meetings and with the 1972 presidential election approaching, there were mounting calls for a national black political convention. In March 1972, nearly 3,000 delegates from across the country gathered in Gary, Indiana, to attempt to draft a national black political agenda. For three days, the assembled delegates, whose ranks included elected officials, civil rights activists, trade unionists, community organizers, and members of Pan-Africanist organizations, debated among themselves. Finally the delegates ratified a document that called for increased political and economic empowerment, increased black involvement and participation in international concerns, and increased control of institutions within African-American communities.

From Muhammad Ali's struggle for the right to observe and to practice his religious beliefs, to the protests of Howard University students on behalf of wide-ranging curricular and institutional changes, to the efforts of the Gary delegates to draft and to ratify an agenda for increased empowerment, activists and organizers served notice that a new era had arrived. Characterized by a growing sense of racial pride and racial solidarity, African-Americans increasingly sought to challenge the status quo in both the larger American community and the African-American community. No longer wedded to the past, they sought to find more innovative, more creative, and more empowering methods to meet their needs, wants, and aspirations.

1. " '. . . I'm the Greatest,' a poem by Cassius Clay"

Part of Muhammad Ali's appeal as a rising heavyweight contender and later champion lay in the poems he would often recite before forthcoming bouts. In these poems, he would call attention to his talents and mockingly chide his opponents. In this 1963 poem (which appeared in* Life *magazine), Ali, then known as Cassius Clay, tells of his importance to boxing, predicts that he will win the heavyweight championship, and marvels at his talent and prowess.

This is a story about a man
With iron fists and a beautiful tan.

He talks a lot and he boasts indeed
Of a powerful punch and blinding speed.
The fight game was dying
And Promoters were crying
For someone to come along
With a new and different song.
Patterson was dull, quiet and sad,
And Sonny Liston was just as bad.
Then along came a kid named Cassius Clay,
Who said, "Liston, I'll take your title away."
This colorful fighter is something to see,
And heavyweight champ he's certain to be.
You get the impression while watching him fight
That he plays cat and mouse, then turns out the light.
What a frustrating feeling I'm sure it must be,
To be hit by blows you can't even see.
Where was he first? Where was he last?
How can you conquer a man so fast?
I'm sure his opponents have tried their best,
But one by one on the canvas they rest.
Everyone knew when Cassius wasn't around,
For quietness descended on the town.
If Clay says a mosquito can pull a plow,
Don't ask him how—
Hitch him up!

2. "The Greatest"

Muhammad Ali with Richard Durham

After having held the heavyweight championship for two years, Muhammad Ali came under increasing national scrutiny and criticism for his draft deferment and his comments against the Vietnam War. In these excerpts from his 1975 autobiography, Ali describes his efforts in 1966–1967 to be exempted from the armed forces and, when unsuccessful, his decision to refuse induction.

Of all the poems I wrote, all the words I spoke, all the slogans I shouted—"I'm the greatest!" . . . "I'm the prettiest!" . . . "I can't be beat!" . . . "He must fall in five!"—of all the controversies that

aroused people against me or for me, none would have the effect on my life or change the climate around me like the "poem" I read on a TV hookup one warm February afternoon in Miami, 1966.

I was in training and looking forward to my third defense of the World Heavyweight Title. This time against six-foot-six Ernie "The Octopus" Terrell, so named because he wrapped his long arms like tentacles around his opponents, smothering their blows and hugging them half to death.

I had come out into the front yard of the little gray cement cottage that my White Southern Christian Millionaire Sponsors had rented in my name in the black section of Miami. A TV reporter had been set up to ask my reaction to the fact that the Louisville Draft Board had just promoted me from 1-Y, deferred status, to 1-A, making me eligible for immediate induction into the U.S. Army.

I gave it: "I ain't got no quarrel with the Viet Cong." Later, when they kept asking the same question, I rhymed it for them:

Keep asking me, no matter how long
On the war in Viet Nam, I sing this song
I ain't got no quarrel with the Viet Cong . . .

I said more than that, of course, much more, and all evening, but those were the only words it seemed the world wanted to hear from me. They broke out in headlines across America and overseas—in London, Paris, Berlin, Zurich, Madrid, Hong Kong, Rome, Amsterdam—and for years afterwards their echo would rumble in the air around me. In fact, the rumbling began even before I got to sleep that night.

After the reporters left I took a ride over to a Miami Beach steakhouse, and when I came back my brother was in the doorway. He was beckoning me in a way I understood to mean he wanted no reporters to follow.

"The phones won't stop," he whispered as I brushed past him. "They gone crazy."

We had three phones and all three were ringing. I was reaching for the nearest one.

"Wait a minute." He tried to restrain me. "Let me answer. They all insane."

But I was already hearing a hard, mean voice on the other end of the line: "This you, Cassius?"

"No, sir," I said, feeling he should at least acknowledge my name. "This is Muhammad Ali."

"Muhammad, Cassius—whatever you call yourself, I heard you on TV!" he shouted. "You cowardly, turncoat black rat! If I had a bomb I would blow you to hell! I've got a message for you and your kind. . . ." I hung up, since I had already gotten the message, and picked up the kitchen phone. A woman's voice was hysterical: "Cassius Clay? Is that you? You better'n my son? You black bastard, you! I pray to God they draft you tomorrow. Draft you and shoot you on the spot! Listen to me. . . ."

I let her go to pick up the phone in the bedroom. This time it was a voice I knew. A deputy sheriff named Murphy who had escorted me around Miami Beach many times. He had a soft drawl, like a fatherly bigot: "Now, Cassius, you just done gone too far now. Somebody's telling you wrong. Them Jews and Dagos you got around you. Now, some of my boys want to come down and talk to you, for your own good."

I hung up and took the phone handed to me by my sparring partner, Cody Jones. There was only heavy breathing. Then: "You gonna die, nigger, before the night's out! You gonna die for that!" and more heavy breathing.

Those who had always wanted me to disappear from the scene reacted quickest. The first calls came mostly from the white side of Miami. But as the news spread across the time zones, other voices were saying, "That was mighty fine." . . . "I'm glad you said that." . . . "It's time someone spoke out."

And in the days that followed, calls came in from Kansas City, Omaha, St. Louis, Las Vegas, New York, Philadelphia. Housewives and professionals and plain everyday people—who I never heard from except when I pulverized somebody in the ring—thanked me for what I said. Students called from campuses, urging me to come and speak. It was a strange new feeling, and now, without planning or even wanting it, I was an important part of a movement I hardly knew existed.

For days I was talking to people from a whole new world. People who were not even interested in sports, especially prize-fighting. One in particular I will never forget: a remarkable man, seventy years older than me but with a fresh outlook which seemed fairer than that of any white man I had ever met in America.

My brother Rahaman had handed me the phone, saying, "Operator says a Mr. Bertrand Russell is calling Mr. Muhammad Ali." I took it and heard the crisp accent of an Englishman: "Is this Muhammad Ali?" When I said it was, he asked if I had been quoted correctly.

I acknowledged that I had been, but wondered out loud, "Why does everyone want to know what I think about Viet Nam? I'm no politician, no leader. I'm just an athlete."

"Well," he said, "this is a war more barbaric than others, and because a mystique is built up around a champion fighter, I suppose the world has more than incidental curiosity about what the World Champion thinks. Usually he goes with the tide. You surprised them."

I liked the sound of his voice, and told him I might be coming to England soon to fight the European champ, Henry Cooper, again.

"If I fight Cooper, who'd you bet on?"

He laughed. "Henry's capable, you know, but I would pick you."

I gave him back a stock answer I used on such occasions: "You're not as dumb as you look." And I invited him to ringside when I got to London.

He couldn't come to the fight, but for years we exchanged cards and notes. I had no idea who he was (the name Bertrand Russell had never come up in Central High in Louisville) until two years later when I was thumbing through a *World Book Encyclopedia* in the *Muhammad Speaks* newspaper office in Chicago and saw his name and picture. He was described as one of the greatest mathematicians and philosophers of the twentieth century. That very minute I sat down and typed out a letter of apology for my offhand remark, "You're not as dumb as you look," and he wrote back that he had enjoyed the joke.

A short time after I fought Cooper, when I had another fight prospect in London, I made plans for Belinda and me to visit

him, but I had to explain to him that the outcome of my fight against being drafted to Viet Nam might hold me up. The letter he wrote back was sent to me in Houston:

> I have read your letter with the greatest admiration and personal respect.
>
> In the coming months there is no doubt that the men who rule Washington will try to damage you in every way open to them, but I am sure you know that you spoke for your people and for the oppressed everywhere in the courageous defiance of American power. They will try to break you because you are a symbol of a force they are unable to destroy, namely, the aroused consciousness of a whole people determined no longer to be butchered and debased with fear and oppression. You have my wholehearted support. Call me when you get to England.
>
> Yours sincerely,
> Bertrand Russell

By the time I got his letter I had been convicted and my passport lifted, just as his had been in World War I. Four years later, when my passport was returned, the friend I had made with my remark in my front yard had died. I thought of him whenever I visited England and for years I kept a picture of his warm face and wide eyes. "Not as dumb as he looks."

I thought the letter was dead and buried, somewhere on a Houston street seven years ago. But I came across it when I was moving out of Cherry Hill, New Jersey, out of the old Spanish-style villa I had bought with the money I made from the first fight after my exile. I was going through stuff I had accumulated from my last three homes—my childhood home in Louisville, then Chicago and Philadelphia—to see what I wanted to keep, and what to throw away.

I found a faded red, white and blue jacket with KENTUCKY GOLDEN GLOVES CHAMPION on the back in pretty gold letters. I had walked all over Louisville wearing that jacket. I was fourteen years old, and it was the first big prize I had won. I threw the jacket

into a box and opened the old chest of drawers where Belinda stored my papers. I pulled out a blue box, and a stack of letters spilled onto the floor.

Kneeling down to pick them up, I noticed the gold-and-green-trimmed letter from President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, the blue stationery from Premier Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria, congratulations from President Charles de Gaulle of France, an invitation to Egypt from President Gamal Abdel Nasser, greetings from President François Duvalier of Haiti, King Faisal Abdel Aziz of Saudi Arabia, President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan, Prime Minister Jack Lynch of Ireland, and the long, plain white envelope I thought I'd thrown away. At first I was almost afraid to pick it up. I knew what it was and the memories it would bring back. I got a chilly feeling, and somehow it seemed as though the mailman had just delivered it, and the part of my life it represented was starting all over again.

I asked Belinda why she had put it there. "It belongs there," she insisted. "This is where I keep all the letters from heads of state."

Although I had gotten congratulations from all over the world after winning the Heavyweight Crown, at that time I was only the second American Heavyweight Champion who was never invited to the White House. Jack Johnson was the other. My only contact with an American President was this letter. It came on April Fool's Day, 1967, ten days after my title defense against Zora Folley. It read:

ORDER FOR TRANSFERRED MAN
TO REPORT FOR INDUCTION

FROM: The President of the United States
TO: Mr. Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr.
AKA Muhammad Ali
5962 Ardmore Street
Houston, Texas 77021

Greetings:

Having heretofore been ordered to report for induction by Local Board No. 47, State of Kentucky, Louisville,

> Kentucky, which is your Local Board of Origin, and having been transferred upon your own request to Local Board No. 61, State of Texas, Houston, Texas, which is your Local Board of Transfer for delivery to an induction station, you will therefore report to the last named Local Board at 3rd Floor, 701 San Jacinto St., Houston, Texas 77022 on April 28, 1967, at 8:30 A.M.

I had filed for draft exemption as a conscientious objector, telling the government that as a minister in the Nation of Islam ". . . to bear arms or kill is against my religion. And I conscientiously object to any combat military service that involves the participation in any war in which the lives of human beings are being taken." The claim was rejected in Louisville, and [attorney Hayden] Covington took the case to the Kentucky Appeal Board. He based my appeal on religious grounds, and the fact that blacks were not represented on the Selective Service Boards that judged me. In a special hearing, Circuit Court Judge Lawrence Grauman determined that my beliefs were sincere, and recommended that my claim be upheld.

A few days later South Carolina Democratic Representative L. Mendel Rivers told the Veterans of Foreign Wars, "If the theologian of Black Muslim power, Cassius Clay, is deferred by the board in Louisville, you watch what happens in Washington. . . . We are going to do something if that board takes your boy and leaves him [Clay] home to double-talk."

Covington convinced me to move to Houston. His sister, he said, was married to Selective Service Director General Lewis B. Hershey, and we hoped I could get a better deal in Texas. But if the deal I got in Houston was better because my lawyer's sister was married to the draft boss, I hate to think what might have happened elsewhere.

It was two weeks before the Houston Board turned down my appeal. Covington called me in Chicago. "It looks like trouble, Champ," he told me. "General Hershey has just predicted that you won't be deferred. This isn't like any case I've had before. Joe Namath can get off to play football and George Hamilton gets

out because he's going with the President's daughter, but you're different. They want to make an example out of you."

When the cab swings up to an old courthouse, there's not a soul around.

"If this is where they're drafting people," the driver says, "nobody's showing up today." He rocks with laughter. "The war's on and nobody's showing up."

Covington almost screams, "Then it must be the other building. Hurry up!"

The driver steps on the gas, still laughing. "Nobody's showing up for the war. Ain't that a bitch?"

He pulls up to a large stone building, the U.S. Customs House, 701 Jacinto Street, where everybody has shown up for the war. People waiting for my arrival have jammed the sidewalk. When they see our cab drive up, they wave picket signs and scream, "Muhammad Ali, don't go!" . . . "Muhammad Ali!"

The steps of buildings all along the street are filled with people and the windows crowded with peering faces.

Some students from Texas Southern University are marching with banners that read STAY HOME, MUHAMMAD ALI! Across the street in a blue denim jacket and jeans stands [SNCC chairman] H. Rap Brown, holding up a clenched fist and surrounded by a group of young blacks shouting, "Hep! Hep! Don't take that step! Hep! Hep! Don't take that step!"

An elderly woman cuts through the crowd, grabs my hand and whispers, "Stand up, brother! We're with you! Stand up! Fight for us! Don't let us down!"

A band of long-haired hippies begin shouting, "We didn't go! You don't go! We didn't go! You don't go!"

Someone grabs my arm, and my lawyer says quietly, "It's the FBI. Go along." A group of policemen push the crowd back from the doors as I return Rap Brown's salute. I climb the step and the people begin to clap and cheer. Newspapermen and photographers are wedging their way through and crying out, "Muhammad, give us the answer!" . . . "Are you going in?" . . . "What's your last word?" . . . "What will your stand be?"

I remember one boy sitting in a corner with tears in his eyes. He's being forced to leave his wife and four children. He doesn't want to go, but he's afraid not to go. All he wants from me is my autograph.

A short, red-haired white boy comes over. "It's something to see you in person. I've read so much about you in the papers."

"Like what?" I ask.

"Well, about your religion. You hate white people, don't you?"

I shake my head. "Do I act like I hate anybody?"

"No." He says nothing more.

An officer walks into the room and there is an uneasy shuffle as everyone tries to pull himself together. My name is third.

Someone whispers, "This is it! This is it!"

"Go left, turn down the hall and go to Room I B," the officer says. "You'll be inducted into the United States Armed Forces! You'll be given further instructions when you get there."

The induction room had been used as a judge's chambers in earlier days and the floor was still covered with its original gold carpeting. A blond green-eyed officer, a little younger than myself, stands behind an oakwood rostrum with American flags on both sides. I'd see his name in the next day's newspapers: Lt. S. Steven Dunkley.

All eyes except Dunkley's are focused on me.

Without looking up from his papers, he orders, "The first four will line up in front and the next four will line up behind them."

We take our places, and I'm third from the left in the second row. I know that I'll be called next to the last to take the step.

A senior officer goes over to the lieutenant and whispers something in his ear. He looks up automatically, and when his eyes meet mine, I feel a knot rise in my throat.

The officers and orderlies had been chatting and joking when I entered, but now everything is quiet. A number of people I can't account for have stepped into the room, some wearing civilian clothes. The young officer at the podium clears his throat.

"Attention!"

We all straighten up somewhat, but the four in front are standing particularly erect. My palms are beginning to sweat.

Dunkley glances quickly around the room before reading his prepared statement. He's probably read it hundreds of times before, but now there is special emphasis in his voice. He tries to make sure that each word is clear: "You are about to be inducted into the Armed Forces of the United States, in the Army, the Navy, the Air Force or the Marine Corps, as indicated by the service announced following your name when called. You will take one step forward as your name and service are called and such step will constitute your induction into the Armed Forces indicated."

He pauses, and even though everyone else is watching me, it seems like he and I are the only ones in the room.

I'm sweating. I look around. It seems like everyone in the entire Induction Center has crept into the room. For months I've drilled myself for this moment, but I still feel nervous. I hope no one notices my shoulders tremble. . . .

The lieutenant has finished with the man on my left and everybody seems to brace himself. The room is still and the lieutenant looks at me intently. He knows that his general, his mayor and everybody in the Houston Induction Center is waiting for this moment. He draws himself up straight and tall.

Something is happening to me. It's as if my blood is changing. I feel fear draining from my body and a rush of anger taking its place.

I hear the politician again: "Who are you to judge?" But who is this white man, no older than me, appointed by another white man, all the way down from the white man in the White House? Who is he to tell me to go to Asia, Africa or anywhere else in the world to fight people who never threw a rock at me or America? Who is this descendant of the slave masters to order a descendant of slaves to fight other people in their own country?

Now I am anxious for him to call me. "Hurry up!" I say to myself. I'm looking straight into his eyes. There's a ripple of movement as some of the people in the room edge closer in anticipation.

"Cassius Clay—Army!"

The room is silent. I stand straight, unmoving. Out of the

corner of my eye I see one of the white boys nodding his head at me, and thin smiles flickering across the faces of some of the blacks. It's as if they are secretly happy to see someone stand up against the power that is ordering them away from their homes and families.

The lieutenant stares at me a long while, then lowers his eyes. One of the recruits snickers and he looks up abruptly, his face beet-red, and orders all the other draftees out of the room. They shuffle out quickly, leaving me standing alone.

He calls out again: "Cassius Clay! Will you please step forward and be inducted into the Armed Forces of the United States?"

All is still. He looks around helplessly. Finally, a senior officer with a notebook full of papers walks to the podium and confers with him a few seconds before coming over to me. He appears to be in his late forties. His hair is streaked with gray and he has a very dignified manner.

"Er, Mr. Clay . . ." he begins. Then, catching himself, "Or Mr. Ali, as you prefer to be called."

"Yes, sir?"

"Would you please follow me to my office? I would like to speak privately with you for a few minutes, if you don't mind."

It's more of an order than a request, but his voice is soft and he speaks politely. I follow him to a pale green room with pictures of Army generals on the walls. He motions me to a chair, but I prefer to stand. He pulls some papers from his notebook, and suddenly drops his politeness, getting straight to the point.

"Perhaps you don't realize the gravity of the act you've just committed. Or maybe you do. But it is my duty to point out to you that if this should be your final decision, you will face criminal charges and your penalty could be five years in prison and ten thousand dollars fine. It's the same for you as it would be for any other offender in a similar case. I don't know what influenced you to act this way, but I am authorized to give you an opportunity to reconsider your position. Selective Service regulations require us to give you a second chance."

"Thank you, sir, but I don't need it."

"It is required"—he never stops talking or looking at his notes—"that you go back into the induction room, stand before the podium and receive the call again."

"Sir, why should I go back out there and waste everybody's time—"

"It's the procedure," he cuts in. "I can't tell you what to do or not to do, but we must follow procedure."

I follow him back into the room, and notice that new faces have appeared. More military personnel, a stenographer and a number of men in civilian clothes, who, I learn later, are FBI agents.

A private hands me a note. "This is from your lawyer."

It's a copy of a letter from U.S. Attorney Morton Sussman.

> I am authorized to advise you that we are willing to enter into an agreement. If you will submit your client for induction, we will be willing to keep him here in the Houston area until all of your civil remedies are exhausted. Otherwise, he will be under criminal indictment. . . .

I crumple it up and stuff it in my pocket. One of the men in civilian clothes who has been watching me now turns and walks out the door. The green-eyed officer is still standing behind the rostrum, ready to read the induction statement. This time I'm closer to him. He's less than an arm's-reach away. I can see drops of sweat on his forehead.

"Mr. Cassius Clay," he begins again, "you will please step forward and be inducted into the United States Army."

Again I don't move.

"Cassius Clay—Army," he repeats. He stands in silence, as though he expects me to make a last-minute change. Finally, with hands shaking, he gives me a form to fill out. "Would you please sign this statement and give your reasons for refusing induction?" His voice is trembling.

I sign quickly and walk out into the hallway. The captain who originally ordered me to the room comes over. "Mr. Clay," he says with a tone of respect that surprises me, "I'll escort you downstairs."

When we reach the bottom of the steps, the television cameramen who had been held up by the guards focus their lights on us, while a platoon of military police scuffle to keep them behind a rope that blocks the end of the corridor.

"Muhammad," a reporter yells, "did you take the step? Are you in the Army?"

"Can we just have a minute, Champ?" another shouts. "What did you do? Can you just tell us yes or no?"

I keep walking with the captain, who leads me to a room where my lawyers are waiting. "You are free to go now," he tells us. "You will be contacted later by the United States Attorney's office."

I step outside and a huge crowd of people rush toward me, pushing and shoving each other and snapping away at me with their cameras. Writers from two French newspapers and one from London throw me a barrage of questions, but I feel too full to say anything. Covington gives them copies of a statement I wrote for them before I left Chicago. In it I cite my ministry and my personal convictions as reasons for refusing to take the step, adding that "I strongly object to the fact that so many newspapers have given the American public and the world the impression that I have only two alternatives in taking this stand—either I go to jail or go into the Army. There is another alternative, and that is justice."

By the time I get to the bottom of the front steps, the news breaks. Everyone is shouting and cheering. Some girls from Texas Southern run over to me, crying, "We're glad you didn't go!" A black boy standing next to H. Rap Brown shouts out, "You don't go, so I won't go!"

I feel a sense of relief and freedom. For the first time in weeks I start to relax. I remember the words of the reporter at the hotel: "How will you act?" Now it's over, and I've come through it. I feel better than when I beat the eight-to-ten odds and won the World Heavyweight Title from Liston.

[Attorney Chauncey] Eskridge pushes me to a cab waiting at the corner.

"You headin' for jail. You headin' straight for jail." I turn and an old white woman is standing behind me, waving a miniature American flag. "You goin' straight to jail. You ain't no champ no more. You ain't never gonna be champ no more. You get down on your knees and beg forgiveness from God!" she shouts in a raspy tone.

I start to answer her, but Covington pulls me inside the cab.

She comes over to my window. "My son's in Viet Nam, and you

no better'n he is. He's there fightin' and you here safe. I hope you rot in jail. I hope they throw away the key."

The judge who later hears my case reflects the same sentiment. I receive a maximum sentence of five years in prison and ten thousand dollars fine. The prosecuting attorney argues, "Judge, we cannot let this man get loose, because if he gets by, all black people will want to be Muslims and get out for the same reasons."

Four years later in June of 1970, the Supreme Court unanimously reverses that decision, 8-0, but now this is the biggest victory of my life. I've won something that's worth whatever price I have to pay. It gives me a good feeling to look at the crowd as we pull off. Seeing people smiling makes me feel that I've spoken for them as well as myself. Deep down, they didn't want the World Heavyweight Champion to give in, and in the days ahead their strength and spirit will keep me going. Even when it looks like I'll go to jail and never fight again.

"They can take away the television cameras, the bright lights, the money, and ban you from the ring," an old man tells me when I get back to Chicago, "but they can't destroy your victory. You have taken a stand for the world and now you are the people's champion."

Bertrand Russell writes to assure me: "The air will change. I sense it."

The World Boxing Authority doesn't take nearly as long as the Government to pass judgment on me. As soon as I get back to my hotel room, I hear a radio announcement that the WBA has stripped me of my title again and that they will hold an elimination tournament to determine my successor. The WBA took action against me back in 1965. And on April 28, 1967, the New York Boxing Commission is the first to take my license. This time it will take me more than seven years to get it back.

3. "Muhammad Ali—The Measure of a Man"

Muhammad Ali's decision to refuse induction into the armed forces would be both jeered and hailed. This is an editorial from* Freedomways, *a New York–based magazine that described itself as "a quarterly review of the Negro freedom movement."

In recent months, with increasing frequency, it has been necessary to use the Editorial pages of FREEDOMWAYS to call attention to attacks upon particular individuals by the Government as well as other agencies of power. This has been necessary because these instances symbolize and mirror the larger pattern of what is happening in America today.

Consequently, our last Editorial (Winter '67) dealt with the unseating of Congressman Adam Clayton Powell. More recently, the withdrawal of the world heavyweight boxing title from its rightful holder, Mr. Muhammad Ali, by the World Boxing Association and various state Athletic Commissions is the latest case in point.

This arrogant, presumptuous act by the moguls of the boxing business was effected in a matter of hours after Muhammad Ali refused induction into the Army at Houston, Texas. Mr. Ali is also threatened with indictment by the Federal Government because of his anti-draft stand. This attack upon Mr. Ali occurs at a time when voices are heard in the U.S. Congress demanding that dissent be crushed and the First Amendment ignored. The huge anti–Vietnam War demonstrations in New York and San Francisco this spring have obviously placed the question of stopping the war in Vietnam on the agenda of our time and can no longer be ignored.

Mr. Ali's case raises questions of great import for the entire country, and most especially for the 22,000,000 Americans of African descent. This is quite aside from any consideration of the blatant immorality of the particular war against the Vietnamese people which Muhammad Ali is protesting together with millions of other Americans. It is also aside from considering his constitutionally guaranteed right to practice his religious beliefs as a matter of conscience.

While we are not claiming any special privilege for Negro Americans, what we are challenging is the moral right of this nation, *based upon its record,* to insist that any black man must put on the military uniform, at any time, and go thousands of miles away from these shores to risk his life for a society which has historically been his oppressor.

Muhammad Ali, as Cassius Clay, fought for "his country" and won at the 1960 Olympics in Rome, only to return to his home town, Louisville, Kentucky, and be refused service at a lunch counter because he is a black man. Where was the Federal Government then, to uphold his human rights? And where is the Federal Government today as civil rights workers in Louisville face screaming mobs, throwing rocks and bottles at them as they peacefully march to end housing discrimination? We are reminded that the State of Kentucky established its fame and wealth in the American Republic by breeding race horses and Negroes (both for sale, of course).

Stripping Muhammad Ali of the heavyweight title, which he earned the hard way, happens to be considered good business by the money-grabbing jackals who control the boxing syndicates. By stealing the heavyweight crown from the champion, they hope they can stimulate competition and a new era of prosperity at the box office. Such are the ethics of "our glorious free enterprise system."

"*I won't wear the uniform,*" declared the world heavyweight champion. Of all the rhetoric used to express opposition to the Vietnam War, these words may prove to be the most eloquent as a statement of personal commitment. They are words which should echo among the youth in every ghetto across this land. In taking his stand as a matter of conscience, the world heavyweight champion may be giving up a small fortune, but he has undoubtedly gained the respect and admiration of a very large part of humanity. That, after all, is the measure of a Man.

The Editors

4. Interview with Paula Giddings

In her effort to become the homecoming queen at Howard University in the fall of 1966, Robin Gregory broke tradition in both her personal grooming and in her campaign substance. Her victory, as described by fellow Howard student Paula Giddings, would signal a new era at one of the nation's oldest black educational institutions. This is an excerpt from a 1988 interview with Giddings by the* Eyes on the Prize *production team.

The traditional homecoming campaign was quite a ritual. Each sorority or fraternity, for example, had their candidates, and other organizations had candidates as well. During the days of the campaign, each candidate would appear on campus at certain times of the afternoon. All the candidates, of course, had to get new wardrobes with the latest fashions. They usually came rolling in in a latest model convertible. And everything was color-coordinated. And I remember working on the campaign, you always had to think of what color was the car, then the dress had to match the car, and the flowers had to match the dress that matched the car. So it was all very elaborate, and then there would be a demonstration talking about the candidate.

Of course, Robin Gregory had no car and always looked sharp, but she was certainly not wearing those elaborate dresses. She had an Afro, which of course was the statement that she made physically. And she was always flanked by two very handsome men, very serious, very well dressed in the way that the Fruit of Islam was dressed, with the bow ties. They always had their arms folded and would look straight ahead while Robin talked. And Robin talked about the movement. Robin talked about black politics. Robin was not the traditional homecoming queen candidate. She would also go around to the dorms in the evenings, which was something very, very different.

I was very excited about Robin's campaign. I'd always felt that there was something wrong with that other kind of traditional ritual that was going on. But at the same time I had divided loyalties, because I was a member of Delta Sigma Theta sorority

and we had our own candidate, who was a very good friend of mine and who I worked on the campaign with. So many of us had these feelings back and forth. But all of us, with divided loyalties or not, felt very excited about Robin's campaign and about what it symbolized, not just in terms of politics but in terms of what women should be doing as well, the role of women. It was very, very important to us.

I remember being confronted with the kind of situation where when you passed by men, especially as an underclassman, as a freshman, sophomore, they would actually give you a grade. I mean, they would talk among themselves and say, "Well, that's an A," or "That's a B." There was a lack of respect in lots of instances. And there was a terrible degrading sense about all of that. And what Robin did was not only in terms of race but also talking about the role of women and what they should be doing and talking about and being taken very, very seriously, not just because of any physical attributes but because of her mind. And this I think was as important as the racial aspect of her campaign.

I remember very much the evening when the homecoming queen was crowned. I was in Cramton Auditorium, which was filled to the hilt. For the last time all the candidates were announced and went up on the stage in the auditorium. And the way the whole evening was set was very, very dramatic. What would happen after that is that the lights went down and all the candidates went behind the curtain, back of the stage. The ballot was actually secret balloting, so no one in the auditorium knew who was going to win. And the idea was that there was a throne, a high-backed throne, with its back to the audience, behind the curtain, and there was a revolving stage, so whoever would win would sit on that throne and then slowly revolve toward the audience.

The lights went down. The candidates went back. Then you heard the curtains open. And you heard the crank of the revolving stage begin. And as the stage revolved and turned around toward the audience, the lights began to come up at the same time. Well, before you saw Robin, you saw the way the lights cast a silhouette on the curtains, and you saw the silhouette of her Afro before you saw her. Well, the auditorium exploded. It was a wonderful moment. People started jumping up and screaming and some were raising their fists, then spontaneously a chant began. The

chant was "Umgawa, Black Power, Umgawa, Black Power," and a chain was created. People started to march to the rhythm of "Umgawa, Black Power," and there was a line that went all the way around the auditorium, and more and more people joined the line. I did too as it went around the auditorium. And finally out the door and into the streets of Washington, D.C., past the campus and still chanting, "Umgawa, Black Power," and that was really the launching of that movement at Howard.

5. An Open Letter Sent to Howard President James M. Nabrit

While the protests of the preceding year had developed a growing racial and political consciousness among many Howard students, few on-campus changes had been realized. In February 1968, a group of undergraduate student leaders sent an open letter to university president James M. Nabrit describing their frustrations with his administration and demanding institutional and curricular changes. The demands contained in this letter would be among the core demands when students occupied the administration building in March.

Dear President Nabrit:

Howard University has always considered itself a source of leadership for the black community and for the black liberation movement in America. In earlier stages of that movement, the leaders whom Howard produced encouraged the masses to work hard, dress neatly and study diligently in order to prove to themselves and to the rest of society that they were as good as white men. It is a tragic testimony to the depth of our collective inferiority complex that we so long based the philosophy of our struggle on the importance of being accepted by others.

It is axiomatic where social movements are concerned that today's militants become tomorrow's moderates and conservatives. To give an extreme example, Abraham Lincoln, a radical in his time, is revealed as a reactionary white supremacist in the context of 1968. In the case of the black liberation movement in America, the Roy Wilkinses, the Whitney Youngs—and the James Nabrits are yesterday's militants and today's moderates and conservatives.

Black youth of today have learned that to be "just like a white man" is to acquire a synthetic identity and to hate one's true self. Black youth of today are conscious that they have been robbed of awareness of themselves by the white man's pervasive brainwash. Thus, the black leader of today must address himself to a new breed of youth and the black university of today must produce a new breed of leaders—leaders who take pride in their true identity and who will instill similar pride in others.

Unfortunately, Howard University has not yet committed itself to producing such leaders. It is desperately trying to remain an imitation white school turning out imitation white people.

It is time for the Howard University administration to recognize that the days of the movement based on bleaching, straightening, brainwashing and otherwise molding the black student into a strange and pathetic hybrid acceptable to whites are gone forever, despite the old guard's fond memories of them.

We therefore demand that Howard University begin to move towards becoming a black university by effecting the following changes:

1. We demand the immediate resignation of the following Howard administrators on the grounds of their incompetence and obvious unwillingness to work towards a black Howard University.
   a. President James Nabrit
   b. Vice President Stanton Wormley
   c. Liberal Arts Dean Frank Snowden
2. We demand the institution of the following curriculum changes by next semester.
   a. We demand that Howard should be the center of Afro-American thought. We demand that the economic, government, literature and social science departments begin to place more emphasis on how these disciplines may be used to effect the liberation of blackpeople in this country.
   b. We demand the institution of non-prerequisite courses in Negro History.
   c. We demand the immediate abolishment of Freshman Assembly. Black students are not culturally deprived. We

demand the immediate reinstatement of all Howard instructors who have been unjustifiably dismissed for their political activism including:

Dr. Nathan Hare	Dr. David Hammond
Dr. Andress Taylor	Dr. Harold Shipper
Samuel Carcione	Dr. Alan Lefcowitz
Keith Lowe	Dr. Ivan Eames

Measures must be instituted to insure that all instructors be given a fair hearing if considered for dismissal.

4. We demand the institution of a Black Awareness Research Institute at Howard University.
5. Students are trained to be leaders only by learning to accept responsibility. We demand therefore that student autonomy that is student control in matters that concern only students. Therefore we demand:
   a. The student judiciary and codification or rules presently submitted to the Faculty Senate Steering Committee should be immediately instituted.
   b. That students must be authorized to control the budgeting and expenditure of the student activity fee.
6. Howard must be made relevant to the black community. The University campus must be made more available to all black people and programs must be instituted to aid the black community in the struggle against oppression.
7. We demand that Howard personnel begin to treat students like black people should treat blackpeople, with respect and courtesy.

We allow you until February 29, exactly three weeks after the Orangeburg Massacre, to respond to our demands.

Sincerely,
Anthony Gittens, Political Director of Howard Univ. Ujamaa
Ewart Brown, President of the University Student Assembly
Adrienne Manns, Editor of the Hilltop
Barbara Penn, President of the LASC Student Council
And all other Concerned Black Students

6. Interview with Tony Gittens

Howard University student Tony Gittens, of the class of 1969, was features editor for the student newspaper,* The Hilltop, *political director of the umbrella organization of student activist groups, Ujamaa, and one of the signatories of the open letter to President Nabrit. This is an excerpt from a 1988 interview with Gittens by the* Eyes on the Prize *production team.

INTERVIEWER: When you got on [the Howard] campus, what disturbed you so much about what you found there?

TONY GITTENS: When I got to Howard, back in 1965, what disturbed me so much was the way . . . the Howard administration tended to treat students like children. As though we couldn't take care [of] ourselves and their job was to make us more cultured black people, that they felt that we were these Negroes from the field and that we were to be treated like kids. And I found that absolutely insulting. I found the whole idea of this, the largest, most prestigious black institution in the country, wanting to view itself as the black Harvard as opposed to setting out its own identity. . . .

INT: Why did you and other students begin to get into this Vietnam protest? What was your personal feeling in connection with that?

T.G.: Well, we were totally against the war. We were against the draft, we felt that the Vietnam War was totally unjust and that especially black people should have no role in the war. And Howard at that time had compulsory ROTC. That was another aspect of it that most men there found just absolutely appalling. We felt that Howard should not be a factory for black officers to go into the war. And that we were not going to just participate in it. And as a matter of fact we were going to say no to it. And so there were protests against that and to let the world know that black people were not going to participate in the war. Or at least were going to be strongly opposed to it.

INT: Will you talk a little bit about the black consciousness stuff

that was going on outside the campus? How did that infect the campus? And was there an attempt by the administration to stop that from coming on campus?

T.G.: The whole Howard movement was impacted by what was going on outside of Howard. There was a lot of activity in the South. There were black colleges in the South where students were taking very militant, very firm stands against discrimination. And here there were the students of Howard, who were considered to be very middle class and sort of away from a lot of that. So there were some students at Howard who believed that that should not be the case and that in fact that Howard if it was to be a leader amongst black universities should take the firmest of stands. And we pushed to make Howard do that. And the resistance to that took the form of, for example, there were people who would come to Howard. There were organizers who wanted to have demonstrations here in Washington and they would come to Howard to try and get Howard students to participate. And there was always resistance on the part of the administration to such people coming on campus. There were speakers who we wanted to bring to Howard, toward the earlier days, not so much during the later days. And there was always resistance to these speakers being brought to Howard. So the university as a whole felt that it should not be in a controversial position. It stated in documents that they felt that a good deal of money was coming from the federal government to support Howard and Howard students therefore should not be antagonistic toward the government. We, on the other hand, felt that where Howard got its money was its own business and we were adults and able to make our own decisions and take our own stands on things.

INT: You talked at one point about how [the administration] was trying to keep the university separate from the community. Can you say something about that?

T.G.: Howard University is located in a community that parts of it are developed, but there's a whole strip along Georgia Avenue that's not very developed. And there's always been this conflict between what at that point were called block boys or gangs of kids who lived in the area, and Howard students whom they viewed as being middle class and snobbish. And our feeling was that the university had to relate to its immediate environment if it was going to live up to its mandate. We couldn't be creating officers for ROTC to go fight wars thousands of miles away and then have a community right at your door where there's all kinds of problems, economic problems and social problems and health problems, and not really do anything for them.

So we wanted the university to just, what we call, relate to the community. To have events that would be attractive enough for people in the area to come in, to have concerts and things. We wanted them to relate to all kinds of activities that were going on in the communities. There were social groups and church organizations that were doing things. We went out and we tried to participate in them and bring speakers in from those communities. We talked about all kinds of things that never really took place. But day-care centers . . . for young mothers. And med school doctors who would go out and spend some time working with people there. So that was what we were looking for. That was our utopia. For what the university should do for people who live right there.

INT: Talk about the [March 1968] takeover. . . .

T.G.: We had decided that we were going to have a sit-in in the administration building. . . . The university was going to have hearings again to try some students who had been more active on campus. So we had a rally in front of Douglas Hall. And we said that we were just tired of this, tired of the way we were being treated. And that we were going to have a sit-in in the administration building. And I remember different people gave speeches. And I gave the last speech. That was part of the plan. And we had these bags of food that we were carrying in. And I said, we're going to go in, and we're going to sit down. And we're not going to get up until they refuse to have these hearings. And I remember just walking off, walking away from the steps and going down. And I was out front and there were some people by my side. And then I remember turning around and just seeing all of these students. [LAUGHS] And it was just so movingly incredible. I mean, we had never been able to get this response before. . . . And I just realized that all these people were also tired. . . .

And we went into the first floor of the administration building.

And everybody sat down, just sat down. When we went in there, when we planned this the night before, we figured that we'd just sit on the first floor and that would be it. And we would just stay there. And then more students [came], people began to hear about it. And then the whole first floor was full. Then the whole second floor was filled. Then they went up the third floor. And the whole building was just filled with these students who had come out of the dormitories, come out of their classes to just participate in this. And it was incredible. It was just amazing. I mean, after all that time, all that work, that someone was actually listening. And so we just stayed there. It was then about noon and we stayed there and the newspapers began to hear about it and reporters began to show up. And the university, the people who worked there, just left. They just left the building to us.

And so then we said, Well, we have to organize this. So we had meetings. There was this group that we called the Central Committee. And we met and we started having chairmen of certain committees. There was a Sanitation Committee, there was a Communications Committee. And there was a Food Committee, and a Security Committee. There were all these committees that we made.

And there were just some incidents there that astounded me. Like the switchboards had to be manned. And so we just made an announcement. From somewhere someone came up with a PA system. . . . And all these women got up and went and took over the whole university switchboard. I remember looking into this room and they were just very professionally and efficiently running the switchboard. I said, How . . . ? And they said, You know, these students work, doing this kind of stuff part-time. And everyone was saying . . . that sorry, the university is closed today. The students have taken it over. And that went on for days. And they developed a schedule for taking care of that.

Then there was food that all these people from off campus, this community, who the university, up until then, had very little relationship with . . . began to bring food. Ladies would bring these bags of food. And churches would take up collections and bring us all this money. And then these cultural groups would come in and say, We want to do something. Can we perform? And there'd be plays and all kinds of things would go on. And

people from around Washington would come and give all these supportive speeches and say, Whatever you want, let us know.

And then, people who could not get into the building, there are all these students outside of the building who were just there, just willing to participate. And signs were made. HOWARD UNIVERSITY, THE BLACK UNIVERSITY. Then teachers would come up. And they said, What can we do? And we had classes that were going on. Because some students were afraid they were getting behind. And these faculty members [were] saying, Don't worry about it. We'll take care of it. And people would come in and have seminars. . . .

We met every morning, and we met periodically to take care of the issues. It was just . . . an incredible experience to just show . . . the administration, these people who thought that we were kids, [they] were just so off-key, just so wrong about the whole thing.

INT: When you say they were off-key, what did it show the university?

T.G.: Well, I think that the demonstration showed the university, the administration there, that they were not dealing with helpless children. That they were dealing with people who were quite capable of taking care of themselves in a very serious, organized fashion. It also showed them that there were not just these few militant minority students who had these grievances with them. That in fact there were thousands of students who were disgruntled and were willing take a stand to put their education on the line. To let them know that they were just off base with understanding who it is they were and what they wanted out of their education, out of Howard University.

INT: Talk about the fear you had that the police might be called on campus. And what was the context of that fear? Had they been called on at other universities?

T.G.: There was some concern that the police would be called in. However, we felt that we had so much community support, that there was so much recognition on the part of the media who were covering this event . . . in the nightly news . . . that the university was not going to use any force to remove us.

INT: Why did you end the takeover? What did you accomplish?

T.G.: A couple of things happened that made us want to end the

takeover. One was that we had gotten a lot of what we said that we came in there for. We told them what we wanted and the negotiations were very successful in our regard. We had made a very strong point about it. You couldn't see a lot of reason to stay there outside of just being belligerent. And we thought that that would be immature, to do that. So we decided that as we chose to go in, that we would be adult and mature and responsible enough to choose to go out. And we talked about it at length and came down one morning and just made the announcement that we felt that it was time to go. . . . There was no press there. We put all the press out. And we had an open mike and anybody could come up and say whatever they felt about it. There was some people who felt that we shouldn't go and then the vast majority said that we should. We took a voice vote.

And so we walked out. And we just left the place. We cleaned it. Put everything as much back in order as much as we could, as we recalled it, and we just walked out that day. And students went back to the dorm and we went back to doing what it is we did before we went in. . . .

I think that experience changed the life of every single Howard student that was on campus that day. Everyone felt proud. And as we walked out I felt very good. And the students tended to feel very, very good about themselves. . . . They just felt their whole self-image of what they were as Howard students just changed. They felt part of the whole world of black progress. So it was quite a wonderful feeling to have ended by choice and in such a positive way.

7. "The Nature and Needs of the Black University"

Gerald McWorter

One of the key demands of student protesters at Howard and on other historically black campuses was for such institutions to remake themselves into "black universities." In this 1968 essay, sociologist Gerald McWorter (now Abdul Alkalimat), then at Fisk University, put forth one model of "the Black University."

Revolutionary change for the liberation of a people from oppressive social structures is not the special function of one course of action, but, more likely, the result of several. And while education is generally hoped to be a liberating force on men's minds and bodies, ofttimes it has been used as a debilitating tool in the interests of an oppressive society. Accordingly, Kwame Nkrumah compares the colonial student educated for "the art of forming not a concrete environmental view of social political problems, but an abstract 'liberal' outlook," with the revolutionary student "animated by a lively national consciousness, (who) sought knowledge as an instrument of national emancipation and integrity." So it is becoming rather clear that educational institutions are vital to a liberation movement, a fact of modern times in anti-colonial movements in the Third World.

In the United States there is no question about the persistence of segregation, racism, and more subtle forms of neo-racism. As the pernicious oppression of racism is an organic part of the institutions, symbols, and values of Western industrial society, so it is firmly entrenched in the U.S.A. ("as American as apple pie"). An Afro-American liberation movement must subvert and/or supplant such a well-entrenched social system if it is to be a real source of radical change and not a false one.

My primary task in this discussion is an ideological consideration of the role of a university in the liberation of the Afro-American community. It must be clear that this role has to deal with today's world, as well as with what ought to be. And certainly, it must include the management of whatever social change is required to move effectively from the "is" to the "ought." The university is alive for people in the world (including all of the socio-economic and political hang-ups involved), and so must meet the challenge of responding creatively to whatever needs exist now for those people. But, at the same time, it must project itself as a prophetic institution calling into question all that which is inconsistent with its highest ideals, and organizing its activities to bring about the realization of its ideals. The focus of this discussion is on what *ought* to be, the prophetic social role of the *Black University*, for therein lies the fountainhead of revolutionary liberation.

We must be reminded of this same theme as stated by Dr.

W. E. B. Du Bois over 50 years ago in the 1910 Niagara Movement resolutions:

> And when we call for education, we mean real education . . . Education is the development of power and ideal. We want our children trained as intelligent human beings should be, and we will fight for all time against any proposal to educate black boys and girls simply as servants and underlings, or simply for the use of other people. They have a right to know, to think, to aspire. We do not believe in violence . . . but we do believe in . . . that willingness to sacrifice money, reputation, and life itself on the altar of right.

The Booker T. Washington–Du Bois dialectical opposition is relevant here, as it is the important example of the "is" versus the "ought" concerning educational ideology for Afro-Americans. Training people to fit in where they can (think of MDTA, Job Corps, etc.) might be acceptable for short term solutions, though not as Washington thought it to be. But the educational ideology of Du Bois is our prophecy, a rationale to build a Black University—the crucible of definitive social change.

In order that the idea of the new university and the notions of how we are to achieve it as a goal will be more clearly understood, it is important to discuss briefly the current social situation. The current situation is one charged with a great deal of expectancy on the part of many Afro-Americans, an expectancy frequently expressed by the emotional connotations of a term or phrase but usually not delineated in structural or programmatic terms. But this programmatic deficiency is not so much a shortcoming, for the exciting search for innovation and relevance is the first sign of progress. A major question, then, is what conditions give rise to this expectancy, this charged atmosphere crystallized around the term Black University?

A major trend in today's world is that, as oppressed people know that the world offers more than they have, and as they are able to get a little more of it, they also expect to get very much more. This has been called "the revolution of rising expectations." A figurative example: An Afro-American family gets a television

set and enters as a spectator the world of affluent Euro-American society. It is not complicated to see that this would lead to the family wanting more than it has, much more. Just imagine how cruel it must be for poor oppressed Black people to watch the give-away quiz programs on which white people win appliances, furniture, and cars in 20 minutes or so. Then think of a scene of ghetto destruction during which people brave armed police to steal appliances, furniture, and cars in 20 minutes or so. Oppressed people see what is going on, and want "in" in the best way they can get "in" (yes, by any means necessary to do it right now!!).

Along with this developing desire to get more out of society there also is the increasing saliency of a nationalistic alternative to the system. The general components are militancy, self-determination, and a desire to identify with similar oppressed people throughout the world (who are *not* by accident mostly colored people). This alternative is grounded in communalism and finds its legitimacy from within Afro-America and not outside of it. Nationalism, in this context, means total concern for the community of common experience, so Afro-American Nationalism is grounded in the Black Experience. Communalism, meaning self-help cooperative efforts, is the ethic supporting the new alternative.

These two major trends cannot be viewed outside of the total context of world events, especially those events of particular relevance to the Afro-American community. The military-industrial machine of the Western powers is equally offensive and outraging in Vietnam and South Africa, in Santo Domingo and Ghana. But it seems apparent that peoples can only unite across the world in aspiring for the same universals—peace, freedom, and justice—while focusing their working activities on the social ills as manifested at home. If we are to reap a harvest of world brotherhood, then each man must first tend to his own garden. But for each garden to have its true meaning, the gardener must know his historical role and his relationship with all others working for the same harvest.

The two trends are general social sources of the cry for a Black University. While everyone is more or less for such a thing as a university, for some the quality of Blackness imbues the concept with polemical emotional intensity and conceptual ambiguity (or,

in extreme cases, of racism). This must be cleared up if the dialogue is to continue. In reference to a university, Blackness must mean at least three things.

First, Blackness refers to the Afro-American community as the basic focus for the University. This in no way compromises or limits its universalistic orientation or its attempts to contribute to human progress: rather, it frees it to be relevant in the face of an unmet need reflecting the woeful limit of human progress.

A second, and more controversial point, considers the limits placed on participation in the University. Blackness does not categorically exclude all white people from the University; it redefines the standards for their participation and the possibility for their involvement. In much the same way that independent African countries have attempted to redefine the possible role of the European, so in the Black University the role of the white man must be redefined and carefully placed for the maximum good of all. Some white people will be necessary for the immediate future if for no other reason than the black community's own shortage of resources. But unconditional participation will have to be ended. The participation must be based on a commitment to the goals and aspirations of the Afro-American community, and the white participant must possess the sacrificial humility necessary for one historically and socially identified with the beast of Afro-American history and the system of oppression.

Last, Blackness is an affirmation of an identity independent of the historical human evils of modern nation states, and is closely tied to the emerging international identity of man in his struggle for a better life. Consider this revelation by Brother Malcolm X when on his pilgrimage to Mecca:

> "That morning was when I first began to reappraise the 'white man.' It was when I first began to perceive that 'white man' as commonly used, means complexion only secondarily; primarily it described attitudes and actions. In America, 'white man' meant specific attitudes and actions toward the black man, and toward all other non-white men. But in the Muslim world, I had seen men with white complexions were more genuinely brotherly than anyone else had ever been."

The relations between people must be allowed to grow and progress without the limiting problem of the national state. Who are we? Afro-Americans, men of the world. Why are we here? We were sent here to love. Where are we going? Toward the community of love, and if stopped we will continue "by any means necessary," because we must continue.

So much for prologue. What is the Black University idea all about? What are its goals? And what might it look like? The university focusing on the particular needs of the Afro-American community will be a center of learning. But, recognizing the alternatives noted above by Nkrumah, it must be based on an educational ideology grounded in an uncompromising goal of psychological independence from the oppressor (and his oppressive system), and as much structural independence as is necessary not only to survive in the world, but to prosper. So, education must be defined to specify these purposes as most important.

The American (U.S.A.) ethic of individualism is inclusive of both basic needs of men and the essence of a social style. All men are, to some extent, self-centered. But to build a social group process on self-centeredness is to hope for a just order through "antagonistic cooperation." The thrust of the Black University must be to overcome this subtle social warlike-state with the ethic of communalism. This means that instead of hoping for social progress through the individual merits of its students or faculty *qua* individuals, progress is to be viewed as a social process through which the community is uplifted with the aid of its contributing people. This then means that while students and faculty play a very vital role, they are co-workers alongside the equally important others, *e.g.*, the community organizer, the artist, the union organizer.

Moreover, the goal of the university must be one of service to the community. The students, faculty, and administration of the Black University must consider themselves as servants to the broader Afro-American community. Being a member of the University must be considered an honor, but more important this honor must be one involving responsibility to the total community and not simply focusing on the "I-made-it-because-I'm-smarter-than" kind of thinking. Being servants, status is not based on the academic credentials university people create for themselves;

rather it is on the extent to which the total community is able to reap benefits from the service provided.

The service of the Black University must not be one transmitted through mass communication or ritualistic ceremony but through a concrete programmatic movement toward liberation. The time when the Afro-American community must be arms-length from its institutions of higher education is over. The pimps, prostitutes, preachers, and Ph.D.'s must find a common bond to change themselves and weave an organic unity as the basis for liberation and a better life for all.

These goals must redefine two dangerously-pervasive patterns found among Afro-American faculty and students today. One of the patterns is for education to be simply a process of acclimation and adjustment to the white world. One goes to a white school to rub shoulders with *them*, "because, son, you got to make a livin' out in their world." Another pattern is the play-culture of friendship cliques and fraternity life. Whether it is mimicry of whites (think of Fort Lauderdale in the spring), or defection based on hopelessness, we must find the recipe for a revolutionary discipline consistent with our desire for immediate radical change. A free man is also (and must be) a responsible man, and so must Afro-American students and faculty be responsible to themselves by being responsible to the Black community.

The values of the Black University must support the liberation movement of Afro-Americans, oppressed people around the world, and all that prevents man from leading the good life. We must find a synthesis of efficient reason and purposive compassion. The value placed on scientific methods must be joined by an equally important value placed on empathy, *i.e.*, scientific detachment must be limited to method and technique, complemented with involvement and commitment. The students and faculty must be evangelical in their social roles and give new meaning to being a missionary for freedom. And finally, the Black University must impart to all who are associated with it the strength to be alone. The struggle against ignorance, just as with the struggle of power, is one within which the forces of good are often small in number and sparsely placed. An Afro-American of the Black University must have inner strength, positive historical identity, and a vision of the good, for only in having these traits will he be able to stand up in a world dominated by evil and be secure even in being alone.

Among its many functions, the university is most concerned with knowledge, both the accumulated information and insights of human history and the vision and process of new discovery. And it is knowledge about Afro-Americans that is most lacking, or biased and wrong, in all these respects. The Black University is based on the fundamental assumption that the Afro-American community is, in E. Franklin Frazier's words, "a little social world," a human universe heretofore misused or ignored by higher education. Consider these autobiographical comments by Dr. Du Bois:

> When I went South to Fisk, I became a member of a closed racial group with rites and loyalties, with a history and a corporate future, with an art and philosophy.
>
> Into this world I leapt with provincial enthusiasm. A new loyalty and allegiance replaced my Americanism: henceforth I was a Negro.

The Black University must respond creatively to just these realities which were true for Du Bois in 1880, and equally true for this author in the 1960's.

The knowledge of Afro-Americans, just as with Africa, is yet to be fully reclaimed. With the full scope of University activities (research, teaching, etc.), revision is needed to secure for colored peoples of the world their proper place in human history. This revision of educational materials is a process as much political as it is scholarly. With scholarly work a text of U.S.A. history can be written, but only with political influence will it be made available by getting it published, placed in a library, or adopted as recommended reading. However, in the present it would be foolish to think of throwing everything aside. Revision of *what is* must be a thorough job of systematic and rigorous scholarship backed by the concerted political efforts of Afro-American students, faculty, and the entire community.

But more important (and more difficult), there is a need to find new styles of scholarship, new forms of knowledge, new ways of knowing. These new developments must be consistent with what

is to be known, and have utility for the liberation movement. There must be research on all aspects of the Black experience, research necessarily not limited to traditional scholarly disciplines, but open to the demands of the subject. For example, the "Blues" component of Afro-American culture demands a historian, musicologist, literary historian, sociologist, etc. The soul of a people must be reflected in the results of the research as well as the life style of the Black University. We must be in search of the "funky" sociologist, the "soulful" political scientist, and the University president who can "get down."

These are some of the necessary ingredients of a Black University. And while we can, at best, look to the future for its full realization, it is quite possible now to suggest a structural outline that reflects these fundamental assumptions about its social and intellectual role. The [author] . . . suggests three related colleges [the College of Liberal Arts, College of Afro-American Studies, and College of Community Life] concerned with distinct areas, though bound together in the idea of the University. Each would be organized around research, teaching, and practice. For every part of the University community there would be an advisory board of community representatives from all walks of life, with the task of providing policy suggestions and guidelines. This would insure the community of ties to the specific parts of the University.

As one enters the University he will be faced with a variety of degree programs and alternative courses of study. It is quite clear that the standard four-year college degree meets only a partial need for the Afro-American community. But even the student entering the College of Liberal Arts would have to work at least a year in one or more of the other two colleges in order to meet the requirements for graduation. The general principle might well be that, to meet the needs of today, the new programs will have to take less time; but those set up to meet the needs of tomorrow will have to take more time.

As a national institution engaged in activities found nowhere else, the component colleges of the Black University would be of great service to a wide variety of groups. Service professionals working with Afro-Americans face a challenge supported by sparse

research and little experience. The College of Afro-American Studies, being a center of innovation and discovery concerning these problems, will conduct special courses and training programs so that students can supplement their training and experience with a concentrated program. There is a desperate need for social workers, teachers, lawyers, doctors, psychiatrists, etc. And the same kind of function is planned for the entire University.

There also must be connected with such a University a set of centers of International Study. They will be small centers specializing in specific areas in order that, together, they might constitute an international program without superficially missing the peculiar character of each part of the world. In addition, no such University could hope to function without an international conference center available to the University community, and accommodating other activities consistent with the aims and purpose of the University community and liberation movement. Afro-Americans are moving onto the international scene and so must have at their disposal a center where such meetings can be held.

As stated at the beginning of this discussion, there is no panacea for the Afro-American liberation movement, just as there can and will be no monolithic organizational structure. But there can be operational unity around such concepts as the Black University. The first step in moving toward this operational unity, moving toward the Black University, is to begin a creative and honest dialogue among Afro-Americans. But more than that, we need small bands of people in positions to act, to make steps, to be daring enough to risk failure (or worse, irrelevance). It will only be when these ideas can be referred to in concrete terms that definitive statements can be made, and the concrete reality of the Black University must begin today.

One last thought. The Afro-American community does not possess unlimited resources with which to carry on experiment after experiment. Each of us who can contribute to the Black University must ask himself what he is doing for it, what he is doing for this kind of operational unity. I am calling for all of the brothers and sisters in "other" colleges and university settings to come on home. And to those at home, let us get this thing together!!

8. "It's Nation Time"

Amiri Baraka

In this clarion call for racial solidarity, poet, playwright, and activist Amiri Baraka (formerly LeRoi Jones) expressed the growing sentiments of many black activists in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The recurrent cry "it's nation time" would be the beckoning call for a proposed national conference of black activists in 1972.

Time to get
together
time to be one strong fast black energy space
one pulsating positive magnetism, rising
time to get up and
be
come
be
come, time to
be come
time to
get up be come
black genius rise in spirit muscle
sun man get up rise heart of universes to be
future of the world
the black man is the future of the world
be come
rise up
future of the black genius spirit reality
move
from crushed roach back
from dead snake head
from wig funeral in slowmotion
from dancing teeth and coward tip
from jibberjabber patme boss patme smmich
when the brothers strike niggers come out
come out niggers
when the brothers take over the school
help niggers
come out niggers

all niggers negroes must change up
come together in unity unify
for nation time
it's nation time . . .
Boom
Booom
BOOOM
Boom
Dadadadadadadadadadad
Boom
Boom
Boom
Boom
Dadadadad adadadad
Hey aheee (soft)
Hey ahheee (loud)
Boom
Boom
Boom
sing a get up time to nationfy
singaa miracle fire light
sing a airplane invisibility for the jesus niggers come from the grave
for the jesus niggers dead in the cave, rose up, passt jewjuice on shadow world
raise up christ nigger
Christ was black
krishna was black shango was black
black jesus nigger come out and strike
come out and strike boom boom
Heyahheeee come out
strike close ford
close prudential burn the policies
tear glasses off dead statue puppets even those
they imitate life
Shango buddah black
hermes rasis black
moses krishna
black
when the brothers wanna stop animals
come out niggers come out

come out niggers niggers niggers come out
help us stop the devil
help us build a new world

niggers come out, brothers are we
with you and your sons your daughters are ours
and we are the same, all the blackness from one black allah
when the world is clear you'll be with us
come out niggers come out
come out niggers come out
It's nation time eye ime
It's nation ti eye ime
chant with bells and drum
it's nation time

It's nation time, get up santa claus (repeat)
it's nation time, build it
get up muffet dragger
get up rastus for real to be rasta farari
ras jua
get up got here bow

It's Nation
Time!

9. "We Must Pave the Way: An Independent Black Political Thrust"

Richard Hatcher

Mayor Richard Hatcher delivered this keynote address at the National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, on March 11, 1972. A co-convenor of the convention, Hatcher had been elected mayor of Gary in 1967, the same year Carl Stokes was elected in Cleveland.

As we look out over this vast and expectant assemblage, we can imagine how Moses and the people of Israel thrilled when they witnessed the parting of the Red Sea.

We picture the jubilation of Joshua and his soldiers at that last trumpet blast.

We experience the exultation of Noah when he gazed at Mount Ararat as the clouds parted and the sun shone down.

We know the spirit of triumph and determination that infused Dr. Du Bois and his fellow warriors at the first gathering of the Niagara movement.

Some of the white bourgeois news media have criticized us for welcoming all brothers and sisters. It is our convention. We shall determine who attends it. All black people are welcome. Thousands strong, we warmly embrace Angela Davis and Bobby Seale.

This convention can make history. Whether it does, will depend on what we do here today.

We must emerge from this convention with an independent national black political agenda: A dynamic program for black liberation, that in the process, will liberate all America from its current decadence.

Equally important, we must not leave this convention until we have built the mechanism to implement our program. Program must mesh with action. For this we must create a living organization.

And as we deliberate, as we plan, as we work—the banner waving over our head must proclaim "unity." Without that unity, all is lost.

Yes, we support marches and demonstrations . . . Yes, we support sit-ins . . . Yes, we support trade union activity . . . Yes, we support legal defense . . . Yes, we support radical action . . . Yes, we support all avenues to liberation. We know full well that political action is not the whole answer. But political action is an essential part of our ultimate liberation. And it is the political questions we shall pursue at this historic convention.

Our precious time together is limited. We must not waste it in fruitless dispute, ego trips, self-aggrandizement, or rhetoric uninformed by thought. Every word, every moment, we shall invest with the utmost meaning.

Poised at the exhilarating beginning of this historic convention, we must first probe our bitter political past. We dare not delude ourselves about the black role in the political life of this country. A people bent on freedom can ill afford to harbor illusions.

From reconstruction to the mid-1930's, we nestled in the white bosom of the Republican Party—a warm home for some, perhaps;

but a rocky bed for the sons and daughters of Africa. In the mid-30's, we took up residence in the hip pocket of the Democratic Party where we lodge uneasily to this day.

Our mythic heroes of Republican and Democratic stripe—Lincoln, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy—none of them moved in our behalf without tremendous pressure. Neither major party can claim our undying loyalty because of any blessings they heaped upon us.

So starved were we for recognition that when Teddy Roosevelt appointed a black man as collector of the Port of Charleston, the editor of the "Coloured American Magazine," overcome by this dubious honor, called it our greatest political triumph in 20 years. And he was probably right . . . appropriately, the new collector was named Crum. That's spelled C-R-U-M.

Desperate for voters after the Civil War, Republicans hastened to recruit us. And vote Republican we did—at least twice saving the presidency for our new masters. Early reconstruction Republican party platforms promised us real freedom, but the issue soon cooled, and so did the Republicans.

The Hayes-Tilden compromise of 1877 more than any other event, marked the end of our hopes for reconstruction, and set the stage for the terror to follow. Hayes, a Republican, beat Tilden for the presidency by just one electoral vote, causing a political uproar. In exchange for letting Hayes ascend peacefully to the presidency, the Republicans betrayed us and agreed to pull federal troops out of the south, leaving us to the mercy of our former masters.

It matters little that Teddy Roosevelt invited Booker T. Washington to the White House for dinner. He also permitted blacks to be barred from the Bull Moose Party convention.

Under another of our great Republican leaders, William Howard Taft, federal employees were segregated—a practice which his Democratic successor, Woodrow Wilson, not to be outdone, expanded and improved.

But we still hadn't learned all our lessons at Republican school. In 1924, W. E. B. Du Bois told us straight out. "Any black man," he said, "any black man who votes for the present Republican party out of gratitude or with any hope that it will do a single

thing for the Negro is a born fool." Born fools all, we trooped to the polls and voted Coolidge in.

Hoover's message to us came through loud and clear; no blacks were allowed on his southern campaign committees. The Ku Klux Klan backed Hoover. So did we. Three weeks after his election, Hoover announced he would end black and tan political power in the south.

1936—the year of the big switch—Franklin Roosevelt and the depression moved us into the Democratic Party and there most of us have remained ever since. But life was no sweeter for us with the Democrats.

Only the threat of a black march on Washington pressured F.D.R. into ending employment discrimination in defense factories. And even with war raging, he refused to desegregate the armed forces.

Malcolm X said it—dixiecrats are nothing but Democrats in disguise. The Democrats never left the dixiecrats. It was the other way around.

And even our liberal friend, John Kennedy, stalled two years before ending discrimination in federally financed housing by a simple "stroke of the pen."

What of Johnson? He bragged about the black thirteen and a half percent of his federal work force—but he didn't tell us they were in the lowest paying jobs.

Democrats or Republicans . . . how much difference has it really made to black people?

In 1969, black median income was still only 60 per cent of white income; black unemployment was still twice that of white unemployment; and a black man with four years of high school still earned less money than a white man with an eighth grade education.

In our infinite patience, we have tried year after year, election after election, to work with the two major political parties. We believed the pledges, believed the platforms, believed the promises, each time hoping they would come true. Hoping we would not again be sold out . . . hoping . . . hoping . . . always hoping.

We are through believing. We are through hoping. We are through trusting in the two major white American political parties.

Hereafter, we shall rely on the power of our own black unity.

We shall no longer bargain away our support for petty jobs or symbolic offices.

If we are to support any political party, the price will now run high—very high.

First. We emphatically reject the role of advisor to the party's governing circles.

Advisors are impotent. We are strong.

Advisors do not vote on vital questions. We must have a vote in every decision which affects the party, black people and this country.

The two Richards, Nixon and Daley, as well as Mao Tse Tung, know that power is of the essence. We know that too. Anything short of our complete sharing of power is a sham and is unacceptable.

Second. Our sharing of power must take place on every political level, from precinct to ward, to county, to state, to Capitol Hill, to presidential cabinet.

Third. We are not concerned with minute tid-bits of political power. We must be accorded the largest share of political power resulting from the following tests:

Our proportionate contribution to the party's vote, or to the defeats that would occur were we to withhold that vote, or the importance of the black question on the American scene. Whichever of these tests yields the greatest amount of political representation, that is what we must have.

Fourth. We shall name our own candidates for public office and our own party and governmental committee members. No political party to which we attach ourselves may any longer pick and choose the Toms and Sallys among us.

Fifth. The political party with which we identify ourselves must work from the bottom up, not the top down.

Before critical national decisions are made, they must be discussed in every nook and cranny of this country, from the tar paper shacks in the Mississippi Delta, to the pine hovels in the Appalachian Hills, from the rank and fetid basement apartments of 47th Street to the barrios of Spanish Harlem.

The 1968 national party conventions made a mockery of the Democratic process. They were drunken carnivals run for the

exclusive few. They debauched electoral politics, and shattered the idealistic hopes of youth.

In considering when a political party may lay claim to our support and fidelity, we come now to the sixth and final point. It is by far the most crucial.

Who does the party represent? For whose benefit does it exist? What arouses its indignation? For whom does it have compassion? Who are its allies, and who its enemies?

In short, what does the political party stand for? What is its ideology?

Preoccupation with power, while neglecting ideology, is the prelude to opportunism and betrayal.

This political convention will come to nought, it will be a disservice to the people, if the problems of power are permitted to overshadow the pressing issues of the day and our thoughtful solutions to them.

It is always a delicate balance we must maintain between the two—issues and program on one hand, power on the other. To neglect either is a disaster.

And so let us consider issues and program.

We demand that any party which asks our support acknowledge the inhumanity every black man, woman and child faces in a hundred different ways, each and every day of his existence, up and down the width and breadth of this vast country.

And we further demand that the party pledge, in bold script and deafening tones, the immediate liberation of black people from their long night of relentless indignities.

Poverty in the midst of opulence is madness. We demand employment, amply compensated, for every able man and woman, or else a governmental income which honorably sustains them.

Advanced education is not meant only for the children of the elite. We demand free college with adequate stipends, for every student who will but make the grade.

We would not house animals where many wretched people dwell. We demand, for every family, a place to live which does not affront the eyes nor offend the nostrils.

No sin is greater than the early maiming of a child's intellect and spirit. We demand a healthy system of public education in which our children can grow and flower.

The state of medical care in the country is a national disgrace. We demand the finest medical and hospital care for every human being, and the absence of the ability to pay should not influence the quality of care.

We demand the eradication of heroin from the ghetto, now eating away the vitals of black youth. White society would never tolerate it in such epidemic proportions in suburbia.

No political party which represents the interests of America's giant corporations, rather than the urgent needs of the people, may enlist black political power in its support.

These huge corporations, which dominate every facet of American existence, now proudly hasten to assure us that they are involved.

Oh, they are involved, alright!

They are involved in exploiting the men and women who work for them, exhausting them with speed ups, cruelly tossing them into the trash heap of retirement, and discriminating against blacks, Latin Americans and women as they hire and promote.

Yes, the corporations surely are involved!

They're involved ever so eagerly in gouging the consumer, exacting enormous profits from him, threatening his health and endangering his life with products both inferior and unsafe.

Behold, as well, the massive corporate involvement as they darken the skies, and poison the waters beyond redemption.

Witness their incredible underpayment of the local property tax, unconscionably shifting it to the little man, already buckling under a mountain of other burdens.

Yes, the corporations are mightily involved. Like dinosaurs, they gobble up the legislatures, both state and national. What does it matter that they destroy or mutilate legislation salutary to the people?

And if a mammoth corporation like I.T.T. wants justice, it is there on sale at the department of justice for a mere four-hundred thousand dollars. With equal ease, a bankrupt Lockheed can borrow two-hundred and fifty million dollars with government guarantee. Listen, black business man, try that out on your local small business administration.

Add it all up, and we most certainly agree with the corporations. They really are involved!

Hereafter, every political party must make up its mind. It cannot represent both the corporations and the people. As the party chooses, so shall we then choose the party.

Finally, we shall shun, like the plague, any political party which does not demand, in unmistakable terms, the immediate return to these shores, of every single American boy from those distant southeast Asian lands.

This horrible war, the ugliest page in our foreign history, could never have taken place without the overwhelming complicity of both political parties.

And it could not continue for another day without that same complicity.

That complicity has slaughtered and maimed over 360,000 American youth and millions of Indochinese, who, I need not remind you, are people of color; and people of color everywhere, no matter where they live, are our brothers and sisters.

And to what end this loathsome carnage? To prop up a cruel and corrupt tyranny in South Vietnam and to keep the mass of poor and aspiring peasants in their place. We black people know that syndrome all too well.

Our participation in that atrocious war is not an unfortunate mistake on the part of the American ruling class. Rather, it is part and parcel of an economic policy to make the world safe for American corporate penetration and to fill the coffers of the corporate treasuries.

That policy is designed to hold the Third World in a state of abject peonage and subjection.

Accordingly, we have shored up one quasi-fascist regime after another. Greece in 1947 and the Greek junta today; Chiang Kai-shek driven out of China by his own people in humiliating defeat, now the tyrant of Taiwan with billions of our assistance; Perón of Argentina in 1946; Syngman Rhee in South Korea in 1950; Batista in Cuba in 1952; and fresh from the Riviera, the playboy Diem in Vietnam in 1954. In each and every instance we fortified the forces of fascist repression in these unhappy lands.

We were also adept, through the CIA, at overthrowing governmentals friendly to their people; Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh of Iran in 1953, because he dared to nationalize his country's oil; Arbenz of Guatemala in 1954 because he wanted to give land to

his people thereby endangering the swollen profits of United Fruit Company which extorted eight million stems of bananas a year from that country; and Premier Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, butchered because he refused to orbit within the American sphere.

The Kennedy and Johnson administrations supported seven military coups which overthrew constitutional governments in Latin America: El Salvador, Argentina, Peru, Guatemala, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic and Honduras.

Finally, we shall never forgive the massive support that a racist American government, and rapacious American corporations, have extended to the white barbarians who reign in the Union of South Africa, Angola, Rhodesia, and Mozambique.

You may be sure that the 436 million dollars our government just gave Portugal, in violation of the United Nations' embargo, will be fully used against our brothers in the guerrilla movement in Mozambique and Angola.

No self-respecting Afro-American can, without a sense of profound betrayal, offer one iota of further support to any political party which does not condemn American foreign policy with abhorrence, and pledge to end our savage repression of the struggling peoples of the third world.

This convention signals the end of hip pocket politics. We ain't in nobody's hip pocket no more!

We are through with any political party, and many of us, with any political system which is not irrevocably committed to our first principles, pursued in tenacious action: The liberation of black people at home and the end of exploitation abroad.

We say to the two American political parties: this is their last clear chance: they have had too many already.

These are not idle threats. Only senile fools would think them so.

The choice is theirs.

To ignore our demands is to will the consequences.

Those of us already disenchanted with the political system could conceivably turn to fearsome tactics, shattering the quiet routine of daily life.

Those of us still committed to a political solution may then cross the Rubicon and form a third party political movement.

I, for one, am willing to give the two major political parties one more chance in the year 1972. But if they fail us, a not unlikely prospect, we must then seriously probe the possibility of a third party movement in this country.

We have broken out of the two-party mold before. Except this time the rupture may well be permanent.

Free soil party . . . Virginia readjusters . . . Greenbackers and populists . . . blacks tried them all.

In our search for political impact we have held political conventions before. This is not the first time blacks have assembled to chart their political future.

1855, 1871, 1872 . . . these were years in which national black political conventions met in New York, Columbia, South Carolina and New Orleans.

We have even formed all-black parties. The great Frederick Douglass, despairing of justice from the Republican party, chaired the New York State Suffrage Association—a statewide black political party—which emerged in 1855. Pennsylvania blacks also disgusted with the regular Republicans, broke away in 1883 and formed the Colored Independent Party.

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party electrified the nation with its appearance at the 1964 Democratic National Convention.

Although the machinations of Johnson and Humphrey prevented the Freedom Democrats from unseating the regular Mississippi delegation, their demands sounded the death knell for future lily-white convention delegations.

The all Black Lowndes County Freedom Organization in Alabama, born in the travail of the 1960's southern freedom movement, raised the consciousness of poor black people by involving them politically.

Yes, we've looked beyond Republican and Democrat in our search for a political home . . . and many of our greatest leaders sick of the trickery of the established political parties, W. E. B. Du Bois, Paul Robeson, Benjamin Davis, Charlotta Bass, Charles Howard, Bill Patterson, and our own valiant sister, Angela, all, all looked outside the established parties to achieve their aspirations for their people.

And when, if they leave us no choice—and if we form a third

political movement, we shall take with us Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Indians, Orientals, a wonderful kaleidoscope of colors.

And that is not all.

We shall also take with us the best of white America. We shall take with us many a white youth nauseated by the corrupt values rotting the innards of this society; many a white intellectual, revolted by the mendacity of the ruling ideology; many of the white poor, who have nothing to lose but the poverty which binds them; many a white ex-G.I. who dares to say "never again"; yes, and many of the white working class, too; we don't for a moment accept the movie character "Joe," or his television counterpart, "Bunker," as the prototype of the white man with the blue collar.

The sixties were an exciting decade: loaded with ferment, freedom rides, sit-ins, marches. It was all here—from the strains of "We Shall Overcome," sung warmly with arms linked—to the penetrating cries of black power, with fists raised.

We buried some wonderful brothers and sisters who strode, like giants, across the decade, sweeping away injustice before them.

And for each murdered martyr, a half-million black soldiers took his place.

The '70's will be the decade of an independent black political thrust.

Its destiny will depend on us.

How shall we respond?

Will we walk in unity or disperse in a thousand different directions?

Will we stand for principle or settle for a mess of pottage?

Will we act like free black men or timid shivering chattels?

Will we do what must be done?

These are the questions confronting this convention. And we—only we—can answer them.

History will be our judge.

10. "National Black Political Agenda. The Gary Declaration: Black Politics at the Crossroads"

After vigorous debate and deliberations, the delegates at the Gary convention ratified a comprehensive agenda. With provisions addressed to "black people" and to those black men and women holding or seeking to run for political office, the agenda put forth numerous initiatives, strategies, and tactics on behalf of increased political and economic empowerment, increased control over community institutions, and increased clout for African-Americans in national policy-making decisions and international developments. This excerpt from that fifty-five-page document, released to the public on May 19, 1972, the anniversary of Malcolm X's birth, includes the original call to the conference.

Introduction

The Black Agenda is addressed primarily to Black people in America. It rises naturally out of the bloody decades and centuries of our people's struggle on these shores. It flows from the most recent surgings of our own cultural and political consciousness. It is our attempt to define some of the essential changes which must take place in this land as we and our children move to self-determination and true independence.

The Black Agenda assumes that no truly basic change for our benefit takes place in Black or white America unless we Black people organize to initiate that change. It assumes that we must have some essential agreement on overall goals, even though we may differ on many specific strategies.

Therefore, this is an initial statement of goals and directions for our own generation, some first definitions of crucial issues around which Black people must organize and move in 1972 and beyond. Anyone who claims to be serious about the survival and liberation of Black people must be serious about the implementation of the Black Agenda.

What Time Is It?

We come to Gary in an hour of great crisis and tremendous promise for Black America. While the white nation hovers on the brink of chaos, while its politicians offer no hope of real change, we stand on the edge of history and are faced with an amazing and frightening choice: We may choose in 1972 to slip back into the decadent white politics of American life, or we may press forward, moving relentlessly from Gary to the creation of our own Black life. The choice is large, but the time is very short.

Let there be no mistake. We come to Gary in a time of unrelieved crisis for our people. From every rural community in Alabama to the high-rise compounds of Chicago, we bring to this Convention the agonies of the masses of our people. From the sprawling Black cities of Watts and Nairobi in the West to the decay of Harlem and Roxbury in the East, the testimony we bear is the same. We are the witnesses to social disaster.

Our cities are crime-haunted dying grounds. Huge sectors of our youth—and countless others—face permanent unemployment. Those of us who work find our paychecks able to purchase less and less. Neither the courts nor the prisons contribute to anything resembling justice or reformation. The schools are unable—or unwilling—to educate our children for the real world of our struggles. Meanwhile, the officially approved epidemic of drugs threatens to wipe out the minds and strength of our best young warriors.

Economic, cultural, and spiritual depression stalk Black America, and the price for survival often appears to be more than we are able to pay. On every side, in every area of our lives, the American institutions in which we have placed our trust are unable to cope with the crises they have created by their single-minded dedication to profits for some and white supremacy above all.

Beyond These Shores

And beyond these shores there is more of the same. For while we are pressed down under all the dying weight of a bloated, inwardly

decaying white civilization, many of our brothers in Africa and the rest of the Third World have fallen prey to the same powers of exploitation and deceit. Wherever America faces the unorganized, politically powerless forces of the non-white world, its goal is domination by any means necessary—as if to hide from itself the crumbling of its own systems of life and work.

But Americans cannot hide. They can run to China and the moon and to the edges of consciousness, but they cannot hide. The crises we face as Black people are the crises of the entire society. They go deep, to the very bones and marrow, to the essential nature of America's economic, political, and cultural systems. They are the natural end-product of a society built on the twin foundations of white racism and white capitalism.

So, let it be clear to us now: The desperation of our people, the agonies of our cities, the desolation of our countryside, the pollution of the air and the water—these things will not be significantly affected by new faces in the old places in Washington, D.C. This is the truth we must face here in Gary if we are to join our people everywhere in the movement forward toward liberation.

White Realities, Black Choice

A Black political convention, indeed all truly Black politics must begin from this truth: *The American system does not work for the masses of our people, and it cannot be made to work without radical fundamental change.* (Indeed, this system does not really work in favor of the humanity of anyone in America.)

In light of such realities, we come to Gary and are confronted with a choice. Will we believe the truth that history presses into our face—or will we, too, try to hide? Will the small favors some of us have received blind us to the larger sufferings of our people, or open our eyes to the testimony of our history in America?

For more than a century we have followed the path of political dependence on white men and their systems. From the Liberty Party in the decades before the Civil War to the Republican Party of Abraham Lincoln, we trusted in white men and white politics as our deliverers. Sixty years ago, W. E. B. Du Bois said he would

give the Democrats their "last chance" to prove their sincere commitment to equality for Black people—and he was given white riots and official segregation in peace and in war.

Nevertheless, some twenty years later we became Democrats in the name of Franklin Roosevelt, then supported his successor Harry Truman, and even tried a "non-partisan" Republican General of the Army named Eisenhower. We were wooed like many others by the superficial liberalism of John F. Kennedy and the make-believe populism of Lyndon Johnson. Let there be no more of that.

Both Parties Have Betrayed Us

Here at Gary, let us never forget that while the times and the names and the parties have continually changed, one truth has faced us insistently, never changing: Both parties have betrayed us whenever their interests conflicted with ours (which was most of the time), and whenever our forces were unorganized and dependent, quiescent and compliant. Nor should this be surprising, for by now we must know that the American political system, like all other white institutions in America, was designed to operate for the benefit of the white race: It was never meant to do anything else.

That is the truth that we must face at Gary. If white "liberalism" could have solved our problems, then Lincoln and Roosevelt and Kennedy would have done so. But they did not solve ours nor the rest of the nation's. If America's problems could have been solved by forceful, politically skilled and aggressive individuals, then Lyndon Johnson would have retained the presidency. If the true "American Way" of unbridled monopoly capitalism, combined with a ruthless military imperialism could do it, then Nixon would not be running around the world, or making speeches comparing his nation's decadence to that of Greece and Rome.

If we have never faced it before, let us face it at Gary: The profound crisis of Black people and the disaster of America are not simply caused by men nor will they be solved by men alone. These crises are the crises of basically flawed economics and politics, and of cultural degradation. None of the Democratic

candidates and none of the Republican candidates—regardless of their vague promises to us or to their white constituencies—can solve our problems or the problems of this country without radically changing the systems by which it operates.

The Politics of Social Transformation

So, we come to Gary confronted with a choice. But it is not the old convention question of which candidate shall we support, the pointless question of who is to preside over a decaying and unsalvageable system. No, if we come to Gary out of the realities of the Black communities of this land, then the only real choice for us is whether or not we will live by the truth we know, whether we will move to organize independently, move to struggle for fundamental transformation, for the creation of new directions, towards a concern for the life and the meaning of Man. Social transformation or social destruction, those are our only real choices.

If we have come to Gary on behalf of our people in America, in the rest of this hemisphere, and in the Homeland—if we have come for our own best ambitions—then a new Black Politics must come to birth. If we are serious, the Black Politics of Gary must accept major responsibility for creating both the atmosphere and the program for fundamental, far-ranging change in America. Such responsibility is ours because it is our people who are most deeply hurt and ravaged by the present systems of society. That responsibility for leading the change is ours because we live in a society where few other men really believe in the responsibility of a truly humane society for anyone anywhere.

We Are the Vanguard

The challenge is thrown to us here in Gary. It is the challenge to consolidate and organize our own Black role as the vanguard in the struggle for a new society. To accept that challenge is to move independent Black politics. There can be no equivocation on that

issue. History leaves us no other choice. White politics has not and cannot bring the changes we need.

We come to Gary and are faced with a challenge. The challenge is to transform ourselves from favor-seeking vassals and loud-talking, "militant" pawns, and to take up the role that the organized masses of our people have attempted to play ever since we came to these shores: That of harbingers of true justice and humanity, leaders in the struggle for liberation.

A major part of the challenge we must accept is that of redefining the functions and operations of all levels of American government, for the existing governing structures—from Washington to the smallest county—are obsolescent. That is part of the reason why nothing works and why corruption rages throughout public life. For white politics seeks not to serve but to dominate and manipulate.

We will have joined the true movement of history if at Gary we grasp the opportunity to press Man forward as the first consideration of politics. Here at Gary we are faithful to the best hopes of our fathers and our people if we move for nothing less than a politics which places community before individualism, love before sexual exploitation, a living environment before profits, peace before war, justice before unjust "order," and morality before expediency.

This is the society we need, but we delude ourselves here at Gary if we think that change can be achieved without organizing the power, the determined national Black power, which is necessary to insist upon such change, to create such change, to seize change.

Towards a Black Agenda

So when we turn to a Black Agenda for the seventies, we move in the truth of history, in the reality of the moment. We move recognizing that no one else is going to represent our interests but ourselves. *The society we seek cannot come unless Black people organize to advance its coming.* We lift up a Black Agenda recognizing that white America moves towards the abyss created by its own racist arrogance, misplaced priorities, rampant materialism, and

ethical bankruptcy. Therefore, we are certain that the Agenda we now press for in Gary is not only for the future of Black humanity, but is probably the only way the rest of America can save itself from the harvest of its criminal past.

So, Brothers and Sisters of our developing Black nation, we now stand at Gary as people whose time has come. From every corner of Black America, from all liberation movements of the Third World, from the graves of our fathers and the coming world of our children, we are faced with a challenge and a call: Though the moment is perilous we must not despair. We must seize the time, for the time is ours.

We begin here and now in Gary. We begin with an independent Black political movement, an independent Black Political Agenda, an independent Black spirit. Nothing less will do. We must build for our people. We must build for our world. We stand on the edge of history. We cannot turn back.

To those who say that such an Agenda is "visionary," "utopian," and "impossible," we say that the keepers of conventional white politics have always viewed our situation and our real needs as beyond the realm of their wildest imaginations. At every critical moment of our struggle in America we have had to press relentlessly against the limits of the "realistic" to create new realities for the life of our people.

This is our challenge at Gary and beyond, for a new Black politics demands new vision, new hope and new definitions of the possible. Our time has come. These things are necessary. All things are possible.