

respond to their needs, and America had equivocated. Integration had once been the unquestioned goal that would be the proudest moment for Negro America. Now it was beginning to be questioned. . . .

When it became more and more apparent that integration was only designed to uplift Negroes and improve their lot, Negroes began wondering whose lot actually needed improving. Maybe the white folks weren't as well-educated and cultured as they thought they were. Thus, Negroes began cutting a path toward learning who they were. . . .

Now the Negro is beginning to study his past, to learn those things that have been lost, to recreate what the white man destroyed in him and to destroy that which the white man put instead. He has stopped being a Negro and has become a black man in recognition of his new identity, his real identity. "Negro" is an American invention which shut him off from those of the same color in Africa. He recognizes now that part of himself is in Africa. . . .

Many things that have happened in the past six years have had little or no meaning for most whites, but have had vital meaning for Negroes. Wasn't it only a month after the March on Washington that four children were killed in a church bombing in Birmingham? Whites could feel morally outraged, but they couldn't feel the futility, despair and anger that swept through The Nation within a nation—Black America. There were limits to how much one people could endure and Birmingham Sunday possibly marked that limit. . . .

What was needed that Sunday was ol' John Brown to come riding into Birmingham as he had ridden into Lawrence, Kansas, burning every building that stood and killing every man, woman and child that ran from his onslaught. Killing, killing, killing, turning men into fountains of blood, spouting until Heaven itself drew back before the frothing red ocean.

But the Liberal and his Negro sycophants would've cried, Vengeance accomplishes nothing. You are only acting like your oppressor and such an act makes you no better than him. John Brown, his hands and wrists slick with blood, would've said, oh so softly and quietly, Mere Vengeance is folly. Purgation is necessary.

Now it is over. America has had chance after chance to show that it really meant "that all men are endowed with certain inalienable rights." America has had precious chances in this decade to make it come true. Now it is over. The days of singing freedom songs and the days of combating bullets and billy clubs with Love. "We Shall Overcome" (and we have overcome our blindness) sounds old, out-dated. . . . As one SNCC veteran put it after the Mississippi March, "Man, the people are too busy getting ready to fight to bother with singing anymore." And as for Love? That's always been better done in bed than on the picket line and marches. Love is fragile and gentle and seeks a like response. They used to sing "I Love Everybody" as they ducked bricks and bottles. Now they sing:

Too much love,
Too much love,
Nothing kills a nigger like
Too much love.

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Stokely Carmichael, Black Power Defined

In 1966 Stokely Carmichael (1942–), the new chairman of SNCC, gave the growing black nationalist sentiment among younger activists both a name and a slogan when he called for "Black Power." Born in the West Indies and raised in New York City, he became active in SNCC while a student at Howard University, then participated in Freedom Summer in Mississippi. In the following document, written in 1966, Carmichael defines and explains the need for Black Power. He later expanded this discussion in the volume, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (1967), which he coauthored with a political scientist. Carmichael eventually adopted a Pan-African perspective, changed his name to Kwame Ture, and moved to the African nation of Guinea.

We shall have to struggle for the right to create our own terms through which to define ourselves and our relationship to the society, and to have these terms recognized. This is the first necessity of a free people. . . .

Negroes are defined by two forces, their blackness and their powerlessness. There have been traditionally two communities in America. The White community, which controlled and defined the forms that all institutions within the society would take; and the Negro community which has been excluded from participation in the power decisions that shaped the society, and has traditionally been dependent upon, and subservient to, the White community.

This has not been accidental. The history of every institution of this society indicates that a major concern in the ordering and structuring of the society has been the maintaining of the Negro community in its condition of dependence and oppression. This has not been on the level of individual acts of discrimination between individual whites against individual Negroes, but as total acts by the White community against the Negro community. This fact cannot be too strongly emphasized—that racist assumptions of white superiority have been so deeply ingrained in the structure of the society that it infuses its entire functioning, and is so much a part of the national subconscious that it is taken for granted and is frequently not even recognized. . . . The ghetto itself is a product of a combination of forces and special interests in the white community, and the groups that have access to the resources and power to change that situation benefit, politically and economically, from the existence of that ghetto.

It is more than a figure of speech to say that the Negro community in America is a victim of white imperialism and colonial exploitation. This is in practical economic and political terms true. There are over twenty million black people comprising ten percent of this nation. They for the most part live in well-defined areas of the country—in the

* Stokely Carmichael, "Toward Black Liberation," *Massachusetts Review* 7 (Autumn 1966).

shanty-towns and rural black belt areas of the South, and increasingly in the slums of northern and western industrial cities. If one goes into any Negro community, whether it be Jackson, Miss., Cambridge, Md., or Harlem, N.Y., one will find the same combination of political, economic, and social forces at work. The people in the Negro community do not control the resources of that community, its political decisions, its law enforcement, its housing standards, and even the physical ownership of the land, houses, and stores *lie outside that community*.

It is white power that makes the laws, and it is violent white power in the form of armed white cops that enforces those laws with guns and nightsticks. The vast majority of Negroes in this country live in these captive communities and must endure these conditions of oppression because, and only because, *they are black and powerless*. . . .

SNCC proposes that it is now time for the black freedom movement to stop pandering to the fears and anxieties of the white middle class in the attempt to earn its "good-will," and to return to the ghetto to organize these communities to control themselves. This organization must be attempted in northern and southern urban areas as well as in the rural black belt counties of the South. . . . We must organize black community power to end these abuses, and to give the Negro community a chance to have its needs expressed.

The Black Panther Party Platform

The leading black revolutionary nationalist group in the Black Power Movement was the Black Panther Party. Founded in Oakland in 1966 by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, the organization blended black nationalism with Marxist thought. The Panthers quickly gained notoriety for their advocacy of violence. They openly displayed weapons, patrolled their neighborhoods to keep watch over the police, urged blacks to "off the pigs," stormed the California State Assembly to protest a pending gun control bill, and engaged in several widely publicized shootouts. Politicians and the media often overlooked their broader political agenda, much of which is expressed in the party's platform below. In Oakland, Chicago, and other cities where they set up chapters, they organized free breakfast and health care programs, taught courses in African-American history, and warned against the dangers of drug use. The Panthers became a main target of the FBI and other law enforcement organizations, prompting their rapid decline in the 1970s.

* The Black Panther Party, "Platform and Program of the Black Panther Party" (October 1966).

The Platform

1. We want freedom. We want the power to determine the destiny of our Black Community. We believe that black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny.

2. We want full employment for our people. We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every man employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the white American businessman will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

3. We want an end to the robbery by the white man of our Black Community.

We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules was promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million black people; therefore we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.

4. We want decent housing, fit for shelter of human beings. We believe that if the white landlords will not give decent housing to our black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.

5. We want education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self. If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.

6. We want all black men to be exempt from military service.

We believe that black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like black people, are being victimized by the white racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.

7. We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of black people.

We believe we can end police brutality in our black community by organizing black self-defense groups that are dedicated to defending our black community from racist police oppression and brutality. The Second Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gives a right to bear arms. We therefore believe that all black people should arm themselves for self-defense.