

THE BLACK PRESS

Vol. 1, No. 2

STATEN ISLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

389

JANUARY — FEBRUARY 1973



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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GWEN STEWART
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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, Dillal, Kareem, etc)! Your newly adopted symbolic names and lifestyles 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: basically 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 decade. 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 America's tokenism with respect to Black hiring practices is rampant. The working (even professional) Black woman will get the position and/or promotions that the "equal opportunity employers" want her to have—no more and no less—regardless of her qualifications. Check out the personnel record files of these employers, 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 positions or the like. Oh, but then aren't all Black minorities intuitively inferior?

It is no wonder that the qualified 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 becomes 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. Nothing is thought or said about the male, who could have been drafted at any moment. Moreover, the Black career woman must compete on an even more poignant level with White women on the job, who feel that they are superior 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. Instead, in a way, he encourages such dehumanization by his admission that he wants and even expects her to work and supplement his income.

And speaking of dehumanizing, another facet of the Black woman's character which hasn't changed appreciably is her own self-image. Today the Black woman, unless she's a carbon copy of a white woman, is not considered 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 improvement). For example, Clearasil could really boost their sales if they only realized that dark complexioned 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 afford 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 family, 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 beautiful in her own way. She must obtain 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 responsibility of earning a living. Because of racism in the job market of White America, Black men in general, do not have sufficient earning capacity. Then too, many are willing to work so hard for they realize that their earnings will revert to the White man. They want their wives to work and supplement their incomes, but at the same time resent her capabilities. The Black man feels unfulfilled because he cannot adequately provide for his family. So he allays his frustration on a vulnerable scapegoat. He asserts or tries to prove his manhood by making his Black woman subservient to him.

The best way I can attempt to show the true relationship between the petty-middle class and the poor masses is to bring to the light some words from George Jackson: "Born to a premature date . . . the caught man under hatches, without bail—that's me. Anyone who can pass the civil service examination today can kill me tomorrow."

Fuck punk-ass Nixon and the Poverty Program. Poor people will continue to deal with their existence, and will strike out at their oppressors; the Poverty Program has been a deterrent to this attitude. Poor people must utilize this attitude in order to survive. No longer will petty middle class (Poverty Program Administrators) people pretend to work for the poor, a group they themselves are attempting to escape from. Fuck handouts; we now realize they may be taken away as suddenly as they are given. Our existence is fast becoming a reality; poor people must deal for themselves. Is this not truly self-determination, and can we, at so late a date, reject any attempt to promote such an attitude, even if it is generated by the enemy? We have long cried for self-determination; we can now cowardly object to a favorable turn of events.

Power to the people, for struggle is a part of our existence. However, handouts need not be. We have the power to determine our existence; do we have the power to determine our existence? —Marcellus T. Jones



Sis. Gwen Stewart

Notes from the Hill

Residents of Parkhill-Fairview have started a Tenants Association. Although it has been in progress only a few weeks, the general response has been favorable. The meetings are held in the room adjacent to the laundry in building 240 of the complex on Wednesdays at 8 pm. The Tenants Association advocates making the community a better place for everyone to live in. By their working 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 maintenance 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 Tenant's Association with the cooperation of management, can deliver that message to them. Are you dissatisfied with constantly inoperable washing machines and dryers? We can get new contractors.

Find out why your children don't have an adequate recreational area, and what you can do about it. Our demands will be the people's. So bring to our attention any problem or question you may have difficulty in solving.

— 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, evidently 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 "Brothers and Sisters" had been Brothers and Sisters, I wouldn't be editor.

Reynolds

Letter to the Editor

This concerns the poem by Eldridge 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 cannot 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 reversed, and in the centerfold of that paper there was a poem entitled "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 instead of denouncing? I sincerely hope that you put this in your next issue of "The Black Press!" —A White Girl

Note to Freshmen

By Robert Young

As you graduate from high school and prepare to further your formal education, you may have many different concepts of college and college life. Many believe that college is the place to obtain knowledge, a well rounded education, and to come out an individual ready for adult life. Some think that college will take a high school kid and turn him into a mature individual. There are those who think college is a place to learn some professional skill to make more money. The latter of the three comes nearest to the truth.

The great American legend of college, the institution of knowledge, doesn't exist as such. There can be no institution to teach or give a student knowledge. Knowledge is an interaction of given information with personal experience and practical use. To know a fact is merely to know as much as the page on which it is written. 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 military machine—not to think, but to act. College will basically do the same thing to you, if you let it. College manufactures minds

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 accompanied the police to the 90th Precinct.

There is no doubt in my mind that it took a considerable amount of courage. I've often philosophized as to whether or not they realized the revolutionary implications 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 aspects 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 hundreds of police? Must they always 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 understands and cherishes this privilege. Exterior roles may be diversified, and usually overshadow this basic principle of nature. Most Black men (and men in general) are hung-up on male supremacy, in view of the fact that inequality for women is contradictory 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 different degrees, it is oppression nonetheless.

The Black woman's role should be defined by the individual woman; there is no national or international woman's role (or man's role). Our role is determined by our understanding, and our attempt to deal with expressing situations that won't respect and will destroy our humanity. Women 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 college, 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 involved in a fascinating array of academic and extracurricular activity 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, broadcasting, 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 personalities are as varied and beautiful as her different shades of blackness.

She, the daughter of hard-working black folks, is determined to attain the education denied her parents. Very often she is the mother of children and understands the necessity of improving her life in order to provide a brighter future for her offspring. Her radiance and positive influence is evident in all her endeavors. She is the sister, friend, classmate, and helper of us all, and she assumes these diverse roles with no less of the charm, femininity, or refinement peculiar to her.

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

Quote of The Month

"Black people are always down for a party." — Sharon Saunders

Reply By Bubba Giles

"I'm not going for that. In today's times I feel that Black people 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 ambiguous context. To me partying is a sense of being together with brothers and sisters (in a true sense) and getting down . . . not shooting dope or the like, but rapping and checking' brothers and sisters heads out. Dr. Saunder's statement, 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."

THE BLACK PRESS Co-Editors SARGE & REYNOLDS PRODUCTION STAFF MARGA McKEYTHON Administration DOROTHY JOHNSON Proofreader SAMBIE AUSTIN Typists: JOYCE HENDRIX, ORCHID D. JOHNSON, MELVINA MCGILL, PAT MONDS, CAROL SATCHELL. — Photos by REYNOLDS — Faculty Adviser — DR. HENRY HARRIS Technical Consultant — DR. BERNARD BLAU The Black Press is a publication of the students of Staten Island Community College. All articles that appear in this publication are the opinions of the writer and may not be the opinion of the faculty, students, or administration.



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 Museum 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—Pharaoh Saunders."



Askia Muhammad 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. Stumblers 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 out 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 eyes, 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.

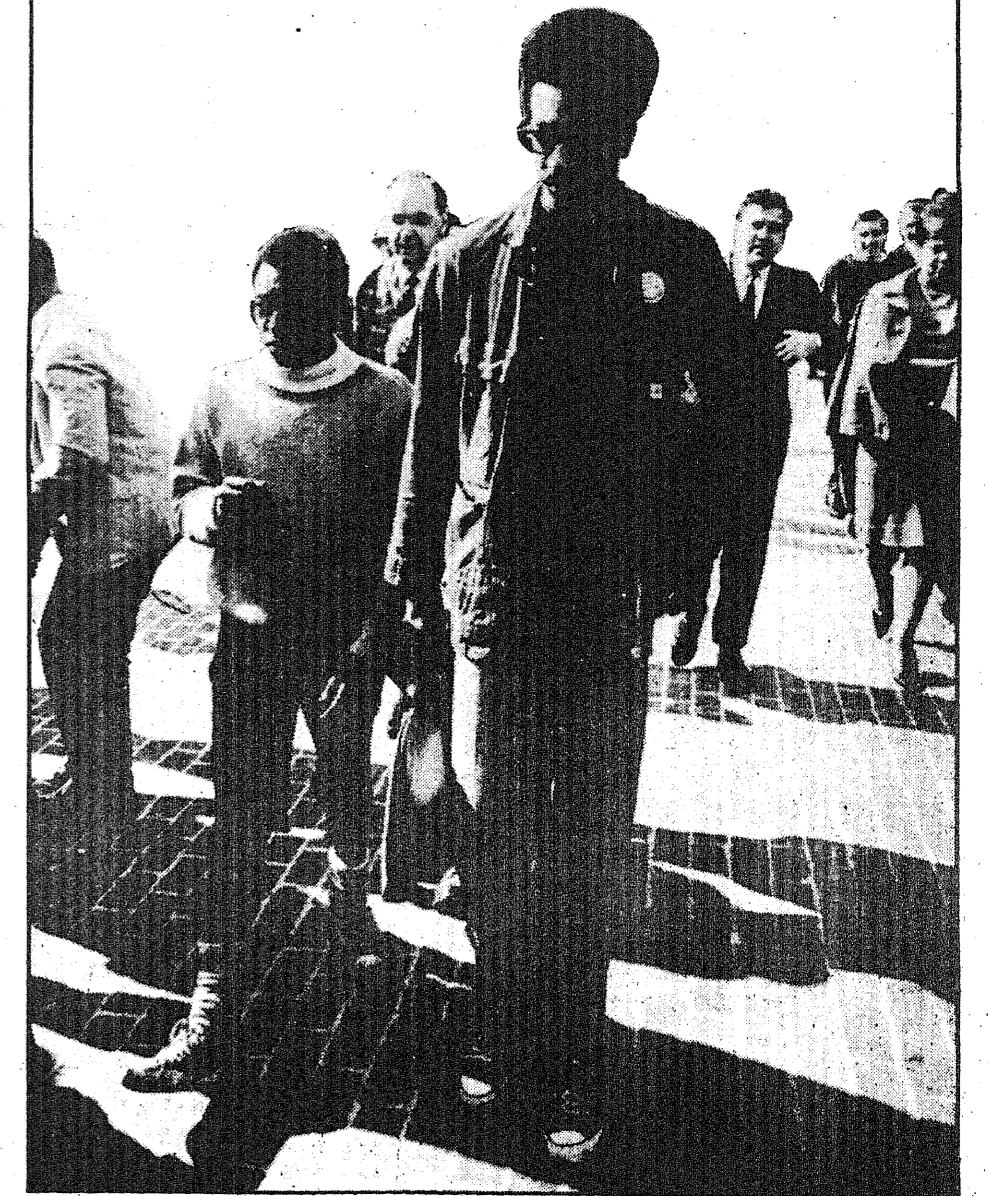
The government's vendetta started in the spring of 1967 when Brown, a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, succeeded Stokeley Carmichael as chairman of the then Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). From the moment when Brown proclaimed the obvious truth that "violence is as American as cherry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



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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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