Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

James Walker Radcliffe December 7, 2012

Pioneer and Participant: the Black Power Movement and the Political Activism of John Oliver Killens

by

James Walker Radcliffe

Dr. Leroy Davis

Adviser

History

Dr. Leroy Davis

Adviser

Dr. Fraser Harbutt

Committee Member

Dr. Lawrence Jackson

Committee Member

2012

Pioneer and Participant: the Black Power Movement and the Political Activism of John Oliver Killens

James Walker Radcliffe

Dr. Leroy Davis

Adviser

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

History

2012

Abstract

Pioneer and Participant: the Black Power Movement and the Political Activism of John Oliver Killens

By James Walker Radcliffe

This thesis studies the political activism of African American author John Oliver Killens from 1964-1971. While previous scholarship has concentrated on his literary output, it has primarily neglected the political activism Killens's life. This thesis uses John Oliver Killens's political activism to examine the historiography of the Black Power Movement itself. It demonstrates how Killens articulated key tenets of the Black Power Movement in the years preceding the official coining of the term in 1966. It also shows how Killens was a key participant in the movement itself. Finally, it illuminates the key differences between the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement.

Pioneer and Participant: the Black Power Movement and the Political Activism of John Oliver Killens

By

James Walker Radcliffe

Dr. Leroy Davis

Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

History

2012

Table of Contents

Preface

In 1967, John Oliver Killens spearheaded an effort to bring a petition to the United Nations (UN) claiming human rights abuses against African Americans at the hands of the United States government.[1] The petition argued that its purpose was to ask the UN to decide "whether or not we descendants of African Slaves in America are justified in our claim that our basic human rights are now, and have always been, withheld, and that we have never been citizens of this country except as far as those 'duties' of citizens such as draft or taxes are concerned." The petition, which was also signed by Black Power activists such as Stokely Carmichael, Huey P. Newton, Bobby Seale, Floyd McKissick, John Henrik Clarke, and LeRoi Jones (later known as Amiri Baraka), was a revival of the same petition Malcolm X and his Organization of African American Unity (OAAU) was working on when he was assassinated in 1965.[2] Killens's work with helping Malcolm and the OAAU is well documented by historians.[3] Nevertheless, while historians have characterized Killens as a proponent of Black Power, they have also seemed to think that Killens's political activism ended with the bullet that

[1] Petition of the Descendants of African Nationals Living in the United States of America to The United Nations" August 1967, Manuscripts And Rare Books Library (MARBL) Emory University, Killens Collection, Atlanta, Georgia, John Oliver Killens Collection, Box 117 Folder 3. Future citations of the Killens Collections will include title of document, year, MARBL, and box and folder number

[2] For more on Carmichael see Stokely Carmichael and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: the Life and Struggles of Stokely* Carmichael (New York: Scribner, 2003); For more on Newton and Seale see Charles E. Jones, *The Black Panther Party* (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press 1998); For more on Floyd McKissick see Chapter 2 of this thesis; For more on John Henrik Clarke see James Coyers and Julius E. Thompson, *Pan African Nationalism in the Americas : The Life and Times of John Henrik Clarke* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004); For more on LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) see Chapter 3 of this thesis.

[3] For Killens's work with Malcolm X see Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (London: Penguin Books, 2011) page 338-341 and Keith Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens: A Life of Literary Activism* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010) 195-196.

took Malcolm X's life. However, the 1967 petition, two years after the death of Malcolm X, challenges these assumptions and hints at an immensely impactful career in Black Power political activism. This thesis examines this portion of Killens's life and argues that from 1964-1971 he was a prominent political activist who was both a pioneer and a participant in the Black Power Movement (BPM).[4]

I decided to conduct research on this topic after perusing the "Civil Rights and Post-Civil Rights" research guide at Emory University's Manuscripts and Rare Books Library (MARBL). After scanning the numerous topics in the catalogue, I came across the extensive collection of African American author John Oliver Killens. I recalled learning about him as an important black literary figure in the 1950s and 1960s. Yet, outside of reading about him helping Malcolm X create the OAAU, I could not recollect any other studies that discussed Killens's participation in political activism. However, MARBL's John Oliver Killens collection contained its own subcategory of "organization files," which contained numerous boxes of Killens's involvement with various political activist organizations.

Two things immediately jumped out at me. First, many of the organizations he worked with were in the latter half of the 1960s. Secondly, many of them were organizations that embraced Black Power. After speaking to one of the MARBL employees, I was told that Pennsylvania State University English professor Keith Gilyard had just published the first biography on Killens, primarily using the Killens papers at

[4] Within this study, "political activism" is defined as participating and confronting political issues in the civic sphere. Such actions include participating in sit-ins, demonstrations, voting drives, conferences, forums, giving public speeches, and joining and working with political organizations; I have chosen the years 1964-1971 because these mark the years that Killens spent substantial time involved in political activism. Before and after these years, Killens devoted most of his time to writing, which was his true passion.

Emory as his sources. I read Gilyard's work, and while it included extensive analysis of Killens's literary career, I was struck by the lack of information on Killens's political activism. After determining that this was an obvious area lacking prior scholarship, I decided to adopt the topic as my research project.

After choosing to research the political activism of Killens, along with his connection with Black Power groups, I posed the following questions. What was the nature of Killens's involvement in the BPM? What organizations was Killens involved with and what role did he play within those groups? How influential was he among Black Power advocates? Additionally, historian Peniel Joseph's seminal work on the BPM, *Waiting 'til the Midnight Hour*, significantly informed my project. His book demonstrated that the BPM had its roots in a number of events and activists in the years leading up to the coining of the term in 1966. Primarily, Joseph argued that Malcolm X was the spiritual father of the BPM, and it was Malcolm and other activists who served as important pioneers, laying the groundwork and defining the characteristics of what would later become part of Black Power Movement.[5] Keeping this in mind, I also asked the following questions: how did Killens help define the goals and aspirations of the BPM? Was he a part of the pioneer activists who articulated early tenets of the BPM or did he join the movement after it became a nationwide phenomenon?

Using these questions as a baseline, I divided the thesis into five chapters. First, the introduction gives a summary of the historical works that have been conducted on John Oliver Killens. Additionally, it also discusses the current historical debates of the

[5] Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour*: *A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company Press, 2006) page xvii-xviii, 147, 118-120, 295-297.

BPM and the Civil Rights Movement (CRM). By doing this, I show how Killens's political activism fits into the historiography of the Black Freedom Movement. The second chapter provides a brief biographical sketch of Killens. This gives unfamiliar readers a chance to put Killens's life in context and understand who he was outside of the short time period covered by this thesis. The third chapter examines the Association of Artists for Freedom (AAF), a national organization founded by Killens in 1964. In this chapter, I trace Killens's political activism in the AAF and his efforts at laying a baseline for characteristics that would later be adopted by the BPM. The fourth chapter looks at Killens's involvement with the Congress On Racial Equality (CORE). I will explain how Killens played an integral role in the group after it embraced the BPM. Lastly, the fifth chapter examines Killens's involvement with two local political activist efforts: Chicago's "Protest at the Polls" in 1965 and the Black Power Movement in Newark, New Jersey in 1970. The former took place before the name Black Power was introduced and the latter was a product of the movement's implementation.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Historiography

A brief analysis of the historiography of the Black Freedom Movement (BFM) and the Black Power Movement (BPM) is essential to understanding the current historical debates and to give one a sense of how to analyze Killens's political activism. According to Steven F. Lawson, during the 1970s when historians first examined the Civil Rights Movement (CRM), scholars often romanticized the late 1950s and the first half of the 1960s and utilized a top-down and southern-centric method of analyzing the period. To these historians, the movement spawned spontaneously out of the 1954 Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board*, was led by the individual heroics of Martin Luther King Jr., and relied on the financial support of sympathetic white liberals. To these historians, the CRM withered after the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the subsequent BPM was the radical afterthoughts of a bygone era. Historians of the 1980s, such as Manning Marable and Jack M. Bloom, disputed the top-down approach of past scholars and instead emphasized the local and indigenous efforts of lesser known activists, while also acknowledging the constraining impact that racist institutions and Cold War politics had on African American activists. Nevertheless, up until this point many historians agreed with the chronological concept of the "modern Civil Rights Era" taking place from 1954 to 1965.[1]

[1] Steven F. Lawson, "Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," American Historical Review 96 (April 1991); For Marable and Bloom's works see Manning Marable, *Race, Reform and Rebellion* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007); and Jack M. Bloom, *Race, Class, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1987).

Beginning in the 1990s, historians looked at the era in a new light and reexamined the BPM of the late 1960s and early 1970s. These historians took issue with previous chronologies and stated that the movement cannot neatly fit into specific time periods. Peniel E. Joseph argued that a Black Power philosophy was embraced by local and national activists alike during the 1950s and early 1960s, well before Stokely Carmichael coined the term in 1966.[2] Additionally, people such as Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Jeanne F. Theoharris, and Komozi Woodward re-conceptualized the period, began using the term Black Freedom Movement instead of the CRM, and came up with the "Long Movement" thesis. According to these historians, the movement actually began in the 1930s and 1940s, well before the *Brown* decision and the Montgomery bus boycotts of 1954 and 1955, respectively.[3] This new thesis claimed that the activists' goals were "more complex and far-reaching than the destruction of petty apartheid, and possessed an ideological and political diversity that transcended liberal thought and nonviolence."[4] Moreover, the Long Movement historians argued that the fight for liberation was not confined to the South, and actually had national and international ramifications. Consequently, the BPM was no longer something separate from the fight for civil rights

---

[2] Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, xvii-xviii, 147, 118-120, 295-297; Stokely Carmichael is credited with popularizing the term Black Power during the Meredith March of 1966. The term subsequently caught on as it personified the ideas that had been building among many activists who were disillusion with the Civil Rights Movement. Furthermore, Black Power set off a movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s which dissolved the fragile unity that existed between the major Civil Rights groups at the time. The ideologies of the Black Power Movement will be discussed on page 7 and 8 of this thesis. For more on the coining of Black Power in 1966 see David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow Paperbacks, 2004) 481-489.

[3] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," Journal of American History 91 (March 2005): 1233-63; Jeanne F. Theoharris and Komozi Woodard, eds. *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South,1940-1980* (New York, 2003)

[4] Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies." *Journal of African American History*, 92 (Spring 2007) 267-268.

in the previous years. Its more radical and international scope was seen as the culmination of an evolution that had been brewing for decades, and was now part of the continuing Black Freedom Movement that historians traced well into the 1980s.

This particular thesis created a debate among contemporary historians on whether the BPM was part of or separate from the CRM. Specifically, Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang have attempted to point out the fallacies within the Long Movement's thesis. First, they used the vampire metaphor to characterize the Long Movement thesis. They argued that historians have taken their conceptualization too far, and by constantly expanding the beginning of the Black Freedom Movement both forwards and backwards, the movement has turned into a vampire – eternally undead with no beginning or end. Secondly, they claimed Hall, Theoharris, and Woodward misinterpreted the Black Freedom Movement by collapsing periodization schemas, erasing conceptual differences between waves of the movement, and blurring regional distinctions in the African American experience.[5]

Cha-Jua and Lang argued that the problem lies in how historians differentiate the terms "civil rights" and "Black Power." In order to rectify the problem, Cha-Jua and Lang formulated a definition of both. They stated that civil rights are "privileges the state grants its citizens, and protections against unjustifiable infringements by either the state or private citizens." They also added that in the case for African Americans, civil rights include "the incorporation into the American polity, as well as American civil society." On the other hand, they argued that Black Power "derived its central meanings from a diverse tradition of black nationalist thought and practice." Furthermore, the principal

[5] Cha-Jua and Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire," 265-266.

characteristics and tenets of the BPM included the following: the embracement of black self-pride, Black Studies curricula, right to self-defense, the creation of independent black institutions and organizations, feminist consciousness raising, capitalist enterprise, alternative religious iconographies, black cultural and artistic expression, land-based reparation campaigns, electoral politics, prison reform, self-determination, and dignity for welfare recipients. Thus. due to the previous ambiguity regarding "civil rights" and "Black Power," Cha-Jua and Lang argued that historians failed to recognize key differences and to fall into the fallacy of arguing that the difference between Civil Rights and Black Power was merely a matter of degree. Moreover, Cha-Jua and Lang stressed that although activists in the CRM and the BPM challenged many of the same inequities, they differed in ideology, discourse, and long range objectives.[6]

My work on the political activism of John Oliver Killens tends to support the position of Cha-Jua and Lang. My subject's activism over time does illustrate, at least from his perspective, that there were stark differences between the ideology and activity stemming from the CRM era of the Black Freedom Movement and the era of the BPM. His activism from 1964-1971, for example, clearly embraces black self-pride, the call to establish independent black organizations and institutions, the highlighting of a unique black cultural ethos, the use of black electoral politics, and the attempt to implement a black education. In addition, the fact that Killens espoused these characteristics in his

[6] For Cha-Jua and Lang's definitions on Civil Rights and Black Power and their similarities and differences see Ibid., 274-275, 265-266.

political activism as early as 1964 supports Peniel Joseph's argument that some activists formulated crucial aspects of the BPM before the movement officially began in 1966.[7]

A brief analysis of past studies concerning John Oliver Killens is also necessary to understand how this thesis contributes to the historiography on the subject. Despite the critical praise Killens received and the influence he wielded over his readers and fans during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, there have been few studies on his works. Outside of scholars citing Killens as working closely with Malcolm X, there has been little examination of his political activism. In the literary realm, some scholars have cited Killens as a notable figure within literary circles. One example is Lawrence Jackson's *The Indignant Generation*. Jackson showed how Killens was part of a generation of writers who denounced mainstream aesthetics and political compromise by using a passionate militancy and a rejection of American liberal values, which influenced subsequent authors and artists.[8] Another example is James Smethurst's *The Black Arts Movement*. Smethurst demonstrated how Killens played an important part in the Black Arts Movement (BAM) by spearheading the Black Writers Conferences of the late 1960s, which Smethurst argued marked the emergence of the BAM as the ascendant force in African American letters.[9]

Two scholars have extensively expanded the historiography on Killens's career. They analyzed the themes and ideologies within Killens's writings and traced its

[7] For this thesis, I also adopt Cha-Jua and Lang's distinctions between the CRM and the BPM. Moreover, I also adopt the term "Black Freedom Movement" to encompass both eras together when referring to an even that took place during both the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements.

[8] Lawrence Jackson, *The Indignant Generation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011) page 11, 342-343.

[9] James Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005) page 332-334

influence on African American literature. The first scholar to do this was Paul R. Lehman. In *The Development of the Black Psyche in the Writings of John Oliver Killens,* Lehman examined Killens writings and traced the development of the "Black Psyche" within his works. Lehman defined the "Black Psyche" as the culmination of the realization of "Black identity, Black pride, and Black Unity." Lehman analyzed four Killens novels, *Youngblood, And Then We Heard the Thunder, 'Sippi,* and *The Cotillion,* all published respectively between 1954 and 1971. Within these books, Lehman argued that each subsequent novel further developed the "Black Psyche," which he claimed is fully expressed in 1971's *The Cotillion*. Additionally, the aforementioned characteristics of the "Black Psyche" were vital components of the Black Power Movement, which Lehman believed Killens supported.[10]

Pennsylvania University English professor Keith Gilyard is another important expert on John Oliver Killens who has made valuable contributions to the historiography. He published two books looking at Killens's writing career: *Liberation Memories: The Rhetoric and Poetics of John Oliver Killens* and *John Oliver Killens: A Life of Literary Activism*. A reoccurring theme in both studies is Gilyard's concern for establishing Killens as an important African American literary figure during the Black Freedom Movement. Gilyard argued passionately about this when he wrote, "…despite the fact that Killens should be regarded as important, his literary reputation is far from secure." Gilyard cited numerous examples where Killens's novels were not included in various anthologies of African American literature, despite being nominated for the Pulitzer Prize for two of his books. More tellingly, Gilyard pointed out how Killens has been neglected

[10] For Lehman's objectives and definition of a "Black Psyche" see Paul R Lehman, *The Development of the Black Psyche in the Writings of John Oliver Killens* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press 2003) page 5-6

by researchers in favor of his more notable contemporaries such as Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin. Gilyard did give credit to the critics who disliked Killens's story structure or his overtly political and journalistic tendencies. Nevertheless, he claimed they are missing the point, for it's the "liberation rhetoric" within the Killens's narratives that are of true significance.[11]

Thus, Gilyard's primary focus within his first book, *Liberation Memories*, was to dissect the themes of Killens writings. While Gilyard's objective was similar to Lehman, they differed in their focus and scope. For example, Lehman used Killens's writings to trace the psyche of African Americans. In contrast, Gilyard used three categories, vision, vehicle, and vernacular to identify the set of values Killens deemed crucial for black liberation. Moreover, Gilyard's scope is beyond Lehman's. While Lehman looked at Killens's first four novels, Gilyard essentially examined all of Killens's influential writings, including novels, essays, and articles up until his death in 1987. Interestingly, Gilyard delved into Killens's journal articles in *Negro Digest* in the mid to late 1960s to show how Killens embraced the tenets of Black Power.[12]

In *John Oliver Killens: A Life of Literary Activism*, Gilyard wrote the first biography on Killens's life. Instead of using important themes to depict Killens as a prominent African American liberation writer as he did in the former book, Gilyard instead researched Killens's entire life to show how he influenced his contemporary writers, activists, and fans, and thus helped shaped the liberation movement throughout his life. By doing so, Gilyard established the significance of Killens career and placed

[11] All quotes in this paragraph are taken from Keith Gilyard, *The Rhetoric and Poetics of Liberation Memories: John Oliver Killens* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2003), 1-2.

[12] Gilyard, *Liberation Memories*, 68-73.

him alongside other eminent writers such as James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison. Furthermore, he used the biographical platform to identify events in Killens's life that led to the evolution of his ideologies that were manifested in his writings. Notably, in the title Gilyard used the words "literary activism." He did this because he argued that Killens used his literature as a form of activism. As Lehman wrote in his book on Killens, it is the job of the Black writer to "support the revolution . . . and take his subject matter from the people and return it to the people in a beautiful and artistic form." Gilyard utilized Lehman's observation and argued that Killens's rhetoric within his writings had an immense impact on both African American literary culture and on the consciousness of the thousands of people who read his works, and consequently on the liberation movement as a whole. By doing so, Gilyard established Killens as a premier black freedom writer of the era.[13]

While Lehman and Gilyard's studies are insightful regarding the literary and thematic accomplishments of Killens's work, there remains glaring issues in the historiography that must be addressed. First, both authors established Killens's support and devotion to the Black Power Movement and how his writings were saturated with its philosophy. However, both authors focused almost exclusively on his literary work, which obscures his activism in the political and civic arena. Neither author attempted to address how Killens translated his rhetoric into action.

In the biography, Gilyard gave some attention to Killens's participation in political activism, such as his involvement in the NAACP in the 1950's and his help in

[13] For "support the revolution . . ." see Lehman, 1-2; Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens: A Life of Literary Activism*, 1-5

forming the Organization for African American Unity (OAAU) with Malcolm X in 1964-1965. Even here it was mainly done to exhibit how Killens's political ideology became more radical over time and how those radical ideas spilled over into his writing. Besides his analysis of these events, Gilyard merely alluded to other activities that Killens participated in, such as attending Black Power Conferences. Gilyard does not analyze why Killens attended these activities or what his role was in them. Perhaps most significantly, there are many political organizations and events that Killens was involved in that Gilyard failed to mention altogether, such as Killens's involvement with the Association of Artists for Freedom and the Congress On Racial Equality, both of which will be analyzed in depth later. Thus, an analysis of Killens's political activism expands the historiography while also gaining a deeper understanding of Killens's life and the BPM itself.[14]

[14]For Gilyard on Killens's involvement with the NAACP see Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens*, 125; For Gilyard on Killens's involvement with Malcolm X and the OAAU see Ibid., 188-189, 193-196.

Chapter Two: Biographical Sketch of John Oliver Killens

As Gilyard noted in his *Liberation Memories* study, few scholars have studied John Oliver Killens. Consequently, many people are left unfamiliar with his life and his works. Thus, a brief biographical sketch is beneficial to better understand John Oliver Killens and put his writings in context of the Black Freedom Movement (BFM) occurring during his lifetime. Killens was born in Macon, Georgia on January 14, 1916. Macon, which Killens claimed was a place he "had lived as a boy but could never grow up to be a man," was a harsh environment for African Americans in the early 20th century. As a young boy, he experienced fear as a result of Macon's rampant and violent racial oppression. He also wrote how he witnessed many instances of "African American valor, achievement and community spirit in the face of such hardship." Such accomplishments included African Americans forming churches, societies, associations, and clubs that united Macon's black community together and instilled a sense of cultural identification. For a young Killens, this illuminated the potential behind blacks using their own ideas and community structures to combat the malignant effects of a racist society. These experiences would shape his thoughts on the Black Power Movement (BPM) and self-determination later in life.[1]

After graduating from an all-black private high school in Macon in 1933, Killens attended Morris Brown College in Atlanta. At this point, he did not entertain the idea of becoming a writer and instead aspired to become a labor and civil rights attorney. Killens

[1]For Killens's childhood experiences in Georgia see John Oliver Killens, *Black Man's Burden* (New York: Trident Press, 1965) 63-64, 84-85, 101 and Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens,* 13.

dropped out of Morris Brown before graduating to take up a job as a civil servant in Washington DC in 1936, but by 1938 he was attending night school at Robert H. Terrell Law School, which did not require students to have an undergraduate degree. However, his law education was sidetracked when Killens joined the U.S. Army in 1942. Killens, like many other African Americans, hoped that by fighting in World War II he could achieve the "Double V," or double victory. This was a strategy formulated by black activists who thought that by defeating tyranny overseas they could simultaneously end the oppression occurring internally in the United States. As wartime propaganda, the U.S. government championed freedom and equality while painting the enemy as repressive and authoritarian. However, when Killens arrived in Australia for his assignment, he soon realized that Uncle Sam's rhetoric was hollow, as racism and segregation were rampant even in the U.S. Army. While in Australia, African Americans were segregated in menial noncombatant jobs such as transportation, construction and laundry. After mounting frustration resulting from obvious discrimination, a race riot broke out between white and black American soldiers on a military base in Brisbane, Australia. Even though Killens arrived shortly after the riots, the racial tension that remained in the armed forces served as the backdrop of one of Killens's most famous novels, *And Then We Heard the Thunder*.[2]

With his perspective altered by the war, Killens decided to change his career path. Committed to revolutionary change, Killens decided that an attorney was, in his view,

[2]For Killens's experiences at Morris Brown College, his job as a civil servant, and at Terrell Law School see Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens*, 32-35, 44-45; For more on the race riot on U.S. military base in Australia, see John Costello, *The Pacific War 1941-1945* (New York: Quill, 1982) 563; For Killens's experiences in WWII see Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens*, 58-59.

"not a revolutionary by the very nature of his position in society."[3] Therefore, Killens reasoned, the best way to contribute to and reform society was to become a professional writer. Knowing that New York was the epicenter of the African American literary community, Killens, who married his wife Grace in 1943 and had two children with her, moved his family to Brooklyn in the late 1940s. By the early 1950s he cofounded the Harlem Writers Guild, where he helped cultivate the skills and spawn the careers of many writers, including Maya Angelou. Also in the 1950s, Killens joined the NAACP and identified with its more militant members, hoping that he could turn the organization away from the conservative direction taken by what he perceived as its white and black bourgeois leaders.[4] However, despite his reservations with the NAACP's middle class leadership, Killens still did not disconnect himself from their core philosophy and its emphasis on litigation to bring about change. This somewhat contradicted his earlier criticism on the lack of substantial impact an attorney could have on racial progress. Additionally, when Killens won election to the staff of NAACP's Brooklyn chapter, he voiced his skepticism about the potential effectiveness of civil disobedience. It seemed that Killens had a different strategy in mind. With the publication of Killens's first novel, *Youngblood,* it was clear that ideas of the Black Power Movement were brewing in his consciousness.[5]

---

[3] John Oliver Killens, *Rappin' With Myself* (New York, Vintage Books, 1971) page 97-131.

[4] The extent of Killens's involvement in the NAACP is not clear. The evidence of his involvement has been established by Gilyard and cited in this paragraph. However, beyond this it is not clear from the Killens Collection at Emory University or other sources what exactly Killens did during his tenure at the NAACP. It is possible that his involvement was minimal. It is clear however that by the early 1960s Killens was no longer participating in the organization.

[5]For Killens's marriage to Grace and family life see Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens,* 58, 251, 265; For Killens's involvement and perception on NAACP see Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens,* 86, 124-125 and NAACP

In *Youngblood*, published in 1954, Killens tells a story about how a Georgia family, and broadly speaking the African American community, overcame racial oppression and capitalist exploitation in the fictional town of Crossroads, Georgia. In the story, based loosely on Killens's experiences growing up, blacks dealt with racial violence from the Ku Klux Klan while also suffering from the exclusionary policies of labor unions. Whites in Crossroads preferred to endure harsh working conditions instead of uniting with blacks to fight against their avaricious boss, Mr. Ogle. However, the most crucial part to the story is the death of the protagonist, Joe Youngblood. Joe had always wondered how an African American could survive in a world ruled by cruel whites. Close to the end of the novel, Youngblood is killed by whites while fighting back alongside other African Americans who were fed up with conventional methods of passive resistance. The novel concludes with Killens's ability to show that collective action is crucial to achieving Black dignity, unity, a positive self-image, and a sense of power that comes with those characteristics.[6]

Following the release of *Youngblood,* Killens enjoyed a sense of accomplishment as his book was highly acclaimed critically. Throughout the remainder of the 1950s, Killens wrote screenplays for actor Harry Belafonte, attended numerous writer conferences, and traveled the country promoting his book and giving university lectures. By the early 1960s he was hard at work on another novel titled *And Then We Heard the Thunder*. Published in 1963 and quasi-autobiographical, the novel told the story of an African American named Solomon and his experience in a racist and segregated United

---

Brooklyn Branch, Cultural Activities Committee, correspondence, 1956-1957 John Oliver Killens Collection, MARBL, Box 116, Folder 7.

[6] John Oliver Killens, *Youngblood* (New York: Trident Press, 1954); Lehman, *Black Psyche*, 44-45.

States Army in WWII. Set in Australia, he must endure verbal and physical abuse, isolation, and the death of loved ones during the story. Paul Lehman has done an excellent job of analyzing the story and identifies the evolution of Solomon from an "American Negro" in the beginning, to a "Black American" in the middle, and finally to being part of "Black humanity" at the conclusion of the story. By the end of the story, in the aftermath of a violent race riot between black and white soldiers (similar to the Second World War Australian race riot of 1943) Solomon realized that a unification of "the darker races" was essential to solving the world's race problem. In the closing lines, Killens wrote,

> "He wanted fiercely to believe - that all this dying was for something. Beat some sense into their heads. If they don't love you they'll respect you… Perhaps the New World would come raging out of Africa and Asia, with a new and different dialogue that was people-oriented. What other hope was there?"

Here, it is clear that Killens was dismissing the notion that whites could be part of the solution, and instead was advocating a Pan-African vision in which the exploited countries of the past spearheaded the movement for worldwide reform. This hinted of the Pan-African focus that would be characterized the BPM later.[7]

Although *And Then We Heard the Thunder* was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, Killens turned his attention away from literature and became more politically active during the mid-1960s. One aspect of his political activism that has been studied is Killens's role in helping Malcolm X form the Organization for African American Unity (OAAU). After leaving the Nation of Islam (NOI) in January 1964 following his public suspension by Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X was finally free to immerse himself in the

[7] For Lehman's analysis of *And Then We Heard the Thunder* see Lehman, *Black Psyche*, 50; For the passage at the end of *And Then We Heard the Thunder* see John Oliver Killens, *And Then We Heard the Thunder* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishing, 1963), 485

civil rights arena. No longer hindered by Muhammad's mandate against involvement in political organizations, Malcolm X took advantage of his independence and immersed himself in the political arena and became a worldwide activist. He traveled around the United States giving speeches, visited heads of state in Africa, and formed his own political organization, the OAAU.[8]

Killens shared Malcolm's vision, referring to him as his "philosophical brother." Killens used this shared ideology to help Malcolm create the OAAU and draft its charter. The charter defined its members as all people of African descent throughout the world and sought to bring Africans and African Americans together to unite against their common oppressors in the fight for human rights. More specifically, the charter emphasized the need for community controlled education to combat Anglo-centric curricula, the need for massive voter registration drives to support black candidates, and the right to self-defense. The OAAU was the culmination of Malcolm's ideological odyssey. The organization's international scope, Pan-Africanism, promotion of black unity, black pride, and black control of community institutions laid the ground work for the Black Power Movement in the subsequent years. However, Malcolm X never got to see his ideas carried out. He was assassinated in Harlem on February 21, 1965. Despite this unfortunate step back, Killens continued to promote the Black Power platform throughout the decade and implemented it in his political activism.[9]

---

[8] For Malcolm X's exit from the Nation of Islam and his subsequent political activities see Marable, *Malcolm X*, 269-418, William W. Sales Jr., *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of African American Unity* (Boston: South End Publishing, 1994) 60, 105, 155, and James Cone, *Martin and Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1991) 207-8;

[9] For Killens referring to Malcolm X as his "philosophical brother" see Killens, *Rappin' With Myself*, 116; For the OAAU's charter and objectives see Organization of Afro-American Unity, petition to the United

Throughout the latter half of the 1960s, Killens tried to balance his political activism with his literary career. On February 1, 1965, Killens started his three year stint as a writer in residence at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. Being at Fisk allowed Killens to receive a steady income from teaching while he worked on various manuscripts. The first of which, *Black Man's Burden*, was a collection of essays written by Killens and published in 1965. The book was an effective expansion of the OAAU charter and echoed many of the same themes regarding Pan-Africanism, Black Nationalism, self-defense, positive black self-image and the need for black unity in African American neighborhoods.[10]

In 1966 Killens published a chapter of the book, titled "Negroes Have a Right to Fight Back," in the *Saturday Evening Post.* Killens's advocacy for self-defense in the article drew a lot of ire from white readers, many of whom either wrote newspaper editorials or wrote letters to Killens personally repudiating his philosophy. For example, one angry reader, who claimed to descend from a family of abolitionists, argued that Killens's ideas were unwelcome because whites in the north "rarely murdered blacks, and that blacks were much more likely to assault whites than vice versa." He claimed that Killens's "radical philosophy" was caused by "self-agitation and paranoiac propaganda" and Killens's ideas had no place in society because it did not benefit "your race or the human race." Such verbal attacks did not deter Killens and he embraced Stokely Carmichael's articulation of Black Power in 1966. He even attended Student Nonviolent

---

Nations, 1964, Emory MARBL, Box 117, Folder 3, and Malcolm X, "Statement of Basic Aims and Objectives of the Organization of Afro-American Unity." In Abraham Chapman, ed, *New Black Voices: An Anthology of Contemporary Afro-American Literature* (New York: Mentor Publishing, 1972) page 558-564.

[10] For Killens work at Fisk University and Columbia University See: John Oliver Killens Collection, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 84-91; John Oliver Killens, *Black Man's Burden* (New York: Trident Press, 1965

Coordinating Committee meetings throughout the latter half of the 1960s.[11] After publishing *'Sippi* in 1967, Killens persisted in his Black Power advocacy. By 1968 Killens wanted to be closer to his family and the political action. Consequently, he accepted a writer in residence job at Columbia University, a position he held until 1974.[12]

In 1971, Killens published *The Cotillion*, which Lehman concluded was the complete manifestation of the Black Psyche. Lehman argued that everything in the book was purposefully over-emphasized, particularly the characteristics of white and black characters, in order to highlight the differences between them. Killens did this with the belief that "before these differences could be demolished, they must be recognized and respected. Once they are respected, then they can be ignored or transcended." Not coincidently, the story's protagonist, Lumumba, shared the name of Congolese freedom fighter Patrice Lumumba who was assassinated in 1961.[13] Through his experiences in the story, Lumumba developed a Black Psyche and used his positive self-image and pride to stimulate a Black Psyche in others, specifically the Lovejoy family. After achieving unity among blacks, Lumumba realizes that this must be utilized in order to achieve the ultimate goal of black liberation. Ultimately, *The Cotillion* represents Killens's

[11] For Killens's involvement with Carmichael and SNCC see Killens Collection, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 117, Folder 9-12. The extent of Killens's involvement with SNCC is not clear from the papers, which are mostly pamphlets and press releases from SNCC. There are some sparse details on various SNCC meetings Killens attended, but exactly what he said at the meetings or did in the organization is unknown. While I was very interested in Killens's participation with SNCC, there were not enough sources to include it in this thesis.

[12] For angry reactions to Killens's philosophies see Letter from Curtis L. Gibson to Killens June 19, 1966, Killens Collection, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 6, Folder 2 and Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens*, 222.

[13] Patrice Lumumba fought for the self-determination of Congolese peoples and against the neo-colonialism of Portugal. He was an enormous influence on African Americans and his assassination was met with fierce outrage from many blacks. For more on Lumumba see Thomas Kanza, *The Rise and Fall of Patrice Lumumba: Conflict in the Congo* (Boston: G. K. Hall Publishing, 1979)

metaphorical treatise on how the embrace of Black Power is the definitive approach in achieving freedom and defeating racism in the world.[14]

As the 1970s rolled on and Killens entered his sixties, his literary output and political activism slowed down. He continued, as he always had done, to organize and attend various writer conferences and workshops around the country. He still loved teaching in the university setting, and in the 1970s and 1980s he held positions at Columbia University, Trinity University, Howard University, Bronx Community College, and Medgar Evers College, respectively. In the 1980s he still participated in various political activism organizations, such as the Emergency Committee for Non-Interference in Jamaica (1980), the Black Workers Organizing Committee (1981), and the Conference in Solidarity with the Liberation Struggles of the People of Southern Africa (1981).[15] Additionally, Killens received numerous awards celebrating his achievements in the years before his death. For example, he received an honorary doctorate of letters from State University of New York in May 1987, attending the ceremony despite being gravely ill from colon cancer.[16] On October 27, 1987, John Oliver Killens died.

It is fitting that in the final months before his death, Killens set up the Fund Against Racism to help African American lawyers financially in their legal battles against

---

[14] John Oliver Killens, *The Cotillion* (New York: Trident Press, 1971); For Lehman's analysis see Lehman, *Black Psyche* 59-61.

[15]For Emergency Committee . . . see Killens Collection, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 112 Folder 8; For Black Workers Organizing Committee see Killens Collection, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 110 Folder 17; For Conference in Solidarity . . . see Killens Collection, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 111 Folder 7. These examples are characteristic of many of the organizational files in the Killens collection after 1971. They are very vague and outside of proving that Killens was present at these various events, provides no further insight into his activism in this respect. His correspondences during this time also do not shed light on this.

[16] Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens*, 327.

discrimination in New York City. Killens viewed this as crucial because he thought that the NAACP and the American Civil Liberties Union were neglecting local cases in favor of ones with national prominence.[17] Thus, Killens had a lifelong commitment toward political activism. However, this aspect of his life has yet to be studied. More specifically, the period between 1964 and 1971 in which Killens's political activism was at its zenith, has been neglected. After analyzing this period, it is clear that through his political activism, Killens played a significant role as both a precursor and participant in articulating, shaping, and implementing core principles of the Black Power Movement with his participation in the Association of Artists for Freedom, the Congress On Racial Equality, and various local organizations.

[17] Ibid., 326

Chapter Three: John Oliver Killens and the Association of Artists for Freedom 1963-1964

"This is an election year, a time of year when millions of little white lies will be told to the American people… it is a time for black Americans to create every kind of confrontation between themselves and those who would stem the tide of freedom."

John Oliver Killens, Association of Artists for Freedom Press Conference, 1964[1]

On September 15, 1963, around the same time that Killens was promoting *And Then We Heard the Thunder*, an explosion rocked the calm morning air in Birmingham, Alabama. A group of white supremacists exploded dynamite under the front steps of the 16th Street Chapel Church. The church, which had been the frequent meeting place for local African Americans on civil rights matters, was hosting its weekly Sunday school for young children. The explosion took the lives of four young girls and sparked outrage among civil rights activists across the country. The explosion highlighted the fact that despite the progress made from local boycotts, marches, and demonstrations, freedom was difficult to attain, especially in an atmosphere of increasing white resistance. Furthermore, the bombing sparked a debate among civil rights activists, with some questioning the effectiveness of the current movement in light of the barbaric violence.[2]

The event particularly affected Killens. He publically rejected nonviolence in the aftermath of the bombing. Outside of a discussion on abstract philosophical morals,

[1] The Black Revolution and the White Backlash Town Hall program June 15, 1964, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107, Folder 15.

[2] For more on 16th Street Chapel bombing see Charles E Connerly, *"The most segregated city in America": City Planning and Civil Rights in Birmingham, 1920-1980* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2005).

Killens said nonviolence had little practically and that now "Negroes must be prepared to protect themselves with guns." Killens founded the Association of Artists for Freedom (AAF) as a direct response to the wanton violence that took place in Birmingham. In hindsight, the event proved to be a catalyst for Killens. Through the AAF, Killens used political activism to articulate programs that became key tenets of the Black Power Movement (BPM) later in the 1960s.[3]

With Killens as founder and chairman, the AAF enjoyed instant support from many prominent African Americans. This included author James Baldwin, actor Ossie Davis, actress Ruby Dee, singer/songwriter Odetta Gordon (better known as her performing name "Odetta"), journalist Louis Lomax, and lawyer/intellectual Clarence B. Jones.[4] At its inception, Killens did not intend the AAF to be a political organization. Rather, he wanted the group to focus on cultural goals. In fact, by using their positions as artists who had the ability to shape the culture of African Americans, Killens saw the AAF as holding a unique position within the Black Freedom Movement (BFM). For example, Killens wrote that the AAF's main goal was to "achieve a meaningful unity of all artists who are concerned with the great American moral and cultural crisis." Killens envisioned the AAF sponsoring and organizing cultural and artistic activities in black communities through the country to rectify America's racial problem.[5]

---

[3] For Killens's quote on non-violence see Coretta Scott King, *My Life with Martin Luther King Jr.* (New York: Puffin Publishing, 1993) 226.

[4] For more on Baldwin see Louis Pratt, *James Baldwin* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978); For on the Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee see their autobiography Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, *With Ossie and Ruby: In This Life Together* (New York City: William Morrow Publishing, 1998); For Lomax's writings see Shari Dorantes Hatch, ed., *Encyclopedia of African-American Writing* (Amenia, NY: Grey House Publishing, 2009)

However, just a few months after he formed the AAF, Killens started to transform the AAF into a political activist organization. On October 1, 1963 Killens wrote a letter to his friend Harry Belafonte.[6] Killens frequently corresponded with the actor, and on this occasion he gave Belafonte an update on the AAF and their efforts in the aftermath of the Birmingham bombing. Killens wrote that the group was working toward convincing President Kennedy to impeach Alabama Governor Wallace and to abolish the "phony" investigation committee that was assigned to look into the 16th Street Chapel bombing. Killens also stated that they were calling for the immediate apprehension and punishment of the murderers and for the boycott of white owned businesses. He went further and claimed he wanted to "touch the American consciousness where it hurts – the pocketbook."[7]

While the plans to impeach Governor Wallace and abolish the investigation committee were unrealistic and merely symbolic, it foreshadowed a turning point in the AAF's direction away from its initial cultural scope and toward specific political aims. By the end of the month the AAF followed through with its intentions and demanded that African Americans boycott Christmas altogether. In a pointed press release, Killens wrote, "This year we will give our children the profoundest gift of all; the gift of truth, which is the gift of love. And we will have the duty to tell them that Santa will not come

---

[5] For the list of prominent members of the AAF see *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, Nov 16, 1963; *Pittsburgh Courier*, Nov 30, 1963; For Killens's initial goals and objectives for the AAF see Association of Artists for Freedom Statement of Purpose 1963, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107, Folder 15.

[6] Killens and Belafonte were very close throughout their lives. Belafonte hired Killens to write screenplays for him, tried to secure movie producer support to for the movie developments of Killens's novels, and even lent Killens money when he was struggling financially. For more on their relationship see Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens*, 131, 186-187, 273 and the "Personal Papers" and "Correspondence" in the John Oliver Killens Collection, MARBL, Emory University.

[7] For the letter Killens sent to Belafonte see Letter from Killens to Henry Belafonte October 1, 1963, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 21 folder 2.

this year because he is in mourning for the children of Birmingham, who will get no gifts this year or the next year or the next." This was significant because the AAF's demand went further than most civil rights boycotts in the past. For example, the famous Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1956 targeted the bus company because they were specifically discriminating against African Americans. However, the AAF's Christmas boycott went beyond that by calling on people to refuse buying Christmas gifts altogether. Killens reasoned that white business owners were the ones that truly profited from the Christmas season and therefore an all-out boycott of Christmas would make their demands heard nationwide, while simultaneously damaging the wallets of those who wielded power in the country.[8]

However, Killens's boycott did not sit well with many white liberals. Consequently, he found himself at the center of tensions between black activists and liberal whites. On one hand, African Americans perceived progress as too sluggish and were increasingly turning towards new tactics and discourses. On the other hand were white liberals who shunned such new approaches and wanted to stay the course. This debate portended the split in the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) and the advent of BPM in the subsequent years. There is one example that is particularly illuminating. Upon hearing of the AAF's boycott strategy, a liberal Chicago magazine called *The Struggle for Social Justice* wrote a letter to Killens and asked a series of questions in an attempt to show their disagreement with the plan and to point out its fallacies. First the magazine pointed out that the AAF's boycott idea split the current CRM leadership, as the

[8] For AAF press release and Killens's quote "This year we . . ." see AAF Press Release, October 28, 1963;For other information on the boycott see *New York Amsterdam News*, Nov 09, 1963, *Daily Defender*, Nov 14, 1963, and *New York Amsterdam News*, Dec 14, 1963

NAACP's leader Roy Wilkins disagreed with the plan while Martin Luther King and CORE sided with the AAF. They claimed this hurt the movement by causing fragmentation instead of unity.[9]

Additionally, the magazine argued that by targeting all whites, Killens was hurting those financially who were supportive of civil rights. The writer was concerned about how the AAF was treating white liberal supporters, who historically were important pieces to the CRM. However, Killens's main issue was whether white people had the capacity and/or will to be effective activists in working purely in the interests of black people, as opposed to balancing white and black concerns. To Killens, it was only if African Americans united and set their own agenda, strategies, and goals would they truly gain liberation. However, the magazine's most revealing question was its final one: "Doesn't the boycott represent by implication, if not by intent, the notion that all white people are 'bad', since it is a broadside against all businessmen?" Within this question is the logic that would be widespread among many white people during the Black Power Movement's peak in the coming years: that the idea of Black Power is "reverse racism" or "reverse hate." Whether Killens knew it or not, his call for an all-out boycott of

[9] For information on the *The Struggle for Social Justice*'s issues with the AAF Christmas boycott see *Chicago Defender* Nov 09, 1963 and Letter from Grace Killens to AAF members October 29, 1963, MARBL Emory, Box 107 Folder 12; Of course I am not arguing that Killens and his thoughts on white liberals were characteristic of all blacks during the period. There were blacks on the left and right of the political spectrum who had different feelings on the role of the white liberal in the Black Freedom Movement. Moreover, Killens does not epitomize the ideas of black radicals at the time. There were black communist, such as John Henrik Clarke, and militant black radicals, such as Malcolm X, who had diverse opinions on how blacks should engage white liberals. Furthermore, some black communists also conducted boycotts to put pressure on white businesses. Therefore, the idea of boycotting was not something that was uncommon. Thus, in this passage I am not trying to overemphasize the importance of Killens's boycott. I am merely responding to, as Killens perceived it, the dichotomy between African Americans in the freedom movement on one side, and white liberals on the other.

Christmas by African Americans throughout the country was an early articulation of Black Power.[10]

As 1964 began, the AAF still struggled to define its role in the Black Freedom Movement. In a report to the group, actor Ossie Davis argued his definition of what the AAF should be. He argued that the AAF should not be exclusively cultural, and that it should ultimately have political aims. He went further by stating that artists should shape the goals of the movement. He justified his stance by saying artists were "uniquely equipped to be the eyes, the ears, the tongue, the conscience – the soul itself – of the revolution in which we find ourselves, and above all the critics and the definers of that revolution." Even more significantly, Davis wanted artists to formulate a "master plan," without which "any revolution becomes at last an exercise in futility." However, he did set limitations on the role of the artist. Davis believed that artists and other intellectuals should assist in formulating policy, but the implementation of the "master plan" should lay in the hands of the "agitators, the organizers, the marchers, the sit-inners, the freedom-riders, and the others who in various ways storm the barricade in person."[11]

Nevertheless, the AAF still attempted to hold onto its strict cultural scope. In their January 1964 meeting, there was widespread consensus among members, including Killens, that the organization's foremost responsibility was to its artistic craft and that craft constituted their contribution to the movement. Furthermore, they decided that they would not have any association with civil rights groups in an attempt to remain the "cultural wing" of the Black Freedom Movement. Acting on this decision, a few weeks

---

[10] Ibid.

[11] For Davis's articulation of political aims and a "master plan" see Report to Association of Artists for Freedom by Ossie Davis 1963, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107 folder 15

later in February, Killens and other AAF members agreed to set up "Freedom Theaters" in various southern cities such as Atlanta, Nashville, New Orleans, and Jackson. These theaters were designed to create a space where African Americans could cultivate their crafts freely. This type of focus on culture provides a hint at the role Killens played in the Black Arts Movement in the late 1960s.[12]

Yet a month later, Killens and the AAF directly contradicted their agreement to stay within the boundaries of the cultural wing and set their sights on more overtly politically-oriented activities. In February 1964, they decided to "participate in some of the dramatic activities being contemplated by various sectors of the civil rights movement in opposition to the expected filibuster in the Senate against the Civil Rights Bill." Particularly, the AAF advocated for picketing or participating in sit-ins in or around the Senate.[13] With Killens leading the way, the AAF continued this pivot toward political activism throughout the year. By June 1964, Killens planned and organized an AAF town hall meeting in New York where he would lay out his new "master plan," which included many of the characteristics of the BPM which exploded on the scene just two short years later.

The name of the town hall meeting, "The Black Revolution and the White Backlash," and accompanying advertisements, hinted at what was on the horizon. For example, one pamphlet read "The Association dedicates itself to a militant struggle for

[12] For Killens's decision not to have any involvement with civil rights groups and to remain in the cultural wing of the movement and his attempts at setting up "Freedom Theaters" see Memorandum from Clarence B. Jones to Killens, January 23, 1964, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107 Folder 12; For info on Killens and the Black Arts Movement see Smethurst, *The Black Arts Movement,* 332-334.

[13] Memorandum from Clarence B. Jones to AAF members February 12, 1964, MARBL Emory Box 107 folder 12

Afro-American freedom. The credo of the Association proclaims the special responsibility of the Negro-American artist to articulate the highest aspirations, the deepest consciousness of his people, and to do this through art and civic activity." Within this quote one can see AAF's new direction: the pamphlet specifically claimed the AAF would implement its militant strategies not only through art, but also via "civic activity". This suggests that Killens and others in the group were re-orienting their efforts to political action.[14]

In the forum's pamphlet, Killens expressed future BPM goals regarding the need to rally around a distinct black culture and identity, and find dignity and honor in espousing it. With his quotations in the pamphlet, Killens seemed to reject assimilation altogether. He said:

> "My fight is not for racial sameness, but for racial equality and against racial prejudice and discrimination. I work for the day when my people will be free of the racist pressures to be 'white like you': a day when 'good hair' and 'high yaller' [sic] and bleaching creams and hair straighteners will be obsolete. What a tiresome place America would be if freedom meant we all had to think alike and be the same color and wear the same gray flannel suit."

The quote further reiterated what Killens believed was a new direction in the Black Freedom Movement away from an exclusive emphasis on civil rights. Though in some ways this new (still nameless) direction also attacked racism and discrimination, it however differed in points of emphasis and the means to achieve the same ends. Killens for example took issue with an ultimatum that implied that black cultural integration into white America was the only path to black freedom. Furthermore, he felt that the CRM and its advocacy of integration would ultimately undermine African American culture and society, and simultaneously allow Anglo-American culture to retain its position of

[14] The Black Revolution and the White Backlash Town Hall program June 15, 1964, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107 Folder 15;

power. In other words, while the CRM's integration policies may result in reduced discrimination, this acquiescence would also bolster white's feelings of racial superiority and lead to the gradual demise of the black cultural experience.[15]

Killens rhetoric in the pamphlets seems to support the thesis of intellectual historian Richard H. King, who argued that cultural universalism was replaced by cultural particularism in the mid-1960s. Cultural universalist, popular from 1945 to the 1960s, believed that different races[16] were equal and shared many commonalties. Furthermore, they emphasized that these commonalities were more important than racial differences. Particularism also believed in the equality between races, but instead stressed the fact that there were many cultural differences between races, and that these differences needed to be accentuated and preserved. According to King, the turn away from cultural universalism that characterized the early CRM and the adoption of cultural particularism among African Americans was a crucial turning point in the formation of the BPM. Exactly how Killens's political activism fits into the transition into cultural particularism has not been studied. Still, it seems Killens and the AAF alluded to cultural particularism and defined goals and aspirations which later became central aspects of the BPM during their New York town hall meeting on "The Black Revolution and the White Backlash."[17]

The structure of the town hall forum was highly organized and deliberate. Panelists included Killens, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, playwright LeRoi Jones (later known as Amiri Baraka), African American author Paule Marshall, Colombia professor Charles

---

[15]For Killens's quote see Ibid. and *New York Times*, June 7 1964.

[16] At this time it was not widely recognized that race was merely a social construct.

[17] For King's distinctions between particularism and universalism see Richard H. King, *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals, 1940-1970* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2004) 2-9

E. Silberman, New York Post editor James Wechsler, and prominent African American playwright Lorraine Hansberry.[18] Each panelist gave four to six minute opening statements and engaged in discussion with each other thereafter. Following the discussion, panel members answered questions from the audience. The panel members were carefully picked so that radical black voices such as Killens, Jones, Davis, and Marshall could be contrasted with the moderation of African Americans like Silberman and Hansberry, and white liberals like Wechsler. While one of the purposes of the forum was to have an honest dialogue between whites and blacks, it was apparent by the majority of the panelist's remarks that they thought such an idea was a difficult and possibly futile task. Killens clearly led the forum with an introduction vowing to "unbrainwash the American people." Thus, here and throughout the rest of the forum, Killens was using the AAF's town hall to unfold an ideological framework for what would later be called Black Power.[19]

Following Killens's introduction, Charles E. Silberman gave the first panel member speech. Silberman began by discussing the intensification of African Americans' demand for rights and their corresponding disillusionment regarding the slow pace of change. Silberman implied that this would prove to be an incendiary

[18] For more on Paule Marshall see Paule Marshall, *A Triangular Road: A Memoir* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2009); For more on Charles E. Silberman see Charles E. Silberman, *A Crisis in Black and White* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1964); For more on Lorraine Hansberry see Anne Cheney, *Lorraine Hansberry* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishing, 1984).

[19] For structure and purpose of the town hall see Letter from Killens to friend June 1964, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107 Folder 12 and "Verbatim Transcript of a Forum: The Black Revolution and the White Backlash", 1964, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107 Folder 16; For Killens's opening remarks see "Verbatim Transcript of a Forum: The Black Revolution and the White Backlash", 1964, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107 Folder 16.

combination that would result in a fissure between African Americans and white liberals. He pinpointed the root of the problem when he said:

> ". . . when the struggle takes to the streets, the majority of (white) liberals are reluctant to move along with it. Hence, the liberals have a deep interest in maintaining peace and harmony. Liberals want racial change all right, but without trouble or turmoil and without upsetting the existing organizations and institutional arrangements."

Some black activists in the CRM, including Martin Luther King Jr., were optimistic concerning the ability of whites to work alongside blacks for societal reforms. However, Silberman and the AAF members felt that unless whites developed "a new ideology or a new theory of politics, one geared to rapid change rather than one designed to eliminate conflict," then blacks would be forced to abandon this collaboration and instead work with their black brothers and sisters for their liberation. In his speech, Silberman tellingly quoted James Baldwin when he said, "There is one role for the white liberal. He is our affliction." While Silberman stated that he did not wholeheartedly agree with this, his rhetoric seemed to allude to the fact that he did not necessarily think that Baldwin was completely wrong either. Nevertheless, the next panelist endorsed Baldwin's idea and took Silberman's ideas a step further in trying to craft a "master plan" for the liberation movement.[20]

Author Paule Marshall was the second individual to give an opening statement. Marshall was a prominent African American author with a diverse background. Marshall was born in Brooklyn in 1929 to parents that emigrated from Barbados. She spent her formative years in Brooklyn and graduated from Hunter College in 1955. As a child she often traveled with her parents to Barbados and received a unique international

[20] "Verbatim Transcript of a Forum: The Black Revolution and the White Backlash", 1964, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107 Folder 16.

perspective on white racism and African culture that would inform many of her writings, such as her first novel, 1959's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*.[21]

It is noteworthy that Killens would select her for such an important speaking role in his town hall for two reasons. First, the sexism and patriarchy of the Black Freedom Movement has been well documented.[22] Recently historians have tried to focus on the contributions that women have made to the movement.[23] While Marshall's political activism is not the focus of this thesis, her detailed articulation of strategies and ideas that would later be embraced by the BPM, which will be discussed below, is important. It shows that historians have a potentially fruitful opportunity to deepen our understanding of the Black Freedom Movement if they continue to examine the efforts of women such as Paule Marshall. Secondly, while Killens may have chosen Marshall due to their relationship as members of the Harlem Writers Guild, it is also possible that Killens was attracted to her international background.[24] Marshall's transnational perspective allowed her to make connections regarding the destructive effects that racism had on African descendent peoples throughout the Diaspora. This Pan-African outlook was championed

---

[21] For more on Paule Marshall see Paule Marshall, *A Triangular Road: A Memoir* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2009); Eszter Timar, *Paule Marshall*, http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Marshall.html (Spring, 2000).

[22] For more on sexism in the Black Freedom Movement see Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith, *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement* (New York : Garland Publishing, 1999), Bettye Collier Thomas and Vincent P. Franklin, ed., *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), and Trayce Matthews, " No One Ever Asks, What a Man's Place in the Revolution Is: Gender and the Politics of the Black Panther Party 1966-1971," in The Black Panther Party Reconsidered, ed., Clarence E. Jones (Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press, 1998).

[23] For more on women in the Civil Rights Movement see Sharron Hannon, "Women and the Civil Rights Movement: Roles Too Lang Unexamined," *The Journal of the Southern Regional Council* Vol. 10 (December 1988) and Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power* Movement (New York: New York University Press, 2001)

[24] For Killens and Marshall in the Harlem Writers Guild see Jackson, *The Indignant Generation*, 494-495.

by Killens in his political activism with the Congress On Racial Equality[25] and later became a distinctive belief among activists in the BPM in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In her speech, Marshall argued for a philosophy that was similar to what was expressed by some during the BPM. For example, she equated white with malignant characteristics in life and black with valiant ones, and used this argument to advocate for Black self-pride. To her, white is "moral callousness and timidity, rigidity and blindness, and wealth without wisdom," and in opposition to change. "Black," according to Marshall, represented the "force which recognizes that change, social, and political change and movement, and struggle are essential realities of human existence. It is the willingness to question and reject the old established institutions once they are proven obsolete and unjust. Black is to seek a new way." Although Marshall argued that "white" was merely a mindset, she seemed only to attribute this characteristic to individuals with white skin. These statements are significant because Marshall specifically stated that "blackness" is the only avenue in which freedom can be achieved. Thus, Marshall felt that African Americans needed to rally around their inherent blackness and use this identity to forge a new political movement.[26]

Marshall also linked the need for a militant struggle for civil rights with the fight for human rights abroad, echoing the rhetoric of Malcolm X and preceding the ideas that Stokely Carmichael and other BPM activists championed in the coming years. She said, ". . . we are part of a huge world community and our struggle here is part of the worldwide struggle for human rights." To achieve this end, she endorsed militancy and

[25] This is discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

[26] "Verbatim Transcript of a Forum: The Black Revolution and the White Backlash", 1964, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107 Folder 16.

expressed doubt regarding the effectiveness of non-violence. "This is not to say that I reject nonviolence as a method of struggle" she claimed, "but I am coming more and more to the conclusion that there is a need now for the establishment of a nationwide organization that is far more militant than any today." Ultimately, Marshall felt that organizations must not take any tactic off the table. Using rhetoric similar to Malcolm X's famous "by any means necessary" slogan, Marshall stated that political activist organizations need to use "whatever means proves the most effective." [27]

Finally, Marshall proposed that these new militant organizations must be independently controlled, funded, and administered by blacks. "Most important, this organization must be truly independent. By this, I mean one thing: that it should not have to look for its financial support from the very sources it is working to overcome. Rather, it must be both financed and led by the black man himself." She elaborated by contrasting her arguments with criticisms of the Civil Rights Movement. She envisioned an independent and militant black organization that would "act in concert on a single issue instead of reacting hastily to each new crisis." Marshall felt that civil rights groups, like the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), were ineffective because they went from town to town based on whatever area was experiencing a racial crisis at the time. Marshall even dismissed the Civil Right Act of 1964, which is arguably one of the CRM's greatest achievements.[28] In her view, the Act, which passed only a few weeks before on July 2nd, was useless because the Senate caused it to be, in her own words,

---

[27]For Malcolm X's "By Any Means Necessary" and other speeches see George Breitman, ed., *By Any Means Necessary: Speeches, Interviews, and a Letter by Malcolm X* (New York : Pathfinder Press, 1970); "Verbatim Transcript of a Forum: The Black Revolution and the White Backlash", 1964, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107 Folder 16.

[28] For more on the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its impact on civil rights see Bernard Grofman, ed., Legacies of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

"amended to death." Marshall's remarks set a militant tone for the town hall meeting. John Oliver Killens was the next speaker. Would he continue down this militant road or chart a more moderate path?[29]

Killens's opening remarks left no doubt to his direction. He began with an enthusiastic endorsement of Marshall's speech by describing it as "beautiful and on target." Killens used the beginning of his dialogue to dispel a number of myths about the liberation movement. In other words, he was attempting to "unbrainwash" the audience, and by extension the American public. Myth one: the Civil Rights Movement was a revolution. Killens argued that it was merely a revolt and alluded to the idea that a more widespread and successful revolution will occur in the future. In Killens's view, white liberals prohibited African Americans from engaging in a true revolution. Although Killens completely agreed with Marshall's assessment, they differed in tone. While Marshall employed an eloquent tone in her critique of the white liberal, Killens was much harsher. He said that "While liberals are disturbed. White liberals have called this revolt a revolution when they get upset because of an inconvenience when we stalled their motor car on the bridge. In revolutions, people blow up bridges." In a biblical reference to the Old Testament's Gideon's Army, Killens likened white liberals to Gideon's deserting soldiers. Lacking a true dedication to the Black Freedom Movement, Killens believed that liberal whites back-pedaled every time African Americans aggressively asserted their right to self-determination.[30]

---

[29] "Verbatim Transcript of a Forum: The Black Revolution and the White Backlash", 1964, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107 Folder 16.

[30] Ibid.

Myth two, according to Killens: blacks were inherently nonviolent. In dismissing this myth, Killens advocated for the right of self-defense, another important characteristic of the BPM later in the decade. Killens said, **"**This is one of the most fundamental rights recognized by all men everywhere, because we must dispel this new myth. You know, Negros have always been trapped in so many myths. Now there's a myth that the Negro is nonviolent." Killens failed to elaborate further. Besides claiming self-defense as a fundamental right, he did not analyze the merits of nonviolence as a form of protest. He also did not specify what he meant by "a myth that the Negro is nonviolent." By characterizing this as a myth, was Killens implying that African Americans have the same innate capacity for self-defense and violence as others? Or did he mean that African descendant peoples did not endorse the ideology of nonviolence as the proper way to address race issues in America and in the world?[31]

It is more probable that he meant the latter. Having said that, Killens did not cite examples to bolster this generalization and he ignored the overwhelming evidence that many still did endorse nonviolence, such as the thousands of African Americans who marched with Dr. King on Washington D.C. just a year earlier in 1963.[32] Unlike Marshall, who at least tried to address the counterevidence on this issue when she spoke about the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Killens merely stated his second "myth" and went directly to the next myth. Nevertheless, Killens's dismissal of

[31] Ibid.

[32] For more on March On Washington See Charles C. Euchner, *Nobody Turn Me Around : A People's History of the 1963 March on Washington* (Boston : Beacon Press, 2010)

nonviolence and his advocacy of self-defense on an international scale resonated later as an important tenet of the BPM.[33]

Myth three: black people were second class citizens. Killens argued that there was no such thing as a second class citizen until it was invented in the United States. He stated that, "A person is either a citizen or he is not a citizen. You are either free or you are a slave." This echoes the rhetoric and ideas Malcolm X articulated in the early 1960s and surely reflects the influence Malcolm X had on Killens. Malcolm X referred to African Americans being subjected to "second class citizenship" in his famous 1961 debate with Bayard Rustin and in his 1963 speech "Message to the Grassroots."[34]

Moreover, Malcolm X's impact is also evident in Killens's ideas on how to combat second class citizenship. Killens proposed that African Americans should charge the United States with human rights violations at the United Nations. He felt this would debunk the idea of a second-class citizen. This mimicked the same plan Malcolm X and the Organization of African American Unity (OAAU) attempted in time. This makes sense because, as was discussed earlier, Killens played an integral role in helping Malcolm X set up the OAAU and begin to formulate plans to bring human rights charges to the U.N.[35] However, Killens also seemed to doubt the overall effectiveness of the

---

[33] "Verbatim Transcript of a Forum: The Black Revolution and the White Backlash", 1964, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107 Folder 16.

[34]Ibid.; For Malcolm X's debate with Rustin see Marable, *Malcolm X*, 186-187; For Malcolm X's speech "Message to the Grassroots" see George Breitman, ed., *By Any Means Necessary: Speeches, Interviews, and a Letter by Malcolm X* (New York : Pathfinder Press, 1970).

[35] Malcolm X was assassinated on February 21, 1965, and never got to see his United Nations plan come to fruition. Malcolm X was in Africa when Killens held the AAF town hall, but because Killens and Malcolm had a close relationship and the fact they advocated many of the same philosophies that would later become part of the BPM, it is possible that if Malcolm had been in the country he would have been one of the panel members at the forum.

U.N. approach. He said the U.N. subscribed to the patriarchal idea that Americans were "one big happy family," regardless of class or race. All attempts at changing that United Nations perspective would be hushed, according to Killens, because "the Negro must not think of embarrassing big daddy before the world." Consequently, Killens argued that the U.N. approach was ruled out. This contradicted Killens's work with the OAAU and even his own words within his remarks.[36]

Killens concluded his speech by concurring with Marshall, and asserted that blacks need to empower themselves and develop their own institutions and organizations that could combat white oppression. Additionally, while he did not altogether refuse white assistance in the movement, he said if any whites participated in the movement, they must follow black leadership. Killens strongly believed that freedom could only be achieved if African Americans and African descendent peoples took control of the movement. In his panel speech, Killens's proposals regarding the right to self-defense and the need for black controlled institutions and organizations were precursors to the ideologies adopted during the BPM. Moreover, his endorsement of speaking in terms of human rights, despite his ambivalence about the U.N. strategy, illustrates Malcolm X's influence on activists like Killens who were articulating key aspects of the BPM before the movement began.[37]

Ossie Davis spoke next at the town hall meeting and reiterated what had already been said by Killens and Marshall. However, he put his own stamp on the town hall meeting by describing the conditions of blacks in America and providing a bleak warning

[36] "Verbatim Transcript of a Forum: The Black Revolution and the White Backlash", 1964, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107 Folder 16.

[37] Ibid.

about what would occur if the movement did not take a new direction. Davis stated that if African Americans stuck with the current tactics of the CRM then it would:

> ". . . lead only to one direction unless circumvented. And that direction is racial riot and bloodshed… Three hundred years of prejudice, poverty, ignorance, deliberate misunderstanding and indifference to inferior housing, unemployment and intolerable living conditions, may all have to be paid for this bitter summer, perhaps by blood." [38]

Davis seemed to have a crystal ball. On July 16, 1964, just one day after the town hall, fifteen year old James Powell was shot and killed by a police officer in Harlem. Two days later Harlem erupted in riots lasting more than five days. Furthermore, the mid to late 1960s were marred by summer race riots in major American cities. Davis and the AAF were influential in recognizing the catalysts for these riots, and their "master plan" was meant to solve the problems that led to such conditions.[39]

New York Post editor James Wechsler spoke next and his comments stood in stark contrast to previous speakers. He was confused why the AAF rejected the help of white liberals and King's nonviolent strategy. He said that they must look to Gandhi's nonviolent revolution in India for a successful blueprint. According to Wechsler, nonviolence proved its applicability in the United States when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, which he felt was an example of a meaningful step in the right direction He also claimed that "moderation," or non-radical, patient, and incremental change was essential for responsible black leadership in the movement. He argued that the rhetoric

---

[38] Ibid.

[39] For information on the Harlem riot see *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 23 1964 and *Chicago Defender*, July 25, 1964.; For more on urban riots in the 1960s See: James A. Geschwender, *The Black Revolt: The Civil Rights Movement, Ghetto Uprisings, and Separatism* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall Publishing, 1971); For Davis's quote see The Black Revolution and the White Backlash Town Hall program June 15, 1964, MARBL Emory, Box 107 Folder 15.

being presented, especially by Killens and Marshall, was hurting the movement because it was dividing blacks even though they were fighting for the same cause.[40]

Lorraine Hansberry was the next speaker. Hansberry was a famous African American playwright and author in the 1950s and 1960. Her 1959 play, *A Raisin the Sun*, explored the life of a black family in an impoverished Chicago neighborhood. The play received widespread critical acclaim and was highly successful on Broadway.[41] In her speech, Hansberry supported the CRM's approaches. She argued that the current approaches resulted in laudable achievements, such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which she said could not be ignored. However, while she did support the current direction, she also criticized white liberals. Hansberry felt that white liberals were holding progress back by their hesitancy and their constant need to balance white and black interests. She said that white liberals need to "stop being a liberal and become an American radical." Yet, Wechsler and Hansberry's pleas to stay the course fell on deaf ears. To Killens, Wechsler and other white liberals could not possibly understand African American frustration. Killens believed CRM policy was dictated by white liberal money and it was time that link was eradicated and replaced with an independent black agenda.[42]

Killens used the question and answer period to continue voicing ideas that would become Black Power Movement characteristics. The town hall moderator, NBC TV

---

[40] "Verbatim Transcript of a Forum: The Black Revolution and the White Backlash", 1964, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 107 Folder 16.

[41] For more on Hansberry see Anne Cheney, *Lorraine Hansberry* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishing, 1984).

[42] Verbatim Transcript of a Forum: The Black Revolution and the White Backlash, MARBL Emory, Box 107 Folder 16

personality David Susskind, seemed hostile toward the ideas being expressed at the forum, pressed Killens on his comments regarding "a revolution." He said that Killens, who is "far more militant" than King, "acts as if he speaks for the whole [N]egro *sic* movement." Susskind felt that Killens was merely an intellectual dissenting from a movement that is already predominantly black. Susskind even questioned Killens's qualifications as a leader. In a powerful rebuttal, Killens claimed that white people, including Susskind, were trying to divide blacks within the movement and that the "current Negro leadership needs to be rescued" via a new strategy. Most tellingly however, addressing the question of credentials, Killens said "Somebody asked by what authority my credentials for speaking for the black masses. My credentials is this," pointing to his skin. He continued, "My credentials are my frame of reference as a black man in this country. Those are my credentials."[43]

This statement is crucial for a number of reasons. First, it demonstrated the philosophy that only black people can truly understand the oppression they experience, also an important tenet of the BPM, and therefore they are the only ones who can address the problem. Secondly, Killens's comments allude to another key principle of the BPM: black self-determination. To Killens, the key to black liberation rested in the hands of any person of African descent. Because of their identities, experiences, and perspectives, African Americans knew the route to freedom without the advice of liberal whites.[44]

However, two exchanges from the town hall meeting illuminated Killens's lack of details in his rhetoric. One audience member asked, "how can we get less heat in this

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

discussion and more rational thought?" LeRoi Jones (later Amiri Baraka), a panel member who did not give opening remarks due to his late arrival, attempted to address the question. Jones is considered by historians as being an important voice in the Black Arts Movement of the late 1960s and a staunch supporter of the Black Power Movement. He bluntly agreed with Marshall and Killens and said that nothing could be gained by talking to white liberals. Silberman, the moderate voice on the panel, responded by arguing that he had yet to hear a concrete direction from the other members who were "long on talk but short on specifics." Silberman turned the mirror back on Killens and criticized him for lacking a succinct and well-developed program. Furthermore, following the town hall meeting, a woman, who only signed her name as "Ellen," wrote Killens with comments on the town hall forum. She wrote:

> "Practically, what could $^{1}/_{11}$ of the population hope to do without the support of another large segment of the people? Seems to me you were proposing another reconstruction period without means to implement or to execute it. I really could not see what 'affirmative alternative' you were proposing in all that."

The feedback by Silberman and audience members, like Ellen, points to possible shortcomings in Killens's vision.[45]

Nevertheless, Killens's rhetoric endorsing independent black institutions and organizations, black self-determination, self-defense, and the need to "unbrainwash" African Americans was possibly an important first step in moving toward Black Power. These characteristics, in addition to the overall development of black self-pride, suggests that perhaps Killens and his Association of Artists for Freedom must also appear among

[45] Ibid.; Letter from Ellen to Killens July 5, 1964, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Folder 9, Box 4.

the precursors of the Black Power Movement along with others suggested by Peniel Joseph.[46]

By 1965 the AAF had declined. It is not clear why or exactly when this happened. There are no other efforts, events, or meetings by the AAF after the town hall meeting. Perhaps the disbandment of the organization can be traced to January 1965 when Killens wrote a letter to his lawyer asking him to allocate all remaining AAF funds to the Congress On Racial Equality (CORE). Nevertheless, as a result of his dedication, Killens seemed not to be especially discouraged. His adherence to the Black Freedom Movement was still strong, and he looked to other groups to see which one was best fit to implement his "master plan." It was no coincidence that he donated all remaining funds to CORE, for he would find what he was looking for in that organization, and his political activism in the group will be discussed in the next chapter.[47]

[46] Joseph cites several activists in the 1950s and 1960s as important precursors to the Black Power Movement. He argued that Malcolm X was possibly the most influential of all and discussed the many ideas espoused by Malcolm X that were adopted by the BPM. For Joseph on Malcolm X see Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 147, 295-297. Joseph also cited activists in Detroit in the early 1960s, such as Albert Cleage Jr., as important precursors to the movement. Joseph argued that activist groups in Detroit, like the Group On Advanced Leadership (GOAL), were important for their criticisms of the tactics of the CRM and for espousing black self-pride and self-determination. For more on activism in Detroit see Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 53-63. Perhaps the most significant female precursor cited by Joseph was Gloria Richardson. She was essential due to her advocacy for self-defense and mentorship of Stokely Carmichael. For more on Richardson see Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 88-89.

[47] Letter from John Oliver Killens to Clarence Jones February 16, 1965, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 5 Folder 1.

Chapter Four: John Oliver Killens and the Congress On Racial Equality 1965-1968

"The basic task of black people at this juncture is to integrate with themselves. This is an enormous task, since we have been taught to despise ourselves. We have to get ourselves together before we can have any meaningful get-together with you. We have to learn to love ourselves before we can take up with the question of loving you."

-John Oliver Killens 1968[1]

The Congress On Racial Equality (CORE) was one of the largest and most influential civil rights organizations during the Black Freedom Movement in America. Created in 1942, it was founded on the principles of integration and harmonious collaboration between all races. This sense of racial partnership was evident in its founders, as James Farmer was African American, and George House and Bernice Fisher were white. CORE was also heavily influenced by Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence, and the organization adopted nonviolent civil disobedience as its calling card. By the mid-1940s, CORE was comprised of thirteen local chapters in various cities throughout the country. But the group was mostly concentrated in the Midwest. All but five chapters were in Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Michigan, and Ohio. There were three in the Northeast – Philadelphia, New York City, and Syracuse – and two in western cities – Denver and Los Angeles. Noticeable was the lack of any CORE chapters in southern states.[2]

[1] Letter from Killens to Notre Dame, July 8, 1968, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 7 Folder 8.

However, in 1947 the group launched the "Journey of Reconciliation" to combat segregation in the South. The campaign involved eight white people and eight black people, including Bayard Rustin.[3] They traveled together on a segregated public bus to Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Kentucky. The participants were arrested several times on the trip, and although it did not achieve any results, it did end up gaining publicity for the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) and the fight to end segregation. CORE continued to use non-violent strategies such as sit-ins, protests and marches in various cities throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s.[4]

Sensing a lull in the CRM by the late 1950s, Farmer revived his "Journey of Reconciliation" strategy in 1961 and renamed it the "Freedom Rides." Again using both black and white participants, the riders began in Washington D.C. and traveled through Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. During their travels, they were again often arrested. However this time they were met with violence in Anniston, Alabama by a white mob. Their bus was firebombed and just as the riders narrowly escaped being burned to death, the white mob beat them viciously outside of the bus. Despite nearly losing their lives, Farmer and other CORE members succeeded in grasping the attention of the nation and forcing President Kennedy's hand to pay attention to civil rights issues and intervene to ensure the safety of freedom riders. Furthermore, the events increased CORE's prominence in the CRM. In 1963, CORE,

---

[2] For a study examining the history of CORE see August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1975).

[3] Rustin was an integral part of the CRM. He was one Martin Luther King's closest advisors in the late 1950s and early 1960s and was the architect for the 1963 March on Washington. For more on Rustin see Daniel Levine, *Bayard Rustin and the Civil Rights Movement* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999)

[4] Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 33-40.

along with the SCLC, SNCC, and the NAACP, played a critical role in organizing and participating in the March on Washington.[5]

However, by the mid-1960s, many CORE members were becoming increasingly militant. In particular, they were influenced by the ideas of Malcolm X and Robert Williams, two activists who Peniel Joseph cited as articulating important ideas that became adopted by the BPM later in the decade. In 1961, Williams was ousted from the NAACP for openly endorsing armed self-defense. Sympathetic CORE members visited his home in North Carolina to show their support before he fled to Cuba later in the year.[6] Moreover, Malcolm X's disavowal of integration and his philosophy on building separate black institutions was embraced by a number of CORE members.[7] Through this period, CORE was transitioning away from its interracial roots and increasingly embraced Black Power.[8]

When Floyd McKissick was elected as CORE's national director in 1965, defeating Farmer, the transformation was solidified. McKissick, an attorney, became involved with CORE during the student sit-ins in North Carolina in 1960. He was a proponent of nonviolent direct action and integration until, like many other group members, he was influenced by the fresh ideas being expressed by people like Williams

---

[5] For more on Freedom Rides and CORE see Derek Charles Catsam, *Freedom's Main Line: The Journey of Reconciliation and the Freedom Rides* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009); For CORE's role in the March on Washington in 1963 see Meier and Rudwick, *CORE, 224-225*.

[6] For Williams's impact on the BPM see Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1999); Also see Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 28-34; For Williams's impact on CORE see Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 202-203.

[7] For Malcolm's impact on the BPM see Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 118-120; For Malcolm's impact on CORE see Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 206-207.

[8] For CORE's turn to Black Power see Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 379-408 and Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 148.

and Malcolm X. As CORE became more radical in the mid-1960s, Farmer fell out of favor and McKissick increased his influence in the organization.[9] While Farmer remained on the advising committee, his voice was increasingly drowned out by McKissick. CORE's position as one of the leading Black Power organizations was evident when Martin Luther King Jr.'s aides dissuaded him from attending CORE's annual convention in 1966 because, according to the unnamed aid, "CORE was yelling black power louder than SNCC." The aid was right, because at the 1966 convention, CORE abandoned the CRM and officially declared its support of Black Power, which it defined as, "control of economic, political, and educational institutions and resources, from top to bottom, by black people in their own areas."[10]

One of the first examples of substantial collaboration between Killens and CORE was in the summer of 1965 when CORE was trying to publish a book called "CORE guide to Negro History, Literature, and Culture". It is not clear if the book was ever published. Outside of the Killens collection at Emory, there is no record of it in any CORE sources, in Meier and Rudwick's CORE study, or in Gilyard's biography on Killens. But based on the correspondence back and forth between Killens and the books editor, Benjamin Brown, it was not due to lack of effort. The book was to be divided into three sections – history, literature, and social commentary – and included chapters from

[9] For more on McKissick and his involvement in CORE see Floyd McKissick, *A Black Manifesto* (New York: National Congress of Racial Equality, 1967) and Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 103, 407, 416-419.

[10] For quote of King's aid on CORE see Peniel E. Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 148; For CORE's official embrace of Black Power see Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 415-417 and Letter from Mckissick to Killens, October 1966, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 6 Folder 3.

notable activists such as Bayard Rustin, Ossie Davis, James Farmer, and Fred Shuttlesworth.[11]

The book presented contradictions between espousing more radical ideas that became part of the BPM on one hand, and classic integrationist philosophies of the CRM on the other. This makes sense because as stated earlier, in 1965 CORE was still in flux between its traditional and radical members. An example of the book embracing characteristics similar to the BPM is found in the statement of purpose. It read:

> ". . . beginning with the West African heritage of the Afro-Americans, the section on history will follow through in chronological order from slavery to freedom to the present day. We believe that a universal program for the study of the Negro people's contributions to society can play a most significant role in our struggle for full economic, social, political and cultural equality in the United States."

The books editor, Benjamin Brown, also stated that the book aimed to use a new militant strategy to instill black self-pride in the black community. Yet the book also attempted to achieve traditional CRM goals of integration and cooperation between whites and blacks. Brown said the book wanted to achieve "a new and greater respect of the White people, as well as a deeper understanding between Negros and Whites." Killens was asked to submit an essay "The House I Live In" to be included in the final section of the literature chapter. Again, due to lack of evidence in the Killens collection and the fact that the book was probably not published, it is not known what Killens's essay was about. However, based on Killens's ideology established by his efforts in the Association of Artists for Freedom and the writings of *Black Man's Burden*,[12] which was published just

[11] Fred Shuttlesworth cofounded the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) along with Martin Luther King in 1957 and played a significant role during the CRM, especially with the Birmingham protests of 1963. For more on Shuttlesworth see Marjorie Langenecker White and Andrew Michael Manis, ed., *Birmingham revolutionaries : the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000).

as Brown was attempting to put the project together , it is likely that Killens framed his essay to coincide with the book's more radical objectives.[13]

Killens did not officially join CORE until the organization completely embraced Black Power in the summer of 1966. Killens, who had been looking for another organization to implement his "master plan," was attracted to CORE and its platform based on Black Power tenets. He viewed their entry into the BPM and the ideas they expressed as reflective of those he had championed during his tenure with the AAF. Thus in 1966, Killens donated all the remaining AAF funds to CORE and became a member of the National CORE Advisory Committee, marking the beginning of his political activism with the organization.[14]

Killens's political activism in CORE illustrates how he became a vital participant in the BPM. He used his position on the advisory committee to assert his leadership and apply Black Power goals. First, he attempted to "unbrainwash" African Americans. This was similar to the ideas he expressed in the AAF town hall in 1964. However, at a CORE advisory meeting in January 1967, he presented a plan on how to implement this idea. Killens wanted to bring together influential black writers, actors, singers, and athletes to CORE events. Because of their status as visible and influential African Americans, these cultural icons were in a favorable position to influence everyday blacks.

---

[12] See page 20-21 of this thesis to see a summary of the themes in *Black Man's Burden*.

[13] For the statement of purpose and Killens's role in the literature section see Letter from Benjamin A. Brown, editor of CORE Guide to Negro History, Literature, and Culture, to Killens June 11, 1965, MARBL, Emory University, Box 11 Folder 8; For the goals that were similar to the BPM and the CRM see Benjamin A. Brown, Progress Report #1, August 20, 1965, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 11 Folder 8.

[14] For Killens allocating remaining AAF funds to CORE see Letter from Killens to attorney Clarence Jones, February 16, 1965, MARBL, Emory University, Box 11 Folder 8; For Killens joining advisory committee see Letter from McKissick to Killens, September 15, 1966, MARBL, Emory University, Box 6 Folder 3.

Killens also suggested that CORE set up a Cultural Committee to set up events in various African American communities where Killens and other black celebrities could speak about Black Power ideals. Additionally, recognizing the importance of gaining support among young blacks, Killens wanted to send CORE members to many college campuses around the country to rally black students around the BPM.[15] Killens's program failed to be implemented by CORE. While there is no direct evidence why, it perhaps was attributed to CORE's financial troubles. When McKissick assumed leadership, he was so involved with rescuing the organization from financial collapse that some associates felt "he lacked the time to develop a viable CORE program.[16] Nevertheless, Killens's framework on implementing what he called an "unbrainwashing" program demonstrated his embrace of the BPM and his political activism in CORE.

Killens also played a part in helping CORE accept a Pan-African ideology. Pan-Africanism usually includes the unification of Africans and African descendant peoples behind a shared experience of racism and oppression by whites.[17] Peniel Joseph cited Pan-Africanism as an important tenet of the BPM. He wrote that Black Power advocates perceived Pan-Africanism "as a practical if also ideological symbol that held the key to

[15] Minutes of CORE advisory meeting, January 30, 1967, MARBL Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 6 Folder 10.

[16] For CORE's financial issues see Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 411.

[17] For more on Pan-Africanism see Tony Martin, *The Pan-African Connection : From Slavery to Garvey and Beyond* (Dover, MA: Majority Press, 1998); Horace Campbell and Rodney Worrell, *Pan-Africanism, Pan-Africanists, and African Liberation in the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2006); and B. F. Bankie, K.J. Mchombu, eds., *Pan-Africanism/African Nationalism: Strengthening the Unity of Africa and Its Diaspora* (Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2008)

black liberation in the United States." He also asserted that key activists including Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael espoused Pan-Africanism.[18]

Killens's attempts to instill Pan-Africanism into CORE can be traced to a CORE workshop in Lexington, Kentucky in May 1967. The workshop attempted to decide on a structure for the upcoming annual CORE convention. The workshop also attempted to gain "a working definition of Black Power" among its members. Killens and Stokely Carmichael were chosen as panel members on this topic. For Killens to be grouped with the man who coined the term "Black Power" with the task of concretely defining the phrase demonstrates the importance of Killens in the BPM and in CORE.[19] To display Pan-Africanism, Killens hoped to convince CORE to invite African heads of state as its mean speakers at the upcoming convention. Ambitiously, Killens wanted Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Sékou Touré of Guinea, or Kwame Nkrumah formerly of Ghana to be keynote speakers.[20] While these leaders did not come to the convention in the summer of 1967, CORE did manage to get two African ambassadors to the United States to speak. They also extended invitations to heads of state in the Caribbean.[21]

---

[18] Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 18-19, 288-289.

[19] Memo from Floyd McKissick to John Killens, May 15, 1967, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 6 Folder 3.

[20] Nyerere, Toure, and Nkrumah were the first African heads of state elected following the decolonization of Africa in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Their elections, which represented Africans exercising self-determination to elect their own leaders, were highly influential on many African Americans who held "a special place in their heart" for these leaders. Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 19. For more on these leaders see Carole Boyce Davies, Encyclopedia of the African Diaspora (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008); Nkrumah was ousted from Ghana by a coup in February 1966.

[21] For Killens's participation at in the May 1967 workshop see CORE memorandum to National Advisory Committee members, April 6, 1967, Box 6 Folder 3; For info on CORE 1967 convention see *New York Amsterdam News*, Jun 24, 1967 and *Los Angeles Sentinel* June 29, 1967.

It is worth noting the lack of female participation at the convention. This is in contrast to Killens's town hall forum of 1964, which while not evenly split between males and females, did include significant participation from black women. This is almost certainly reflective of the sexism that permeated many organizations in both the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement, including CORE.[22] Killens's papers are silent on his recognition of sexism. Nevertheless, the fact that Killens convinced CORE to allow a Pan-African perspective at their 1967 convention certainly shows the influence Killens's political activism had on organization after it embraced Black Power.

Despite his efforts at the CORE 1967 convention, Killens thought that the development of black pride and cohesion among African Americans was still lacking. To change this, Killens came back to the idea of "unbrainwashing" which he had first proposed while in the AAF. At a September 1967 meeting, he said African Americans were brainwashed by a racist culture that implied that blacks were inferior and in need of white assistance. To combat this, Killens argued that CORE needed to use "de-brainwashing techniques," via the television and other media outlets.[23] Killens did not explain what he meant by this. However, Killens had a history of utilizing newspapers and television to spread his message. For example, in 1963 Killens appeared on the Today Show to discuss his views on how blacks should view themselves in society and their relationship with whites.[24] Moreover, Killens's article in the *Saturday Evening Post*

---

[22] For information on sexism in the Black Freedom Movement refer to footnote 23 in Chapter 3.
[23] Notes on CORE meeting, September 12, 1967, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 6 Folder 10.

[24] *Cleveland Call and Post*, February 2, 1963.

(discussed in chapter 2) in which he advocated for black self-defense is another example of his usage of the media in spreading his philosophy and "unbrainwashing" society.

Secondly, Killens encouraged the usage of a "Black Education", another important component of the BPM. To Killens, this meant that young African American students should receive an education that grounded them in a sense of black history, dignity, and pride. To accomplish this, Killens said CORE first must set up programs to help black high school students succeed. This included high school writing workshops, dramatic workshops, and scholarships, so that African American students could nurture and further their intellectual faculties. Once this was achieved, Killens reasoned that students would develop better critical thinking skills that would allow them to analyze and criticize the oppressive institutions around them. Killens also recognized that using black centered curricula to instill racial pride must begin even earlier than high school. Consequently, Killens suggested CORE finance the mass publication of black history books which could be taught to black children at an early age. This would instill black dignity and pride early in one's life, thus diminishing the chances of being brainwashed. Despite Killens's detailed plans, CORE suffered from diminished funds, mismanagement of resources, and internal factionalism. Consequently, they were most likely in no position to put Killens's idea into action. Nonetheless, it is evident that Killens's ideas on fighting against white propaganda and his championing of a black centered education represented important components of Black Power philosophy that he hoped to institute through his political activism in CORE.[25]

[25]For Killens ideas on an Afro-centric education see Notes on CORE meeting, September 12, 1967, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 6 Folder 10; For CORE's organizational issues in 1967 and 1968 see Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 423.

However, by 1968, Killens's political activism with CORE ended. In January 1968, Killens wrote a letter to McKissick stating that he needed to step back from his role on the advisory committee. He stated he wished he could become a full time employee with CORE, but ultimately he struggled with this idea because it would take away time from his writing. Killens admitted in his letter, though committed to political activism, his contribution to "the black revolution" was primarily as a writer. [26] This supports the thesis of Gilyard's biography which stated that Killens's foremost passion was literary activism. Killens's withdrawal from CORE in 1968 coincided with his transition into his "writer in residence" position at Columbia University.[27] He was also likely working on writing his novel *The Cotillion*. Killens, perhaps, recognized he simply needed to focus more on his writing.

In the end, Killens's political activism in CORE shows how he was an important participant in the BPM. When Killens attempted to set up programs to "unbrainwash" African Americans, instill black self-pride, inject Pan-Africanism into CORE's platform, and implement a black-centric education curriculum for African American students, he was espousing essential tenets of the BPM and devising political strategies to have them implemented in CORE. Considering how Killens worked closely with McKissick, it is not surprising that he supported McKissick's Soul City Project, which attempted to set up

---

[26] Letter from Killens to Mckissick, January 16, 1968, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 111 Folder 8.

[27] For summary of Killens's Columbia University job and of *The Cotillion* see page 21 of this thesis. It is interesting that, considering his abhorrence for white liberals and the white establishment, Killens decided to accept a job at Columbia, an elite, wealthy, and primarily white university. While it is not clear from the sources or from Gilyard's biography why Killens took this job, it could be partly attributed to the university's proximity to Killens's New York home.

an all black city in rural North Carolina in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[28] However, this differed from Killens's past political activism because it was a local effort, as opposed to his work with national organizations such as the AAF and CORE. Thus, the focus of the final chapter of this thesis will look at how Killens's political activism included local struggles in addition to national ones.

[28] For more on the Soul City Project See Christopher Strain, "Soul City, North Carolina: Black Power, Utopia, and the African American Dream," *The Journal of African American History*, Vol. 89, No. 1 (Winter, 2004). There is no evidence of substantial support from Killens cited in the article, but according to the Killens Collection at MARBL, Killens supported McKissick's Soul City project by being appointed Treasurer of the project in 1969, City Historian in 1975, and wanting to set up creative workshops for aspiring black writers in the city in 1973. But it is not clear what being Treasurer or Historian of the city entailed beyond merely having the title. Additionally, beyond a 1972 Soul City Memo mentioning Killens's idea of a writer's workshop, it not known if it ever took place. Consequently, there was insufficient evidence in the sources to incorporate Killens's involvement in Soul City into this thesis.

Chapter Five: John Oliver Killens and Political Activism in Local Movements

I. Killens and Chicago's "Protest at the Polls," 1965

"*The emphasis of the movement from this point must shift from a goal of integration to a goal of freedom… Integration is a tactic, not a goal".*
-John Oliver Killens, 1965 [1]

As has been demonstrated in this study, Killens was active in national Black Power groups such as the AAF and CORE in addition to being involved with the OAAU and SNCC. However, as Peniel E. Joseph pointed out, Black Power had its roots in urban communities throughout the country, both before the term was coined in 1966 and in the subsequent years.[2] Therefore it is essential to study Killens's involvement with political activism on the local level as well. Killens was constantly asked to give his time and efforts to smaller political activism efforts that operated out of various cities throughout the country. For example, by examining incoming and outgoing correspondence each year between 1964 and 1971, Killens received a total of 118 requests for his participation in local political activism organizations and events.[3] Between teaching university classes, writing novels and essays, and

[1] *Chicago Defender*, January 9, 1965

[2] Joseph especially showed how the local activists in Detroit in the 1950s and 1960s were important in influencing the BPM. See Joseph, *Midnight Hour*, 53-63; For detailed study on local organizations in the North during the Black Freedom Movement see Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: the Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).

[3] See the Appendix for a table that displays how many requests Killens received in each year from 1964-1971. Data retrieved from tallying incoming and outgoing correspondence in the Killens Collection, MARBL Emory University, Box 4-11, 21

engaging in political activism elsewhere, Killens had little time to participate in these local efforts. Consequently, he often turned them down. But he did participate in some local political activist groups. One of these organizations was called "Protest at the Polls". Killens's contribution to the group revealed his influence on local groups who were espousing early articulations of Black Power.

The Protest at the Polls organization was created around the idea of black self-determination and black political power, two essential ideas of the BPM. It was founded by Bennett J. Johnson in 1963.[4] The group disavowed civil disobedience because they felt it was not an effective tactic. They instead emphasized black electoral activism which consisted of getting voters educated and registered, and formally endorsing black candidates in Chicago who looked out for the interests of African American constituents. Furthermore, according to the organization's Constitution, the group wanted to "gear itself to make some incursions at the behemoth Daley-Dawson political machine – which has shackled the Negro Community." To many black activists, Chicago's mayor Richard Daley was the quintessential example of the kind of white liberal Killens and the Association of Artists for Freedom criticized so often. Daley was seen as publicly supporting the civil rights cause, yet simultaneously keeping his white political allies in power and allowing widespread segregation and discrimination to occur in housing and employment. Thus, the formation of the Protest at the Polls organization was a marked effort to build Black political power in Chicago. These activists had given up hope on the capacity for white politicians to enact change for African Americans.

[4] The only evidence I could find on Protest at the Polls was in the Killens Collection and in Black Newspapers which reported on the event Killens attended in 1965. Consequently, relevant background information on Bennett Johnson and further information on the group is not available.

Instead, according to the group's constitution, they concentrated their efforts toward convincing local African Americans to nominate their own black candidates who would truly work for the interests of the community.[5]

By May 1964, Johnson developed a platform with ideas that preceded the official espousal of Black Power. He also attempted to recruit Killens into the group. Johnson's ideas included the call to secure black electoral power, the improvement of education for blacks, and reducing police abuse and discriminatory practices against blacks. The organization's platform also included combating housing discrimination, and increasing black employment.[6] This was a reflection of nearly all of the aspects cited by Cha-Jua and Lang as integral parts of the BPM after 1966,[7] and was similar to some of the ideas expressed by the Association of Artists for Freedom and the Congress On Racial Equality.

Johnson's program also showed how the Chicago group used pre-Black Power ideologies and shaped it to address specific needs of their local community. For example, regarding the idea of housing reform, the organization pinpointed Chicago's discriminatory real estate practices and segregated housing codes. Johnson wanted to rectify these issues by amending Chicago building codes. He claimed this would prevent blacks from being exploited by racist white landlords and stop the placement of African Americans into housing projects, which Johnson called "Negro

[5] For all information on the goals of the Protest at the Polls organization see Constitution of Protest at the Polls, November 9, 1963, MARBL, Emory University, Box 4 folder 6.

[6] Letter from Bennett Johnson to Killens May 17, 1964, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 4 Folder 7.

[7] See page 7-8 of this thesis for a summary of Cha-Jua and Lang's definition of Black Power and its tenets.

reservations."[8] This presents an example of Killens's possible influence on a local activist group, which as we will see, adopted the general themes espoused by the AAF and framed them to address the specific societal ills of the local black communities.[9]

John Oliver Killens's influence is even more evident in a Chicago symposium organized by Protest at the Polls on January 1, 1965. It was arranged to commemorate the 102nd anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and reflected the local character of the organization. The symposium included the participation of Chicagoan civil rights activists such as local NAACP members, Gus Savage, editor of the African American newspaper the *Chicago Bulletin*, and other local academics.[10]

Killens's influence is manifested in the fact that he was the keynote speaker[11] and that the entire symposium was purposefully crafted around the themes expressed in Killens's *Black Man's Burden*. As mentioned earlier, *Black Man's Burden* was a collection of essays that advocated future Black Power tenets such as Pan-Africanism, Black Nationalism, self-defense, positive black self-image, and the need for black unity within African American communities. Of course there were other activists and groups that articulated these ideas during this time, such as Malcolm X and the

---

[8] Letter from Bennett Johnson to Killens May 17, 1964, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 4 Folder 7.

[9] It is not clear if and how Johnson implemented his housing code reforms. The only evidence of the Protest at the Polls organization outside of the Killens collection is the articles in black newspapers which reported on the group event Killens attended in 1965.

[10] For Protest at the Polls symposium see *Daily Defender*, December 31, 1964, *Chicago Defender*, January 2, 1965, *Chicago Defender*, January 9, 1965, and Press release by Protest at the Polls, Dec 1964, MARBL, Emory University, Box 5 folder 2.

[11] There is no evidence of what exactly Killens said in his address.

Nation of Islam which was headquartered in Chicago.[12] Yet, the fact that the group specifically framed their symposium around Killens's ideas demonstrated how influential Killens was to the organization. Protest at the Polls was particularly attracted to Killens's idea on the need for a strong sense of black empowerment in the black community. For example, one of Killens's main points in "Downsouth-Upsouth," one of the essays in *Black Man's Burden*, was that white oppression caused blacks to suffer from "psychological castration," which prevented them from empowering themselves and kept them under the false notion that they were dependent on the help of white liberals [13]

Protest at the Polls used Killens's theme on empowerment and interpreted it to fit to their particular needs in Chicago. Protest at the Polls endorsed Killens's idea of instilling community based racial pride and dignity and inferred that the next logical step was to build a powerful and united black voting bloc in Chicago. This black political machine could then lead to the formation of a semi-autonomous community in which African Americans built their own economy, institutions, and culture to enrich their livelihoods free from white oppression, which would allow them to finally obtain their liberation.

To Killens, involvement with the Protest at the Polls organization was a prime example of his "master plan" working as it was intended: blacks adopting the themes expressed by the black artists and implementing them around the country. However,

---

[12] For more on the Nation of Islam see Dawn-Marie Gibson, *A History of the Nation of Islam: Race, Islam, and the Quest for Freedom* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Publishing, 2012).

[13] For essays and themes in *Black Man's Burden* see John Oliver Killens, *Black Man's Burden* (New York: Trident Press, 1965).

the particular case in Chicago complicated that narrative. While it is obvious that they were influenced by Killens's rhetoric, it is also clear that local activists developed strategies based on their own unique circumstances within their localities. In the end, the "Protest at the Polls" organization demonstrated the fact that local and national organization shared black nationalist views that were in vogue before the BPM officially began. More importantly however, it also revealed how local groups used contemporary ideologies to meet local needs.[14]

[14] *Daily Defender*, Dec 31, 1964; *Chicago Defender*, January 2, 1965; *Chicago Defender*, January 9, 1965; Letter from Killens to Bennett Johnson, Dec 10, 1964, MARBL Emory, Box 5 Folder 2; Gilyard, *Literary Activism*, 199.

II. The Political Activism of John Oliver Killens and the Black Power Movement in Newark, New Jersey 1969-1970

"…a magnificent Black and beautiful victory for Newark, the nation and the world. Now the task begins anew. Any time you need me, I am at your service."

-John Oliver Killens in a letter congratulating Kenneth Gibson becoming elected mayor of Newark in 1970[1]

John Oliver Killens's political activism was also a factor in local black politics in Newark, New Jersey after the official articulation of Black Power. Newark politics was dominated by whites in the 1960s, despite the fact that the city's minorities made up a numerical majority of the population. To Black Power activists, this represented the archetypal example of how whites retained their oppressive power to the detriment of African Americans. Consequently, this situation led to urban riots that were sweeping northern cities in the late 1960s, including Newark. In that city, a movement of localized Black political power was born. According to historian Komozi Woodard, with Amiri Baraka (formerly LeRoi Jones)[2] leading the way, the Black Power Movement in Newark sought to "accelerate the process of black nationality formation through the rapid spread of independent black economic, institutional, cultural, social, and political development." African Americans and Puerto Ricans, who made up the largest minority groups in Newark respectively, both recognized that they were being oppressed by whites.

---

[1] Letter from Killens to Mayor Gibson June 24, 1970, MARBL Emory, Box 21 folder 8

[2] LeRoi Jones changed his name to Amiri Baraka in 1965, one year after his involvement in Killens's Association of Artists for Freedom town hall (See Chapter 3). Komozi Woodard argues that the name change was a response to the death of Malcolm X. According to Woodard, Baraka was influenced by Malcolm X's ideas regarding self-determination, self-respect, and self-defense for blacks, and felt that Malcolm X embodied the black ethos and the mood of the "revolutionary black consciousness." This speaks to the enormous influence Malcolm X had on participants of the BPM. See Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999) 59.

Logically, they calculated that if they joined together against their oppressors and utilized their electoral power, then liberation would ensue.[3]

This alliance culminated in the Black and Puerto Rican Conference of 1969.[4] The conference echoed sentiments of Pan-Africanism and Cold War Non-Alignment against "internal colonialism" in America, and external colonialism throughout the world. The members crafted a reform agenda using Black Power principles. The reforms fell into five categories: Law enforcement in the community, Education, Health, Welfare, and Economic Development. Examples of reforms in these categories included the following: (1) Establishment of an effective police review board to investigate and hear community complaints concerning police activity; (2) The addition of Swahili and Spanish languages to the curriculum in all public schools; (3) Welfare recipients should be given a greater role in welfare policy making; and (4) The appointment of highly trained, sensitive and creative Blacks and Puerto Ricans on all boards where decisions are made on housing. All of these reforms were designed for African Americans and Puerto Ricans to control their own destinies.[5]

Blacks and Puerto Ricans recognized that in order to achieve these objectives, they needed to elect candidates to public office; the 1969 Conference was designed to do just that. The convention nominated Kenneth A. Gibson, an African American, for mayor and four candidates for councilman – three African Americans (Donald Tucker,

---

[3] For the goals of the BPM in Newark see Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation*, 114-115; For a comparison of white, African America, and Puerto Rican populations in Newark see Ibid., 75.

[4] Komozi's book does not emphasize the participation of the Puerto Rican delegation. Therefore it is unclear if there were any clear differences in ideology and strategy between blacks and Puerto Ricans at the conference. Because the two sides recognized that the only way they could succeed was to unite together around common goals, it is probable that there was consensus among the two delegations.

[5] Black and Puerto Rican Political Convention, Newark, New Jersey, November 14-16, 1969, MARBL Emory, Box 110 Folder 13; *Daily Defender*, January 6, 1970.

Earl Harris, and C. Theodore Pinckney) and one Puerto Rican (Ramon Aneses). Prominent African American speakers at the conference were Ossie Davis, Mayor of Gary, Indiana, Richard Hatcher, and Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm.[6] However, despite a numerical electoral advantage, the conventions nominations did not ensure victory. Their remained the issue of another black candidate, George Richardson, who belonged to the old guard of the Civil Rights Movement in Newark.[7]

While Killens did not attend the conference, he kept close tabs on it as he supported Amiri Baraka's efforts to implement a Black Power platform in Newark.[8] Killens's association with the white power structure in Newark was not a positive one. In 1969, Killens's son-in-law, Barry Wynn, was arrested in Newark during the summer riots and was brutally beaten by the police. Wynn was arrested with Baraka and the two were sentenced to one and a half and two years in prison respectively. Even though they both won their appeals, Killens's financial funds were nearly depleted due to lawyer fees and he was forced to write to friends asking for financial support. The event further solidified Killens's Black Power convictions and compelled him to get involved in Newark.[9]

---

[6] In 1967, Richard Hatcher and Cleveland mayor Carol Stokes were the first African Americans to be elected to a major American city. Hatcher was an influential figure in black politics and supporter of the BPM. For more on Hatcher see Alex Poinsett, *Black Power, Gary Style: The Making of Mayor Richard Gordon Hatcher* (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1970); Shirley Chisholm became the first African American woman elected to the United States Congress in 1968. And was one of the founders of the Congressional Black Caucus. She represented Brooklyn's congressional district until she retired in 1982. For more on Chisholm see Susan Duffy, *Shirley Chisholm: A Bibliography of Writings By and About Her* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1988).

[7] For description of convention see Black and Puerto Rican Political Convention, Newark, New Jersey, November 14-16, 1969, MARBL Emory, Box 110 Folder 13, *Daily Defender*, January 6, 1970, *New Amsterdam News*, November 22, 1969, and *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 6, 1969, For announcement of Richardson's candidacy see *New York Amsterdam News*, Feb 07, 1970.

[8] In Komozi's book he does not mention Killens a single time. This thesis is the first to examine Killens's involvement in the Newark movement. There are no indications of how the candidates or the members of the conference, besides of Baraka, felt about Killens's involvement.

Killens joined the struggle in Newark by publicly opposing George Richardson's candidacy. Killens argued that the prospect of a Richardson administration represented a stark threat to the prospect of the BPM in the city. He felt that Richardson personified the ills and limitations of the CRM and his ideas on integration and cooperation with whites would only keep African Americans relegated to urban ghettos where they were stuck in a vicious cycle of white oppression and black self-hate. Killens, along with other prominent African Americans such as Ossie Davis, Michigan Representative John Conyers, Richard Hatcher, and Shirley Chisholm all wrote a personal letter to George Richardson demanding that he drop out of the race so that Gibson could win. Killens also published the letter in black newspapers to put public pressure on Richardson. He recognized that having both Richardson and Gibson on the ballot would split the black vote, enabling Anthony Imperiale, a self-professed white supremacist, to win the election. In his letter to Richardson, Killens wrote that if he does not pull out he "will be responsible for Anthony Imperiale winning. This is known all over the country."[10]

Richardson refused to back down and responded to Killens in the *Philadelphia Tribune*. First, Richardson argued that the convention's Black Power philosophy was unrealistic. "In order to win," Richardson argued, "any black candidate must be able to gather at least 10-12% of the white vote. In this ethnically oriented city, no candidate

---

[9] For Killens's son and law and Baraka getting arrested in Newark see Gilyard, *John Oliver Killens*, 232; For Killens asking for money to pay for lawyer fees see Letter from John and Grace Killens to their friends Carol and Charollette July 12, 1969, MARBL Emory, Box 21 Folder 7. The leader does not include Carol and Charollette's last name, but based on the letter it seemed that they were good friends with the John and Grace Killens. Grace Killens's contribution and ideas regarding John Killens's political activism is not clear either. Their frequent correspondence is nearly completely devoid of discussion on political issues and mostly concentrates on family and work matters.

[10] For Killens's and others asking Richardson to drop out see *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 14, 1970 and Letter from Baraka to Killens, February 17, 1970, MARBL, Emory University, Killens Collection, Box 9 Folder 4.

coming out of a black convention, which excluded white participation merely on the grounds of race, has any hope of winning such substantial white support." Secondly, he argued that Black Power was a morally flawed philosophy. "Morally speaking, the black and Puerto Rican convention was merely another facet of the same racism we have spent our adult lives fighting." Richardson ended his refutation by emphasizing his credentials as a local leader in the Civil Rights Movement throughout the 1950s and 1960s and claimed he had the support of various Newark civic, religious, political, and labor leaders.[11]

Yet Killens, Baraka, and other Gibson supporters were not deterred. They continued their campaign of opposition to Richardson in order to realize what they saw as the manifestation of Black political power in Newark. In the midst of the conflict between the black candidates, Killens and Baraka appeared together in a press conference to demonstrate their solidarity for Gibson and their political agenda. Furthermore, on June 15, 1970, prominent black nationalist historian John Henrik Clarke[12] joined Killens in another press conference that attempted to shore up support from the black writers, historians, poets, and professionals before the election. The next day on June 16, 1970, Kenneth Gibson won the election and became the first African American mayor of Newark, New Jersey.[13]

---

[11] *Philadelphia Tribune*, March 14, 1970

[12] Clarke was an important African American intellectual and was an influential figure in the Black Power Movement. For more on Clarke see John Henrik Clarke see James Coyers and Julius E. Thompson, *Pan African Nationalism in the Americas : The Life and Times of John Henrik Clarke* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004).

[13] As noted earlier, the two black mayors elected before Gibson were Richard Hatcher and Carl Stokes who were both elected in 1968.

John Oliver Killens's support of Kenneth Gibson and the Black and Puerto Rican Convention that nominated him is another example of his political activism in local communities. Furthermore, one can use Killens's activity in Newark to see how Black Power activists utilized the ideology in that city. "Protest at the Polls" and the Black and Puerto Rican Convention in Newark illustrate how blacks adopted various Black Power principles and tailored them to combat the specific inequalities in their communities. Moreover, while groups such as SNCC and CORE were crucial to the movement due to their efforts in traveling to different localities and spreading the Black Power philosophy, the Black and Puerto Rican Convention shows how a mainly grassroots BPM took hold and succeed against staunch white backlash. Secondly, by examining Killens's political activism in Newark, one can also see the schism between the BPM and the CRM, which was personified in the conflict between supporters of Kenneth Gibson and George Richardson. This reinforces Cha-Jua and Lang's argument that the BPM and CRM were separate movements that differed significantly on discourse, tactics, and tone. Even though both were essentially fighting for the same end, the strategies on how to achieve it were very dissimilar. Therefore, Killens's participation in Protest in the Polls and the Newark Convention illuminates his importance before and during the BPM. More broadly, it also gives further insight into the complexities of the Black Freedom Movement in America.

Conclusion

The victory, which Killens characterized as "a magnificent Black and beautiful victory for Newark, the nation and the world," seemed to illustrate something that Killens had been publicly advocating for years: that the Black Power Movement and its principles were the key to African Americans experiencing the liberation which eluded them for centuries. These sentiments were also shared by Amiri Baraka, who put immense effort into the movement in Newark. Unfortunately, the idea of Gibson's election serving as a stepping stone to getting other African Americans elected around the country and ushering in an era of Black Power dominance turned out to be unrealistic. Only a few years later, Gibson's administration was mired in corruption. Baraka, arguably the person who was most responsible for the movement that resulted in Gibson's victory, criticized Gibson by saying he was a "neo-colonialist" who was "for the profit of Prudential, Public Service, Port Authority, and other huge corporations that run in and around and through and out of Newark paying little or no taxes."[1]

In some ways, Gibson's downfall in the early to mid-1970s paralleled the decline of the BPM as a whole throughout the country. In the 1970s, white liberals were increasingly turned off by the racial politics of Black Power. In fact, a small number of them reoriented their ideologies and became the New Conservatives. This coincided with a more general backlash in the electorate in which many whites consolidated into a powerful political niche called the "silent majority." This new electoral bloc successfully elected Governors, Senators, Representatives, and President Richard Nixon, all of whom

[1] For Baraka's criticism of Gibson see Thomas Dolan, "Newark and its Gateway Complex," *Newark Metro*, Rutgers University, http://www.newarkmetro.rutgers.edu/reports/display.php?id=17&page=3

turned a cold shoulder to the demands of African Americans. Consequently, the efforts of Black Power activists were severely hindered. Despite the limitations of the movement, it nonetheless stands as an immensely important piece of American and African American history. The BPM still remains an interesting and captivating philosophy. As historians continue to study the movement, its complexities and nuances will continue to unfold.[2]

This is especially clear from the political activism of John Oliver Killens. Between 1964 and 1971, Killens was an important pioneer and participant in the Black Power Movement. His activity in national groups like the Association of Artists for Freedom and local organizations like Protest at the Polls showed how he articulated important tenets that later were adopted by the BPM. Such ideas included the need to "unbrainwash" African Americans, develop black self-pride, express black political power, and create independent black institutions and political organizations. Furthermore, his involvement in attempting to implement the tenets of the BPM through national and local groups and events such as the Congress on Racial Equality and Newark's Black and Puerto Rican Convention shows how he was a vital contributor during the movement. This is evident in his efforts crafting black education in schools, instilling a sense of racial pride and unity, bringing a Pan-African focus to the CORE convention, and assisting in the election of Kenneth Gibson in Newark.

In the end, one could argue that Killens, via his political activism, is analogous to the fictional character Lumumba, the protagonist in his novel *The Cotillion*. Toward the end of the book, Lumumba tries to convince blacks to leave their home where they are

[2] For New Conservatives see George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement since 1945* (Bloomington, IN; Indiana University Press, 1975)

pressured to conform to the ideals of white society. At the book's conclusion, he shouted "Follow us to liberation, up with the Black Nation" while he led his friends Yoruba, Big Matt, and Daphne out of Dixieland and into a new life where they embraced their black identity.[3] It is true that one could understand the ending of *The Cotillion* as demonstrating how Killens romanticized the significance of leaving Dixie and failed to render the complexities of the Black Power Movement in the North. However, one could also conclude that through his efforts to get blacks to accept the principles of the Black Power Movement, Killens, like Lumumba from the novel, led many African Americans away from the oppressive shackles of racism and into a liberated life of black empowerment.

[3] Killens, *The Cotillion*, 255.

Appendix

Number of requests Killens received from local political activism groups in various American cities from 1964-1971

Year	*1964*	*1965*	*1966*	*1967*	*1968*	*1969*	*1970*	*1971*
Number of Requests	*18*	*19*	*16*	*12*	*16*	*17*	*10*	*10*

Bibliography

Books and Articles

Bankie, B. F. and K.J. Mchombu. *Pan-Africanism/African Nationalism: Strengthening the Unity of Africa and Its Diaspora.* Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2008.

Bloom, Jack M. *Race, Class, and the Civil Rights Movement.* Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987.

Breitman, George. *By Any Means Necessary: Speeches, Interviews, and a Letter by Malcolm X* . New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970.

Campbell, Horace and Rodney Worrell. *Pan-Africanism, Pan-Africanists, and African Liberation in the 21st Century.* Washington, D.C.: New Academia Publishing, 2006.

Catsam, Derek Charles. *Freedom's Main Line: The Journey of Reconciliation and the Freedom Rides* . Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2009.

Chapman, Abraham. *New Black Voices: An Anthology of Contemporary Afro-American Literature.* New York: Mentor Publishing, 1972.

Cheney, Anne. *Lorraine Hansberry (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishing, 1984).* Boston: Twayne Publishing, 1984.

Cone, James. *Martin and Malcolm and America: A Dream or a Nightmare* . Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Press, 1991.

Connerly, Charles E. *"The most segregated city in America": City Planning and Civil Rights in Birmingham, 1920-1980.* Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2005.

Coyers, James and Julius E. Thompson. *Pan African Nationalism in the Americas : The Life and Times of John Henrik Clarke.* Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004.

Davies, Carole Boyce. *Encyclopedia of the African Diaspora.* Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008.

Dee, Ossie Davis and Ruby. *With Ossie and Ruby: In This Life Together.* New York: William Morrow Publishing, 1998.

Dolan, Thomas. *"Newark and its Gateway Complex"*. Newark Metro, Rutgers University, http://www.newarkmetro.rutgers.edu/reports/display.php?id=17&page=3, n.d.

Duffy, Susan. *Shirley Chisholm: A Bibliography of Writings By and About Her.* Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1988.

Euchner, Charles C. *Nobody Turn Me Around : A People's History of the 1963 March on Washington.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2010.

Franklin, Vincent P. and Bettye Collier Thomas. *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement.* New York: New York University Press, 2001.

Garrow, David. *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* . New York: William Morrow Paperbacks, 2004.

Geschwender, James A. *The Black Revolt: The Civil Rights Movement, Ghetto Uprisings, and Separatism.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Publishing, 1971.

Gibson, Dawn-Marie. *A History of the Nation of Islam: Race, Islam, and the Quest for Freedom.* Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Publishing, 2012.

Gilyard, Keith. *John Oliver Killens: A Life of Literary Activism.* Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2010.

—. *The Rhetoric and Poetics of Liberation Memories: John Oliver Killens.* Detriot: Wayne State University Press, 2003.

Hal, Jacquelyn Dowd. *"The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," Journal of American History 91* . March 2005.

Hannon, Sharron. *"Women and the Civil Rights Movement: Roles Too Lang Unexamined," The Journal of the Southern Regional Council Vol. 10* . December 1988.

Hatch, Shari Dorantes. *Encyclopedia of African-American Writing* . Amenia, NY: Grey House Publishing, 2009.

Jackson, Lawrence. *The Indignant Generation.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Jeanne F. Theoharris and Komozi Woodard, eds. *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South,1940-1980.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Jones, Charles E. *The Black Panther Party* . Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998.

Jones, Clarence E. *The Black Panther Party Reconsidered.* Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998.

Joseph, Peniel E. *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America.* New York: Henry Holt and Company Press, 2006.

Kanza, Thomas. *The Rise and Fall of Patrice Lumumba: Conflict in the Congo.* Boston: G.K. Hall Publishing, 1979.

Killens, John Oliver. *And Then We Heard the Thunder* . New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishing, 1963.

—. *Black Man's Burden* . New York: Trident Press, 1965.

—. *The Cotillion.* New York: Trident Press, 1971.

—. *Rappin With Myself.* New York: Vintage Books, 1971

—. *Youngblood* . New York: Trident Press, 1954.

King, Coretta Scott. *My Life with Martin Luther King Jr.* New York: Puffin Publishing, 1993.

King, Richard H. *Race, Culture, and the Intellectuals, 1940-1970.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004.

Lang, Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence. *"The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies." Journal of African American History, 92.* Spring 2007.

Lawson, Steven F. *Freedom Then, Freedom Now: The Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement," American Historical Review 96.* April 1991.

Lehman, Paul R. *The Development of the Black Psyche in the Writings of John Oliver Killens* . Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003.

Levine, Daniel. *Bayard Rustin and the Civil Rights Movement.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999.

Marable, Manning. *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* . London: Penguin Books, 2011.

—. *Race, Reform and Rebellion.* Jackson, MS: Univesity Press of Mississippi, 2007.

Marshall, Paule. *A Triangular Road: A Memoir* . New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2009.

Martin, Tony. *The Pan-African Connection : From Slavery to Garvey and Beyond.* Dover, MA: Majority Press, 1998.

McKissick, Floyd. *A Black Manifesto.* New York: National Congress of Racial Equality, 1967.

Monoteith, Sharon and Peter J. Ling. *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement.* New York: Garland Publishing, 1999.

Nash, George. *The Conservative Intellectual Movement since 1945* . Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1975.

Poinsett, Alex. *Black Power, Gary Style: The Making of Mayor Richard Gordon Hatcher.* Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, 1970.

Pratt, Louis. *James Baldwin* . Boston: Twayne Pubishers, 1978.

Rudwick, Elliott M. and August Meier. *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* . Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1975.

Sales, William W. *From Civil Rights to Black Liberation: Malcolm X and the Organization of African American Unity.* Boston: South End Publishing, 1994.

Silberman, Charles E. *A Crisis in Black and White.* New York: Random House Publishing, 1964.

Smethurst, James. *The Black Arts Movement.* Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Strain, Christopher. *"Soul City, North Carolina: Black Power, Utopia, and the African American Dream,"*. The Journal of African American History, Vol. 89, No. 1 , Winter 2004.

Sugrue, Thomas. *Sweet Land of Liberty: the Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North.* New York: Random House, 2008.

Thelwell, Ekwueme Michael and Stokely Carmichael. *Ready for Revolution: the Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael.* New York: Scribner, 2003.

Timar, Eszter. *Paule Marshall.* http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Marshall.html, Spring 2000.

Tyson, Timothy B. *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams & the Roots of Black Power* . Chapell Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1999.

White, Marjorie Langenecker and Andrew Michael Manis. *Birmingham revolutionaries : the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights.* Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000.

Woodard, Komozi. *A Nation Within a Nation* . Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999.

Primary Sources

Chicago Defender, November 1963-January 1965.

Cleveland Call and Post, February 1963.

Daily Defender, November 1963-January 1970.

John Oliver Killens Papers, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta.

Los Angeles Sentinel, July 1964-June 1967.

New York Amsterdam News, November 1963-Febuary 1970.

New York Times, June 1964.

Norfolk New Journal, November 1963.

Philadelphia Tribune, March 1970.

Pittsburgh Courier, November 1963-December 1969.