmichael, Carmichael FBI File.

¹⁰⁵ Dudziak, *Cold War*; Ian Rocksborough-Smith, *Black Public History in Chicago: Civil Rights Activism from World War II into the Cold War* (Urbana, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 2018); Kate Baldwin, *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters between Black and Red, 1922-1963* (Durham, NC: Duke University

the United States' fear of communism and Cuba's close proximity. Famous incidents like the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Bay of Pigs indicated the extreme tensions the two nations had.¹⁰⁶ This is why when Stokely Carmichael traveled to Cuba expressing his solidarity with the Cuban regime and acknowledging the lack of political equality in the U.S., the American government heavily scrutinized Carmichael's relationship with the communist state.

Federal government agencies were incredibly wary when members of SNCC conducted foreign travel and experienced foreign influence, which proved especially true with Cuba considering the global atmosphere. The FBI wrote a report specifically documenting foreign influences on black nationalists, which focused heavily on Cuba. Hoover thought that Cuba could potentially participate in SNCC's "revolutionary direct-action, antiwhite ideology that places no faith in normal democratic procedures."¹⁰⁷ Which is why, when the Cuban government invited Carmichael as a guest and "honorary delegate" to attend a conference of the Latin American Solidarity Organization (LASO)

Press, 2002); Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao, and Che* (New York: Verso, 2002); Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986); Gerald Horne, *Black Revolutionary: William Patterson and the Globalization of the African American Freedom Struggle* (Urbana, IL: The University of Illinois Press, 2013).

¹⁰⁶ Gerald Horne, *Race to Revolution: The United States and Cuba during Slavery and Jim Crow* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2014); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Hideaki Kami, *Diplomacy Meets Migration: US Relations with Cuba during the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America and the Making of a New Left* (London: Verso, 1993).

¹⁰⁷ Re: Foreign Influences in the Black Nationalist Movement, January 11, 1968, FBI Report, SNCC FBI file, The National Archives.

in July 1967, the Bureau probed into Cuba's and Carmichael's relationship.¹⁰⁸ The fact that Carmichael was friendly with a communist government that was an enemy to the United States showed the Bureau that his travel reflected the "actual as well as potential extent of foreign involvement and participation in the black nationalist movement."¹⁰⁹

At this conference, Carmichael delivered a speech to the Cuban people emphasizing the unity between blacks in the United States and Hispanics in Cuba and their need to rise up to defeat the imperialist colonizer, the United States government. He said: "[we] are moving to control our African-American communities as you are moving to wrest control of your countries, of the entire Latin continent, from the hands of foreign imperialist powers. There is only one course open to us: we must change North America so that the economy and politics of the country will be in the hands of the people."¹¹⁰

Carmichael wanted nonwhites to take control from the white people who had seized authority several years before at their expense. He wanted all oppressed people, regardless of the continent on which they were born, to revolt together and create a world in which the powerless became the people in power, and he shared this idea with nonwhites all over the world.

With the popularization of Black Power, Stokely Carmichael worked with other African nations, primarily Guinea and Ghana to create a state in which blacks held power. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah was the socialist president of Ghana until 1966 when the CIA instigated a coup against him. He was forced into exile and moved to Guinea where

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Stokely Carmichael, "Solidarity with Latin America" (speech, First Conference of the Organization of Latin American Solidarity, Cuba, July, 1967), in *Stokely Speaks: From Black Power to Pan-Africanism*, ed. Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) (Chicago, Chicago Review Press: 1971), 104.

he planned to launch a socialist revolution against the dictatorial regime under Lieutenant-General Joseph Arthur Ankrah, who was backed by the United States government.¹¹¹ Throughout these years of exile Stokely Carmichael built a strong relationship with Nkrumah so much so that when Carmichael changed his name to Kwame Ture, part of that name was from his friend Kwame Nkrumah. Carmichael's and Nkrumah's political and social ideologies often aligned, and the two discussed plans for a socialist revolution and implementation of a Pan-African state in Ghana under Nkrumah's leadership. In a speech in Guinea delivered by Howard Fuller on behalf of Carmichael, Fuller discussed Carmichael's work with Dr. Nkrumah when he said that the two were striving: "to reinstall [Nkrumah] as the legitimate President of Ghana, and to once again initiate a revolutionary Pan-Africanist government in that country – one that will serve as an English-speaking land base for our people in the Americas."¹¹² The authoritative relationship between Nkrumah and Carmichael and their public support and planning of the creation of a socialist Pan-African state posed a major challenge to the United States' Cold War diplomacy. The country witnessed Carmichael's travel throughout Africa, spreading Nkrumah's revolutionary ideas. Watching his global presence become more pronounced intensified the American government's apprehension towards the power of anti-democratic ideology.

¹¹¹ "Ghana Betrayed by Uncle Toms: C.I.A.: Enemy of African Freedom?," *The Nitty Gritty* 1, no. 2, March 19, 1966; Kwame Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path* (London: Panaf Books Ltd., 1973); Harcourt Fuller, *Building the Ghanaian Nation-State: Kwame Nkrumah's Symbolic Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Kwame Sanaa-Poku Jantuah, *Death of an Empire: Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana and Africa* (Tema, Ghana: Digibooks Ghana, 2017).

¹¹² Howard Fuller on Behalf of Stokely Carmichael, "Message from Guinea" (speech, Malcolm X Liberation University, Guinea, October, 1969), in *Stokely Speaks: From Black Power to Pan-Africanism*, ed. Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture) (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 1971), 181.

While Stokely Carmichael and other Black Power advocates discussed socialism abroad, the media and the government linked Black Power with communism at home. Much of the CPUSA supported the ideals of Black Power, and the two groups had several ideas in common like dissatisfaction with the current capitalist system and anti-Vietnam sentiment.¹¹³ Therefore, the media and the federal government portrayed black nationalists and communists as close allies. Of course, this popular notion that black leaders were communists was far from new when Black Power was established. The media and the government labeled early civil rights leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lewis as communists. Yet, the fact that American society lumped Black Power leaders together with communists was dangerous because Hoover began to associate communists' supposed traitorous and anarchist attitudes with the revolutionaries of the Black Power movement. In 1967, the United States experienced several riots and accounts of racial unrest, and the FBI largely blamed Black Power leaders. In 1968 J. Edgar Hoover publicly stated that the Communist party had teamed up with Black Power leaders and that: "black power development in the racial field is tailor-made for the Communist party... They have sowed the seeds of discord and hope to reap in 1968 a year filled with explosive unrest."¹¹⁴ In other words, Hoover felt that if the two groups worked together, dissident behavior would become exponentially worse. Although Carmichael did not strongly associate himself with the CPUSA, this fact did not matter. The more time he spent in countries like Ghana and Guinea spreading

¹¹³ David Levering Lewis, Michael H. Nash, and Daniel L. Leab, ed., *Red Activists and Black Freedom: James and Esther Jackson and the Long Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

¹¹⁴ Tom Talburt, " 'Tailor Made for Commies,' Hoover Says Black Power and Reds Linked," *The Washington Daily*, January 5, 1968.

insurgent, Pan-Africanist ideas, the more the media and the government viewed him and other Black Power enthusiasts as violent, dissident criminals both within the United States and abroad.

While black nationalists like Stokely Carmichael advocated for an international revolution against the United States, the U.S. experienced black revolt domestically as well. During the second half of the 1960s, the nation saw a significant increase in racial unrest. The year 1967 marked infamous riots like in Newark, New Jersey and Detroit, Michigan. American government officials did not understand what had changed that suddenly caused African Americans to rise up in acts of violence, and they were afraid of what these seemingly unwarranted acts of aggression would mean for American society. So much unrest occurred that later in 1967 President Johnson implemented the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, or the Kerner Commission, which had the specific goal of understanding the causes.¹¹⁵ While searching for a reason for the sudden increase in racial unrest, government officials were quick to blame the words and deeds of radical leaders with Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown. By 1968, the U.S. government was so convinced of black leaders' direct involvement in the unrest that FBI Director Hoover requested a budget of \$207 million to investigate black nationalists instrumental in inciting racial unrest. He cited that "crowds took violent action following the 'exhortation of extremists such as black power advocates Stokely Carmichael and H.

¹¹⁵ United States, Kerner Commission, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Washington D.C., 1968).

Rap Brown.”¹¹⁶ However, the FBI was suspicious toward SNCC even before the riots of 1967.

The FBI and the media even blamed SNCC leaders for riots and racial disturbances in areas where they had never been. For example, on September 6, 1966 a riot broke out in Summerhill, a neighborhood of Atlanta, after a police officer shot a black suspected car thief. The press, the Atlanta police, and the Atlanta mayor all blamed SNCC, but SNCC member Marion Barry countered that this was a frame-up. He said that the press, police, and mayor all “tried to frame and discredit SNCC by accusing SNCC of leading a riot there.”¹¹⁷ Barry said that in reality SNCC had never worked in that neighborhood of Atlanta, and Stokely Carmichael only went there after hearing that a black person was shot. Later that year, Congress pushed the Anti-Riot Act essentially targeting Carmichael and H. Rap Brown. The law made it illegal to incite “a riot or other violent disturbance” across state borders.¹¹⁸ The punishment was a maximum fine of \$10,000 and/or five years in prison.¹¹⁹ Once Congress passed this law, government agencies were even more incentivized to target Black Power leaders like Stokely Carmichael, especially when considering his work with the violent and revolutionary Black Panther Party.

¹¹⁶ “Black Violence Advocates Imperil U.S., Hoover Says,” *The Evening Star*, May 18, 1968, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

¹¹⁷ “Barry Says SNCC Hit by ‘Frame-Up,’” *The Washington Post*, September 9, 1966, James Forman Collection, the Library of Congress.

¹¹⁸ Anti-Riot Act, *US Code* 18 (1968), §§ 2101 et seq.

¹¹⁹ Anti-Riot Act, *US Code* 18 (1968), §§ 2101 et seq.; James Edwards, “Riot San: Stop Stokely – Rap Bill.” In Report on the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, October 9, 1967, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee FBI File, National Archives.

Although Carmichael was certainly not the main source to blame for the 1967 race riots, he did encourage militant and insurrectionary behavior as both a leader within SNCC and a leader within the Oakland Black Panther Party. In 1965 he helped found the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO), also known as the Black Panther Party, to help blacks in Lowndes County, Alabama register to vote. The black panther emblem symbolized the ferocity of black creatures. The organization's goals and emblem spread throughout the nation, and in 1966 Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale used the famous symbol to create the more militant Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, California.¹²⁰ The Black Panthers and SNCC were allies, and Carmichael, Forman, and H. Rap Brown were all leaders at one point within both organizations. Among the three, Carmichael maintained a much larger role within the Black Panther Party. In fact, by 1967 he stepped down as chairman of SNCC to fully devote himself to the Black Panthers and more grassroots organizing.¹²¹ These two organizations worked together for a number of years, but eventually too much contention caused the two to rupture. This was in large part due to the federal government.

FBI Director Hoover understood that unity and cooperation among black nationalist groups like SNCC and the Black Panthers would increase their dominance and influence, making it more difficult to stop their revolutionary efforts. Therefore, when the Black Panthers and SNCC began working with one another, the Bureau looked to create rifts in their relationship. The FBI engaged in various and detailed forms of sabotage to create distrust and hostility between members of the two organizations, so

¹²⁰ Stokely Carmichael with Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, "Lowndes County: The Roar of the Panther." In *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2003).

¹²¹ Carmichael with Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution*, 564.

that cohesion would be an impossibility. FBI Director Hoover sent a memorandum to the special agents in charge of the New York and San Francisco FBI offices asking agents to think of specific ways to “create lasting and wide-spread dissension and friction among black nationalist groups.”¹²² Two months later, the special agent in charge of the New York office responded to Hoover with a detailed plan of action to exacerbate relations between SNCC and the Black Panthers. The agent wanted to anonymously call the head of the New York Black Panthers, at which time “he would be told, in a Negro dialect,” that a SNCC member and supposed ally planned for him “to be eliminated” because he was “becoming too powerful a figure so he [would] have to be ‘rubbed out.’ He [would] be cautioned to ‘keep looking over his shoulder’ for sooner or later he [would] be taken care of.”¹²³ This plan illustrates the intricate levels of sabotage the FBI was willing to carry out in order to put pressure on black nationalists. The Bureau thought that by severing relationships between prominent Black Power leaders, they would lose some of their influence and would be less effective in reaching their revolutionary goals. Even before the FBI instigated these efforts to create distrust, SNCC and the Black Panthers often quarreled and possessed fundamental differences over how to achieve power for black people. However, the FBI recognized this and capitalized on these issues in order to exacerbate tension and suspicion so that the two organizations could barely work with

¹²² FBI Director to Special Agents in Charge, New York and San Francisco, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence (Black Panther Party), July 30, 1968, Memorandum, COINTELPRO: Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

¹²³ Special Agent in Charge, New York to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence, August 13, 1968, Memorandum, COINTELPRO: Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

one another. The Bureau used similar tactics of sabotage specifically on Carmichael as well.

From 1966 through the 1970s the FBI used whatever means necessary to try to diminish Stokely Carmichael's influence. These tactics included telephone calls, mail interception, financial sabotage, anonymous letters, and attempts to disrupt relationships.¹²⁴ For instance, in a memorandum to Director Hoover, the FBI acknowledged that it often made anonymous phone calls to Carmichael and others "for the purpose of disruption, misdirection and to attempt to neutralize and frustrate the activities of these black nationalists."¹²⁵ Yet, perhaps the biggest way Hoover tried to stop Carmichael's influence was by attacking his reputation. He felt that Carmichael's popularity and charisma were extraordinarily dangerous. When Carmichael spoke people listened, which was terrifying for Hoover because Carmichael's words were those of revolution. Upon the suggestion of the special agent in charge of the Washington field office, the FBI implemented the "whispering campaign" specifically to tarnish Carmichael's reputation, and therefore diminish his influence.¹²⁶ The special agent sent

¹²⁴ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 56, 631; From FBI Director to Special Agent in Charge, New York, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence, September 9, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault; From Special Agent in Charge, Detroit to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence (La Cosa Nostra), June 14, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault; From FBI Director to Special Agent in Charge, Detroit, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence (La Cosa Nostra), June 28, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault; Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, chap. 57.

¹²⁵ From Special Agent in Charge, New York to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Internal Security, February 28, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

¹²⁶ Joseph, *Stokely*, 267.

Hoover a memorandum with his plan of ordering an agent to work among African Americans so that he may gather information on Carmichael while simultaneously spreading false rumors that Carmichael was “being greatly rewarded by the government for his efforts.”¹²⁷ In other words, the FBI spread rumors among the black population to show Carmichael as an ally to the federal government and not a man for the African American people.

The two main ways the FBI attempted to tarnish his reputation were by showing that he had wealth and by spreading the notion that he was a CIA agent. For instance, the Bureau proposed writing a report to the CIA “written” by Carmichael and putting it in the car of a fellow black nationalist.¹²⁸ Later, the FBI illustrated Carmichael’s wealth when he and his wife, South African singer Miriam Makeba were planning on buying a \$70,000 home in 1968. The Bureau publicized this information to show that he was unsuitable to be a black leader and that he was a CIA agent. By showing that the price of the house was that much money, he would hopefully seem like a hypocrite.¹²⁹ According to an FBI memorandum written from a special agent to Hoover, because the CIA had “never been overly concerned about the amount of money expended to achieve an objective[, it] would be readily accepted by the public that the achievement of recruiting

¹²⁷ From Special Agent in Charge, Washington Field Office to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence (Stokely Carmichael), July 9, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

¹²⁸ From Special Agent in Charge, New York to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence (Stokely Carmichael), July 10, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

¹²⁹ From Special Agent in Charge, Detroit to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence (Stokely Carmichael), June 12, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault; From FBI Director to Special Agent in Charge, Washington Field Office, July 1, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

Carmichael as a CIA agent would be considered of such importance as to make almost unlimited funds available to him.”¹³⁰ However, Carmichael and Makeba never bought the house, claiming insufficient funds.¹³¹

The FBI continued trying to find any reason to depict Carmichael as a conniving CIA agent, like the fact that he often traveled overseas. In a memorandum to the Portland FBI office, Hoover stated his desire to create distrust between the Black Panthers and SNCC and ruin Carmichael’s reputation by illustrating Carmichael as a “light complexioned” man who worked for the white man. He traveled throughout the world and had “violated many United States laws,” but he was never “arrested, charged, indicted, or brought to trial for violation of any Federal laws,” showing that he was working for the CIA.¹³² By acknowledging that Carmichael appeared to face immunity from the federal government, the FBI wanted to convince the black community that he was some sort of diplomat working for the American government. This method was not very successful considering it was public knowledge that Carmichael frequently traveled to socialist and communist countries to express solidarity with oppressed nonwhites.

As the FBI underwent significant efforts to curb Carmichael’s power in any way possible, the Bureau continued to argue that it was solely an investigative organization

¹³⁰ From Special Agent in Charge, Chicago to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence (Stokely Carmichael), August 18, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

¹³¹ From Special Agent in Charge, Washington Field Office to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Programs: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence (Stokely Carmichael), June 27, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

¹³² From FBI Director to Special Agent in Charge, Portland, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence (Black Panther Party), October 28, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

and had no other authority. When President Johnson ordered the creation of the Kerner Commission to inquire into the reasons for the sudden increase in racial unrest, FBI Director Hoover was a witness for the commission. After reviewing 52 instances of racial unrest, he emphasized that the Bureau's role in looking into these events "consisted of investigating for possible violations of Federal law."¹³³ The FBI "made no arrests for the looting, arson and shooting because those are violations of local laws and outside the F.B.I.'s jurisdiction."¹³⁴ According to Senate Minority Leader Everett McKinley Dirksen, the FBI did not possess the authority to look into whether there was any sort of national pattern to the riots.¹³⁵ Dirksen was a vocal advocate for civil rights and helped write and pass the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968. He was therefore less inclined to have the FBI look into patterns of racial unrest, and the FBI was quick to renounce any claim to the authority to take any actions other than those of investigation. In 1964 Hoover stated: "[we] most certainly do not and will not give protection to civil rights workers... In the first place, the F.B.I. is not a police organization. It is purely an investigative organization."¹³⁶ This government body that supposedly only had the authority to analyze national patterns was the same one that bugged phones, bribed people, intercepted and opened mail, wrote anonymous letters, and created rifts among relationships to diminish black leaders' power. The fact that Hoover wanted to show the

¹³³ Roy Reed, "Riot 'Agitators' Cited by Hoover: But Outsiders Played Minor Role, He Told U.S. Panel," *The New York Times*, August 3, 1967, SNCC Collection, The National Archives.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ "Mississippi Force Expanded by F.B.I.: Big Build-Up, to 153 Agents, Divulged by Hoover as He Opens Office in Jackson," *The New York Times*, July 11, 1964, accessed January 8, 2019.

powerlessness of the FBI goes to show the lengths to which he and his agency would go in order to stop black leaders, whether overtly or covertly.

Carmichael's foreign travel and revolutionary ideas became so powerful, that other federal government agencies in addition to the FBI implemented programs specifically designed to track him and other Black Power leaders. From 1969 to 1970, foreign travel was one of the highest priorities for domestic intelligence.¹³⁷ The CIA, for example, enacted Operation Chaos in 1967.¹³⁸ Its purpose was to identify and examine foreign links between American dissidents, which included the New Left, student protestors, and black nationalists. The objective was "to discover the extent to which Soviets, ChiComs, Cubans and other Communist countries [were] exploiting... domestic problems in terms of subversion and espionage."¹³⁹

Due to Stokely Carmichael's foreign travel and relations to communist and socialist countries, he was a primary target, and the CIA went to great lengths to understand the extent of his foreign communication. For instance, the Agency intercepted his mail in order to identify his foreign contacts.¹⁴⁰ It also worked closely with the FBI, and the targets and goals of Operation Chaos frequently overlapped with

¹³⁷ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 503.

¹³⁸ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report; Frank J. Rafalko, *MH/CHAOS: The CIA's Campaign against the Radical New Left and the Black Panthers* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2011); Scott C. Monje, *The Central Intelligence Agency: A Documentary History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008); United States. Commission on CIA Activities within the United States, Report to the President (Washington, 1975); Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *The CIA and American Democracy*, 3rd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

¹³⁹ CIA cable from Thomas Karamessines to various field stations, July 1968, 1, in Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 694.

¹⁴⁰ "Domestic CIA and FBI Mail Opening." In Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 559-678.

those of COINTELPRO. When Carmichael was planning to go to North Vietnam in 1966 to attend a tribunal investigating war crimes, the FBI and the CIA watched his travel plans closely, which is evident in a memorandum from Hoover to several FBI offices. According to the memorandum, the FBI and CIA were even alerted when Carmichael received a valid passport.¹⁴¹ In 1969 the CIA expanded its operation of monitoring Carmichael's travel due to newly elected President Richard Nixon's desire to continue surveillance of domestic dissidents. The expansion allowed for increased inquiry into communist countries' role in propagating revolutionary movements within the United States.¹⁴² Operation Chaos was finally disbanded in 1974 amid Central Intelligence fear of scrutiny into possible illegal methods used within the program.¹⁴³

The National Security Agency engaged in similar tactics of surveillance towards Stokely Carmichael and SNCC. During the early 1960s, the NSA constructed a watch list, which consisted mostly of names given to the NSA by the watch lists of other government agencies, like the CIA and the FBI. In 1967, however, the watch list began to include the names of organizations and individuals involved in the anti-war movement and/or civil rights movement to determine the level of foreign influence.¹⁴⁴ By 1969 the NSA created the MINARET program. This program examined not only foreign

¹⁴¹ From FBI Director to Special Agents in Charge, Atlanta, New York, and Washington Field Office, Re: Communist Infiltration of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Stokely Carmichael: Internal Security, August 18, 1966, Memorandum, Stokely Carmichael FBI File, Online FBI Archives: The Vault.

¹⁴² Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 699.

¹⁴³ " 'Operation Chaos': Files on 7,200: Antiwar Groups, Dissidents Were Targets of 'Improper' Program," *Washington Post*, June 11, 1975, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

¹⁴⁴ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 739.

influence on domestic dissidents, but also Americans whose activities could potentially result in civil disturbances.¹⁴⁵ Before the creation of MINARET, the NSA only possessed the authority to intercept messages from Americans to other Americans. After its establishment, the NSA could intercept messages to, from, or mentioning U.S. citizens. Civil rights organizations considered “Black Power groups” were specifically targeted for effects of potential foreign influence or foreign control.¹⁴⁶

The NSA frequently provided information it gathered regarding “possible terrorist activity” to other government bodies, primarily the Secret Service, the CIA, the FBI, and the Department of Defense.¹⁴⁷ The Secret Service used the information to prevent potential African American or anti-war demonstrations that would physically threaten government officials like the president. The CIA and the FBI used the NSA’s information for their own programs of examining foreign impact of domestic dissidents, Operation Chaos and COINTELPRO respectively.¹⁴⁸ In a memorandum from J. Edgar Hoover to the NSA Director Noel Gayler, Hoover wrote that there were: “black racial extremists in the United States advocating and participating in illegal and violent activities for the purpose of destroying our present form of government. Because of this goal, such racial extremists [were] natural allies of foreign enemies of the United

¹⁴⁵ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 739; Matthew M. Aid, *The Secret Sentry: The Untold History of the National Security Agency* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 750.

¹⁴⁸ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 750-751.

States.”¹⁴⁹ Although working with slightly different goals and tactics, these three organizations shared as much information as possible because foreign influence was a significant threat for each of them. Since they were particularly concerned with civil disturbances and foreign influence coming from black radicals and Black Power organizations, Stokely Carmichael and SNCC were heavily scrutinized. Every major federal government agency in charge of maintaining national security was watching Carmichael during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

This level of investigation illustrates that the federal government considered Carmichael a serious threat to national security. When Carmichael discussed Pan-Africanism and overthrowing the current system of government, the American government truly believed that was a possibility, and therefore made significant efforts to prevent it from happening. Since Carmichael never launched a Pan-African revolution, the government’s tactics of investigation, attack, and sabotage were successful. However, even when he moved to Guinea in 1968, the American government continued to track him and find ways to curb his influence. Carmichael was perceived to be dangerous enough that even when he no longer lived in the United States, he continued to be considered a major threat to the country’s social and political order.

¹⁴⁹ J. Edgar Hoover to Director, NSA, November 6, 1970, Memorandum. In Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 751.

Chapter 3 - H. Rap Brown: The True Lengths to Which the American Government Would Go to Stop a Revolutionary Leader

When H. Rap Brown was elected chairman in 1967, the American government was able to attack him much more than it attacked James Forman and Stokely Carmichael. This is in part due to the fact that by the time Brown was elected, the media and the government already knew the kinds of ideologies, tactics, and rhetoric SNCC was using to achieve its revolutionary goals. During the early years of SNCC and the civil rights movement when James Forman was a major leader, SNCC was in the process of transitioning into a more militant organization. The federal government had to readjust to this shift and understand how to properly target Forman and SNCC. When H. Rap Brown became chairman, SNCC was already set in its militant attitude and strategies. Additionally, Brown was not under the public spotlight in the same way Stokely Carmichael was. Although he certainly had a large following, it could not compare to Carmichael's. Carmichael was the man who created Black Power. This meant that the government could attack Brown more easily than Carmichael without drawing public attention. Finally, when Brown became chairman, SNCC was disintegrating. Internal divisions, lack of a unified ideology, and constant antagonisms from the government caused serious conflict. A weakened SNCC gave the U.S. government more opportunity to exacerbate these divisions, which would subsequently make Brown less effective.¹⁵⁰ For these reasons, understanding H. Rap Brown's more victimized role within SNCC and the Black Power movement provides an alternative perspective on the consequences of being a dissident and an enemy of the American government. While Brown still

¹⁵⁰ Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 475-481.

achieved a great deal both domestically and internationally during his time as chairman, he faced federal harassment and attacks to a level previously unseen.

Hubert Brown, or H. Rap Brown was born and raised in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. There he experienced the realities of the Jim Crow South and became resentful toward racial discrimination. His older brother Ed first introduced him to the civil rights movement when he brought Brown to Howard University's campus meetings of the Nonviolent Action Group (NAG).¹⁵¹ Brown became a NAG leader at Howard in 1960 and then joined SNCC in 1963.¹⁵² Like James Forman and Stokely Carmichael, Brown encouraged a more militant approach during the early civil rights movement, but he supported SNCC and its ideologies. It was not until Carmichael became chairman and the Black Power movement began that Brown truly rose to prominence. As someone who demonstrated many of the same beliefs and values as Carmichael, Brown quickly became his trusted ally. Therefore, when Carmichael stepped down as chairman in 1967, Brown was the natural choice to take his place and carry on many of the same ideologies of Black Power that Carmichael did.¹⁵³ This included working with people of color around the world.

H. Rap Brown recognized that nonwhites across the globe suffered from white capitalism and imperialism, and it was SNCC's duty to aid in any way it could. Therefore, shortly after Brown was elected chairman in 1967, SNCC officially transitioned from a civil rights organization to a human rights organization. This meant

¹⁵¹ "H. Rap Brown," SNCC Digital Gateway, accessed January 7, 2019.

¹⁵² H. Rap Brown, *Die Nigger Die!* (New York, The Dial Press, Inc.: 1969), 55-59; "H. Rap Brown," SNCC Digital Gateway.

¹⁵³ Brown, *Die*, 99; Carmichael with Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution*, 565; Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 480.

that it was not just focusing on black issues, and it was not just focusing on domestic issues. It was prepared to provide aid to any group of people oppressed by whites.¹⁵⁴ Although SNCC primarily focused on the people of Africa because it considered all people of African descent its brothers and sisters, so all should be free of colonization. The nation of South Africa, for instance, had experienced apartheid and serious racial inequality for years, and Brown compared the apartheid in South Africa to the racial discrimination in the United States. Additionally, he claimed that the United States actually benefitted from South African apartheid and would therefore do everything in its power to maintain the unequal system. Therefore, it was up to SNCC and other Black Power advocates to send aid. Brown sent a message to SNCC members saying: “[we] cannot sit back and wait until the United States has sent troops to Rhodesia and South Africa. Already in South Africa it is the heavy investment of the United States’ capitalists that makes this regime stay in power.”¹⁵⁵ Becoming a human rights organization did not simply mean that SNCC supported the colonized and subjugated nonwhites of the world. It also meant that it was the duty of all African Americans to help in any way possible to end that oppression, and South African blacks certainly endured years of persecution and required aid.

¹⁵⁴ James Forman, “James Forman’s Opening Speech,” organized by the United Nations with the Cooperation of the Government of the Republic of Zambia (speech presented at the International Seminar on Apartheid, Racial Discrimination, and Colonialism in Southern Africa, Lusaks, Republic of Zambia, July-August 1967), James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress; Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 480.

¹⁵⁵ H. Rap Brown, “A Message from H. Rap Brown,” August 28, 1967, James Forman Collection, Library of Congress.

Nonwhites of South Africa suffered from apartheid beginning in the 1940s, although racial discrimination was present for centuries.¹⁵⁶ Only whites held power, and they enacted several laws to ensure that blacks remained second-class citizens. Yet, as discrimination and apartheid became more pronounced, resistance groups fought back. Beginning in the 1960s the apartheid struggle reached an intensified and more violent phase. On March 21, 1960 the famous Sharpeville Massacre took place in which police killed 69 unarmed black demonstrators.¹⁵⁷ The same year, resistance groups like the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) were declared illegal and forced to move underground. The ANC and the PAC were the most well known anti-apartheid organizations and had been fighting racial discrimination in South Africa for decades.¹⁵⁸ Previously, these groups had been nonviolent and sought equality through peaceful protests. However, after the massacres and their own outlaw, they became much more militant. Their tactics soon centered upon armed struggle and offensive confrontation, and as the 1960s progressed, violence, death, and insurrection increased. By the time H. Rap Brown became chairman in 1967, South African black resistance was in desperate need of aid.

¹⁵⁶ Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Apartheid, Democracy* (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 2012); Daniel Conway, *Masculinities, Militarisation and the End Conscription Campaign: War Resistance in Apartheid South Africa* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2016).

¹⁵⁷ Tom Lodge, *Sharpeville: An Apartheid Massacre and Its Consequences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Philip H. Frankel, *An Ordinary Atrocity: Sharpeville and Its Massacre* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2001).

¹⁵⁸ Susan Booyesen, *The African National Congress and the Regeneration of Political Power* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2011).

In August 1967 Brown called upon African Americans to support the black revolutionaries of South Africa by sending money and medical supplies to Oliver Tambo, the newly elected president of the African National Congress, and to educate themselves “about the involvement of the United States and other Western Powers in helping to maintain racism colonialism and apartheid in South Africa.”¹⁵⁹ Since he believed that the United States economically benefitted from apartheid and would therefore not take action to help these war torn people, black Americans must send any aid they could. A few months after he sent this message, Brown actually planned on organizing an army to support the revolutionaries in South Africa. In an article of the Nation of Islam’s newspaper *Muhammad Speaks*, he said he “would spearhead an ‘African-American International Military Brigade’ of armed volunteers to fight within South-West Africa against control by the Nazi regime in South Africa.”¹⁶⁰ He asked the United Nations for endorsement, but neither endorsement nor the military brigade ever came to fruition. That is not to say, however, that African Americans did not individually volunteer to fight or at least send aid. The fact that Brown planned to establish a revolutionary army to support black South Africans not only showed the solidarity among nonwhites throughout the world and the possible ramifications of that unity, it also showed that Brown might have planned on creating a black revolutionary army in the United States. This potential extreme militancy caused government agencies like the FBI to try to stop Brown’s influence so that blacks would not follow him and an army would be impossible.

¹⁵⁹ Brown, “A Message.”

¹⁶⁰ “Rap Sets Eyes on Black Army,” *Muhammad Speaks*, December 22, 1967, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

The FBI was wary that if H. Rap Brown enjoyed a large enough following, there would be revolutionary consequences. Therefore, the Bureau introduced several tactics to diminish Brown's impact like discouraging young blacks from participating in the Black Power movement. The FBI proposed ideas like publishing a negative comic book or adult coloring book so that teenagers would be less inclined to join the movement. The Bureau made plans to write a coloring book called "Culla Me (H. Rap Brown)" that would contain information like "data regarding [Brown's] early life" or "bank account and other facets of his life that show him to be other than a sincere black nationalist."¹⁶¹ The coloring book would have jingles like "Ole Rap Brown / Came to town / With his shades / Hanging down / He hollered fight / Take what's right / Then he flew, man / In the night."¹⁶² The FBI wanted to illustrate that H. Rap Brown could not be trusted and therefore should not be followed as a Black Power leader. By writing books for a younger audience, the FBI could aim at prospective revolutionaries and stop black radicals before they even became radical. This book was never published, but the fact that the FBI created such a detailed plan demonstrates how critical the Bureau felt it was to stop Brown and future black radicals. This was especially true considering the fact that throughout the U.S., African Americans seemed to be growing more violent and dissident.

1967 marked a rise in violent behavior from the African American community as massive riots took place in cities like Detroit and Newark. The American government was incredibly frightened and bewildered by this sudden surge in violence because it did

¹⁶¹ From Special Agent in Charge, New York to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence, April 4, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

¹⁶² Ibid.

not understand the cause. Meanwhile, SNCC leaders like H. Rap Brown increased their hostile and revolutionary rhetoric against the government. This meant that the federal government was quick to blame these leaders for blacks' dissident behavior, and it became more anxious about their potential to threaten national security. Therefore, the FBI placed James Forman, Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, and SNCC itself on several lists to justify an escalation in investigation. In 1967, shortly after Brown became chairman, the FBI created the COINTELPRO program "black nationalist-hate groups," the Rabble Rouser Index, and the Security Index.¹⁶³ The FBI introduced the black nationalist program with the specific goal of attacking people like Brown and examining organizations like SNCC and the Black Panther Party for potential violence and political upheaval. In other words, the FBI targeted them because Hoover feared a black political and social revolution. The FBI placed Forman, Carmichael, Brown, and SNCC on the Rabble Rouser Index and the Security Index. These indices made up a list of individuals and groups who were a potential risk to national security and threatened violence. Essentially, according to a 1976 Senate Commission's report, they "served as a convenient list of primary targets for COINTELPRO activity."¹⁶⁴ Forman, Carmichael, and Brown were on these indices long after SNCC was even an organization. James Forman, for example, was on them until 1976, and he left SNCC in 1969.¹⁶⁵ After 1967 when these lists and programs were introduced, the FBI felt justified in increasing its measures to investigate and stop SNCC and Brown.

¹⁶³ Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, Supplementary Detailed Staff Report, 4, 511-512.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 511.

¹⁶⁵ Laura Post, "Rights Activist Criticizes FBI," *The Cornell Daily Sun*, November 7, 1978, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

One course of action the FBI often used under these programs was placing anonymous phone calls to SNCC leaders like Brown to spread false information and potentially record them saying something self-incriminating. This is evident in a memorandum from the FBI New York office to Hoover recommending anonymous phone calls. According to the information in the memo, Brown was: “[residing] at 530 Manhattan Avenue, New York City, with an individual named WILLIAM HALL (phone 865-5328) Employment: National Leader, SNCC, 100 5th Avenue, New York City (phone YU9-1313).”¹⁶⁶ The FBI acquired every detail on Brown’s personal information so that placing the phone calls could be the most effective. Additionally, having all of his information made it easier for the Bureau to find him should he ever make concrete plans for a revolution. In the eyes of the New York special agent, though SNCC’s, “particular activity may not violate a specific law, their pattern of activity, evidence by voice recording, might have future probative evidentiary value.”¹⁶⁷ It did not matter whether Brown and other SNCC leaders had broken any laws or taken suspicious actions; the FBI simply sought any means of incriminating them.

The FBI also used this method of spreading false information to sabotage relationships between Black Power leaders. It used this tactic with Brown just as it had with Forman and Carmichael. However, the FBI attempted to disrupt Brown’s relationships even when he was in prison and was seemingly powerless, which illustrates how impactful the FBI considered him. On one occasion when Brown was in prison, the special agent in charge of the New York office wrote a memorandum to Hoover detailing

¹⁶⁶ From Special Agent in Charge, New York to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Internal Security, February 28, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

a letter the FBI would send to Brown pretending it was one of his colleagues. The agent intended the letter to “plant seeds of distrust between Brown, Carmichael, and Forman.”¹⁶⁸ It read: “Dig this man. I got it from inside. Stokely and Forman sent you to the West Coast so that the man would get you. They are a little too cool for you Rap Baby. With you out of the way they can have the whole pie. – Soul Brother.”¹⁶⁹

Regardless of whether or not H. Rap Brown actually believed a SNCC member wrote this, the fact that the FBI went through these efforts of sabotage even when Brown was in jail and out of the public sphere, speaks not only to the amount of influence Brown had but also to the amount of trepidation he instilled within the Bureau.

While the FBI took measures to unnerve Brown when he was in jail, it also worked to keep him in jail so that he would be unable to make speeches and widen his revolutionary following. For example, Brown was imprisoned on February 21, 1968, and SNCC was trying to raise \$30,000 to pay his bond. A special agent of the New Orleans office of the Bureau sent a memo to Hoover, which suggested hiring a journalist to publish an article stating that SNCC collected more than the \$30,000 it needed and only handed in \$10,000 to the jail for bond.¹⁷⁰ This tactic most likely would have been used if not for the fact that Brown’s opportunity for release on bond was suddenly revoked immediately after SNCC was able to acquire the \$30,000. Although the FBI did not have the opportunity to perform this act of obstruction, Hoover replied to the special agent’s

¹⁶⁸ From Special Agent in Charge, New York to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Programs: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence, April 1, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ From Special Agent in Charge, New Orleans to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence, March 28, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

memo and praised him for his suggestion of “creating discord within militant black nationalist groups” and that “New Orleans should be alert for further ways to accomplish this objective.”¹⁷¹ Although Hoover certainly encouraged this form of surveillance, in his eyes these more private and surreptitious strategies were no longer as effective, so the Bureau employed a more active approach.

As SNCC became more of both a national and international presence during the second half of the 1960s, the FBI increased its level of extreme action to maintain surveillance of the organization. This is evident from the events that occurred on May 22, 1967 when the joint offices of the Friends of SNCC newspaper the *Movement's* national office and SNCC's regional Bay Area office were raided. The man broke in and stole the *Movement* subscription list, confidential files of SNCC's reports and correspondence, names and addresses of people working for the *Movement* and SNCC, and a list of international contacts.¹⁷² Two weeks prior, two witnesses who worked in the same building saw a middle-aged man trying to break in, but their screams drove him off. Terence Canon, an editor of the *Movement*, was sure it was the same man who broke in a second time and that that man was a member of the FBI.¹⁷³ The Bureau was harassing SNCC, he argued: “for its opposition to the Vietnam War... J. Edgar Hoover is trying to link SNCC with so-called insurrectionary groups. This climate of oppression has led directly to this raid. It was clearly carried out by persons who want to know who we are,

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² “Movement – SNCC Office Raided,” *The Movement*, June, 1967, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress; “SNCC Office Raided,” *SNCC Newsletter*, June – July, 1967, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

¹⁷³ “Movement;” “SNCC Office.”

fear what we are doing, and wish to intimidate who we know.”¹⁷⁴ When Canon requested an investigation with the FBI, the local FBI chief asked: “[is] there any reason why we should?”¹⁷⁵ Canon answered that he thought Hoover would be interested because of his accusations that SNCC was in contact with “All-Negro, Red Chinese, Marxist-Leninist, revolutionary groups dedicated to the overthrow of the United States government.”¹⁷⁶ The FBI chief again refused to investigate. This incident demonstrates how threatening SNCC’s domestic and global stature was to the FBI. The Bureau felt that its more covert acts of sabotage and surveillance were not enough to prevent Brown and SNCC from spreading its message to revolutionary nonwhites around the world. The FBI, as well as other government agencies, recognized that SNCC was an incredible force and that more extreme measures would need to be taken in order to stop it.

In order for SNCC to be effective and achieve its goals, the organization needed money. However, since its inception in 1960 it had struggled with raising sufficient funds. The federal government recognized this and realized that providing financial pressure was a valuable approach to weaken the Committee.¹⁷⁷ Even before Brown’s time as chairman, SNCC faced financial harassment. James Forman noted that the Bureau of Internal Revenue, the former name of the Internal Revenue Service, targeted SNCC after Carmichael popularized Black Power in 1966. He said that the Bureau increased the amount it taxed the organization, because “SNCC had not filed an income

¹⁷⁴ “SNCC Office Raided.”

¹⁷⁵ “Movement – SNCC Office Raided.”

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 269-270; From Special Agent in Charge, Seattle to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence, May 31, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

tax return as an organization, although it had always paid personal income tax on the subsistence pay of staff members. The bureau also demanded that SNCC produce its complete financial records – including the names of people who had made donations to the organization.”¹⁷⁸ SNCC never handed over its financial records to maintain the anonymity of its donors, so the harassment continued. Once Brown became Chairman in 1967, SNCC finally won a ruling saying it did not have to reveal the names of its donors.¹⁷⁹ However, financial intimidation continued at the hands of the FBI.

In 1968, the Los Angeles chapter of SNCC and the US Organization, a black nationalist group, began displaying strong collaboration with one another. The special agent in charge of the Los Angeles FBI office subsequently requested intensifying the counterintelligence program targeting these two organizations to “develop violations of Federal and local crimes, as well as, income tax laws on the principal leaders,” which is evident in the agent’s memorandum to Director Hoover.¹⁸⁰ Upon implementation of this program, the Bureau requested the federal tax records and Selective Service records of every SNCC member to better grasp the organization’s financial situation.¹⁸¹ The Bureau recognized that SNCC was economically vulnerable and used that vulnerability against it. Therefore, it investigated the intricacies of the organization’s financial structure and points of weakness to most effectively exploit it. The FBI used this strategy in SNCC offices throughout the country.

¹⁷⁸ Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 472.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ From Special Agent in Charge, Los Angeles to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence, June 3, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

By the time Brown became chairman in 1967, SNCC held offices in several major cities throughout the country, and the FBI would often financially intimidate and disrupt specific offices to try to bring down the entire organization. For example, the FBI targeted the financial structure of SNCC's Houston office in 1968. According to a memorandum written by a special agent of the Houston FBI office, the office had somehow "obtained copies of all the SNCC records in Houston and these records [contained] information concerning financial contributors. The identities of these contributors [presented] an excellent avenue for counterintelligence."¹⁸² A similar situation occurred in New Orleans that same month. A few weeks prior, H. Rap Brown had been incarcerated in New Orleans, and the FBI was cautious about possible racial violence and insurrection to protest his imprisonment.¹⁸³ Therefore, according to plans detailed in an FBI memorandum to Director Hoover from a special agent of the New Orleans office, the Bureau created a rumor that SNCC leaders were stealing money from the organization for their personal use. The agent thought that if the Bureau showed that SNCC and Brown were more preoccupied with personal wealth than the black struggle, then African Americans would not protest for Brown's release from jail. Hoover used this same tactic on the Ku Klux Klan, and it was very effective in creating distrust and suspicion.¹⁸⁴ Many of these financial attacks on SNCC were quite successful because they capitalized on the organization's already weak financial structure. However, these

¹⁸² From Special Agent in Charge, Houston to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence, March 14, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

¹⁸³ From Special Agent in Charge, New Orleans to FBI Director, Re: Counterintelligence Program: Black Nationalist Hate Groups: Racial Intelligence, March 28, 1968, Memorandum, Black Extremist FBI File, FBI Online Archives: The Vault.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

methods of assault on SNCC's monetary problems in no way compared to its assault on H. Rap Brown specifically. Almost as soon as Brown was elected chairman, the American government bombarded him with economic pressure, imprisonment, threats, and more.

Three days before Brown famously said: "I say violence is necessary. It is as American as cherry pie," he presented an equally provocative speech at a rally in Cambridge, Maryland on July 24 1967.¹⁸⁵ In an FBI memorandum written just two weeks after this speech, Agent Smith detailed a report on the evolution of SNCC, seeking to address when and how SNCC transitioned from a peaceful civil rights group to a militant Black Power group. The memorandum discussed Brown's Cambridge speech when he said: "[it's] time for Cambridge to explode, baby. Black folks built America and if America don't come around, we're going to burn America down."¹⁸⁶ Shortly after he finished his speech, the city broke out into a scene of chaotic violence. Hundreds of blacks began rioting, looting, and committing arson. A school was even burned down. This was the night of the notorious Cambridge riot.¹⁸⁷

Federal officials said that Brown was present when the school was burned down and helped incite the riot and arson. He was charged with inciting to riot and inciting to arson, but officials claimed that he knowingly left Maryland after a state and federal warrant was out for his arrest. He was then arrested two days later in Alexandria,

¹⁸⁵ From Mr. M. W. Smith to Mr. W.C. Sullivan, Re: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee: Research – Satellite Matter, August 8, 1967, Memorandum, SNCC FBI File, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

Virginia for inciting the riot and the arson and for violating the federal fugitive warrant since he left the state of Maryland.¹⁸⁸

According to newspapers more sympathetic to Black Power leaders, Brown left Cambridge on his way to Washington D.C. before the school started burning at all. He was there when the riot began, but he suffered a minor gunshot wound, so he left the city.¹⁸⁹ The next day, the state of Maryland and the federal government issued a warrant for his arrest. Maryland charged him with inciting the fire and the riot, while the federal government charged him with leaving the state of Maryland to avoid arrest on the state's charge. Once Brown learned of these warrants, he and his attorneys arranged to turn himself in the next day to the FBI in New York. That day on July 26, Brown left Washington to go turn himself in, as was agreed upon, when police arrested him at the Washington National Airport, and he was turned over to the FBI.¹⁹⁰ According to SNCC's newspaper *The Movement*: "[the] FBI was fully cognizant of where Brown was going and for what purpose, but they chose to abrogate the agreement that had been worked out between them and Brown's attorneys, choosing instead to make it appear that he had been trying to run away."¹⁹¹ Brown was taken to jail in Alexandria, Virginia. Federal authorities released him after a few hours, but upon his release Alexandria police arrested him. This time he was released on a \$10,000 bail.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ "Word on Rap: An Interview with Ed Brown," *Unity and Struggle* 5, no. 2, February 1978, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

¹⁹⁰ "Rap Brown under 'House Arrest,'" *The Movement* 4, no. 1, January 1968, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress; "Rap Brown Trial Shifted 2d Time: Judge Reacts to Concern by Prosecutor and Defense," *The New York Times*, March 28, 1969, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

¹⁹¹ "Rap Brown under 'House Arrest.'"

A few months later, on September 18, 1967, Brown was again arrested and again released on a \$10,000 bail on the condition that he would not leave southern New York where he lived. He was restricted in Manhattan for several months. He appealed to have the restriction lifted, but it was denied.¹⁹² During Brown's time in isolation, he converted to Islam and changed his name to Jamil Al-Amin.¹⁹³ This would later prove significant because it gave the American government more opportunities to target Brown.

Before his arrest and restriction in September, he traveled to Virginia and then Louisiana to visit his mother in August 1967.¹⁹⁴ During his trip he crossed state lines with weapons in his vehicle, which was illegal. Several months later, on February 21, 1968, when he was still under his travel ban, Brown went to California to speak with his attorney regarding potentially lifting his restrictions. The California FBI then arrested him for violating his travel ban, carrying arms to Louisiana and Virginia back in August, and for threatening an FBI agent.¹⁹⁵ According to *The Black Panther*, immediately after an FBI agent arrested him in California, Brown went up to another black agent and expressed "the hope that the agent's children grew up to be better men than he was." During the trial that ensued following his arrest, the agent testified that Brown had threatened his life and his children's lives.¹⁹⁶ Brown was found guilty on all charges. His bail for violating the travel ban was \$50,000, and his bail for threatening an FBI

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, "H. Rap Brown/Jamil Al-Amin: A Profoundly American Story," *The Nation*, February 28, 2002, accessed March 8, 2019.

¹⁹⁴ "Minister of Justice," *The Black Panther* 11, no. 3, May 18, 1968, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

¹⁹⁵ "Minister of Justice;" "Rap Brown under 'House Arrest;'" "Black Movement: Repression and Resistance," *The Movement* 4, no. 3, April 1968, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

¹⁹⁶ "Minister of Justice."

agent was also \$50,000. On February 23, Brown was moved to a Virginia prison where bail was revoked completely.¹⁹⁷ He was in jail for a few months until his release.

After almost two years of the American government's heavy persecution since the Cambridge riot, H. Rap Brown decided that SNCC needed a change. Shortly after his release from his most recent time in jail, on July 22, 1969 after a SNCC annual staff meeting, Brown was again elected chairman. Although he would step down as chairman in just a few months, Brown decided that SNCC would no longer be the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and he changed its name to the Student National Coordinating Committee.¹⁹⁸ This is evident in an FBI report on the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which was sent to Army, Navy, and Air Force bases around Atlanta, SNCC's headquarters. The report described that the organization still went by SNCC, and it included a press release from Brown stating that it changed the name to denounce "any relationship to the concept of nonviolence as a solution to the problems of oppressed people."¹⁹⁹ Although SNCC had certainly not associated itself with nonviolence in recent years, Brown felt that the organization should in no way illustrate a leaning toward nonviolence. Brown's suffering at the hands of the federal government since he had first been elected chairman only darkened his view of American government

¹⁹⁷ "Minister of Justice;" "Rap Brown under 'House Arrest;'" "Black Movement."

¹⁹⁸ From Special Agent to Naval Investigative Service, Charleston, SC, Office of Special Investigations, District Six, Robins Air Force Base, Warner Robins, GA, 111th Military Intelligence Group, Region I, Ft. McPherson, GA, Re: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, August 1, 1969, Report, SNCC FBI File, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

¹⁹⁹ H. Rap Brown, "Press Release," (press release issued at SNCC Press Conference, New York, July 22, 1969). In Re: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, August 1, 1969, SNCC FBI File, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

and society and made him all the more ready for violent revolution. This change in name only publicly solidified SNCC's transition in attitude and rhetoric from 1960 to 1969.

Eight months after SNCC became the Student National Coordinating Committee and almost three years after the riot in Cambridge that began Brown's saga of constant imprisonment, Brown was finally about to await his trial from that night he was charged with inciting a riot and arson. His trial was scheduled for March 10, 1970 in Bel-Air, Maryland. The venue changed from Cambridge to Bel-Air in 1968.²⁰⁰ Bel-Air was in Harford County, which was 90 percent white.²⁰¹ Brown rode to his trial with two other SNCC members in the car, Ralph Featherstone and William "Che" Payne. All of a sudden the vehicle exploded. The car was bombed, killing Featherstone and Payne. Brown was missing.²⁰²

There were differences of opinion as to what and/or who caused the explosion. State and federal authorities determined that Brown, Featherstone, or Payne had brought dynamite into the car. Police "did not rule out the possibility that it was planted there without the knowledge of the vehicle's occupants," but "they suggested that it was being carried voluntarily and exploded accidentally."²⁰³ Civil rights and Black Power leaders, on the other hand, believed that someone within the American government planted the dynamite. A few days after the explosion, SNCC released a statement not only blaming the federal government for the deaths of Payne and Featherstone, but also accusing the government of specifically targeting Brown. SNCC suspected: "that agents of the federal

²⁰⁰ "Rap Brown Trial Shifted 2d Time."

²⁰¹ Peter A. Jay, "Car Blast Kills Two near Trial of Rap Brown," *Washington Post*, March 11, 1970, SNCC Collection, The National Archives.

²⁰² "Rap Brown Trial Shifted 2d Time;" "Car Blast Kills Two;" "Official Statement by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee," March 16, 1970.

²⁰³ "Car Blast Kills Two."

government were directly involved, probably because they thought that Brother Rap Brown was in the car. This is the way that the CIA has operated all over the Third World from the Congo to Laos, from Ghana to Vietnam. If they are in the way, people of color and their leaders are mysteriously blown to bits.”²⁰⁴ After the explosion, Brown went missing for over a year. Since Black Power leaders did not trust the information government officials were providing on the matter, they had no way of knowing whether Brown was dead or alive, whether someone had him or he was free. Although it is still uncertain how the dynamite was present in the car that day, it seems unlikely that any of the three men would knowingly bring dynamite into the vehicle or that the dynamite would randomly explode. Furthermore, it is highly coincidental that the vehicle exploded when authorities knew exactly where Brown was, where he was going, and at what time he would be there. The circumstances surrounding this incident are incredibly murky, which indicates that there could have been other factors as to how and why Brown’s car was bombed that are still unknown today.

Although he was not killed that day, he went missing from March 10, 1970 to October 16, 1971. In January 1971, after Brown had endured years of imprisonment, fines, and physical attacks, Richard J. Kinlein, a Maryland prosecutor, admitted that the count of arson on which the state of Maryland had originally charged Brown in 1967 was a false charge the state fabricated to involve FBI. In Maryland, arson is considered a felony, so the FBI would have possessed the authority to get involved.²⁰⁵ Kinlein was fined \$350 for the lie. The fact that the FBI got involved demonstrates not only the

²⁰⁴ “Official Statement.”

²⁰⁵ *In Re Kinlein*, 292 A.2d 749 (15 Md. App. 1972); “Where Is Rap Brown?,” *Struggle!* 1, no. 1, February 1971.

lengths to which it would go to keep Brown in jail and out of the public eye, but also the fact that the Bureau felt it needed to maintain control over all acts of assault on Brown.

Finally, after over a year of being missing, Brown resurfaced in Manhattan trying to rob a bar with a few other armed men. He received a severe gunshot wound and was promptly arrested. After recovering in the hospital, Brown was charged and sent to jail with “possession of dangerous weapon, armed robbery and assault.”²⁰⁶ He served five years in prison until he was finally released in 1976.²⁰⁷ Brown did not publicly share where he was during his year in hiding or what he was doing. It was rumored that he was spotted in Cuba and right in the middle of Manhattan. He could have just traveled the globe laying low, or he could have been planning the armed revolution he always discussed. Regardless of what his plans were, when he was finally free five years later, Brown was a changed man. He was not the militant and revolutionary figure he was once was. Rather, he became spiritual and peaceful. However, the American government refused to recognize this change and therefore continued to target him.

When Brown was released from prison in 1976, SNCC had been disintegrated for years, and the age of Black Power was essentially over. Yet, when he moved to Atlanta to begin his new life as a harmonious and devout Muslim, the government still felt that he was a major threat to national security. For example, on the heels of the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, federal authorities took him in for questioning and

²⁰⁶ Thomas A. Johnson, “Unanswered Questions still Surround H. Rap Brown,” *The New York Times*, October 25, 1971; “Word on Rap: An Interview with Ed Brown,” *Unity and Struggle* 5, no. 2, February 1976.

²⁰⁷ Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, “H. Rap Brown/Jamil Al-Amin: A Profoundly American Story,” *The Nation*, March 18, 2002.

interrogation, although this time he was never arrested.²⁰⁸ Two years later, however, in 1995 Brown was arrested and questioned after a shooting. Finally, on March 16, 2000 a police shooting took place in Atlanta near the mosque that Brown had founded. Two police officers were killed, and Brown was arrested.²⁰⁹ His defense attorneys claimed that he was framed for a government conspiracy and that federal authorities planted the weapons. Nonetheless, in 2002 he was convicted of thirteen accounts, including murder, aggravated assault on a police officer, and obstruction and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.²¹⁰ Brown continually attested to his innocence. In a statement released after his arrest, Brown said: “For more than 30 years, I have been tormented and persecuted by my enemies for reasons of race and belief... Let me declare before the families of these men, before the state, and any who would dare to know the truth, that I neither shot nor killed anyone. I am innocent of the 13 charges that have been brought against me.”²¹¹ He was sentenced to life in prison and is still in prison today.²¹²

It is still unclear as to what exactly happened that day in 2000. Maybe Brown truly did shoot and kill those two police officers. Maybe the FBI underwent an elaborate process to set him up. Regardless of whether he is innocent or guilty and regardless of whether the federal government played a hand in Brown’s final arrest, the government finally achieved its goal of targeting a SNCC leader until he could no longer be a looming revolutionary leader. Since SNCC’s beginning in the early 1960s, the American

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Francie Grace, “‘H. Rap Brown’ Convicted,” *CBS News*, March 9, 2002, accessed February 15, 2019.

²¹¹ H. Rap Brown, statement, in “A Profoundly American Story,” by Thelwell.

²¹² Arun Kundnani, “End the Isolation of Jamil Al-Amin (H. Rap Brown): An Open Letter,” *Black Perspectives*, February 4, 2018, accessed March 15, 2019.

government was terrified of what radical and influential African Americans like James Forman, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown could do to the American social and political order. All of them were undoubtedly victims of the government's manhunt to end black extremism, although Brown experienced this victimization to a far greater extent. Despite his constant imprisonment and intimidation, he achieved a great deal in a short time. He: "accomplished more than any Negro would have accomplished in five years. One thing is for sure, he brought forth Black Unity."²¹³ Although H. Rap Brown is still paying for implementing his militant and radical ideologies, he was able to spread his message, affect change, and challenge the American system of government, all the while fighting one of the most powerful government bodies in the world.

²¹³ Reverend Willeam H. Borders. In "H. Rap Brown Brings Changes to Jacksonville," *The Ghetto Voice* 1, no. 6, August 15, 1967, accessed March 15, 2019.

Conclusion

During the 1960s, the American government considered both civil rights workers and communism grave threats to American society. Civil rights workers challenged the social and political order, while revolutionary leftist movements threatened worldwide freedom and democracy. The federal government subsequently investigated many people associated with civil rights and the New Left in order to maintain the established order and national security. This thesis has analyzed three historical figures whose civil rights activism intersected with support for revolutionary movements at home and abroad. By analyzing the vigorous level of surveillance against Forman, Brown, and Carmichael, this thesis shows that the combination of racial militancy and revolutionary ideology prompted increasingly aggressive levels of government surveillance. Furthermore, by examining the chronological progression of SNCC and the civil rights movement into the Black Power movement through the accounts of Forman, Carmichael, and Brown, this thesis illuminates how government surveillance intensified as civil rights leaders became more radical and broadened their critique of Western imperialism and the capitalist system.

Government surveillance transformed and intensified as Forman, Carmichael, and Brown became prominent figures during the civil rights movement and Black Power movement. Comparing these three individuals provides insight into how SNCC and the civil rights movement radicalized and how government surveillance escalated in response. James Forman, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown reached their peak level of influence and power at different points during the 1960s. James Forman was one of the predominant leaders in SNCC during the early 1960s like with his role in the 1964

Freedom Summer and the MFDP. This period of leadership coincided with anticolonial movements in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that inspired and influenced American civil rights activists.²¹⁴ By the time H. Rap Brown ascended to chairman and became the face of SNCC in the late 1960s, the Black Power movement was well established and more explicitly aligned with leftist revolutionary movements at home and abroad.

Forman, Carmichael, and Brown are in many ways representative of the radicalization of SNCC, the civil rights movement, and the African American community at large. By discussing Forman, Carmichael, and Brown as indicative of a larger chronological and radical progression, this thesis is able to illustrate how government scrutiny magnified along with and in response to the transformations of the civil rights movement into the Black Power movement.

When comparing government surveillance towards James Forman in 1961 with the surveillance towards Stokely Carmichael in 1966 or H. Rap in 1967, we see a cause-and-effect relationship between the government and these individuals. As Forman, Carmichael, and Brown radicalized, the government increased its targeting of them. Conversely, as the government tightened its grip around these leaders' sense of security and freedom, Forman, Carmichael, and Brown became more hostile toward the government and more ready for revolution. This antagonism escalated over the period that these three men were major leaders of SNCC. However, tensions did not subside even after the Black Power movement had ended and SNCC disintegrated. The American government continued to target Forman, Carmichael, and Brown for years to

²¹⁴ Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Penny M Von Eschen, *Race against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1997).

come. H. Rap Brown will be in prison for the rest of his life for a crime he says he did not commit. Stokely Carmichael faced harassment even after he moved to Guinea in 1968. In 1970 Carmichael visited the United States to bring aid to the black community. During this time, the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, chaired by Senator Patrick McCarran, brought him to court for questioning. Carmichael spoke after his questioning, saying that the subcommittee members asked him about his “travels and associations in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Africa and Communist China during the last three years.”²¹⁵

According to other sources from the subcommittee, “these questions were framed to elicit information that the subcommittee [was] seeking about black and white militants in this country as well as their connections with Communist countries.”²¹⁶ Carmichael experienced this kind of investigation until he died from prostate cancer in 1998.²¹⁷

Similarly, James Forman continued to face harassment even as he distanced himself from SNCC. In the early 1970s the FBI and the CIA scrutinized Forman as he helped create the Republic of New Africa, or RNA, “a purposed socialist republic within the US, and the new international movement.”²¹⁸ In 1972 FBI agents approached a former associate of Forman offering him \$100,000 cash, twenty-four hours of protection, and free passage to any non-socialist country if he would sign a statement implicating Forman and two of his acquaintances, Muhammed Kenyatta and Michael Hamlin.²¹⁹

²¹⁵ “Carmichael Questioned Secretly by Senate Security Committee,” *The New York Times*, March 25, 1970, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

²¹⁶ “Carmichael Questioned.”

²¹⁷ Carmichael with Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution*, 783-784.

²¹⁸ From FBI Director to Special Agent in Charge, Detroit, Re: James Rufus Forman (Key Extremist), October 23, 1973, James Forman FBI File, James Forman Collection, The Library of Congress.

²¹⁹ US Congress, Senate, and Select Committee, *The Development of F.B.I. Domestic Intelligence Investigations*, 2.

Forman finally saw the FBI's file on him in 1978, and in a 1979 article discussed that he was convinced the FBI was still sabotaging him. He said: "I've been unemployed for two or three years. I couldn't get a job. It was hard... But you see, the story's not complete without the FBI harassment."²²⁰ By the end of the 1970s, Forman was not engaging in any insurrectionary behavior, and still faced harassment. Nevertheless, he became a successful professor, and he eventually died from colon cancer in 2005.²²¹

Analyzing government scrutiny of James Forman, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown provides a unique perspective into the nature of surveillance against domestic leftists and civil rights workers. For example, comparing these three individuals demonstrates the progression and amplification of surveillance during the 1960s. Furthermore, these men were incredibly influential among blacks in the United States and nonwhites around the world. Discussing government surveillance of men who were so radical and crucial to the civil rights and Black Power movement, provides a deeper comprehension of what it meant for the government to target leftists and civil rights workers. These men were not the only popular black leaders within the civil rights movement or even within SNCC, nor were they the only black leaders to maintain communication with leftist nations. However, examining Forman, Carmichael, and Brown because of their international ties, their wide influence, and the fact that they represent the radicalization of the civil rights movement and subsequent intensification of government investigation, together provides a unique glimpse into the level and repercussions of government attack of radical civil rights workers.

²²⁰ O'Brien, "Still Active."

²²¹ Martin, "James Forman Dies at 76."

This thesis has aimed to show another way in which the U.S. government has targeted radicals because it is a vital part of this nation's history. In the 1950s McCarthy era, several people were put on unsubstantiated blacklists if they were suspected of being associated with communism.²²² In the 1970s the CIA led covert operations in the Angola Civil War in South Africa to prevent a Marxist government from taking power.²²³ In the post – 9/11 2000s, the federal government authorized covert investigations to identify potential terrorists like the Patriot Act, which authorized the FBI to search telephone, email, and financial records without a court order.²²⁴ The United States government has a history of undertaking extreme measures against people perceived to threaten the social and political order. Understanding the history of the American government's targeting of Forman, Carmichael, and Brown means understanding how the United States' struggle against perceived threats at home and abroad intertwines during periods of social change and domestic turmoil.

²²² Edward Alwood, *Dark Days in the Newsroom: McCarthyism Aimed at the Press* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2007); David H. Price, *Threatening Anthropology: McCarthyism and the FBI's Surveillance of Activist Anthropologists* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

²²³ George Wright, *The Destruction of a Nation: United States' Policy towards Angola since 1945* (London: Pluto Press, 1997); Delia A. Solomon, "Shattering the 'Shell of Constraint' in Angola: U.S. Covert Collusion with Apartheid South Africa, 1974-1976" (honors thesis, Emory University, 2013).

²²⁴ Donald E. Pease, *The New American Exceptionalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009); The USA Patriot Act of 2001, Public Law 107-56, 107th Cong. (October 26, 2001).

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