

THE BLACK PRESS

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STATEN ISLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

389

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This Issue of The Black Press Is Dedicated to Black Women— Like Sister Athene Ledbetter, Co-Editor of The Black Press, Vice President of Black Student Union, and Member of Black Concern Women Ltd.

Contributors to This Issue

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Featured in this issue are interviews with:

Sr. Camille Yarbrough, Actress/Writer

Bro. Askia Muhammed Toure, Poet

Bro. Bilal Farid, Artist/Photographer

Also:

The First Monthly "Jive Dude Award"

Insights Into Financial Aid

The Gospel According to Leslie O

A Short Short Story

Poetry

Yes! We Lost Cynthia

I suppose it was inevitable; after all we were playing their game, by their rules, on their home ground. Yes, we lost Cynthia. We were not prepared for defeat, and that is how it should be. The plan was well conceived, the soldiers willing, the field generalship superb. But we lost Cynthia. Oh! we had artillery enough; the Black faculty, united into a cohesive unit, were willing and did support the cause. Still in all, we lost Cynthia. Filled with idealism, and heavy with visions of their potency, the Black Concerned Women were the primary instigators of the move to support the cause. Incredible as it sounds (to us), we lost Cynthia. The leadership of the B.S.U. gave full support, although unschooled in the politics of bureaucracy. And we still lost Cynthia.

Yes, we lost the battle, and there's no excuse for that. We lost Cynthia, but we won. For the first time in a long time Black people on this campus have united. We lost Cynthia but we finally got over with each other. Let us continue to work together to insure that we learn from the battle, and that our casualty was not in vain. We did lose Cynthia.



Cynthia Belgrave

Black Women's Point of View



Gabrielle Lawrence

Wake up, brothers (Malik, Di-
allo, Kareem, etc!) Your newly
adopted symbolic names and life-
styles aren't going to cut the
mustard unless you get down to
basics. In other words, to coin a
recent cliché, Black Men will never
be free until their women are
liberated. Just check it out: basi-
cally what has changed for the
Black woman in this so-called era
of great strides in Civil Rights
and women's liberation?

You say education? That's no
milestone for the Black woman
of today. The education level of
both males and females in this
country has risen in the past de-
cade. But let's go one step further
and see what the Black woman
can do with that education. Oh
yes, sure she can get a relatively
well paying job without making
it with the boss. But White Amer-
ica's tokenism with respect to
Black hiring practices is ram-
pant. The working (even profes-
sional) Black woman will get the
position and/or promotions that
the "equal opportunity employ-
ers" want her to have—no more
and no less—regardless of her
qualifications. Check out the per-
sonnel record files of these em-
ployers, who are always boasting
about the number of Blacks and/
or minorities they hire. Delve
further and figure out how many
of these are in managerial posi-
tions or the like. Oh, but then
aren't all Black minorities intu-
itively inferior?

It is no wonder that the quali-
fied professional Black woman
experiences anger and a sense of
futility. Then too, like her White
counterpart, the Black career girl

is discriminated against sexually.
She finds that men in the same
position earn more. If she be-
comes pregnant, all too often, she
is not given maternity leave, but
fired. She is penalized, because
after all she may get married,
become pregnant, and leave. No-
thing is thought or said about the
male, who could have been draft-
ed at any moment. Moreover, the
Black career woman must com-
pete on an even more poignant
level with White women on the
job, who feel that they are su-
perior and are treated that way.
All of these negative attitudes
and appraisals more often than
not result in the Black woman
feeling inferior. Yet she gets no
consolation from her male. In-
stead, in a way, he encourages
such dehumanization by his ad-
mission that he wants and even
expects her to work and supple-
ment his income.

And speaking of dehumanizing,
another facet of the Black wom-
an's character which hasn't
changed appreciably is her own
self-image. Today the Black wom-
an, unless she's a carbon copy
of a white woman, is not consid-
ered beautiful—not even, in many

instances, by her own Black man.
Sure, cosmetically, Black women
have progressed. Now not just the
fair sisters who had cover girl
complexions heretofore can use
cosmetics advantageously (thanks
to Flori Roberts and Posner, but
there is still room for improve-
ment). For example, Clearasil
could really boost their sales if
they only realized that dark com-
plexioned and/or Black people
occasionally have blemishes too.
Black women, in a way, can't
begin to compete with the white
straight-haired "beauty" of white
America. Not only can't she af-
ford the beauty parlor several
times a week, luxurious health
spas, clothes, face liftings, maids
and the like, but she usually has
to work to help support her fam-
ily, which takes a toll on youth
and beauty. Before the Black
woman will truly be liberated, she
must be aware of her own self-
esteem and realize she is beauti-
ful in her own way. She must ob-
tain reinforcement at least from
her man—because she is certainly
not going to get it from White
America's mass media.

The Black woman's femininity,
today as in the past, is also
threatened by the need for her
to assume part of the male re-
sponsibility of earning a living.
Because of racism in the job
market of White America, Black
men in general, do not have suf-
ficient earning capacity. Then
too, many are willing to work so
hard for their realize that their
earnings will revert to the White
man. They want their wives to
work and supplement their in-
comes, but at the same time re-
sent her capabilities. The Black
man feels unfulfilled because he
cannot adequately provide for his
family. So he allays his frustra-
tion on a vulnerable scapegoat.
He asserts or tries to prove his
manhood by making his Black
woman subservient to him.

The Black male ego is socio-
economic and also impetuous, today
just as in the past, many Black
families to become matriarchal.
This necessarily affects the Black
women because the male child of
such a family carries the psycho-
logical scars associated with a
dominant mother and he often
retaliates by dominating the fe-
male figure in his own home.

In conclusion, I am not suggest-
ing that Black women are martyrs
to the cause and are abused by
Black men. Both Black men and
women have been, are, and will
continue to be victimized by this
racist society. But what I am try-
ing to say is that it is about time
Black men and women began to
help each other. They will never
make it as long as the Black wom-
an is her man's scapegoat. Black
women today are in a posi-
tion where they do make a real
contribution to their men and
families. Now it's up to the Black
man, above all else, to let her
know he appreciates her efforts.
For unless the Black man helps
the one who loves him, bears his
children and nurtures and shapes
the minds of Black prosperity—
unless he gives her consolation
and protection from the inevitable
slurs, slings and arrows of igno-
rant and bigoted men—he will
not be ready and never be free.



Sis. Gwen Stewart

Notes from the Hill

Residents of Parkhill-Fairview
have started a Tenants Associa-
tion. Although it has been in pro-
gress only a few weeks, the general
response has been favorable. The
meetings are held in the room
adjacent to the laundry in build-
ing 240 of the complex on Wed-
nesdays at 8 pm. The Tenants As-
sociation advocates making the
community a better place for
everyone to live in. By their work-
ing with management as well as
the tenants of the complex, they
are confident that their goal will
be reached, and their complaints
will be acted upon.

Numerous tenants have voiced
the same complaints; unlocked
front and back doors, unreliable
guards, and insufficient main-
tenance personnel.

"What about your neighbor's
dog? Is he a nuisance? If so,
what can you do about it? Or
even your neighbor? Is he or she
an undesirable tenant? The Ten-
ant's Association with the coop-
eration of management, can deliv-
er that message to them. Are
you dissatisfied with constantly
inoperable washing machines and
dryers? We can get new contract-
ors.

— Sr. Gwen Stewart

NOTICE
To all sisters interested
in moving in a positive
direction, come out and
join
**BLACK CONCERNED
WOMEN LTD.,**
C-114, ask for
Sis. Leona Sanders
or
Sis. Athene Ledbetter.
It's an extension of
the B.S.U. dealing with
the sisters of S.I.C.C.
and their concern.

EDITORIAL PAGE

To the Black Students of S.I.C.C.

Thank you, thank you very much; as the result of your
"cooperation," "support" and "help" the Black Press has
lost both of its founding editors. Brothers Jake Ford and
Gleen Grimes are no longer with us. They succumbed under
the monumental burden of publishing a newspaper in the
face of apathy, indolence, and undependable writers. For
those of you who may complain of the dearth of copy, give
yourselves a pat on the back for not submitting articles.

The purpose of this paper is to print news and articles
of relevance to black students; yet surprisingly enough the
only comments on the paper we have received were from
the "Man," that's right, the white man. I suppose that can
be interpreted as a judgment by the black students, evident-
ly there was nothing in the paper that moved you, either
way. It has been suggested that maybe too much print
bores you, in this issue we have given you more pictures in
hopes that they will tell you more than a thousand words.

In closing I would like to thank those brothers and
sisters who did help, and even if they are the only ones
who care the work involved in this second edition was
worth it.

P.S. I suppose I owe you my job, because if the "Broth-
ers and Sisters" had been Brothers and Sisters, I wouldn't
be editor.

Reynolds

Letter to the Editor Note to Freshmen

This concerns the poem by El-
dridge Cleaver, "To a White
Girl," in the centerfold of your
latest edition of The Black Press
(Dec./72-Jan./73).

First of all, I acknowledge your
"right" to print this as a part of
freedom of the press. What I can-
not acknowledge or condone is
that you have put this poem in
your school paper. Where is your
sense of fairness? I'm sure that
if, in one of the other papers of
the school, the situation were re-
versed, and in the centerfold of
that paper there was a poem en-
titled "To a Black Girl," which
gave the same message that your
centerfold does, you would be all
up in arms about it, and rightly
so, and as I feel right now.

Do you find pride in putting
other people down? Are you
proud of all your achievements
past, present, and future? To me,
by putting others down all the
time, as a means of a stepping
stone for your achievements, you
are, in fact, telling me that you
have nothing to be proud of, since
you never write about these.
Aren't you resorting to the means
that you are so rigorously
against? Why don't you spend all
your valuable time announcing in-
stead of denouncing? I sincerely
hope that you put this in your
next issue of "The Black Press!"
—A White Girl

The great American legend of
college, the institution of knowl-
edge, doesn't exist as such. There
can be no institution to teach or
give a student knowledge. Knowl-
edge is an interaction of given
information with personal experi-
ence and practical use. To know
a fact is merely to know as much
as the page on which it is writ-
ten. People say to young men,
"Join the Army, boy. It'll make
a man out of you." But what type
of man does it make out of you?
It makes an Army man out of
you. The Army needs a man it
can rely on to operate as a mili-
tary machine—not to think but
to act. College will basically do
the same thing to you, if you let
it. College manufactures minds

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dents, or administration.

to service the present social mach-
ine. If you sit back waiting to be
given knowledge you expected,
you will get a course in basic
social machine.

The black man should seek a
place in this machine because it
does not service him. College is
an opportunity for knowledge
which the black man needs to
get out from under this Social
machine. I urge all blacks to get
off their asses and use the oppor-
tunity to obtain this knowledge.
The present system has made the
mistake of giving you the oppor-
tunity to obtain the tools neces-
sary to destroy this oppressive
system: Don't you make the mis-
take of passing them by.

You should explore fully every
course you take in order to
achieve its full value to you as a
black person. If you were to do
a deep study on any course, you
should find that there is no
course offered to you in which
you cannot learn something of
personal value. If you learn no-
thing else, you learn about peo-
ple. You shouldn't start any
course with the attitude that it
is required of you, but that you
require it to obtain your goal.
Every course given to you can
be considered an expression of
man's ideas, actions, and their
results.

The instructor has the responsi-
bility to educate and stimulate
your minds, to awaken you to
knowledge. If he fails, in your
opinion, then you must accept this
responsibility or consider the
course a waste. But a waste to
whom? The instructor still gets
paid.

**Quote of
The Month**
"Black people are al-
ways down for a party."
— Sharon Saunders

**Reply By
Bubba Giles**

"I'm not going for that. In to-
day's times I feel that Black peo-
ple need a certain amount of
pleasure and relaxation . . . but
there is a time to get down to
business. First, I'd like to examine
the word partying. Party like any
other word found in Webster's
jive dictionary is a very ambigu-
ous context. To me partying is a
sense of being together with bro-
thers and sisters (in a true sense)
and getting down . . . not shoot-
ing dope or the like, but rapping
and checking' brothers and sisters
heads out. Dr. Saunders' state-
ment, if taken seriously, will
mean to me that Malcolm X,
King, and all other Black brothers
that took the giant step forward
died in vain."

Williamsburg Four Heroes?

I consider the Williamsburg
Four heroes, not because they
held hostages, or killed and
wounded policemen, but because
they recognized and acted against
oppression and repression. They
gave the appropriate response to
an intolerable situation. There's
evidence that I am not alone in
my adulation of the Williamsburg
Four; they were roundly cheered
when they left the store and ac-
companied the police to the 90th
Precinct.

There is no doubt in my mind
that it took a considerable amount
of courage. I've often philoso-
phized as to whether or not they
realized the revolutionary impli-
cations of their action.

The effect of their action was
not totally confined to Black
people. In the ensuing hours mass
transit in the area ceased, hitting
the man where it hurts most, and
as an added benefit Black people
were able to recognize many as-
pects of the nature as well as the
extent of their oppression. We
were able to see the full extent
of police over-reaction. Was it
really necessary to bring in hun-
dreds of police? Must they al-
ways move in battalion strength
in Black enclaves? Forewarned is
forearmed.

There is a valuable lesson to be
learned from the Williamsburg
Four if we will take the time to
see through the propaganda of
the powers that be.

Sister Melvinia McGill

Black Women Must Define Their Roles

The continued existence of the
Black race is the primary and
fundamental privilege of the
Black woman. Woman, therefore,
is biologically destined to this
role. The Black woman under-
stands and cherishes this privi-
lege. Exterior roles may be di-
versified, and usually overshadow
this basic principle of nature.
Most Black men (and men in gen-
eral) are hung-up on male sup-
remacy, in view of the fact that
inequality for women is contra-
dictory to their call for unity.

Problems faced by women are
the same as those that face men.
We are oppressed as a people and
not as male and female. Just as
the worker is oppressed in dif-
ferent degrees, it is oppression
nonetheless.

The Black woman's role should
be defined by the individual wom-
an; there is no national or inter-
national woman's role (or man's
role). Our role is determined by
our understanding, and our at-
tempt to deal with expressing
situations that won't respect and
will destroy our humanity. Wom-
en just as men must struggle
to determine the role of the Black
race in world determinations. No
man or woman can say what this
role is or should be; we can only
make unity a part of the process
and not the gold at the end of
the rainbow.

In the same struggle,
Marcellus T. Jones

**We Will Accept
All Comments
About How You
Feel. Please Let
Us Know.
Write:
BLACK PRESS
Editor
c/o SICC
715 Ocean Terrace
Staten Island, N.Y.
10301**

Vocabulary

I used to think I was poor
Then they told me I wasn't poor,
I was needy.
Then they told me it was self-
defeating
To think of myself as needy, that
I was
Culturally deprived.
Then they told me "deprived" was
a bad image,
That I was underprivileged was
overused,
That I was disadvantaged.
I still don't have a dime,
But I do have a Great vocabulary.
— Unknown (not by Lou)

Black Woman on Campus

The beauty and warmth she
naturally possesses is inherited
from earlier ebony queens. She is
intelligent, she is proud, and her
positive vibrations are shared by
all who know her.

She is the black woman in col-
lege, and at SICC there're many
together sisters going about the
task of furthering their education
in a very positive and creative
manner. The black woman is in-
volved in a fascinating array of
academic and extracurricular ac-
tivity on campus. She can be
found gracing any classroom in
school, for her interests are many.
She is learning the mysteries of
science, higher math, broadcast-
ing, home economics, nursing, and
judo. She is capable of meeting
head-on the rigors and challenges
of academic life.

She comes from various places
and backgrounds and her person-
alities are as varied and beautiful
as her different shades of black-
ness.

She, the daughter of hard-work-
ing black folks, is determined to
attain the education denied her
parents. Very often she is the
mother of children and under-
stands the necessity of improving
her life in order to provide a
brighter future for her offspring.
Her radiance and positive influ-
ence is evident in all her endeav-
ors. She is the sister, friend, class-
mate, and helper of us all, and
she assumes these diverse roles
with no less of the charm, femi-
ninity, or refinement peculiar to
her.

I salute you, black woman. Keep
on keeping on.
Bill Tate



I Came To Be With You

It comes in a little bag and you can put it in your pocket
And when you take it out to show even those who never seen before

Know what it is if the screws are in the right sockets
Well I got my equipment and took into my veins, then I began to feel so good I knew this was my games

So I began to dance and dance and dance

You should have the steps I did
Hey I was really getting off good baby

Like I never thought I could,
My heart started to bother me so I sat down before I blew my mind

Hey Baby be cool I said and try to stay in line.

Suddenly there was a knock at the door, so I got up, open it and finally took a look at a big black soul brother with copper-colored skin dark brown eyes and a big black bush that was really dynamic. He opened his mouth and these words came out: I came to be with you tonight—the night that you have been waiting for. So I say hey baby I don't mind but you could at least give me some kind of warning sign.

We sat on the couch and began to kiss and then we began to reminisce. The uppers the downers and things like that the trips the flashbacks just things of the past. He noticed the door to my bed.

room was open, then pulling and leading me into the room he said hey Mama I know you can do better than this. Now we can move up to bigger and better risks.

Yes . . . yes yes! I said, so I go into bed and took him all in, man it felt so good I thought it would never end. Before we were through it was almost dawn but after I took him in I felt as if I was reborn. I turn to look at him and ask if he was going to leave now, No! he said I came to be with you.

Hey I thought this was nice of him. Then I got up walked into the room and to my surprise I was still sitting there. He came out of the room walked up behind me and begin to laugh a laugh that was so loud it made me stop and turn around. I looked into his face and it had changed! Now he was a white man with big blue plastic baby doll eyes and skin that was cracked and wrinkled with hair that was as white as snow. Then he spoke again saying I came to be with you, you have been calling me every time you stick that needle into your arm so what else can I do but be with you. You see now that you've had relations with me I shall be with you forever. There I stood with the realization of being aware that I had been making love with death.

— Dorothy Johnson

Join the Black Student Union

Well, Brothers and Sisters, we finally made it. The Black Student Union has made it through to the other side, and is still functioning.

Casualties were high, but that was to be expected. Before you're misled, let me state that only one battle has been won: The organization has survived another se-

mester. We have not won the war and the conflict is not at an end. Support is needed, ACTIVE SUPPORT. We are saturated with rhetoricians; now as ever is the time for work.

Peace and the freedom to enjoy it,
Reynolds

Dateline Harlem:

On Jan. 17, 1973 this reporter was present at the first book party of the year given for a Black poet. The event, which took place at the Studio Duseum in Harlem honored poet Askia Muhammad Toure and introduced his new book "Songhai." The guest list included such notables as: John O. Killens, Sonia Sanchez, George Davis, Camille Yarbrough, Bill Savage, Nikki Grimes, and Bro. Ashanti.

A festive mood pervaded the occasion, and entertainment was provided by The Caravan, a Black ensemble. The main event of the evening was the introduction of the book "Songhai." Bro. Toure describes his book as follows: "Songhai" is primarily an epic philosophical verse deeply rooted in Islam and the cosmic music of Coltrane and Pharoah S—Pharoah Saunders."



Askia Muhammed Toure

Tate's View of Native Son

Any young black reader of Wright's classic Native Son must experience a certain psychological gnawing which penetrated to the core of their blackness. Automatically identifying with the all too familiar rat killing scene that opens the book, our readers psyche quickly assumes a karate stance, prepared to block and strike at once. And there proves to be plenty of need for both. By the close of the first chapter we have felt the despair of a black man waking to a crowded one room world bursting from need.

Saddened by the ease of shifting violence from an enemy to a brother friend, and shamed by his inability to vent anger constructively Bigger Thomas cheers himself up by fantasizing on the nature of the beast while protected by the safety of a movie house. Events shortly lead up to the first direct contact for the title character with white folks, it is at this point that the catharsis begins for the young reader. Bigger's first encounter with his future employer and family seemed to parallel the experience of any black taking his first real close up look at the Durants and Archie Bunkers in this land of the free.

The visceral reaction of feeling that a certain inferior posture must be effected by the black in any white/black meeting gnawed at Bigger Thomas as he groped for some right, some justification, to look a white man in the eye. The psychological effect of the book on young people today and young people at the same time the book was written is basically the same. Both can intimately understand the frustration and could easily relate to Bigger's poignant soliloquy describing his plight as ". . . just like peeping in through a knot-hole in the fence . . ." Bigger's sons could say the same thing today.

Although social conditions have improved across the board since the time Native Son was written the unequal equation remains. Blacks still occupy the lowest rungs of the socio-economic order. Slumlords today wallow in wealth and the dignity stripping welfare

programs that held a death grip on the Thomases, still flourish in the black community.

Fear, the title of the books first chapter, is the dominant emotion of the story's beginning. The main character, Bigger Thomas, embodies all the fears accompanying the decision of a black man to strike back at the oppressive forces that are constantly grinding him to oblivion.

The fears are all consuming and dangerous, for they concern survival. For Bigger the problem was transforming these tremendous fears into energetic lifesaving action. He had done the unspeakable. In reading the murder scene I was initially bewildered by the author allowing Bigger to slay the girl, simply to avoid being discovered in her room. Reflecting, however, on the penal justice of this nation the reasoning became clear. Black rape of white women historically runs a close second to murder as the prime feeder of the gallows. To be accused of rape would be just as dire a fate as would a murder charge, as far as Bigger was concerned. His framing of Jan, the Communist organizer, and one of the two white people who displayed some regard for Bigger as a human being was another example of the urgent need for him to alleviate the fear of consequences for his deeds. The phlegmatic attitude that Bigger assumed after each of these endeavors underscores the gravity of the situations he found himself in. A pattern suddenly develops. Fear, calm detachment, violence . . . given the quicksand circumstances of Bigger's life, the essence of his character is extremely complicated. His actions prove that the race issue is more than skin deep. He had rejected religion, which was the mainstay of many Negroes of his time. His savage treatment of religious persons visiting him in jail measured the degree of contempt he held for them. Bigger was apolitical, selling his vote to the highest bidder thereby expressing his utter disinterest in political apparatus as a means of achieving a sense of worth.

Bigger was guided by his own rules and morality. These rules were the natural consequences of

the experience of being a Bigger Thomas. In certain respects I picture Bigger as an ebony Everyman, encompassing the entire gamut of black action and reaction. There are few attitudes which Bigger displayed that have not been borne by black men around the globe. The conditions that make Bigger Thomases remain and fortunately there are Biggers striking out everyday to keep forever open the clear and unacceptable of the life this nation would have the black man live. Other avenues of expression have slowly materialized enabling us black men to justify our being. Black awareness and nationalism have intensified in recent years and we are beginning a new black era. However, the Bigger in us all must remain firmly in our totality rising when circumstances warrant, when our other selves fail.

The Gospel According to Leslie O.

It has occurred to me that since dope pushers, pimps, and various other ghetto parasites are considered to be acting too revolutionary roles then maybe it's time to reassess our evaluation of "Little Black Sambo." It's time to give our children a new hero. After all, what turned us against him? His name, remember? — Black Sambo. It was the black that got to us. In those days it was easier to call down the dozens on somebody's mother than to call them black, for black was a fighting word. He had kinky hair; now don't we all? He had thick lips and no blowout cream can give Mad. Ave. that. He was smart; only a fool would have fought the tiger. He was a "natural" athlete; fast enough to run a tiger into a pool of butter, with an appetite adequate enough to consume 144 pancakes (definite sexual overtones). So why not Black Sambo? He is a part of our heritage and he's at least as relevant as the pimps, pushers, and muggers of Harlem. Surey we're no longer ashamed of being called black! What is an Afro but puffed-up, kinky hair? And thick lips are better for kissing. Welcome home, Sambo.

"From the moment when Brown proclaimed the obvious truth that 'violence is as American as cherry pie,' he became the target of fierce attacks by the establishment."

H. Rap Brown, former Chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and his three co-defendants, Samuel Petty, Levi Valentine, and Arthur Young, are now on trial at 100 Centre Street in New York. He was arrested on October 16, 1971, and has been in jail for the last year and a half, charged with attempted murder of a police officer, robbery, and the possession of weapons. He is held on \$250,000 bail.

For a crucial period in the 1960's, Rap Brown articulated the anger and courage of a generation of Blacks. Now he is all but forgotten, though the conditions that first propelled Rap into history have changed very little. Even as his trial began New York City policemen—under the guise of hunting for members of the Black Liberation Army—arbitrarily shot and killed two black citizens whom the police themselves never even claimed to be suspects.

We remember Rap from the late 1960's. His book Die, Nigger Die, was, along with Soul on Ice and The Autobiography of Malcolm X crucial for our education. While our professors failed us by cooperating with the Pentagon, and churning out old myths about the Free World and American Democracy, Rap was teaching us lessons about violence, Black Power, and Vietnam. Before the era of the Black Panthers, Rap was sounding the alarm: "If you're going to play good Germans, we're not going to play good Jews," he said. But Rap wasn't a prophet of doom and destruction. He celebrated the Black Nation, the pride and power of Black people: he was

audacious and joyful signifying the dignity of the oppressed. When Rap spoke people held their heads higher, walked bolder, and doffed their hats to no masters.

"I have been accused of many things," Rap said in his opening statement to the jury on February 1, 1973. "but those who have ears, let them see; and those who have ears, let them hear." From March, 1970 when he went underground to October, 1971, when he was captured and jailed, Rap was unseen, unheard, and somewhat of a mystery. But his commanding presence and his clear voice are unmistakable in the courtroom. Rap began his remarks to the jury by reciting in Arabic, The Fatiah, the first prayer in the Koran. He concluded with his own beautiful prophecy:

Truth is the eye of the storm, and I myself no more than a raindrop looking for a fertile place to fall; a poet who speaks to the deaf; a scribe whose ledger is the wind; a rainbow in the mind of the blind.

The trial is held in part 38 of the Supreme Court, Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. There is no Friday session because Rap, Valentine, Petty, and Young are Sunni Moslems and observe the Sabbath on Fridays. People are invited and encouraged to attend the trial. Funds are needed and contributions for the defense can be sent to H. Rap Brown Defense Committee, P.O. Box 287 Colonial Park Station, New York, N.Y. 10039 —Eds.

By WILLIAM KUNSTLER

Rap Brown is currently on trial in New York City because of a government vendetta that began five years ago in Cambridge, Maryland, and has continued unabated until today. His case is a classic example of the perverse use of the legal process to silence a voice that some hate and fear. The state and federal authorities have subjected no other contemporary American dissident to such sustained and unrelenting efforts to destroy him, both as a person and as a spokesman for a radical point of view.

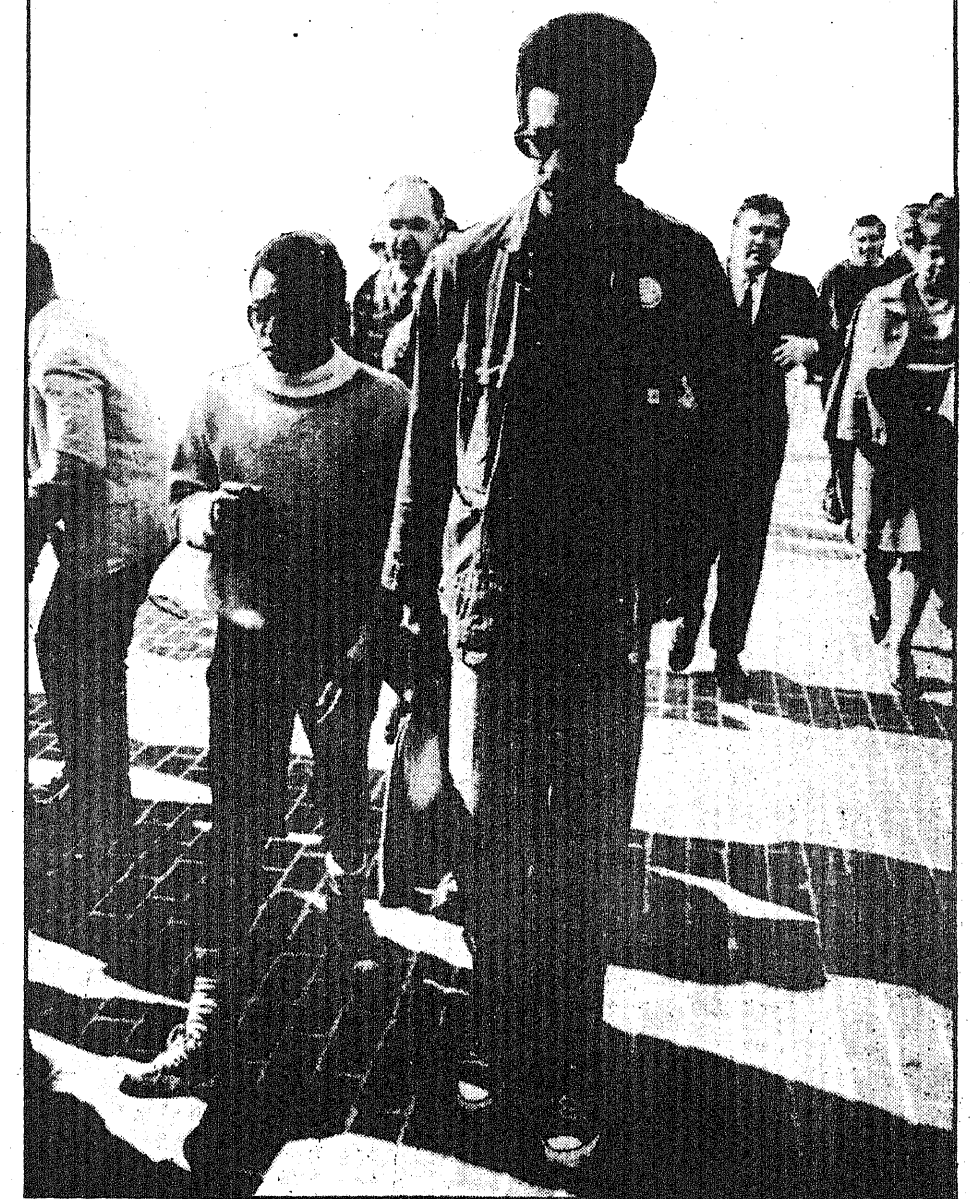
The government's vendetta started in the spring of 1967 when Brown, a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, succeeded Stokely Carmichael as chairman of the then Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). From the moment when Brown proclaimed the obvious truth that "violence is as American as cherry pie," he became the target of

William Kunstler has been H. Rap Brown's close friend and attorney for the past seven years.

fierce attacks by the establishment. Across the country one public official after another denounced Brown as an apostle of racial conflict who used fiery and provocative rhetoric to generate armed insurrections like Nat Turner's, or, at the very least, sporadic rebellions in the nation's black communities.

It is now difficult to understand the causes of such deep and widespread paranoia. One might attribute it to Brown's personal characteristics: his towering height, his affinity for lightly tinted glasses, his stern, unsmiling visage and outward aloofness, or his often strident voice. But it is more probably true that Brown inspired fear because 1967 was a year when the accepted (albeit grudgingly) articulation of black protest—undoubtedly best symbolized by Dr. King—changed to the angry, bitter, and less patient expression of that discontent by Carmichael, Brown, and others. In 1967 the old refrain of "Black and White Together" was replaced by the undefined cry, "Black Power!" It was soon apparent that the national white community responded to this

J. Edgar Hoover Frank Hogan Cambridge, Md. New Orleans Parish New York Magazine vs. H. RAP BROWN



change with uneasiness and outright fear.

The government's persecution of Brown began on the evening of July 25, 1967, when Brown, at the invitation of the black citizens of Cambridge, Maryland, spoke at an outdoor rally. Cambridge is a segregated Eastern shore city, and had been the scene of intense racial conflict four years earlier. In his speech, Brown referred to the

Pine Street Elementary School, an antiquated building that had been condemned for human use many years before, but which black children still had to attend. Brown denounced the continued use of the school and even lauded the fact that a fire had partially destroyed it some months back.

As Brown walked away from the rally site, a deputy sheriff wounded him with buckshot—an act that the Kerner

Commission subsequently characterized as an example of "over-reaction" by city officials to his appearance. After being treated at a local infirmary, Brown left town and drove to Washington, D.C. Some four hours later, according to the Cambridge police, a youth set fire to the remaining walls of the Pine Street Elementary School.

The Cambridge prosecutor immediately charged Brown with a variety of crimes, including arson and inciting to riot, and issued a multi-state alarm for his arrest. He also accused Brown of violating a federal statute forbidding interstate flight to avoid prosecution. Several times during their persecution of Brown, the government was to use this gambit of indicting him without his

knowledge and then accusing him of breaking laws pertaining only to people under indictment.

Brown was not aware of the Cambridge prosecutor's charges until he awoke the next morning at his sister's home in Washington. Later that evening two FBI agents, looking for Brown, visited the home of one of Brown's attorneys. At that time the agents agreed, with the express approval of their supervisor, that Brown could surrender himself at their New York office the next day. Upon being informed of this arrangement, Brown planned to fly to New York the next morning.

However, when he arrived at Washington's National Airport he was arrested by local police and promptly

turned over to waiting FBI agents. Taken to the United States Courthouse in Alexandria, Virginia, and held for several hours, Brown was finally informed that the federal charges against him had been withdrawn—whereupon marshalls pushed Brown down the steps of the building and (literally) into the arms of the Alexandria police who had a state fugitive warrant for his apprehension. Bond was set in the sum of \$10,000 and Brown was released to await a hearing on whether he should be extradited to Maryland.

On August 14, a grand jury in Cambridge indicted Brown for arson and incitement to riot—again without his knowledge. Two days later Brown flew to New Orleans to visit his family. On the flight he carried with him, in full view, a .30 caliber carbine. The gun is a legal weapon and Brown duly checked it with the pilot, both on his flight to New Orleans and when he returned on August 18th.

At 2 o'clock the next morning, Brown was arrested and charged with violating an obscure federal statute that makes it a crime for a person under indictment to carry any weapon in interstate commerce. The charge—originally enacted to prevent armed racketeers from travelling around the country and never before applied to civil rights activists—saddled Brown with \$15,000 additional bail, and also made it impossible for him to carry a firearm for his protection.

The conditions of his new bond required Brown to get the approval of a Louisiana federal judge any time he wanted to travel outside of New York City. In February 1968 his bond was revoked because he had failed to obtain such permission before addressing Black Panther rallies in Oakland and Los Angeles earlier that month. He was remanded to the Orleans Parish jail (where, incidentally, prison officials intercepted his telephone conversations with his attorneys and disclosed the contents to the FBI) and his bail was raised to \$50,000.

Soon after, he was accused of yet

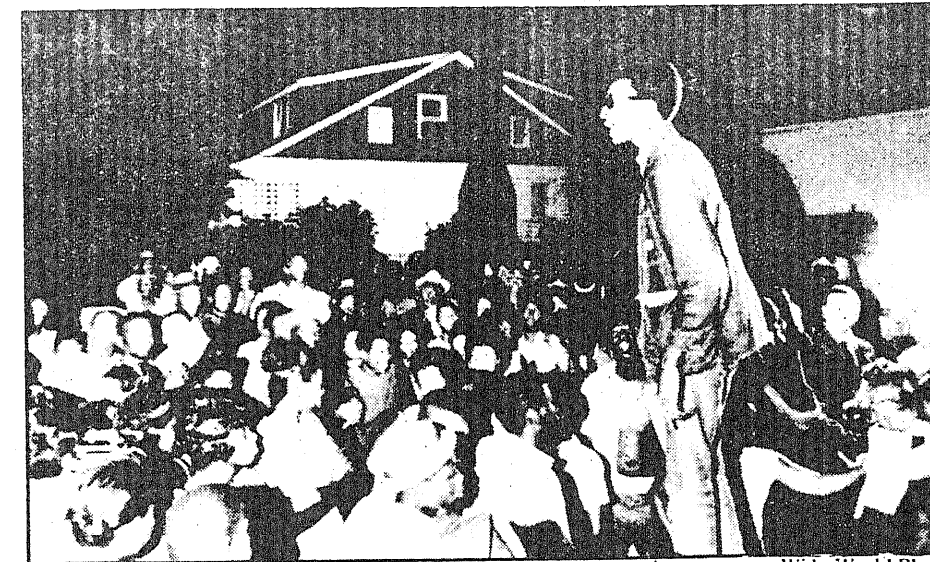
another crime: intimidating a black FBI agent who had testified against him at the bail revocation hearing. During a recess in the hearing, Brown had commented that he hoped the agent's children didn't grow up to be like their father, a remark that the Federal authorities quickly translated into a threat to harm the latter's non-existent offspring. The judge rapidly set an additional \$50,000 bail.

Although the Appellate Court eventually reduced the bail, Brown spent the next two months in jail. It took extensive legal proceedings in courts in Louisiana, Virginia and Maryland to secure his release in the middle of April. During this time, Brown was, of course, effectively silenced, and unable to perform any of his functions and duties as the Chairman of SNCC.

Shortly after he gained his freedom, Brown was tried and convicted of the federal weapons charge in New Orleans. Although he had no criminal record, he was sentenced to the maximum punishment permitted by the statute—five years imprisonment and a \$2,000 fine. He was allowed to remain free on bond, subject to the same travel restrictions, pending appeal.

He was destined to be sentenced twice more on this charge. While he was confined in Louisiana, his captors eavesdropped on his telephone conversations, even those to his lawyer, and repeated many of them to the FBI. Because of this, his sentence was set aside pending a hearing on the wiretapping. Parenthetically, his second sentence on the same charge had also been vacated because the judge, in open violation of the Constitution, insisted on resentencing him *in absentia*.

The Maryland trial was scheduled to begin in March, 1970. Earlier the prosecution had moved to transfer the case from the county where the alleged crimes took place, which had a black population of about 35%. Although no Maryland defendant had ever been forced to stand trial in a county other than the one in which the crime sup-



Wide World Photos

posedly occurred, the court ruled in the prosecution's favor. The case was transferred to Harford County, which had a black population of around 5% and also the national headquarters of a chapter of the Ku Klux Klan.

On the eve of the trial, two of Brown's closest friends, Ralph Featherstone and William "Che" Payne, were killed when the car in which they were riding near Bel Air (the seat of Harford County) was mysteriously blown to bits. Brown's case was transferred once again to another county with an even lower black population percentage; and Brown, acutely aware of the probability that what had happened to Featherstone and Payne could happen to him, went underground. He was not seen publicly again until he was shot by a New York City police officer on a Manhattan rooftop in October of 1971.

When Brown disappeared, J. Edgar Hoover announced that Brown was now Public Enemy No. 11 on the FBI's Most Wanted List. In addition, Hoover issued a Wanted Flyer, to be posted in police stations and other public buildings throughout the United States, which stated that "Brown may be armed and should be considered dangerous," a flyer that was frequently shown at the conclusion of the television program, "FBI." The clear message of these actions to every law enforcement officer was that it was better to shoot first and ask questions later.

Hoover also directed his agents to hound Brown's family at every turn. His parents and his wife's parents were harassed night and day, and it is highly possible that the untimely deaths of his mother and both of his in-laws shortly after these tactics began was due to such pressure. On one occasion, his wife returned from abroad, and was detained at Kennedy International Airport for hours without apparent reason. During such detention, she was told by federal agents that she and her family and friends would be constantly terrorized until her husband surrendered or was apprehended.

Even after Brown was arrested and charged with armed robbery and the attempted murder of police officers in New York City, the crimes for which he is presently being tried, his persecution continued without any respite. The day before his trial was scheduled to begin on October 24, 1972, *New York Magazine* published a lead article entitled "The Man Who Shot Rap Brown." Written by a former deputy police commissioner, the piece portrayed Brown as a desperado and Ralph Mannetta, the policeman who shot him, as a hero; it also contained demonstrably untrue allegations that were

calculated to prejudice prospective jurors against him.

For example, the article contained a two-page, brightly colored illustration that, according to the magazine, "recreates the rooftop confrontation between Patrolman Mannetta and Rap Brown." Brown is depicted pointing a flaming revolver in the direction of the police officer, and the accompanying caption states that, "[G]unfire is exchanged . . ." Yet, according to the official ballistics report, the weapon attributed to Brown bore "no evidence of discharge."

The pattern of systematic persecution of H. Rap Brown is clearly apparent. Even the Cambridge States' Attorney recently told a reporter (as well as a fellow prosecutor) that the arson charge against Brown was deliberately fabricated to "get him on the FBI most wanted list." Moreover, despite Brown's persistent efforts to obtain a speedy trial on these unfounded charges as well as those involving the so-called intimidation of the FBI agent in Louisiana, he has been consistently denied such a fundamental right.

Perhaps we have become too inured to the use of the criminal law to curb dissent in the United States. The recent prosecution of Benjamin Spock, Angela Davis, Bobby G. Seale, the Chicago 8, Phillip Berrigan, Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo, Black Panthers throughout the country, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and Carlos Feliciano are prime examples of this immoral practice. But what has been done to Rap Brown and those he loves has, in its intensity, its duration, and its cruelty, gone far beyond the limits of a society which has learned to ignore suppression.

Today Rap Brown is fighting for his life in a New York courtroom. Had it not been for what his society had done to him, he would not be there. It is impossible to watch him day after day without being thoroughly ashamed, without suffering some portion of the same bitterness, frustration, and rage that must be his daily lot. One can only hope, however unrealistically, that his ordeal may educate and awaken enough of us in time to begin to confront those in power when they so blatantly and arrogantly misuse it.

The possibility of a free and open society ends, as Justice Douglas has only recently reminded us, with the creation of a submissive people. The time to avoid chains is before they are forged, not when they are being welded into place. The story of H. Rap Brown is the handwriting on the wall for those who care to read. The time to resist is now—or perhaps never!

"Today Rap Brown is fighting for his life in a New York City courtroom. It is impossible to watch him day after day without being thoroughly ashamed, without suffering some portion of the same bitterness, frustration, and rage that must be his daily lot."



Wide World Photos



Clockwise from left: H. Rap Brown, July 25, 1967, speaking to a crowd at a rally in Cambridge, Maryland, for which he was later indicted on charges of riot and arson; February 22, 1968, being escorted by Federal and State officials from the courthouse in New Orleans, Louisiana where he had been charged with intimidating an FBI agent; and at Columbia University's Hamilton Hall, April 26, 1968, with Stokely Carmichael, at left in dark glasses.



Photo by Ray Gaspar

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